

Women in Leadership Interview

While it is perceived that there are many structural and other barriers that limit women's progress through the ranks in energy management, we would like to explore a different question: how have the women who have made it to the very top in energy management overcome those barriers?

Paulina Bohdanowicz-Godfrey, Senior Director Energy & Environment EMEA at Hilton takes us through the journey of pushing her career boundaries and finding the balance to rise to the prominence in energy management.

Paulina Bohdanowicz-Godfrey – Senior Director Energy & Environment EMEA at Hilton



What is your personal story?

Being born into a family of academics, my first focus was on pursuing a university career with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Protection and Management from the Technical University of Gdansk in Poland, followed by a [Masters in Sustainable Energy Engineering](#) at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. It was however my PhD work that defined my future career.

Whilst doing academic research into responsible resource management in hotels, I connected with Scandic

and [Hilton](#) and realised hospitality is an industry that provides great opportunities to make a positive change to global environmental wellbeing. Whilst I was studying for my PhD degree, I was offered an opportunity to manage, develop and control HER – Hilton Environmental Reporting digital platform (the predecessor to Hilton's LightStay). The tool was designed to monitor, measure and track reductions in energy and water use as well as carbon and waste output of the hotels. This gave me a real taste for the difference I could make in this industry, so following some teaching commitments in Sweden and Poland, I returned to Hilton to look after [sustainability](#) for the EMEA region, based in the UK.

Whilst being at university allowed me to learn about various environmental and engineering challenges and help to educate future generations, I found that by embarking upon a career in engineering, I had the potential to be part of the change. At Hilton, I was given the opportunity to transform from an academic wanting

to understand a challenge, into a decision maker who is focused on providing a solution.

My role and position with Hilton have continued to evolve ever since. I now cover environmental governance and reporting, learning and personal development programmes in engineering and sustainability, team member engagement programmes and ESG advisory for the EMEA region. With time, my role has expanded to cover efficiency projects and energy procurement. I started as an environmental engineer, then evolved into a sustainability specialist and energy manager. I currently occupy a niche in between the three 'E' worlds of environment, energy and engineering. I have a small, diverse and very capable team to support 250+ hotels across the region. Ashley, Georgina, Harry, Simon and I continue to evolve and expand our horizons and push for change, as sustainability and efficiency goalposts are never still.

Both the company and my team have been recognised for our contribution to better environmental and energy

management internationally and nationally. The team was recognized as [Highly Commended EMA Energy Management Team of the year 2017](#), and in 2016 I was included in the inaugural 'Top 50 Women in Engineering' list by Women's Engineering Society and The Daily Telegraph.

What does your role entail?

My current role is to help the company become more environmentally and socially responsible and efficient whilst providing value to all stakeholders. There are multiple aspects and pathways that need consideration to achieve the goal.

My team and I are responsible for the strategy, management, planning and directing of the energy and environmental activities for hotels across EMEA. This includes awareness, engagement and recognition campaigns to ensure hotels are aware of the latest opportunities to reduce their footprint, improve service levels and control costs. We also lead on efficiency and conservation projects and compliance with company and local environmental legislation and certification.

Collaboration is key, and we provide organisational support to other departments and individual hotels with environmental and engineering initiatives. We are involved in sustainability reporting and the continuous development of

Hilton's ESG management platform, LightStay to ensure we continue to accurately track, report and analyse our environmental footprint, helping us to see the progress of various initiatives, and where changes and improvements to our operations need to be made. A key element of the role is also related to the contract management and procurement process for all centrally managed utilities, such as electricity, gas and water across the region.



Within my role I enjoy the continuous opportunity to learn, discover, inspire and engage others, and second only to my passion for the environment is my passion for people and providing them with development opportunities. This led me to create the Women at Hilton Engineering EMEA network, which I continue to support alongside co-developing learning and leadership programmes for our engineering teams.

Did you always know where you wanted to be professionally at this stage?

My parents enjoyed spending time in nature, whether at the seaside, countryside or in the forest. As such I was exposed to the natural

environment and knew quite early that I wanted to do something to help protect and preserve it for the next generation to enjoy. I have always loved travelling and working with people, so the current role is the combination of my passions. My other professional career option of choice would be to work within the education system to empower and inspire the next generation to make a difference.

What is your leadership style, and how did you develop your leadership confidence and voice?

My parents have always encouraged me to speak up and voice opinions but were careful that I was capable to rationally explain and justify these. I think I was a natural leader from my early youth, but most frequently worked independently. In my professional formative years my managers were very flexible and allowed me a lot of independence to learn, make mistakes, improve and evolve. They however always expected a high degree of collaboration within and across teams.

I'd like to think that I have taken their leadership style on board, and work collaboratively with my team. I encourage them to discover, voice their opinions, make and own their independent decisions, take responsibility, manage their time and workload. At the same time, I make sure that I'm there to support, make decisions, inspire and encourage, but also take ownership and coach when required.



Throughout my career my proudest moments have always been related to my team and seeing them inspired and inspiring others as they develop personally and professionally, take on challenges and responsibilities, build their careers at Hilton and deliver fantastic business results, including the annual energy and water [reductions across our hotels](#) or an increase in the share of properties supplied by certified renewable electricity, to name a few.

