

SONITA  
LONTOH '06

# THE ENERGY EVOLUTION

Lontoh champions the transformational benefits of smart-energy technology

An energy evolution is under way, says **Sonita Lontoh '06**. And it's due, in large part, to smart-energy technology.

Lontoh, a smart-energy expert and frequent contributor to media outlets, such as *Forbes* and *Fortune*, understands the potential of smart energy: improving energy efficiency, lowering operating costs, reducing greenhouse gases and increasing renewable energy resources.

An energy/clean technology executive for more than a decade, Lontoh currently serves as head of global marketing for Trilliant, a global smart-energy company headquartered in Silicon Valley. In this role, she has dedicated herself to harnessing and communicating the value of smart energy, "a technology that will make our energy infrastructure smarter," she explains.

"Imagine a day when all of a home's devices know when to work, given user-controlled presets," Lontoh says. "Imagine having solar panels on your rooftop that power your home and feed any excess electricity back to the grid. Picture a charger for electric cars that automatically turns on when rates are at their lowest. That's what we're after: a smarter, more energy-efficient world."

Smart energy promotes energy efficiency by enabling two-way communication between supply and demand. As a result, energy suppliers achieve greater grid reliability and operational efficiency, and consumers can view and adjust their energy use/costs. The technology also has the potential to create high-quality green jobs, lower greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy security and independence.

In the way of smart energy's progress, however, stands a chaotic regulatory structure. In the U.S., states have differing mandates and policies for smart-energy use. There's also resistance within the energy industry to integrate the technology into existing systems.

"There is a bit of a clash of cultures between technology innovation and the energy industry," says Lontoh. **"Technology moves at a rapid speed while energy moves at a much slower pace. Smart energy is where these two cultures have to intersect."**

Today, most people associate smart energy with smart meters only. But that's only the tip of the energy evolution, explains Lontoh, who holds a master's in engineering from MIT in addition to her Kellogg MBA. "Smart Energy 2.0," by contrast, distributes intelligence across the entire energy value chain — from generation to transmission to distribution to meters. It even extends into distributed energy resources, such as solar panels, electric vehicles and energy storage.

"Think of this as an energy Internet — a network linking devices such as solar panels or electric car chargers," Lontoh says. "I'm focused on building a powerful, transformational smart-energy infrastructure that can handle any device or application that comes down the road.

"This is essential," she continues. "Because just like its name-sake, the energy Internet can transform the world. My goal is to help make that happen."

