I wanted to get up every day and do something that would actually make a change in the world. I realized that the way forward for me was to get into the power industry, and specifically to work with ester-based transformer fluids.
Women in Power Systems is an initiative that we at APC Media started last year, building a network and a community that advocates for women in all power systems roles, facilitates their connections and celebrates their successes. In this interview, we present one of these women, who found that getting into the power industry was a way for her to do something that will actually make a change in the world.

Dorotea Filipan: I am Dorotea Filipan, Project Manager of Women in Power System. In this interview, I have the pleasure to speak with Sabine Bowers who is Power Systems Global Renewable Energy Leader for Cargill Bioindustrial. Sabine, thank you for joining me.

Sabine Bowers: Thank you very much, Dorotea.

DF I wanted to do a study in a field that would allow me to work internationally, and that specific degree (Sciences & Management) gave me the tools for that. My husband had also suggested for me to study in Manchester, as the city has an important industrial history. It was actually the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, so it seemed a really good place to study this topic.

SB After graduation, my first target was that I wanted to work for a large multinational company. I felt that it would be a good experience to get the feeling of the corporate world. I also wanted to understand the automotive industry and at the time it seemed to tick that box for me. I found the industry very interesting, and very challenging, but also quite old-fashioned in a sense. Unfortunately, it wasn’t ticking all the boxes for me and I eventually ended up moving to the UK with my husband, which is when I began my career in the computer industry.

DF It’s wonderful to have such inspiring and supporting people so close to you in your life.

SB Yes, my husband was very supportive throughout my career including when I had to travel a lot. I have to say I am very fortunate with him in that respect.

DF Right now, you are the Power Systems Global Renewable Energy Leader for Cargill Bioindustrial, however, you didn’t start out in bio industrial products. In fact, you didn’t start out in the power industry at all. I believe you started out in the automotive industry and then worked for a bit in the computer industry. Could you describe your career journey from graduation at Manchester to where you are now, and how it happened? How did you get to where you are today?

SB Absolutely. After my experience with other multinational companies, I felt I really needed to move to a company that took environmental issues very seriously, including sustainability, but also, a company that is focused on equal opportunities, on diversity issues, and making the workplace and the world a better place.

DF You said that you wanted to work somewhere that created something that could make the world a better place. Was that one of the main factors that drew you to Cargill?

SB Absolutely, 100%. After my experience with other multinational companies, I felt I really needed to move to a company that took environmental issues very seriously, including sustainability, but also a company that is focused on equal opportunities, on diversity issues, and making the workplace and the world a better place.

SB I feel that Cargill is making a positive difference in the world and I am helping the company to achieve those goals. This, in turn, is very rewarding.

DF Absolutely, working for a company that stands for the same values as you do is such wind under one’s wings. Now Sabine, have you had a very rich career of over 30 years. Looking back, what would you say is your greatest achievement? I’m sure there are many, however, can you share with me what achievements you are most proud of?

SB My greatest achievement so far, from a professional point of view is really to make a change in the renewable industry, and to introduce natural ester in renewable technology. This sector was primarily working with mineral oil filled or dry-type transformers, and I succeeded in bringing a more sustainable and green fluid to this market. Furthermore, switching to a natural ester - like FR3® fluid - is not just valuable from a sustainability perspective, but it’s also important from a safety perspective.

DF My greatest achievement so far is really making a change in the renewable industry and creating more infrastructure safety in the power industry.

SB I’m fortunate to be able to work with a great team that is equally motivated to drive and promote this further across the globe.

DF I think anyone who has experienced success in the company knows the importance of understanding that need. You can love what you do to no end but if you don’t feel properly supported, valued, and taken care of as an employee, it can eat away at your happiness very quickly.

SB Throughout my career, I was working a lot in India, and there I recognized that infrastructure safety is a massive aspect of the power industry, and by introducing this...
Sabine, you agreed to an interview for Women in Power System, so it stands to reason that women’s networking within the energy industry is important to you. Are there any other women’s organizations or networking groups that you are involved with?

Yes, I’ve recently joined the CIGRE networking group of women called Women in Energy (WiE) Net Zero Initiative, clearly acknowledging that we are becoming a much bigger driving force. I found out at the last CIGRE session in Paris, that women in CIGRE seem to dominate in work groups that are concerned with net zero/green topics in engineering. So, it’s a perfect space for us to grow and network the different interests. And this group is made up of women from a wide range of positions within the industry: lawyers, environmental specialists, of course, engineers. I think I myself am the only more product-related person in there. It’s very motivating to work with this group of women from all these different business areas but also geographic areas - from Australia to South Africa to Europe – seeing our common goals and working together on this important topic.

It’s very motivating to work with women from different business and geographic areas, seeing our common goals and working together on important topics.

That is wonderful, and I feel that unfortunately, we are currently lacking women in the workforce. And I feel that one of the most important things that we, as members and representatives of these organizations must do is to advocate for young women in schools and at universities to consider entering the energy field. The same also goes for all the new transformers needed in the renewable energy industry. So, yes, to answer your question my greatest achievement is to get this product into the renewable space and therefore I’m super happy that I’ve been appointed to be the global leader. I’m fortunate to be able to work with a great team that is equally motivated to drive and promote this further across the globe.
My advice to young girls and young women who are considering a career in the power industry would be to try and find a company that can be good to you and encourages you to grow, and to find a field that really motivates you, that gives you a reason to be enthusiastic and passionate when you talk to your friends and your family about it.

DB Yes, absolutely.

DF I have one last question for you, Sabine. We agreed earlier that we need more women to join the energy industry to help make it better. What piece of advice would you give young girls and young women to encourage them to start considering a career in the power industry?

SB When I was a little girl in school and realized I could no longer spend all my day just playing with friends and climbing up trees, I decided if I had to spend all my days working, I would want to do something that would give me as much joy as the playing did. So, my advice would be to try and find a company that can be good to you and encourages you to grow, and to find a field that really motivates you, that gives you a reason to be enthusiastic and passionate when you talk to your friends and your family about it. I truly believe that that is a recipe for success.

DF There is a saying, and I couldn’t agree with it more, that travel is the one thing that you spend money on, and you end up coming out richer because of it.

SB Yes, absolutely.

DF I have one last question for you, Sabine. We agreed earlier that we need more women to join the energy industry to help make it better. What piece of advice would you give young girls and young women to encourage them to start considering a career in the power industry?

SB I’m very lucky to live in a region where I have access to a lot of lakes and mountains. In the winter, I can do some winter sports, and in the summer, we go on bike tours and hiking.

On top of that, I am very engaged in organizing cultural activities with a group of international women. I live in Munich where we have a large expat community, and I organize trips across Munich and Europe with women from this community; we visit all kinds of cultural destinations: exhibitions, ballets, theatre, and the opera. This is good fun and very satisfying. Having friends from across the globe is stimulating and really helps me recharge my batteries.

DF It most certainly is. Sabine, thank you so much for joining us for the interview today. It’s been a pleasure.

SB Thank you very much, Dorotea.