

Sabine Bowers

**Power Systems Global Renewable
Energy Leader for Cargill Bioindustrial**

Interview with **Sabine Bowers**





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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 Sabine, you studied Sciences and Management at the University of Manchester. Was this always a field of interest for you? And what was it that drew you to this area in particular, or who inspired you to perhaps take this direction?

SB 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.

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?

Working with natural ester fluids for transformers - a sustainable, high performing and green technology - gave me a lot of satisfaction, and still does to this day.

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.

At the time it was the millennium, and so much was evolving in this industry. It was interesting and it was certainly stimulating, but it still wasn't hitting all the boxes for me. So, I took a break with my family. We took some time out and moved to France, giving me a chance to evaluate what I wanted from my career, and my life.

This break gave me the time I needed to look at what I really wanted to do, and I decided that I wanted to do something that is truly motivating for me. I wanted to get up every day and do something that would actually make a change in the world and in the way it was operating. I realized that the way forward for me was to get into the power industry, and specifically to work with ester-based transformer fluids, which are a big part of the green technology in the power industry.

And just like that, that was it. It was a global opportunity. Everybody needs power, whether you go to India or to Brazil or to America or Europe, it's the same for the entire globe. But the question is, how do we develop this power need? How do we develop this power infrastructure across the globe, and how can we sustain and meet the need for growth in a world that is increasingly challenged by climate change and sustainability issues as well as the growing demand on the grid?

So, working with natural ester fluids for transformers - a sustainable, high performing and green technology - especially gave me a lot of satisfaction, and still does to this day.

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?

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 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 to be in. It is very important for me to work for a company that takes social and environmental issues seriously.

DF I think anyone who has experienced office and company life can understand 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.

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

SB I feel that Cargill is making a positive difference in the world and I'm 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, you have 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 introducing 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.

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

green transformer fluid, we can also make the transformers much safer for the entire community and the environment. The same goes for all the new transformers needed in the renewable energy industry. So yes, to answer your question my greatest achievement

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.



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.

DF 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?

DF 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?

SB 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



DF 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

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energy industry and also to let them know that you don't have to be an engineer to do so or to make a difference in the power industry.

SB Yes, absolutely. I think that's what we're becoming more aware of, that we need to have diversity in our industry. We need people from different backgrounds and fields of expertise to join us to bring in different perspectives, and to understand the issues that people from other backgrounds see and deal with in their everyday life and that the energy industry could help resolve.

DF Now, I think we can agree that we are all living in a fast-paced, highly digital world, where we tend to burn the candle at both ends. Tell me, what helps you maintain a healthy life-work balance and what helps you just unwind, switch off, and recharge your battery?



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 ex-pat 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 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.

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.

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 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 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.