What are, from your perspective, the biggest challenges for women in energy management leadership roles?

I believe that the roles should always go to the best person for the job and women are absolutely capable of doing everything they set their

minds to. However, I think sometimes we may be our own worst enemies. The concept of imposter syndrome, whilst not always referred to as such, is probably familiar to most of us, and might have prevented many of us from taking a step upwards or sideways in our careers and challenging ourselves to take on a new role. The fear of not being able to properly manage the work-life balance is most likely contributing to the situation as well. However, there are numerous role models of women who expertly balance executive job roles with family life and thrive in their environments, such as those annually recognised by [Women's Engineering Society in the UK](#).

Diversity and Inclusion are becoming increasingly important considerations

on the business agenda, and people expect to see tangible action and results to help drive inclusivity in the workplace across every sector. I hope that this increased focus on creating workplaces that empower everyone to thrive will encourage more women to see that they can take on a leadership role in this sector. The Women in Hilton Engineering EMEA network has been a critical internal support tool during the last 18 months, and is one of a number of Hilton initiatives which led to the company being recognised as the #3 best place to work for women in the UK by Great Place to Work.

What can women do to overcome these challenges or to change these situations?

We should not be afraid to step

outside of our comfort zones, choose to challenge (as the leading theme of the 2021 International Women Day campaign) and take on the challenges presented to us. Every challenge can be turned into opportunity. We should be influencing our own career path and motivating other women to join the sector to build diverse, effective and harmonious teams. We can be the source of a positive change for those around us and the next generation.

Many people struggle with finding a mentor or support to help them in their career journey. Did you ever receive any form of support or mentoring as you moved along?

I was very lucky in that regard, as I have been directly exposed to very inspiring individuals and fantastic mentors, including Ivo Martinac at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, JP Bergkvist at Scandic/Hilton, Andrew Forte and Darren Cook at Hilton. They have supported and challenged me in my roles, allowing me to get out of my comfort zone, develop, make mistakes and learn from them – all in a very supportive environment. The teams I have been part of have always been extremely collaborative – which makes for a great learning environment. I have learned so much from my team – not just managers and mentors, but also younger generations who approach things in a different way and have different life experience to bring to the table.

As well as those personal experiences,

everyone at Hilton has access to a very comprehensive set of resources and tools to support individual development through Thrive@Hilton and Hilton University, including online self-study modules, reflection materials, as well as coaching and mentoring opportunities.



What about training? For those who want to be leaders, do you advise that they get any formal training on how to lead?

I think this really is an individual choice. Some formal training on leadership styles and people management can be useful, but I believe in order to develop an authentic leadership style, it is also important to let your leadership skills develop organically through experience – something which my career at Hilton has allowed me to do. That way, we are more likely to remain true to ourselves, which ultimately helps to be an authentic leader

and build trust with our teams and partners.

Looking back, what three pieces of advice do you have for your younger self?

- Don't wait for opportunities – create them, challenge yourself and define your own career path.
- Always strive to learn and improve yourself. Learn from interaction with other individuals and cultures.
- Inspire and be inspired. Even the smallest of positive changes, when taken up by all those we influence, can result in a massive positive ripple effect globally.

What are your long-term plans professionally?

I want to continue contributing to the improvement of environmental and social conditions in which we live, as the negative effects of what we have already done

to the environment are more obvious than ever. [Hilton's Travel with Purpose ESG strategy](#) is one of the strongest in the sector and we are working to achieve our 2030 goals "to cut our environmental footprint in half and double our investment in social impact", however sustainability does not stand still and we need to remain engaged and committed to make a long lasting positive impact.

Secondly, I am passionate about developing people and seeing them grow. I have so much faith in the abilities of my team, so I would like to see them progress in their professional and personal lives.

ENERGY MANAGEMENT ONLINE TRAINING SCHEDULE

Energy Management Theory Combined with Real-World Applications

SEPTEMBER

- 23rd Energy Auditing Techniques
- 24th Energy Monitoring, Targeting and Validation

OCTOBER

- 8th Become an ESOS Lead Assessor
- 15th On-site Electricity Generation
- 21st BMS Essentials, Controls and Optimisation

NOVEMBER

- 4th Turning Data into Energy Savings
- 5th Lighting – Basic Understanding
- 10th Net Zero Fundamentals
- 11th Understanding and Delivering Behavioural Change Programme
- 12th Essential HVAC Control and Optimisation
- 15th SECR Compliance
- 19th Waste Management
- 22nd Reaching Net Zero
- 25th - 26th Energy Management in Building Services

DECEMBER

- 3rd Energy Procurement

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Knowledge and Skills Gap Analysis Interview

Understanding of a range of energy management competencies is required for professionals to effectively manage organisation's energy cost and consumption, monitoring and reporting energy use, as well as meeting energy efficiency requirements. The EMA can assess your knowledge and skills through the Knowledge and Skills Gap Analysis Interview. The Interview is an informal 60-minute conversation that concludes with a feedback on how to progress your professional development and advance your career.

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"The course gave me some great ideas that I will apply at the start of the next financial year as part of my energy efficiency programme."

Central Operations Manager – Azzurri Restaurants

"It was informative, useful and given confidence to challenge quotes and suppliers."

Energy Efficiency Manager – Parkwood Leisure