

Rebecca has 20 years of energy sector experience gained both as a team member and leader of successful multi-disciplinary, multi-national teams tasked to find and exploit oil & gas resources. Working in mid-size and small E&P company environments delivering company strategies and development targets. Recognising the importance of the energy transition, ESG and its impact on energy-focused companies, Rebecca completed a Business Sustainability Management course with CISL (Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership, University of Cambridge) and delivered a client focused Business Sustainability Plan for a London Stock Exchange main-market listed E&P company. Since then, I have moved into sustainability strategy and execution in the oil and gas sector. Rebecca believes successful project delivery includes developing people, encouraging innovation and deploying expertise and skills effectively, promoting communication and an open-minded team environment. Strong technical skills in reservoir development and modelling, project management, operational support, asset valuation and risk assessment.

Why did you choose to do the University of Cambridge Sustainability Management course? Tell us a bit about the course.

I was looking for a new direction, being disillusioned with the oil and gas sector. I didn't want to fully re-train in a technical skill but wanted to move towards a sustainable role, encouraging companies to make more of a positive impact. I was working as a management consultant in an advisory capacity and it became apparent that there was huge growth potential in helping companies drive towards delivering a more positive, sustainable culture. I had listened to a couple of free training courses before committing to a paid course. The course with the University of Cambridge was recommended and fitted around my job. The objective of the course was to create a sustainable business strategy that aligns with the company objectives. The course covered a broad range of industries, starting with 2 modules on why there is a need to move to more sustainable businesses and living. The lecturers were very knowledgeable in their field and were able to provide background reading for most sectors.

What were the biggest takeaways from the course and did it influence the direction of your career? Did your decision to focus on sustainability come before or after the course and what was the primary driver for the change in direction?

The course was very pragmatic, a big take away was not to waste time and energy on businesses or people who are completely closed off to evolving into a more sustainable way of working and living. The company I was consulting for at the time put the sustainability strategy in the bin. It was a good learning for me in the sense that, suggestions and ambitions in the sustainability space need to be targeted to the audience, particular if the audience isn't of the same hearts and minds. I left the company not long after and found a company that we're looking to grow their sustainability strategy. I have always been interested in sustainability, so the changing appetite for sustainable businesses has resulted in many opportunities to work in the sector which has allowed me to transition to a completely different role.

What is your current role? What is similar in your current work to your previous roles in O&G and what is different? What are the most challenging and most interesting aspects of it?

I now work as Sustainability Lead for NEO Energy, a UK offshore oil and gas producers. This is my first role in this discipline and in the UK. I trained as a geologist and moved into subsurface technical roles and later into strategic advisory for the oil and gas sector working in the Middle East and onshore Europe. Having extensive experience in the industry helps with being able to talk the same language, engaging with the technical aspect of the business and contributing to the strategy within a relevant business context. The role differs significantly from previous jobs as it covers such a wide remit across the company from environmental impact, decarbonisation, waste management, social aspects of the culture and stakeholder engagement, and to some extent (but less so, in this role) the governance. Obviously, this cuts across many different disciplines and business units so ensuring engagement with the correct stakeholders is a key to success. There are technical projects that are closer to my original skill set but delivering sustainability is also continual improvement so managing my own expectations around what is achievable in a given time frame has been a challenge. Working within the UK and has been a learning curve with respect to UK legislation and regulation but it has also opened the door to people I would never had had the opportunity

to meet. A large part of this role involves taking stakeholders on the same journey, and it's very satisfying when you see someone who was previously sceptical changing behaviours.

Any advice for those in O&G who want to work in sustainability? Is formal training a good route in?

Formal training isn't a prerequisite but moving to a new company without any experience may be challenging. An alternative route in would be demonstrating an interest and a general understand across the industry should help. Reading around sustainability topics and keeping up to date with technologies and industry strategies' is also beneficial. It's also worth remembering even if you have a great idea, it may not be accepted as readily as expected so ensure the idea is tailored to the audience and business strategy. Recently, I've had people seconded into my team, part time, from commercial and business development functions as they have expressed an interest in the projects. If there is a sustainability team in your current company, it is always worth a conversation to find out what they are working on, or suggesting a project that you think would add value that you could deliver.