

Cheung (Gary) Lam Of FranklinWH Energy Storage On How They Are Breaking the Cy...

An Interview With Monica Sanders

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you a bit. Can you tell us a bit about how you grew up?

Born in Hong Kong, raised in Ecuador, and later settling in the US, my multinational experiences have been a cornerstone of my unique perspective on cultures and business strategies. I'm fluent in Cantonese, Spanish, and English, and I feel like a living testament to the power of multicultural inclusivity and global awareness.

My passion for the solar industry was sparked during my college years when I took a Solar 101 course, which led me to become a lead member in Solar Decathlon projects. These competitions challenged me to design and build efficient, solar-powered houses and laid the groundwork for my career in solar technology.

Post-college, I joined Petra Solar as an R&D engineer, where I was introduced to the concept of home batteries. The potential of this technology to revolutionize the solar industry by allowing homeowners to store excess solar energy for later use ignited a long-lasting interest that I pursued over the next 12 years.

Intrigued by the business side of the solar industry, I transitioned into marketing and sales, leveraging my technical background and international experiences. This unique position allowed me to bridge the gap between intricate solar technologies and wider market needs. I enjoyed and excelled in translating complex technical concepts into easily understandable information for customers and stakeholders.

Subsequently, I then joined another company in a leadership role, overseeing both technical and marketing teams. And my multicultural background and international network proved invaluable and drove the company's global expansion and solidifying its position in the solar industry.

After years of honing my skills and deepening my understanding of home battery technology and its commercial viability, I founded FranklinWH. FranklinWH is dedicated to advancing

home battery technology and making solar energy more accessible around the globe. From my early days in Solar Decathlon projects to becoming a solar industry leader, I'm proud of how my personal experiences, passion, and multicultural understanding can shape a successful international career.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

Indeed, success is a collective journey, and I am immensely grateful to the mentors and colleagues who have shaped my path. A key figure in my career has been my college professor, Dunbar Bernie. He introduced me to the solar industry through the Solar 101 course and the transformative Solar Decathlon projects, providing an environment that mirrored the startup world and equipped me with invaluable skills and insights.

Further enriching my career, I have been privileged to work with dedicated professionals who've imparted their wisdom and guidance. Of particular note is Shihab Kuran, the CEO of Petra Solar, whose visionary leadership was instrumental in my professional development. His mentorship did not cease with my tenure at Petra Solar; he has continued to coach and assist me in my career journey, providing consistent support and invaluable guidance that have greatly contributed to my growth.

In summary, my journey to founding FranklinWH has been shaped by the collective wisdom and collaborative efforts of those I've had the privilege of learning from and working with. From the foundational mentorship of Professor Dunbar Bernie to the continuing guidance from Shihab Kuran and the valuable contributions from all my colleagues and managers, I express my deepest gratitude. Their collective influence has been vital in shaping my understanding of the solar industry and in equipping me with the skills necessary to lead FranklinWH.

What is the mission of your company? What problems are you aiming to solve? What is your "why" ?

At FranklinWH, our mission is to create a seamless living experience through the integration of diverse energy sources. We aim to empower households and communities to harness and manage their power, moving beyond just solar to include a range of renewable and traditional energy sources. Our focus is on solving the challenge of energy storage and management, which has been a limiting factor in the broader adoption of renewable energy.

We're developing innovative solutions to not only store power generated from solar panels but also integrate it with other energy sources, renewable or traditional. Our advanced home

battery technology ensures a reliable and consistent power supply, regardless of weather conditions or time of day, providing a practical pathway to a complete off-grid living experience. By addressing the challenge of energy storage and management, we're making renewable energy a more viable, practical alternative to traditional energy sources, and enabling more households to transition towards energy independence.

Our "why" stems from a deep-seated belief in the power of innovation to create a more sustainable and equitable world. With FranklinWH, we aim to make clean, renewable, and reliable energy accessible to all, irrespective of geographical or socio-economic status. We're not just developing technology; we're creating solutions that empower individuals, foster resilient communities, and contribute to a sustainable future for our planet. We envision a world where energy independence is within everyone's reach, and through our work at FranklinWH, we're taking significant steps towards realizing that vision.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began leading your company or organization?

