Virginia L. Wright

Job Title: Energy Cyber Portfolio Program Manager

Education: Bachelor of Science, information systems and operations management, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Company Name: Idaho National Laboratory

Industry: Energy Research and Development

Company CEO: Dr. Mark Peters

Company Headquarters Location: Idaho Falls, Idaho

Number of Employees: 4,500

Words you live by: "Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death." – Mame

Personal Philosophy: "The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet." – Theodore Hesburgh

What book are you reading: *An Orchestra of Minorities* by Chigozie Obioma

What was your first job: Developing software for textile plant floor applications

Favorite charity: P.E.O. International

Interests: Reading, board games, lock picking, and teaching women to shoot handguns safely

Family: My husband Jason is truly my "Mr. Right," and my daughters Elizabeth (13) and Phoebe (11) teach me every day how to love deeply and live well.

See "No" as an Opportunity

Cybersecurity is a male-dominated industry. The 2017 Global Information Security Workforce Study assessed that men make up 86 percent of the cybersecurity workforce in North America and 89 percent, worldwide. As a result of this gender disparity, the culture of the cybersecurity workforce is permeated with assumptions and norms generated from hyper-masculine ideals.

Everywhere I have worked, I've been one of the few women in computer programming or cybersecurity. As I've advanced in my career from programmer to program manager, I've had to decide when to be "one of the boys" and how to incorporate my femininity in what I do. I've learned a few things from that struggle:

- Don't let a fear of failure make you sell yourself short. Women are notorious for this, myself included. Develop a network of peers, both female and male, who will encourage you to leave your comfort zone.

- Don't let perfect be the enemy of good enough. A Hewlett Packard internal report showed that men applied for jobs when they met 60 percent of the qualifications, but women did not apply unless they met 100 percent. Take the chance before it is a perfect fit, and you may succeed.

- Success is a team sport. Successful teams incorporate diverse talents and experience, and understand how to benefit from each other's differences. If you can't affect the hiring process directly, bring in interns who can increase the diversity on your team.

- "No" is an opportunity for a conversation. I'm an innovator, always pushing my organization to accept new ideas. Whether it's because I'm a woman or because I'm stretching their desire for change, I hear "no" a lot. Instead of letting it discourage you, interpret it as an opportunity to reconsider and develop a new approach.

- Find mentors who can extend your own experience base. Don't stop at one mentor, acquire several. Find a few mentors who have an alternate perspective, so that you can safely see the other side of an issue.

My research at the Idaho National Laboratory will reduce the risk of a catastrophic cyber attack on critical infrastructure. I love having the opportunity to make such a key impact on the nation, and I'm determined not to let the challenges of working in a male-dominated field slow me down.