



## Learning from others: Top performer case study



# Q&A with Good Energy

Good Energy is one of three companies that have achieved at least 40% female representation across all three tracked levels in this year's report. Within this UK-headquartered company, women are in 43% of board roles, 49% of leadership roles and 52% of middle management roles, which is a great achievement.

We spoke to Fran Woodward, Chief Operating Officer at Good Energy, to explore what actions have made a difference and the good practice they can share with other companies in the sector.

### LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

**Q** What specific targets has your company set for gender balance at different levels (board, leadership, middle management)?

Three years ago we challenged ourselves to hit the following targets:

- 40% women on the Board**
- 50% women in leadership roles**
- 50% in middle- management roles**

We were delighted to achieve all three by the end of our third year, in 2024. Especially pleasing is the increased numbers of senior women in traditionally male-dominated functions: energy trading, technology, product development and finance.

**Q** What metrics or tracking mechanisms do you use to measure progress on gender diversity?

Each month we monitor and report the following up to executive team level:

- % of women by grade and function**
- % of women applicants to roles and successfully appointed**
- % of women being promoted internally (v % of men)**

We also then report this into Board level each quarter with an annual deep dive into our D&I plans and progress.

**Q** How do you hold senior leadership accountable for gender diversity goals?

We involve senior leaders in setting diversity and inclusion plans and we monitor and share metrics and progress in our senior leadership governance meetings. We also recognise and celebrate those senior leaders who role model accountability and progress; and challenge and support those who may need it.

## RECRUITMENT AND TALENT

**Q** What have been the most successful approaches you've implemented in your recruitment and hiring processes for attracting and appointing/promoting more women in leadership roles?

Firstly, when we advertise roles, we ensure our adverts only contain absolute essential skills, moving other elements to 'desirable'. By not overly limiting our essential skills we're opening the pipeline for those who may not have had the same opportunities to develop certain skillsets, allowing us to recruit for potential rather than experience that might not be needed.

Our adverts also highlight our flexibility policy to appeal to a wider range of candidates. And as a founding member of 'We Show the Salary', we have a commitment to advertise the salary on all roles. This is important as women are less likely to apply for roles where the salary is not advertised.

Secondly, implementing balanced shortlists ensures a fair split of gender at review stage, and we try to have balanced interview panels wherever possible. We run unconscious bias training for hiring managers, supporting them in their ability to spot their own bias and check this in real time. Ensuring talent acquisition experts are represented in interviews and wash-up sessions, brings consistency and fairness to all interviews and post-interview discussions.

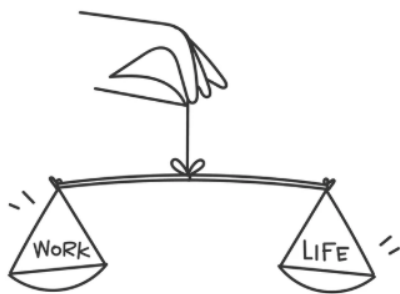
More broadly, we promote D&I, through marketing and transparency both internally and externally. We celebrate International Women's Day externally, sharing this on socials and careers sites.

**Q** Are there any programs (e.g., STEM outreach, return-ship programs) that have helped increase your pipeline of female talent and have you focussed on certain roles, e.g. technical?

We don't have any formal programmes focussed on hiring into Good Energy from the external market. This is in part perhaps because our successful track record of developing women internally and our high levels of female representation on the Board (which we have had for over 10 years) themselves help us attract women. We actively use our women to promote careers at Good Energy, both in our recruitment collateral and encouraging them to network, speak at conferences, and so on.

We have a huge number of internal talent development programmes and initiatives operating at all levels, with 70% of our leadership team (all gender identities) being internally developed





## WORKPLACE POLICIES

**What workplace policies (e.g. flexible working, parental leave, mentorship programs) have had the biggest impact on female career progression?**

- » **Shared parental leave:** this has had a very positive impact on women returning to work, as has the trend of men taking up flexible working to play a more equal role in caring for dependents. We actively promote and celebrate the men at Good Energy who do this, as the societal benefits are huge, as well as it de-stigmatising part-time work.
- » **Flexible working and working hours culture:** we both encourage formal changes to working hours and have a very effective informal level of flexibility allowing staff to work around school pick-ups/drop-offs, etc. At an executive team level, we are very mindful of role-modelling a balanced approach to work-life balance and are extremely respectful of the boundaries of the working day, weekends, etc.
- » **Curated hybrid working:** for 50% of our staff, we only mandate that employees come to the office one day per week, and that is a set day so that they can meet the rest of their team or function ("anchor day"). Other than this, we encourage office attendance by making it a great place to collaborate and build relationships, but we do not force it. 30% of our people are on remote contracts and attend one day per month, which has increased the diversity of our talent pool significantly as we can hire nationwide. Both these factors help men and women juggle life and work and have contributed to female progression and retention in our workplace.

- » **Enhanced maternity pay:** we offer relatively generous maternity pay provisions, which helps us both attract and retain women, and we mirror this for shared parental leave.
- » **Return to work/transition coaching:** we invest in an executive coaching service for staff at all levels who are returning from any significant break in work, with women returning from maternity leave being the greatest users of the support. It gets fantastic feedback from employees as it helps them deal with the lack of confidence they can feel after a long break. Our post-maternity-leave return to work rate is over 89%.