One particularly memorable story comes to mind from the early days of FranklinWH. We were involved in an ambitious off-grid project on the picturesque island of Maui, working closely with a luxury home builder. The goal was to build a premium, off-grid living home, while also replacing the traditional gas generator used at the construction site. The construction site was powered by a shipping container that we had retrofitted with our beta system and photovoltaic (PV) panels.

The project was a unique challenge, requiring us to adapt and refine our system to accommodate the demands of a high-end construction project in a remote location. Each hurdle we encountered pushed us to innovate and improve our system, from optimizing energy storage and management to enhancing the system's durability and reliability in a tropical climate.

Despite the challenges, our team pulled together and the project was completed on time. Seeing our system power the construction site seamlessly, replacing the gas generator entirely, was a significant milestone for us. The moment served as a strong validation of our mission at FranklinWH: to integrate diverse energy sources and provide a seamless living experience, regardless of location or scale.

This project didn't just lead to substantial improvements in our technology; it reinforced our belief in the potential of renewable energy solutions in transforming how we live and work. As I look back, I realize that this ambitious project was a crucial turning point for FranklinWH, setting the stage for our future endeavors.

Do you have a favorite life lesson quote? Can you tell us how that was relevant to you in your own life?

One of my most cherished life lesson quotes is, “There are plenty of smart people, but not enough hardworking ones.” This saying has deeply resonated with me and played an instrumental role throughout my journey with FranklinWH.

In the realm of innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in the renewable energy sector, we often focus on intelligence, brilliance, and groundbreaking ideas. However, my experiences have underscored that while these are important, they are not the complete equation. Intelligence might sow the seeds of innovation, but it’s hard work and dedication that nurture these seeds to fruition.

This quote has consistently reminded me that tenacity, resilience, and relentless effort often make the crucial difference between a good idea and a transformative solution. In the face of complexities and setbacks, it wasn’t just intellectual prowess, but our team’s unyielding commitment and hard work that allowed us to progress, refine our technology, and stay committed to our mission.

In my personal and professional life, this quote has been a beacon, underscoring the importance of diligence and perseverance. It has served as a guiding principle, reminding me that hard work often tips the scales towards success, propelling great ideas into reality.

Let’s now shift to the main part of our interview. Can you tell our readers about the initiatives that you or your company are taking to help break the cycle of non-renewable consumption? What specific problems related to non-renewable consumption are you aiming to solve?”

At FranklinWH, we are deeply aware of the complexities involved in the transition from non-renewable to renewable energy sources. We recognize that this transformation cannot occur overnight and requires a patient and determined approach. In response to these challenges, our initiatives are designed to support the adoption of renewable energy in a manner that is gradual, affordable, and above all, seamless for users.

A significant hurdle for renewable energy adoption is the intermittent nature of sources like solar and wind, which can lead to inconsistencies in power supply. To tackle this, we are developing advanced home battery systems capable of efficiently storing energy produced during peak times for later use. This approach ensures a constant power supply, making renewable energy a more reliable alternative.

Moreover, our systems are designed to integrate seamlessly with existing infrastructure and a mix of energy sources, including traditional generators and renewable energy technologies. This blend allows for a smoother, more pragmatic transition, minimizing disruption and facilitating households in adopting renewable energy at their pace. The integration with generators ensures that power is available even during prolonged periods of inadequate renewable energy production, adding another layer of reliability.

Our objective at FranklinWH is to make renewable energy an accessible and practical option for everyone. By providing an easy transition pathway, we aim to encourage more households and communities to shift towards cleaner, sustainable energy sources. We're not just mitigating issues related to non-renewable consumption but also fostering a more sustainable and resilient energy future.

Indeed, the road to a fully renewable world is lengthy and requires collective effort. By incorporating renewable energy sources, battery storage, and traditional generators, we're providing a comprehensive solution for energy independence where in FranklinWH we define it as "Energy Freedom." Through our technological innovations, partnerships, and awareness drives, FranklinWH is committed to easing the journey towards that goal.

Can you give a few examples of what you are implementing to help address those issues?

FranklinWH's mission to combat non-renewable energy consumption and promote the adoption of renewable sources is brought to life through several practical initiatives.

