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"I DO BELIEVE THAT WOMEN ARE NATURALLY CONFIGURED TO BE MORE HUMBLE, MORE EMPATHETIC, AND DUE TO THIS MAYBE WE HOLD BACK MORE THAN WE SHOULD – USUALLY WHILST WE ARE TRYING TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT. NETWORKS SUCH AS WINLPG ARE SO IMPORTANT IN HELPING TO GIVE WOMEN THE CONFIDENCE TO TAKE BIGGER AND BOLDER STEPS AND MAKE PROGRESS IN THE INDUSTRY."

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WINLPG

Women in LPG Global Network

Meet the Role Models

WINLPG Role Models introduce successful women in the LPG industry and gives an insight into their career path, their challenges and their advice to fellow WINLPG members.

I attended Horbury High School in the north of England but my years there were more memorable for my out-of-school activities – I played violin in the Wakefield Youth Orchestra, sang in the Wakefield Youth Choir, and the family had horses so I had a very horsey life too – lots of rosettes, boxes of them!

Doing A levels at Wakefield District College made me realise I now had to work hard to succeed academically. I went on to read Chemistry and Physics at Durham University, where I learned how to manage my time, cram my head with information. To work hard – but also to rest and enjoy life.

After graduating I was offered several PhDs and was sponsored by BP to research Environmental Stress-Cracking of Polyethylene at Leeds Inter-Disciplinary Research Centre, working also at their Grangemouth base. Tutoring students as a post-grad was great fun, but after one year in I realised that research was not for me.

Learning that something is not right for you and to move on from it, is a difficult thing and a challenge that requires maturity. But if something isn't right for you, you will know and you need to do something about it. Don't make rash decisions, but don't stay doing something that you feel you don't get something back from.

As I left the research world I joined Air Products and Chemicals (an industrial gases player) who I worked with for 18 years. I tended to work in commercial roles of increasing responsibilities, working across different divisions and in many countries in Europe and Asia, also in the USA. I also had the opportunity work in Brussels for five years where I lived with my husband and two children.

Whilst I was at Air Products an opportunity evolved at UGI and I became really interested in moving to the energy industry. Air Products was a universe in itself, very self-contained, but what I found fascinating about the energy world was the reliance of the industry on external factors – politics, policy, commodities, supply chain partners – so many external influences. For me that was quite a revolution, energy as it turns out is a very different and exciting market place.



6 KEY QUESTIONS



What is your goal today?

My business goal is to support UGI in achieving its full development potential within the International region, be it in new markets, existing markets, through delivering maturity or evolution – whichever is required. My personal goal is two-fold: that I ensure I am engaged and happy and energised by what I'm doing in my career, and I can achieve a balance between work and life. The last bit's quite a cliché but you have to work at making time for yourself and your family outside of work. It's quite a simple statement, but rather hard to do.



Did you have a mentor and how did this help?

I've had a number of mentors – and I believe strongly that having a good mentor is really important to somebody who sees their work life as a career. It's really about learning, and a mentor can help you to understand and navigate those challenging, subtle business circumstances that are really difficult when you're new into something and you might not otherwise quite understand how it all hangs together.



Describe your Pathway?

Although my education was primarily scientific, I nearly always pursued commercial roles in my career, be it heading up European front office teams, or leading a particular business unit or pan-European sales team. I realise I like being at the forefront of business decisions, helping to move a business forward. I particularly know this as I did take a detour into heading up a global IT deployment project. Although I learned loads about IT project management and infrastructure I don't think I would do it again as I didn't feel that I was able to generate my usual energy levels and give the best of me to the role. It didn't energise me!



What does leadership mean to you?

Leadership is about providing not just inspiration but also a steady hand at the tiller, you need to generate ideas but they have to be supported by strong business plans – see the whole picture. Leadership to me is also about creating a culture and being clear about being a role model for that culture. People will look to you for that. In leadership you have to be somebody people feel they can trust, because you are taking their career and their future partly into your hands. Finally for me leadership is about building a team around you that can help you to deliver. I believe that strongly.



Did you face any specific challenges?

Like everyone I have in the past and still do face challenges, every day. You have to become tougher than you might normally be, make decisions you feel are right and prove beyond anyone's doubt you can deliver. If others have made subtle put-downs, I see them but don't take them to heart or feel they are a direct reflection of what I'm doing. I want to be valued for what I can deliver. By the way I don't think that because I am female or 43 or whatever age makes me any different to anyone else. The main challenges I've had to overcome are personal ones - working myself too hard, not taking time to step back and look at the big picture. I also perhaps haven't at times understood or given time for others to keep up with me in making business decisions. Time and experience has helped me to take perspective and think more broadly about others and the impact you have.



What three pieces of advice would you give to someone embarking on their career with LPG?

Build those external support networks, such as political relationships, because it's an industry that's heavily inter-dependent.

The basic principles of business apply in the LPG industry as much as anywhere.

The industry is actually very open and needs talented people. Go out and show people you've got talent and you will be valuable in the industry.