

Q&A

AN EXPERT Q&A WITH

JULIE WALLIN, Industry Manager, Power Systems and
SUZANNE STAUDUHAR, Industry Manager, Power Systems

CARGILL BIOINDUSTRIAL



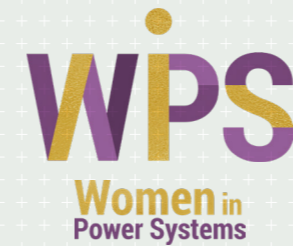
What strategies do you believe are essential for fostering gender diversity and promoting the advancement of women in leadership roles within the power systems industry?

Julie Wallin: One of the most important things in my opinion, which can apply to many other topics, is being deliberate about what your goals are around diversity and advancing women. Set them and then measure the progress periodically. If you're falling short, what can be done to change the course of action for the better? Cargill is taking intentional steps to foster inclusive practices and equity in leadership. We continue to focus on issues like wellbeing, inclusive facilities, creating diverse talent pipelines, and recruiting female college graduates to join our workforce. There must be a strong desire to want to reach those goals. It goes beyond a "check the box" exercise.



Suzanne Stauduhar: For a business to foster diversity and promote advancement of women, it needs to create an inclusive environment and culture where every employee feels comfortable and valued. I believe that this starts with a leadership team that truly believes, acknowledges and supports different thoughts within the organization and recognizes different types of talents from each team member. If the leadership does not truly support diversity, or sees diversity as only a KPI or metric, then the organization will continue to be stifled for new ideas, hiring diverse talent, or fully implementing inclusive practices.

Can you discuss a specific initiative or program Cargill has implemented or been involved in that aimed to increase the representation of women in positions of power within the power systems sector? What were the key challenges and successes?



Julie Wallin: Cargill has had great success since 2006 with their employee-led, employee-driven "BRIDGE" program. It was founded by women who wanted to create a "bridge" to empowered leadership. The 12–18-month commitment is available in North America, South America and Europe with limited enrollment to keep the program manageable. A program of self discovery that also broadens the participants understanding of Cargill will have a different result for each participant based on their own objectives set at the beginning of the program. Interestingly enough, the success of the program shows – in 2022, a third-party study reported over 60% of the women reported they had moved to a higher job band since completing BRIDGE.

Suzanne Stauduhar: Cargill has many programs aimed to develop women across the entire organization and across multiple industries. One program that I had the opportunity to participate in was called Bridge, which was designed for women employees to take time to think about their own development, meet with company leadership and mentors, and receive feedback from colleagues to help further their development. It was a useful program because during the day-to-day of work activities, it can be easy to push off thinking how to develop or further your career or take time to set really meaningful goals. This program not only enabled time to do this, but also provided coaching and a space for women to discuss challenges and successes and to learn from each other as they went on their own development paths.



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Julie Wallin

How do you think the presence of women in leadership roles impacts decision-making processes and overall organizational performance within the power systems industry? Can you provide any examples or evidence to support your perspective?

Julie Wallin: Embracing diversity of thought will lead to the best decisions in the end. There is no dispute that when employees feel valued and that their voice matters, the company will see better performance financially as well. I feel grateful to be on a leadership team within Cargill that has such a strong female-driven presence, and the level of camaraderie is top notch. We have candid and sometimes difficult conversations, but at the end of the day, we'll still get together outside of work for some laughs. When you have that level of trust among your team, you can get through anything!

Suzanne Stauduhar: First, I think that each leader, regardless of gender, offers a unique leadership style and impact. Not all women leaders are the same. I have seen, in many cases, that teams led by women may ask more opinions from the team and outside perspectives, which can lead to a solution that the team feels that they had ownership in the decision process. When there is more ownership of the decision, employees are often willing to push the extra mile to achieve the desired results. The team also feels more valued as their inputs were asked for.

I also believe that when a woman is in a leadership position, she can inspire others in the organization that they can also achieve their goals within the organization. This female leader acts as a role model and can encourage other women to speak their opinions and make their voices heard. The more that different opinions and voices are heard, the more others also feel comfortable to bring their ideas to the table, creating a larger environment of diversity and inclusion, which leads to a stronger, more resilient, and more satisfying work environment. This increased employee engagement also often leads to stronger financial results.

In light of discussions around "tokenism" prominent in the recent years, how can companies ensure that women in positions of power within the power systems industry have genuine executive authority and influence rather than merely holding titles for appearance's sake? Can you share any experiences or observations related to this issue?

Julie Wallin: It's really about creating an environment where leadership and accountability are defined for the role and not gender. Early in my 25-year career with Cargill, I remember having the concept of "everyone is a leader" engrained and we developed our goals based on a leadership mindset. I feel grateful to have been encouraged to have a seat at the table and it has made me more comfortable in sharing my perspective.

On top of that, I have had the privilege of working for some very strong women leaders in Cargill that weren't afraid to push me beyond my comfort levels and make me reach higher. As women, we need to own our development and go after it... but having someone support our ambition is also pretty great!

Suzanne Stauduhar: In order for companies to ensure that women in positions of power have genuine authority, I think it is important for companies and the colleagues of their leaders to stress that a woman (or candidate) is in this position because they are the best person for the position, not because they are part of an inclusion initiative (although what makes this person unique may make them the best choice). If the strengths and experiences of the individual are highlighted, it reinforces the actual value they bring to the company, rather than reinforcing a diversity and inclusion statistic. When an organization only highlights a person in power as being a diversity and inclusion statistic, although perhaps well-meaning, it can undermine the legitimacy of the leader as seen by the team.

The company can continue to support this leader by ensuring that the entire leadership team creates an inclusive environment that highlights the strengths and values brought from all different employees.



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