

Women in the gases industry

Mutual respect for accomplishments prevails

Part 1. Now entering her second year as President and CEO of Chart Industries, **Jill Evanko** is breaking through perceived barriers in the industry. But do they really exist at all?

Evanko believes there is mutual respect for accomplishments in the industry today, writes

Rob Cockerill, and that a strong work ethic, doing the best job you can, and doing the right things for all stakeholders will enable opportunity and success.

It's been just over a decade since *gasworld* profiled various female thought leaders in our industry and asked if a glass ceiling existed where women in gases are concerned. Back then, it was noted that women were 'undoubtedly the minority in the industrial gases business' both in manufacturing and managing.

Fast forward to 2019 and one could argue that significant progress has been made in this regard, with more female leaders in senior or executive positions within the industry's top players than ever before.

Think Susan Ellerbusch, in charge of the Large Industries and Electronics activities in the US for Air Liquide, or across the globe at Air Liquide, Virginie Cavalli as CEO for Southeast Asia Region, Diana Schillag (Europe Healthcare hub), Emilie Mouren-Renouard (in charge of Innovation, Digital & IT, Intellectual Property as well as Global Markets and Technologies activity), Fabienne Lecorvaisier (Executive Vice-President in charge of Finance, Operations Control and General Secretariat) and Armelle Leveux (Vice President, Group Human Resources) are all examples of female leadership at Air Liquide too.

Marie Ffolkes is President of Americas, and Victoria Brifo, Senior Vice-President

"The most surprising thing that I learned early on was how much opportunity both commercially and operationally we have within our own control..."

and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) at Air Products; Dr. Anne Roby is Executive Vice-President at Linde plc, having previously served as Praxair's senior vice-president; and Dr. Nathalie von Siemens sits on the Management Supervisory Board at the Messer Group.

These are just some examples across the industry's Tier One players. There are many more examples throughout the gas and equipment supply chain, globally – from Abydee Butler Moore, President of Butler Gas Products Company, to Rosalyn Luo, President of Shanghai Chinllenge Gases, and Jennifer Wagner as the Executive Vice-President of CarbonCure. Amy Sexton has recently been appointed as the new Director of Bulk Gas Sales at American Welding Gas,



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Inc. (AWG). These are just a handful of examples; the list goes on. That's without even mentioning the women in safety – from Ffolkes as the new Vice-Chair of the Compressed Gas Association (CGA) Board of Directors to Els Vandererven, EIGA's Technical Manager.

The glass ceiling in the industry has clearly been broken, if it ever really existed at all. A view back in 2006, when *gasworld* last explored this subject, was that the opportunities were always there – but perhaps the awareness or knowledge

of this niche industry was not there right at the start of an individual's career path. Widely acknowledged today as 'The Invisible Industry', it's entirely plausible that future female leaders and market shapers are not aware of the gases industry or motivated by it at an academic age/level; those pursuing a career in engineering or science are probably more likely to be aware of other industries with a better name recognition.

Jill Evanko (*pictured*) has come at the industry from another angle, having pursued a career in finance and business (administration). Previously in the role of vice-president of finance for the company, she was appointed President and CEO of Chart Industries in June 2018 and has recently passed one year at the helm.

It's been a busy first year. Chart has been in a process of transformation under Evanko, a strategic realignment that has seen the company better balance its business segments with the divestment of a non-core asset in CAIRE Medical and the acquisitions of both VRV S.p.A and more recently, the Industrial Air-X-Changers business of Harsco Corporation. The acquisition of VRV in particular also provides improved access to high growth markets in India and the Middle East, the evidence of which has already been seen in orders won.

"Yes, it has been a year now in the role of CEO," Evanko enthuses. "It has been an exciting time for the business as we have shaped our strategy and portfolio. During the past 12 months we have completed one divestiture (Sale of CAIRE Medical, the oxygen concentrator business), closed on one acquisition (VRV) and announced another (Harsco Air-X-Changer). In addition, our team has continued to execute on our cost-out focus, taking advantage of 'self-help' margin expansion activities. We are excited about the foundation we have to support our customers in cryogenic activities, in particular in the industrial gas and energy end applications."

"It is a privilege to lead such a great group of people in a great business at Chart."

2018

Jill Evanko became President and CEO of Chart Industries in June 2018

These have clearly been big steps forward for the company under Evanko's leadership, progress that she is pleased to have presided over. "I am very pleased with how our strategy and execution of the strategy has progressed in the past year,"

she affirms. "The team has done a great job staying focused. I am extremely pleased with the outcome of the sale of a non-core asset in CAIRE, and with the purchase of a core asset in VRV. Also, I am proud of the team for the discipline in finally achieving a definitive agreement to purchase an asset we have sought after in the Harsco Air-X-Changer business."

"We have made good progress on finding margin expansion opportunities under our own rooftops too, with more to go. Lastly, with our renewed focus on our customers in what I believe to be a more commercial manner, we are gradually changing those relationships from what they were in the past – more partnerships and willingness to come up with solutions that work for them versus just providing a 'widget'."

"I would like to continue to build out our customer touchpoints to be a strategic partner with a solution mindset versus just a transactional supplier..."

It is perhaps these points that have most surprised Evanko since she took on the role – opportunities within, and the kind of relationships established with the customer. Both are continued goals under Evanko's leadership.

