



WINLPG

Women in LPG



Mary Coughlin

**Product Manager
Calor Gas
Northern Ireland**

“WINLPG IS PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROMOTING GREATER DIVERSITY IN OUR INDUSTRY. MY PARTICIPATION HAS HELPED MY CAREER JOURNEY AND HOPEFULLY I WILL BE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS IN THE YEARS AHEAD.”

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Meet the Role Models

WINLPG Role Models introduce successful individuals in the LPG industry and gives an insight into their career path, their challenges and their advice to fellow WINLPG members.

When I meet people now they would see a confident and forthright woman, this has taken a long time to achieve. I left school as a young sixteen year old and started in technical college studying engineering. This was the first time I faced a male dominated environment, being 1 of just 3 girls out of a class of 40 students. Quietly at the back of the class I kept my head down and worked hard to achieve good grades. Truthfully, when I look back now I wanted to be better than the boys. This attitude lead me to Ulster University with a first class honors degree in Technology and Design and in recent years a Master's in Business Development and Innovation.

In 2004 I took a year out of university, to experience the world of full-time work. This is when the LPG industry changed my life. Since then my entire professional career has been in the LPG industry in the range of roles in engineering and sales. As my experience developed I started to believe my opinion mattered and I took on bigger challenges with Calor Ireland as my home ground.

A big year for me personally was when I turned 30, I bought my home in County Down, having worked across Ireland I knew I wanted to buy in my home town close to my family. Later that year I was also luckily to meet my husband Mike. We dated for a few years and recently celebrated our one year anniversary.

In recent years I have led new innovative product launches. These have allowed me to hone both my technical and commercial skills. As an engineer, it is interesting for me to grow my experience in dealing with the business development aspect in Calor. SHV Energy, Calor's parent company, offered me the opportunity to work on a European scale, launching BioLPG. I managed the introduction of renewable LPG into six European countries and co-ordinated key relationships ranging from the supply chain through to end users. This has been one of my favourite roles because I have had the opportunity to take a leading role in a project which I believe can be transformational for our industry.

In the coming weeks, Calor will be the first to supply LNG in Ireland. Once again, I am proud to be leading the roll out. This is a different liquefied gas but the principles are the same and I plan to work with LPG again in the near future.

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SIX KEY QUESTIONS

What is your goal today?

In the last 2 years, I have played a leading role in two major innovations for our business. This has surpassed my expectations of where I thought I might be. This has been possible, in no small part, due to the support I have had from colleagues. As I have become more established in our business and our industry, I hope I can play a positive role supporting the careers and ambitions of others.

Did you have a mentor and how did this help?

I firmly believe I have succeeded due to the people around me, I have not had one particular mentor. My career within the LPG industry has allowed me to meet and learn from a wide range of people, both men and women. I could name at least four people who have supported me in building my confidence in myself and I only hope to support others in the same way. I think it is extremely important to try and build a support network either formally or informally.

Describe your Pathway?

My decision to choose engineering as a specialism have been a strength for me, but at the beginning I had no idea what I wanted as a day job. Since starting with Calor I have taken opportunities when they have presented themselves, initially after a push from others. Now I am more likely to see the opportunity for myself. These have been short and long term roles that offered me a great chance to test myself. This approach is potentially only possible in certain sectors, the LPG industry as definitely supported my pathway.

What does leadership mean to you?

It is important to highlight that leadership can be shown at any level in an organisation. The goal of a leader must be to allow everyone the opportunity to perform at their peak. Key traits I believe a leader should have are integrity and compassion for everyone in the organisation; "Treat others as you would like to be treated".

Did you face any specific challenges?

I like to think I see challenges as opportunities more than hurdles but of course there are times you feel you are not succeeding. My most difficult challenge to date, is when you have a well-established approach it can be difficult to introduce something new. At the time I couldn't understand the resistance and I felt it was an impossible task. Trying different methods and approaches, really through trial and error I discovered even in a professional environment you need to make any change part of an individual's personal story.

What three pieces of advice would you give to someone embarking on their career with LPG?

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough" is one of my favourite Albert Einstein quotes. It leads me to my advice, you can be the greatest expert but you need to bring people with you by explaining it in a way that relates to them individually. Embrace sustainability, don't be afraid to stand up and be noticed by putting it on the agenda. Creating a discussion around sustainability is just as powerful as the final decision. We need to be commercially focussed but also aware of our future impact, ensuring the LPG industry remains relevant and thriving. There is no point in making an extra pound today if we don't have a business tomorrow.



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