



“Apparently, I’m an energy manager!”

My career in energy management, in seven easy questions (With apologies to Andy Clarke, from whom I nicked the title).

When did you first hear the term ‘Energy Management’?

Working in the Ministry of Defence, with the Estates Management section of a local Brigade, the first time I heard this term was in 2001, in relation to fuel deliveries and storage. I was loaned to our accounts payment section to help with a backlog of bills, due to staff illness, and had the distinct pleasure of processing 700+ oil receipts; some came from the usual route of Quartermasters, but several came from Energy Managers, so this was when I became aware of the job and its role.

What made you choose energy management as a career?

I didn’t, it chose me!

I was working as an estates management officer, when I was tasked to survey and report on the condition of our LPG installations, as I was the only one in our office with any experience of fuels. (In my case from having worked in a transport unit, managing a leased fleet of vehicles and their fuel usage, same reason I got voluntold to help with the receipts). I was given a four-inch thick spring binder with the MoD and LPGA guides on LPG installations, and asked to produce an in depth report on the sites.

After getting deeply involved in the subject, I realised that I was actually enjoying the work and was very interested in the technical aspect

of energy. The fact that I am also an environmentalist made me realise that I could achieve something in energy, as it could have a real impact.

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

Initially, I carried out the role unofficially as a favour to senior management.

Then luck came into play in 2003, a vacancy for a Brigade Energy Manager came up, which came with a promotion and funding for outside specialist training, which I grabbed. (Whether the fact I was the only applicant affected the result, I cannot say). My Line Manager gave me a lot of leeway to get the appropriate professional training, as well as attending industry exhibitions and conferences to get acquainted with the role; and telling me to get out

on the estate and familiarise myself with the actual sites, something which any self-respecting energy manager should do – how can you manage sites if you don’t know what is happening on them?

Once suitably qualified, I joined the Energy Institute as an affiliate to start with, and started my job in earnest; rapidly discovering that most people did not know or understand what an energy manager did, but having the advantage that I could build the role into something useful covering 120 sites in the SW of England.

I took on the role of Brigade Energy Manager, and started working with other managers across the MoD, and discovered what a broad remit the role entailed – from project development to resource management, behavioural change to data usage.

In 2008, I was offered the Regional



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Divisional role that I gladly accepted, which covered 300 sites across the whole of the Midlands and Wales, and came with the management of four other energy managers, and we made a great team. We achieved a great deal, and it is a time that I still look back on with pride.

In 2012, the Regional Divisional structure was abolished, and I transferred to my present post with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, which has given me a national role, dealing with EU ETS and CRC, as well as controlling capacity requirements, reviewing projects and making use of my knowledge and experience to help our new Area Utilities Managers in their day to day work.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

That's a hard one, really there are two.

When I took over the Divisional role, it had been empty for two years and everything had slipped or gone quiet, and I effectively had to start from scratch. Persuading the management to recruit consultant energy managers, and fund our work was interesting, as it was still viewed in some quarters as a black art; but we succeeded and got the Division energy assets running efficiently and

to the point that we were developing our own energy champions scheme (Energy wardens in MoD speak), benchmarking methodology and data analysis system.

Secondly, gaining the Chartered Energy Manager title, this means a great deal to me.

What is the best approach to attract new talent into the energy management sector?

Ensure that the potential new managers can see a clear and gainful career path, that shows that they will achieve something good and lasting, and comes with sufficient reward to attract people with suitable qualifications; and if they don't have these, ensure that the necessary training is available to them.

A good salary is a good attraction, but is not the be all and end all; I have seen energy managers also being tasked with health and safety, waste management and even being used as a spare hand for overworked offices. The role has to be respected as a separate, distinct and valued position; that can deliver financial savings, in a sustainable and practical manner, which will benefit the business now and into what is fast becoming an unsure future.

What advice would you give to someone looking to become an energy manager?

Take up drinking!

Seriously, think carefully before you decide to take on this role, it is not easy or simple, and can be a major part of your life. If you decide to go for it, then do it properly, follow a well-co-ordinated training programme and visit some of the exhibitions and conferences before you finally decide, you will be surprised what you can learn from these and how open and helpful other more experienced energy managers are.

What qualities should a good energy manager possess?

Patience, as a start, as initially the work will go slow until the senior management realise the advantages of your role and what it can deliver, and because some managers need to be spoken to veeerrrrry sloooowwwly to get their heads around what can be a very geeky profession.

Secondly, inquisitiveness, you will find that this role needs lifelong learning and every day is a school day, and you will be surprised in what you will learn..