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SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW



Energy management is a broad subject, and career paths and roles of those working within this industry can also vary widely. The EMA gathers energy management professionals from across all industries and in this feature, we offer an insight into individuals' career journey and day-to-day role. In this issue, we are shining the spotlight on Colin Farrell, Global Sourcing Specialist at Trelleborg Sealing Solutions.

How did you become interested in energy management?

When I started in procurement, I noticed that individuals in most of the organisations that I worked for, be they private or corporate, were fearful or baffled by energy procurement and management. People didn't understand it; energy was often approached as "we buy the energy and that's it".

I wanted to do a lot more. I didn't just want to buy the energy, I wanted to look at ways that we could reduce our consumption, and it really stemmed from there. I started learning from experts, attending webinars and workshops, and it really brought home to me what could be done.

As the years went on and I moved through organisations, I could see the same things happening again and again. It can be daunting when you see all the legislation and data that is needed, but there is so much support out there,

so I was encouraged to drive energy improvements and push on to progress the businesses that I worked for as well as myself. That helped me in the procurement positions I was in because I became more involved in energy management, energy initiatives and other strategies.

One of my life mottos is: "If you don't understand it, learn about it!" There is a



lot of information out there which helps me gain understanding and knowledge, which then enables me to make decisions on what is the best strategy going forward in reducing a company's energy emissions, reducing costs and

putting in management systems that will help businesses progress.

What does your role at Trelleborg Sealing Solutions entail?

I joined Trelleborg in 2016 as a Global Sourcing Specialist for Trelleborg Sealing Solutions. I was tasked with operational support in procurement within the UK of all Trelleborg

manufacturing sites and business areas. This enabled me to look to streamline energy procurement within the UK, as we had many different energy suppliers and providers throughout all our sites. We had approximately 19 sites, out of which nine were quite large manufacturing

sites, and it took a while to really understand where we were as a business.

I started at a base level and worked through to get all the sites under one umbrella. Instead of having various

contracts for one, three, five years or no contracts, I set about arranging a fixed contract for the first 12 months. This gave me time to look and assess our energy costs for the UK. Once I had achieved this, I set up an energy strategy that would support our UK sites and enable them to act decisively on market fluctuations as well as share best practices across all sites. From this I was able to see exactly where we could make large reductions in our CO2 emissions as well as our costs. I started making small changes, ensuring we had full transparency with all major sites having an energy portal at their fingertips. This helped with savings and really got people noticing the work and the whole change in energy strategy and management I had been driving. This allowed me to start talking to sites and introducing more cost saving initiatives but also carbon reductions.

Since 2018, I have been deeply involved in the company's energy efficiency and carbon reduction activities. My role has a global perspective and I support all our sites in the UK on best practice in the fields of sustainability, energy and carbon saving techniques and government legislation. Trelleborg operates in many different market sectors, and I support all of them in the UK which is quite unusual. I am part of a global team of four but I have started to work with recently established energy champions at each of our sites in the UK to further our commitment to reducing

our CO2 emissions.

What is the most exciting part of your job?

Seeing the energy initiatives that were supported, fulfilled and achieved reduction in the emissions or consumption is probably the most exciting part of my job. I drive, I push, I plant that little seed to say: "this is



what you should be looking at", and I advise and offer support, but each site is self-sufficient and self-governing, so I really have to sell the proposal and the strategy to them. My aim is to create a lasting cultural change with high stakeholder engagement at each level and whilst it's a work in progress, I am happy with the engagement so far from all our Trelleborg sites.

What is the most frustrating part of your job?

It is harder than I expected to think of

something that frustrates me because truly, there isn't much. I view problems and issues as opportunities to find solutions and learn. I like to support and advise people on the importance of understanding energy and the ways to reduce usage and save on costs. Understandably, if a site I work with decides not to go with the proposed initiatives that could be hard because I may have spent a lot of time reviewing its practices, but generally they see the benefits.

It's like with my hobby of astrophotography which I started a couple of years ago. I wanted to take a picture of something that was 5,200 light years away (1 light year equals 5.8 trillion miles). I didn't know how to do it, but I taught myself. Some people might see it as a frustration, but I see it as an opportunity for me to learn and to understand. I do the same in my work environment. If I see something which can be improved or people have an issue, I don't necessarily always know

what it is. I have a knack for finding the best way or the best solution to get around it - the simplest way is normally the best way.

However, if I absolutely had to find something frustrating about my job, it would probably be driving to work on the M5 and being stuck in traffic for an hour.

What drives you?

I really love my job and I have a lot of passion which probably comes across

when I go to the sites. When I first looked at energy for Trelleborg sites in the UK, it was daunting. There were so many different contracts, so many things that could be improved. But I did it in stages, I broke it down and made sure that they were all under one umbrella, then we pushed for renewable energy. Today, all our sites in the UK purchase renewable electricity. Sometimes the best approach is to take a big problem, break it down into manageable chunks and tackle them separately. Of course, I have moments when I think to myself “why did I take this on?”. But in the long run, I believe in the benefits for our sites and our company and that is the biggest driver.

What qualities are key for your role?

I think you have to be open minded. You have to be a good listener, be supportive and encourage people. If someone comes up with an idea, even though you think it’s probably not the best idea, it helps to encourage them and support them to develop it into

something that is right for the business. People love that, they take that on board and it encourages them to look even further for other things as well.

What advice would you give to those new to the industry?

What I would say is probably to listen to energy experts, to join webinars, workshops, courses and learn. There are lots of available resources out there, and I encourage everyone to take advantage of them.

What is the greatest contribution you achieved in your current role?

Having all the sites in the UK follow my drive and my ambition is what I am most proud of. Also, the fact that all our UK sites are supplied by 100% renewable electricity is a big achievement considering where we first started.

In 2022, you won the Utilities Manager of the Year in the Energy Management Awards, what did it mean for you and how was it received

internally?

To be honest, I don’t really promote myself, I tend to just get on and do the work. It was really rewarding to receive the award last year, it was noticed by colleagues I worked with externally and I even received a call from our CEO. And when a CEO of a multi-billion-pound organisation calls you to say “Congratulations, you have done a great job”, it means a lot! Winning the award from energy experts highlighted the work that I’d done and it gave me a really positive feeling and reassurance that I’m going in the right direction and that meant a lot to me.

What is in the pipeline next for you?

I will continue to work and break boundaries within Trelleborg in the foreseeable future. There are many opportunities, initiatives, processes, and strategies to implement still.

I will always think outside the box to try and look at changes that may be beneficial for our business from an energy and procurement perspective.