Our primary effort has been the development of an advanced home battery system. This system can store energy generated from various sources, including solar, wind, and traditional generators. This solution effectively addresses a key challenge in renewable energy adoption — the inconsistency in power supply due to the intermittent nature of sources like wind and solar. Our system ensures a consistent power supply by storing excess energy produced during peak times for use when renewable energy generation is low.

Additionally, our system is designed to integrate seamlessly with existing infrastructure, making the transition to renewable energy practical and minimally disruptive for users. Whether it's traditional grid power or generators, our system can work in conjunction with current setups, allowing users to progressively shift towards renewable sources.

We're also harnessing the power of smart load control technology. This feature intelligently manages the power consumption of different appliances and systems within a home or building. It optimizes energy usage based on a variety of factors such as time of day, overall

energy demand, and availability of stored energy, reducing unnecessary energy consumption and promoting energy efficiency.

Lastly, we're committed to continuous research and development to further refine our technology and broaden its applications. Our objective is to stay at the forefront of the energy sector's evolution, providing effective solutions that cater to changing energy needs and contributing to a more sustainable future.

Through these initiatives, FranklinWH is not only addressing issues related to non-renewable consumption, but also fostering a transition to a more sustainable, resilient, and energy-independent world.

How do you measure the impact of your company's sustainability initiatives, both in terms of environmental benefits and business growth? Can you share any key metrics or success stories?

Measuring the impact of FranklinWH's sustainability initiatives involves assessing both environmental and business-related outcomes.

From an environmental standpoint, we track the amount of renewable energy produced and consumed by our systems, as well as the reduction in carbon emissions achieved by our customers' shift from non-renewable sources to renewable ones. For instance, for each kilowatt-hour of renewable energy generated and consumed, we're able to calculate the equivalent reduction in carbon emissions, compared to using traditional fossil fuel-based sources.

On the business front, we measure our growth in several ways. This includes the number of units sold, the increase in our customer base, geographical expansion, and the rate of customer retention. Additionally, we gauge the adoption rate of our home battery systems, and the degree of satisfaction among our customers, captured through surveys and customer reviews.

One of our success stories involves a community in a remote area that had limited access to the grid. We installed our systems in their homes, allowing them to harness solar power effectively and store excess energy for use during periods of low solar production. Not only did this provide a consistent, reliable power supply, but it also reduced the community's dependence on expensive, environmentally damaging diesel generators. This installation resulted in a significant reduction in their carbon footprint and brought about substantial cost savings on energy bills.

These tangible results underscore the effectiveness of our sustainability initiatives and motivate us to continue driving towards a more renewable and resilient energy future.

What challenges have you faced while implementing sustainable practices in your company, and how did you overcome them? Can you share a specific example?

Navigating the landscape of sustainable energy practices comes with its share of challenges. At FranklinWH, we've encountered various hurdles while developing our unique seamless generator tie-in function.

One of the most prominent technical challenges was the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources. To overcome this, we leveraged extensive research and development to design advanced home battery systems. These systems store excess energy generated during peak periods, providing consistent power supply during low, irregular or no energy generation.

Further complexity arose with the development of our seamless generator tie-in function. Adapting power from generators, particularly fossil fuel-powered ones, to a format that could be safely and efficiently stored required intricate engineering and an astute system design. Additionally, the system had to intelligently manage when to draw power from the generator, based on battery state of charge, load demand, and other factors.

The last major hurdle we faced was customer acceptance and education. As a unique market offering, it was essential to elucidate the benefits and workings of the seamless generator tie-in function to potential customers. This was tackled through detailed demonstrations, customer education initiatives, and comprehensive support. Despite these challenges, the seamless generator tie-in function has become a key differentiator for FranklinWH, providing a truly integrated, flexible, and reliable energy solution.

How would you articulate how a business can become more profitable by being more sustainable and more environmentally conscious? Can you share a story or example?

Sustainability and profitability are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they often go hand in hand. Not only can sustainable practices lead to efficiency improvements and cost reductions, but they also drive innovation, opening up new market opportunities.

