



Mitch Layng reflects on his career path in Energy Management

The Energy Managers Association aims to encourage and enable more professionals to enter the world of energy management and environmental roles. Being an energy manager may not seem like the most obvious career for many. The EMA has taken on a challenge of changing the perception of energy management, by raising the sector's profile and sharing its members' – leading energy managers – insights into their career progress and achievements. In this issue, we have asked Mitch Layng, Portfolio Energy Manager at M&G Real Estate and the winner of the EMA Energy Manager 2016 category about his career and views.

When did you first hear the term 'Energy Management'?

Probably during the energy crisis in the 80's when the cost of energy increased significantly. This resulted in a focus on energy management to reduce costs, rather than carbon emissions, which is a key driver today.

What made you choose energy management as a career?

It was a natural progression; my career started as a design engineer, and then moved on to the operational side. This was a bit of an eye opener to me, as I couldn't understand why we end up with buildings that don't work as they were designed and why we have the so-called performance gap. This not only resulted in unhappy occupants, but also an

increase in energy consumption. Although I have been an energy manager for 5 years, my whole career has involved consideration of energy performance to some extent.

How did you progress through the profession to your current role?

I spent 38 years in the building sector, both as a design and operational engineer, before taking up the position of Portfolio Energy Manager at M&G Real Estate in 2012. It was a brand new role for the organisation, which needed to take a strategic approach on energy management and put in place a process to achieve energy reductions across M&G's managed portfolio.

I'm responsible for setting strategy on energy and carbon reductions. I began focusing on no and low cost initiatives, which started to show results within a year and continued

our energy reductions each year after. In addition to this are further initiatives that do require investment, like LED lighting and additional controls.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

The energy reductions we have seen since setting and implementing the strategy have been really exciting. We have achieved a reduction in energy intensity of 16% over 4 years, on a like for like basis across our UK managed portfolio.

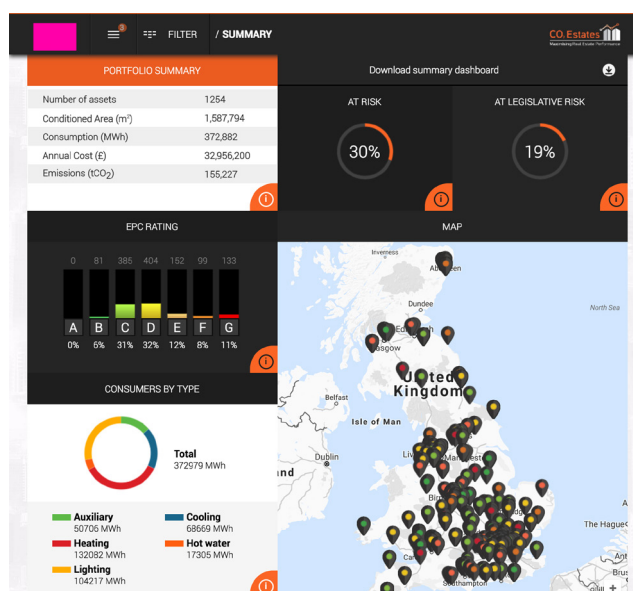
One particular project, a large shopping centre, has shown energy reductions of 23% after 2 years.

I also identified an opportunity at M&G to rationalise a number of reporting and compliance requirements into one platform, Carbon Estates.

Looking ahead, what do you think will be the key challenges for Energy Managers?

If I were to pick two key areas, I would have to say MEES and metering.

With the introduction of the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) legislation in April 2018, energy managers need to start thinking now about properties that are in danger of not achieving the minimum 'E' rating. Planning for MEES now will allow for measures to be put in place to make sure properties comply.



Carbon Estates software - a fully automated web based MEES risk management decision support tool.

We identified the need to obtain better quality information about EPCs, and have worked closely with the Carbon Estates software platform that analyses the energy efficiency for commercial property, since its early days of development.

This has given us the ability to model the EPC from design stage, rather than getting landed with a poor rating after the build. It also means you can look at acquisitions and investigate what an asset could achieve before buying the property, giving you the chance to advise on it in advance.

Those responsible for property acquisition, selling and leasing property, should involve the energy management community, and must start undertaking these types of assessment so they are aware of the risk of poorly rated buildings, and can set and agree a plan of action to reduce that risk.

Accurate metering is a big area that needs improvement in my view. Despite the requirement since 2002 to produce building log books and to have a metering strategy in place to help with optimising performance, it is rare to see a document that is fit for purpose. The industry (and by that I mean the designers through to the operational staff) should be involved in the production of these at an early stage, so that the project team fully understand what is required to enable accurate data collection in the correct format, using the correct meters serving the correct plant and equipment.



What advice would you give energy managers looking to take further steps to reduce emissions?

A really significant proportion of our properties' energy consumption is influenced by our occupiers, so an essential part of strategy is occupier engagement. There are various strands to this, but two key areas are providing the occupier with accurate and timely energy usage and billing information, and to look at providing an occupier's fit out and operational environmental guide to assist tenants in managing their own energy use.

Often the no and low cost changes can make a big difference, so start with looking at those. It may seem obvious, but look to see if energy in offices is being used on weekends and evenings unnecessarily? Having the correct energy reduction strategy in place is key, including a monitoring and targeting process. If periodic reports can be produced showing base loads out of hours for instance, and spikes of consumption, it should be easy to make management improvements to address these.

The type and quality of maintenance contracts and contractors is another vital area for me. The operatives that maintain building services have a crucial role in ensuring an efficient running building. You can spend a lot of money in upgrading plant and equipment to improve energy performance, but that can be wasted if, for example, the water quality in the closed systems is not correct resulting in bacteria and sludge, which will have a significant impact on plant efficiency. Rather than go into detail here, this blog I did for BSRIA attempts to explain the issues: <https://blogs.bsria.co.uk/2014/12/03/building-services-maintenance-contractors-have-a-key-role-in-reducing-carbon-emissions-from-our-existing-building-stock/>

What qualities should a good energy manager possess?

The term energy manager covers a variety of roles and skills, from the soft service side, through to the more

technical role requiring detailed engineering knowledge. Therefore, the qualities are wide ranging. I would say that knowledge and awareness of exactly how a building or process works is important, ideally having actual experience from both the practical and theoretical side, along with a methodical mind and good communication skills.

As the winner of the EMA Energy Manager 2016 Award, what prompted you to put a submission forward for the EMA Energy Management Awards?

M&G Real Estate has had a responsible property investment



strategy in place for over 10 years now, and in the 5 years I have been the portfolio energy manager, we have made some really strong improvements. Recognition of these achievements are becoming more important to us as an organisation, as we have a number of key stakeholders interested in our environmental credentials, including investors and occupiers. And on a personal level, it is rewarding to be recognised for those achievements, and to help get the message out to the industry, not only how important it is to reduce carbon emissions, but also how straight forward it can be (in most cases) if you have the right processes in place.