"The most surprising thing that

I learned early on was how much opportunity both commercially and operationally we have within our own control. It is easy to fall into the trap of 'we've always done it this way', especially when the business has been successful. So changing the mindset to listen more carefully, deliver on time, and constantly look for improvements has been the biggest challenge, but also the biggest return when you see your team members rewarded for a job well done."

"I would like to continue to build out our customer touchpoints to be a strategic partner with a solution mindset versus just a transactional supplier. In addition, there are in-house margin expansion opportunities that also can shorten lead times that I would like to accelerate faster than what we have in the plans. Our segment presidents are fantastic and have embraced these changes."

Values

Of all the many achievements in her first year at the helm of Chart, Evanko explains that she is most proud of her team members embracing the company's four key themes: Safety; Be Nice to Our Customers; Strong Work Ethic; and Have Fun.

In a way, these themes reflect the values that Evanko has lived and worked by from an early age – hard work, doing the right thing, and taking the opportunities that arise. This mantra has seen Evanko gain a broad background of experience prior to Chart and, ultimately, the role that she has today.

Having worked in valuation services at Arthur Andersen, LLP and also held audit and accounting roles for Honeywell and Sony Corporation of America, Evanko got her big break at Dover Corporation in 2004, holding multiple executive positions there and at its subsidiaries, including the role of vice-president and chief financial officer (CFO) of Dover Fluids since January 2014. After a brief spell as vice-president of Truck-Lite Co., LLC from October 2016, she joined Chart Industries in February 2017 as vice-president of finance. ▶

► “I have been very lucky in my career to date to have a great set of mentors, and good opportunities to get diverse experience,” she reflects. “My family and I have been willing to relocate for the next opportunity, and that has served me well in seeing a variety of end markets, products and geographies.”

Spending 12 years there from 2004 to late 2016, Evanko credits her time at Dover Corporation as a big influence on her career, especially the model of business partnership between the CEO and CFO that she feels served her well with operational, segment and corporate experiences.

Succeeding Bill Johnson as President and CEO of Chart on 13th June 2018, Evanko’s appointment was particularly prominent as a dynamic female taking the

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top role in a traditionally male-dominated industry, something that she says did not initially occur to her.

“It did not cross my mind at the time, but I have had many people ask that question. I was always taught by my parents that if you have a strong work ethic, do the best job you can do, and do the right things, that opportunity will come. I am thankful for this opportunity, the trust that our Board of Directors has placed in our senior leadership team, and in particular, I am thankful to all of our Chart team members that make this company great every day.”

Evanko doesn’t spend time thinking about the perceived glass ceiling or

the significance of her appointment, she believes there is mutual respect for accomplishments in the industry and instead derives pride from good customer feedback, while acknowledging with a good-humoured smile that she is also proud when the team wins orders. “I am most proud when I get a note from customer thanking our team for a job well done,” she says. “If everyone stays focused on that, I will be a very proud CEO!”

But in questioning her further about the relative lack of women in the industry, she admits there is of course a degree of pride in reaching her current position, given the gender trend across wider industry. “In my opinion, there are certainly fewer women than men in industrial manufacturing and energy. I have spent my entire career in manufacturing and energy businesses, and really enjoy getting out to the plants where our product is made (and where the money is made!), and customer sites to see our products operating.”

“There have been a lot of successful female pioneers in the LNG industry, and I am proud to be even a small part of that. People such as Meg Gentle, Marie Pfolkes, Kathleen Eisbrenner to just name a few, are key contributors to the industrial gas, energy and LNG industries.”

“It is an honour to get to know all of the leaders that make this a dynamic space to participate in, and all of these leaders have been very welcoming to me in this role.”

“All of our customers, investors and suppliers have been very supportive,” she adds. “I believe that everyone we deal with is working toward the same outcome for the industry, and respect thoughtful opinions and perspectives, regardless of gender. I’ve had a lot of feedback since taking this role about how much more customer focused the company has become, versus any discussion about barriers due to gender.”

This is a theme she thinks is definitely

proliferating. “I have seen a lot of intelligent men and women in my time in the industry. I think there is mutual respect for accomplishments in the industry. That is evident in the various

combinations of women and men leadership teams in public and private companies in the space, as well as industry consortiums and groups that have diverse leadership.”

“We are seeing this more and more in the industry and

I believe that is one of the unique attributes to this space – we all go through the challenges of the cycles, and a mutual understanding of what it takes to succeed bands folks together in a rare way.”

Evanko and Chart are certainly doing their bit to further the opportunities for all, noting that Chart is keen to embrace internships that inspire and equip the next generation of leaders – male and female. “I think it is critical for us to develop and give opportunities to the next generation of leadership,” she explains. “For example, this summer we have a few internships across functions, which include undergraduate and graduate students. This gives women (as well as men) who previously might not be interested in a manufacturing environment, the chance to see how exciting it can be.”

“We also try to bring aspiring women and men on trips that include access to investors or banks in an unintimidating environment where they can observe, ask questions, and determine if that is the type of role they’d like to eventually have.”

In closing, we ask Evanko what advice she might have for any aspiring female leaders in the industry. She reaffirms the mantra that she believes has served her so well in our her own career, concluding, “I would reiterate what I mentioned above – work hard, do the best job you can for all of your stakeholders, and do the right thing for your own team members and your customers, and success will follow.” Hear, hear. [gw](#)

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Jill Evanko spent 12 years at the Dover Corporation from 2004-2016

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