In the renewable energy industry, this relationship between sustainability and innovation is particularly evident. Companies striving to meet environmental goals and cater to the growing consumer demand for sustainable solutions are propelled to innovate and rethink traditional norms.

At FranklinWH, this dynamic has played out in real-time. Confronted with an industry dominated by non-renewable sources, we saw a compelling need for sustainable, reliable, and efficient energy solutions. This commitment to sustainability led us to reimagine how energy could be managed and consumed at a household level. Our unique seamless generator tie-in function is a testament to this innovative approach, providing a pioneering solution that integrates traditional generators with renewable energy sources in a practical and sustainable manner.

Moreover, our commitment to sustainability resulted in the development of a product offering that not only distinguished us from competitors but also attracted a broad customer base passionate about renewable energy. The drive towards sustainability led to the creation of products and solutions that not only benefited the environment but also offered competitive advantages and opened new markets.

In essence, by embracing sustainability, businesses can unlock a host of benefits — from cost savings and efficiency improvements to product innovation and market differentiation — all of which can significantly enhance profitability. It's a win-win situation for both the company and the planet.

This is the signature question we ask in most of our interviews. What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started promoting sustainability and climate justice” and why? Please share a story or example for each.

- 1. Sustainability is a journey, not a destination.** When I first began promoting sustainability, I had the misconception that there was a defined endpoint. Over time, I realized that sustainability is a continual process of improvement and adaptation. With FranklinWH, we initially started with integrating solar power, but as we progressed, we incorporated a wider range of energy sources to improve our systems' overall efficiency and sustainability.
- 2. Every action counts.** Initially, I thought that only large-scale initiatives could make a significant impact. However, I've learned that even small actions can collectively lead to substantial changes. When we were designing our home battery systems, even minor improvements in energy efficiency contributed to greater overall sustainability. In fact, we were so committed to continuous improvement that we doubled our headcount in the

Research and Development (R&D) department to accommodate the necessary resources for making these small but impactful changes. This allowed us to optimize our systems, refine our technology, and stay at the forefront of sustainable energy solutions.

- 3. Innovation is key.** Sustainability and innovation are closely linked. To make substantial strides in sustainability, we have to rethink traditional methods and systems. Our seamless generator tie-in function is an example of this, where we innovated a solution that blends traditional and renewable energy sources, contributing to a more sustainable energy landscape. This innovation not only opened up new market opportunities but also demonstrated our commitment to finding creative solutions to pressing environmental challenges.
- 4. Set high goals but maintain low expectations.** It's important to aim high and set ambitious sustainability goals to drive progress. However, it's equally crucial to maintain realistic expectations regarding the speed and extent of change. For example, when we launched FranklinWH, we had high aspirations about transforming the energy sector. However, we also understood that the acceptance and adoption of new technologies take time. We remained steadfast in our goals while recognizing that the journey towards sustainability requires patience and perseverance.
- 5. Expect resistance and be patient.** Change, especially on a large scale, often encounters resistance. It's essential to stay patient, keep advocating for sustainability, and persevere despite the challenges. When we first launched FranklinWH, it took time to convince customers and stakeholders about the viability and benefits of our sustainable energy solutions. We encountered skepticism and faced resistance. However, we remained steadfast in our mission and continuously engaged with stakeholders, shared success stories, and demonstrated the value of our solutions. Over time, this persistence paid off as more people recognized the importance of sustainability and joined our cause.

You are a person of great influence and doing some great things for the world! If you could inspire a movement that would bring the greatest amount of good to the greatest amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. 😊

Although this is a movement already in the works, I'd like to emphasize the importance of education. We can't expect the public to feel motivated to act if they're not aware of the impact of climate change. I'd love to see community focused workshops and seminars that further educate people about the environmental impact of conventional energy sources and the benefits of renewable energy alternatives and sustainable energy sources. The goal is to empower people to take control of their energy and create a ripple effect of positive change, that will eventually lead to a widespread adoption of sustainable practices and renewable energy solutions.

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To stay updated on our work and initiatives, follow us on our social media platforms, subscribe to our YouTube channel, visit our website for detailed content and updates, and keep an eye on press releases, articles, and features by our PR agency PAN and Authority Magazine.

This was very meaningful, thank you so much. We wish you only continued success on your great work!

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