



How to Avoid Pitfalls in Renewable Energy Development

By Robert Blenker, President and CEO of WRB Energy

As a renewable energy developer in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 30 years, I've made a few critical observations about bringing renewable projects to completion successfully.

1. There are no short cuts.

Every step of the development process takes time; much more time than you might think. Be deliberate in understanding the economic landscape of the marketplace you're considering, as well as the compliance issues with local energy policies and regulations. At WRB Energy, we're also very cautious in examining the environmental and cultural realities concerning site selection and technology options – selecting those that are best suited to the region. We find it's wise to estimate twice as much time as you think a project will take. Similarly, more time means more money, so give yourself a healthy allowance of both.

2. Master the art of relationships.

Partnering on projects for renewable energy development is like building and maintaining any long-term relationship. It requires shared ethics, both personal and professional, trust, transparency, openness to new ideas, willingness to learn, collaboration, setting realistic expectations, and maintaining respectful, honest communications.

3. Keep it local.

There are many benefits to partnering with a local development company to get your project started and commissioned in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Understanding the reality of

the region's regulations, legal system, real estate, transportation, permitting, workforce capabilities, and access to construction materials and equipment has a significant impact on project development. Having feet on the ground with local experience and knowledge helps inform and facilitate a smoother process to complete projects.

4. Fill gaps in skill sets.

Maximizing your capabilities with the skills and knowledge of others increases the likelihood of project success. In addition to the technical aspects, we focus on the economic and business issues of the initiative. Part of our due diligence includes adhering to high social and environmental standards to expedite project development. We work towards meeting and exceeding the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) performance standards to help mitigate and manage environmental, social, and governance risks for conducting business in a sustainable manner. We observe strict guidelines for labor relations, health, safety, security, resource efficiency, environmental protection, and land acquisition to safeguard the people living in the local communities as well as investors.



5. Mitigate and manage financial risk.

At WRB Energy, we always begin a project with the financial close in mind. We conduct due diligence at the outset to help ensure the bankability of a project and an appropriate return on investment. Whether it's the stability of an off-taker, clear real estate titling, sound regulations, or secure political climate, we take the time to ensure the viability of a project to avoid delays or cancellations.

6. Trust in the right people.

Engaging in a long-term relationship with a renewable energy partner requires a high level of comfort with the integrity, work ethic, experience, communication style, and reliability of the people.



That's why setting up clear roles and responsibilities for each partner at the outset is critical. You'll avoid misunderstandings about what each party is bringing to the effort. Often, people think they are contributing more than they really are, which can cause friction and derail a project unnecessarily.

Communication is key. Look for partners that you can speak openly with to share ideas, address challenges, and work collaboratively with to achieve mutual goals in a timely manner. Again, put the time in upfront; short cuts don't exist, and rarely will you figure out problems later.



Robert Blenker is a veteran renewable energy executive with more than 30 years of experience sourcing, developing, and managing infrastructure projects, specifically in Latin America and the Caribbean. He has developed renewable energy projects, vertically-integrated utilities, and sustainable infrastructure in Honduras, Uzbekistan, Nigeria, Mauritania, Colombia, Grenada, Jamaica, and Turks and Caicos.

About WRB Energy

WRB Energy develops renewable energy projects in the Caribbean and Latin America to help stabilize electricity prices and reduce dependence on imported fuels to drive economic growth and sustainability. WRB Energy manages the entire project lifecycle including site selection, design, permitting, financing, construction, and operation.

To learn more, visit wrbenergy.com.

©WRB Energy. All rights reserved.