**Q** How do you ensure your workplace fosters an inclusive culture, especially for women in traditionally male-dominated roles?

One of our four values is 'Inclusive' (alongside 'fair', 'straightforward' and 'focused') and we bring this to life in a number of ways.

We have a Signature Skills programme, which all employees at every level – from Executive to front line – participate in during their first 12 months at Good Energy. It translates our values into behaviours and practical skills with a special focus on what inclusion means in relation to how we interact with others: how to use listening and coaching skills, have high quality conversations, including how to discuss differences of opinion or approach, and give and receive feedback in a straightforward yet supportive manner. These are the building blocks of an inclusive culture, so we invest heavily to ensure everyone has both the will and skill to behave in a way that aligns to it.

We hire and promote people into leadership roles very carefully ensuring they are inclusive in their beliefs, mindset and style. And if we get this wrong, we address it.

We hire and promote men who are good at attracting and retaining women, and vice versa. This has resulted in a strong pipeline of women in senior roles in functions like technology, product development, finance and trading.

In the early days, when we only had a few senior women in more male-dominated teams, we ensured they had senior female mentorship from other functions. As COO, I was happy to play an active role in this, with many of the senior women reporting into executive team level.

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

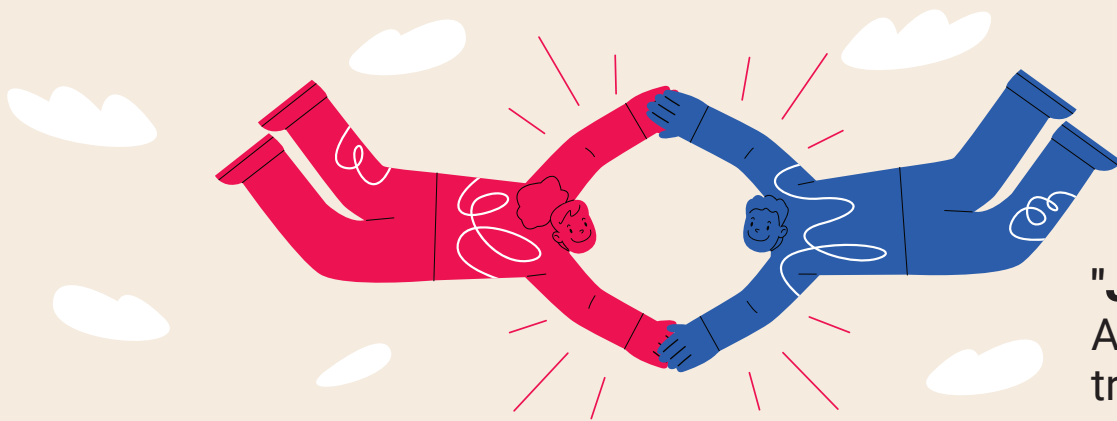
**Q** Do you have employee resource groups (ERGs) or sponsorship programs that support gender diversity? How are they integrated into company strategy?

We have one group of Inclusion champions supporting all forms of diversity and helping us uphold our inclusive culture. It is mainly non-leadership staff in the group, and they work with our people and culture team to develop our D&I strategies and plans. We think having one group works well for intersectionality and fairness.

**Q** What leadership development opportunities do you offer to help women advance into senior roles?

- » We run Talent Boards twice a year across every function from the bottom up and have an active approach to matching personal development to work opportunities, which is a key reason we promote so effectively from within.
- » We use projects, development assignments and role scope extension, to encourage women in particular to have a go at something they might feel they are 'not fully qualified or experienced' for if they were asked to formally apply.
- » Our executive coaching programme for middle management women with senior leadership potential has had fantastic results, due to confidence so often being a barrier to progress. (We also offer it to men – but they are 50% less likely to take it up ...)
- » Our Early Career programme ('Good Start') is open to all and gives early-stage career talent the chance to learn about other functions across the business, encouraging them to cross skill and helping them work out how to understand their strengths and build careers around them. This has actively driven women's progression by giving them early career breadth, not just depth.





**"Just do it.**  
Action fosters  
trust. Trust drives  
more action."

### LESSONS LEARNED:

**Q** What have been the biggest challenges in improving gender diversity, and how have you tackled them?

Firstly, a key challenge is male dominance in certain functions and roles UK-wide and growing our own talent has been our key strategy to address this. Secondly, women carry an unfair burden of caring responsibilities, and our strategy here has been to promote flexibility for men and make good work-life balance and high performance two sides of the same coin for all in our culture.

**Q** Have you faced resistance to gender diversity initiatives? How have you managed any backlash or scepticism?

No, not greatly; if we focus too much on one form of diversity it may be perceived to be at the expense of others, so we work hard with our inclusive approaches to counter this.

### FUTURE GOALS:

**Q** What are Good Energy's next steps to continue improving gender diversity in leadership?

Having newly acquired several engineering businesses, we recognise this brings a new level of challenge to our D&I agenda and ambitions for gender balance up to a leadership level, which we are starting to work through. We want to further increase the gender balance in our Director population and have a good pipeline of talent to help us achieve more in the next three years.

Gender balance contributes significantly to the diversity of thinking and behaviours required to develop sound strategies and build a strong organisation to deliver on them, year after year.

**Q** If you could recommend one key action for companies looking to improve gender diversity, what would it be?

Just do it. Action fosters trust.  
Trust drives more action.

**POWERful WOMEN**

Hosted by the Energy Institute