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CLASS OF 2024



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEADING THE WAY 2	Paul Golob 36
If there is a trait this year's Forty Under 40 honorees share, it is an aptitude for taking on difficult tasks that has been honed by tough lessons on the job, a determined mindset and help from trusted mentors.	Coterra Energy
WANTED: TOP YOUNG TALENT FOR THE ENERGY SECTOR 4	Brian E. Halchak 38
Q&A with John Goodrum, partner with Preng & Associates, the executive search firm dedicated to the energy industry.	The Williams Cos.
NAVIGATING THE CROSSROADS 6	Callie Hamilton 39
The oil and gas industry has both a need and an opportunity to embrace the digital transformation while engaging the next generation of its workforce.	Prudential Private Capital Energy
ENERGY ENROLLMENTS INCH HIGHER AS STUDENTS SEE MULTIPLE PATHS TO A CAREER 8	Ryan Healy 40
Improving outlook on global demand for oil and gas lures new generation to study fossil fuel development at top energy programs around the U.S.	Encino Energy
THE WORKFORCE THEY LEAD 88	Paul K. Heerwagen IV 42
Employment and wages by the numbers.	Selenite Energy Partners
	Melanie Hill 44
	Danos
	Jake Hood 46
	Brazos Midstream
	Brayden Hudson 48
	Trellis Energy Partners
	Austin Hughes 50
	Petrie Partners
	Marshall T. Hunt 52
	Petro-Hunt
	Shirley Ike 54
	Wood
	Braydn Johnson 56
	Expand Energy
	Tony Kroschewsky 58
	Merit Advisors
	Fraz Malik 60
	Shell Trading & Supply
	Blake McKenna 62
	XCL Resources
	Kyle McQuire 64
	Peak 10 Energy
	Joseph M. Mello 66
	Netherland, Sewell & Associates, Inc.
	Lane Neal 68
	Quantum Capital Group
	Alison Nelson 70
	Tallgrass
	Brock Niezgod 72
	Gray Reed
	Robert Norton 74
	Deep Blue
	Haavard Oestensen 76
	Kongsberg Digital
	Elizabeth Parker 78
	Birch Resources
	Jena Resnick 80
	Antero Resources
	Troy Ruths 82
	PetroAI
	Amruta Sardeshpande 83
	Hexagon
	David Schneider 84
	LLOG Exploration
	Cody Sutton 85
	Guide Energy Solutions
	Whitney Ward 86
	WestMont Energy

CLASS OF 2024

Maggie Albrecht 16
Anschutz Exploration Corp.
Carina Antweil 17
Baker Botts
Adam Arthur 18
Energy Transfer
Daniel Brooks 20
Crescent Energy
John Chapman 22
TPH & Co.
Mark Cleveland 24
Civitas Resources
Lyndie Dragomir 26
KPMG International
Eric Eichler 28
FourPoint Energy
Adam Esparza 30
Expand Energy
Amanda Finn 32
Ascent Resources
Ashi Geberkidane 34
BPX Energy
Meredith Gipson 35
Republic Services

ON THE COVER

Photographer Violeta Alvarez captured Forty Under 40 honorees during a gathering in Houston in August. Left to right (seated): Meredith Gipson, Whitney Ward, Tony Kroschewsky and Amruta Sardeshpande; (standing) Ashi Geberkidane, Fraz Malik, Braydn Johnson and Shirley Ike.



LEADING THE WAY

Meet the tech-savvy, innovation-focused, fast-moving class of 2024.

The paths taken by this year's Forty Under 40 honorees to oil and gas industry careers are varied. Some represent their family's latest generation in the oil patch, while others grew up only vaguely aware that the industry existed. Most are somewhere in the middle.

Engineering degrees are a common milestone, but some trekked through law school and others through finance and other studies before reaching their destination in oil and gas. A few even came to a place where their career roads diverged and they somehow managed to travel all of them, ultimately bringing well-site experience to the negotiating table and C-suite.

If there is a trait they all share, it is an aptitude for taking on difficult tasks that has been honed by tough lessons on the job, a determined mindset and help from trusted mentors.

Adam Esparza of Expand Energy shared this advice from a mentor.

"Get comfortable being uncomfortable," he said. "In other words, just because something may be new or you may be approached with a new challenge outside of your current skill set, don't shy away; rather accept it and take it head on."

One of the youngest members of the class of 2024, 30-year-old Austin Hughes of Petrie Partners, offered this piece of mentor-provided wisdom: "Don't pretend to know something you don't—have the gumption to acknowledge ignorance and then fix it."

But not all of the counsel that honorees have received and now offer to younger colleagues was passed on from grizzled industry veterans.

"Be curious and thirsty for knowledge," urged Jena Resnick of Antero Resources, who is also a mother of two young girls. "Times will get tough, but in the words of Dory, 'just keep swimming!' and have faith in yourself."

Unlike many of their contemporaries in other fields, the honorees are leading the way in an industry under tremendous pressure from a society grappling with climate change.

Tony Kroschewsky of Merit Advisors is among those advocating for greater education of the general public about how this industry must meet an ever-growing demand for energy.

"We quickly forget that every major recession since World War II was preceded by high energy prices," he said. "If we could take the politics out of it and focus on human flourishing, we could be working together to continue to develop the safest, cleanest and most reliable source of energy on the planet."

