



WINLPG

Women in LPG



Rob Shuttleworth

**Chief Executive
UKLPG
United Kingdom**

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.

I have been Chief Executive at UKLPG since June 2006 following a career largely spent within two large organisations – one public sector (the UK's rail industry) and one private sector (ConocoPhillips oil company).

I graduated with a degree in geography, a subject which attracted an equal number of male and female undergraduates. It gave me a broad perspective on the complexities of the world whilst leading to an understanding of a wide range of disciplines needed to run businesses or public bodies.

I have performed various roles through my career from being the "doer" following a set of rules, to the strategist and planner where you have the opportunity to challenge the way things are done. I've always taken a view that whilst tradition is important, change is vital so I have always examined "rules" with a critical eye. Not that they are not needed, but are they the right ones?

" I think it is incredibly important not to recruit in your own mould as your organisation risks stagnating, never being challenged or not changing with the times. There is a huge talent pool of people whom industry and businesses can tap into if they view recruitment differently. So far as increasing the representation of women within the LPG industry, WINLPG can be a vital part of that change."

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SIX KEY QUESTIONS

What is your goal today?

I am due to retire in 2018 and so whilst working to hand over a happy, smoothly functioning, productive team to my successor, I am looking beyond work to a more balanced life with new challenges and new opportunities to learn.

Describe your Pathway?

I went to university (the University of Aberdeen) in the 1970's and studying for an arts degree meant that there were an equal number of women to men within the classes and indeed the halls of residence though I imagine that the same situation applied then as now that technical and engineering subjects tended to have fewer female undergraduates. Industry at that time was dominated by, typically, older men - the first office I worked in had 12 workers, all men. Industry has changed since then but there is still a shortfall of women within top roles, and also unfortunately across senior roles in those industries requiring technical and engineering knowledge. Ultimately change has to start at school, and very early on when subjects studied are narrowed down - and these changes will only come when societal attitudes towards "traditional" roles change. It is happening but it seems painfully slow.

Did you face any specific challenges?

Not because of my gender. In the UK, I would expect people to have an expectation of equality, both in terms of how people and employees are treated as well as an expectation as to their output and achievements, irrespective of gender. The big challenge for businesses is setting an environment where women of all ages and stages in life have access to jobs that fulfil them and enable growth in all aspects of their life. (I should say this applies equally to men who would benefit mightily from a more balanced perspective). A particular issue remains for women post-maternity as where there is sometimes the need for flexibility around family commitments, professional jobs that provide flexibility at all levels of seniority are few and far between. It is important that companies and business look to build flexibility into their employment structure and work practices to encourage those with parental responsibilities to also work without undue stress. Apart from the advantages of widening the talent pool available to a business, this approach forms part of societal change and as a parent of two young adults, one male and one female, this seems a critical shift that is needed to ensure the job opportunities available to both of my children along with the wider population are equal, irrespective of their gender.

Did you have a mentor and how did this help?

I was never formally mentored but I do think that it has many advantages, particularly to help develop skills and, perhaps more importantly, to navigate one's way around obstacles to change. I was lucky to have, at different times in my career, four senior managers, each of whom wanted to challenge the status quo, who helped and supported me in developing my skills, identifying my strengths and most importantly giving me a perspective on the potential of change and tactics necessary to achieve those changes.

What does leadership mean to you?

It means providing a vision, enabling your team to deliver that vision by providing direction, encouragement, support and the tools to do the job. It is important to set your team and yourself challenging hurdles and then encourage and listen to alternative viewpoints to overcome difficulties and blockages to delivery. Clearly the more diverse the team, the wider the opportunity of leaders hearing alternative views and being challenged on traditional ways of doing things. The real challenge of leadership is to be strong in yourself, and be bold enough to risk your comfort zone by appointing those who will challenge you.

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

Never stop learning personally, whether formally, from experience or from others, and use this to refresh yourself.

Challenge the status quo with good solid arguments and clever tactics!

Whilst focussing on current activity look ahead to changes and trends and let that guide your product and market development now.



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