That means taking seriously the social license to operate.

"We have a responsibility to ensure there is a viable future, both for our industry and the planet as a whole," said Shirley Ike of Wood. "We must continuously work to limit the negative environmental impact of our operations and champion sustainability at every turn. This is not just the right thing to do, but a strategic imperative as we navigate the energy transition."

To learn more about the young leaders of our industry and what they have to say, read their bios on the following pages or on HartEnergy.com. ■

Joseph Markman
Senior Managing Editor



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Wanted: Top Young Talent for the Energy Sector

The global energy executive search firm, Preng & Associates, is a proud sponsor of the Forty Under 40 program. Hart Energy spoke with John Goodrum, a partner at the firm, about the vital importance of attracting more intelligent, hard-working young leaders to the energy sector.



Hart Energy:
Thanks so much
for joining us.
Please tell me

a little bit about Preng and the importance of the Forty Under 40 program.

John Goodrum: Thank you. Preng & Associates was founded about 44 years ago. We're a fully retained executive search firm, exclusively focusing in the energy sector. We say wellhead to the wall socket, covering upstream oil and gas, oilfield services, industrial services, all the way to the power, utility and renewables sector. So, this is a great opportunity for our firm to be able to really understand the true value chain of leadership and talent being developed going into the future for our energy sector.



talent of senior-level executives who've been in the industry for 50 years versus those that are now coming into the industry is something that's been talked about for the last 10 to 15 years over and over again. Obviously, the various cycles in the last 10 years or so have probably created a little bit more of a challenge.

The divide with some of the more senior individuals who've been in this sector for a long time has started to really become more and more visible. We're seeing a lot of individuals who are

potentially interested in moving up in the sector, moving up in advancement in their careers, but maybe being a little bit challenged by some people thinking that they were going to be retiring more quickly and maybe that hasn't actually occurred. However, we are also seeing a lot more collaboration. There's been a lot of people and a lot of companies really focused on how to take that knowledge base from more senior leaders and really transfer it down to some of the other individuals within the organization to help to create less of a brain drain.

I would also say that there's a lot of younger employees who have a different perspective and different capabilities of being able to really help bring new ideas to the organization to really help drive it forward. It's become much more thought about, and it's become much more addressed recently than it has been in the past.

HE: Obviously, you're more focused on the executive side, but we wanted to get your take on some of the biggest challenges in recruiting top young people into the energy sector and retaining them. And are the industry's overall efforts succeeding?

JG: Retention in the energy sector amongst individuals that are first coming into this sector is becoming a very big challenge. It's something I think every company—private and public—has really started to address and pay attention to and focus upon. Primarily, a lot of this is the negative attention that oil and gas has broadly, without an understanding of really where energy comes from and what it does to help better and advance the lives of people. One of the things I've seen is the lack of understanding around technology, particularly around software development, and all the interesting and global experiences that you get to have in this industry.

HE: Admittedly using clichés here, but what about the ongoing, so-called “great crew change” in the industry and the resulting brain drain that's ensuing?

JG: The brain drain, if you will, or the gap between the



CLASS OF 2024

HE: Do you feel like now we're kind of smack dab in the middle of the crew change? How do you see that timeline playing out?

JG: You can look at how many petroleum engineers we've been graduating over the last 20 years, and you can see that it has dropped off dramatically. So, you can say that we are really going to be challenged. But I think we also have a big unknown within technology. We're seeing how technology, particularly AI (artificial intelligence) and other software advancements within the energy sector, has really been able to help bridge some of that gap. This is a people-driven, human capital-driven industry. However, there is a lot of

technology that plays a part in it, which I think is helping to narrow that gap a little bit. But we still realize how important it is to work together and collaborate so that you get some of that practical experience that some of these individuals have over many years compared to their more junior colleagues.

HE: Is the industry really adjusting adequately to alleviate the evolving workforce and technology needs of the sector?

JG: The younger workforce has been working with technology for many years. They bring a specialized skill set that's becoming adopted by more seasoned veterans who maybe grew up in the field. That being said, we work in an environment and energy sector that is absolutely committed to working with people. It's driven by people, and so I think we're trying to find that divide and close that divide with collaboration, and also being able to use technology. One of the things I know we've looked at is a lot of hybrid schedules. During the pandemic, it was realized that there were a lot of roles in the energy sector that were not able to be done remotely, and yet some of these roles could be done remotely. So, how do you manage and lead in those kind of environments? What is fair and what is not fair? I think those conversations continue to evolve.

What we're seeing, from our perspective, is a lot of companies looking at it and adopting a hybrid methodology to really try to recruit those individuals and bring them to the organization, realizing that maybe that motivation is a little bit different than the motivation of others. I don't believe that answer has been fully defined yet, but I do think that there's an aspect between trying to recruit individuals knowing that this is an in-the-office or in-the-field job for five days a week, or if this is a little bit of a hybrid role. I think there's finding a balance.

HE: What do you see as some of the most innovative and exciting aspects of working in the industry right now?

JG: The energy sector is trying really hard, and they've come leaps and bounds in selling what is important to this sector and what really can be exciting. I was with my nephew this past weekend at Georgia Tech. He's a chemical engineering undergraduate and he had no idea the global reach of the sector. He had no idea of the compensation. But, more importantly, how much technology is driving—AI is driving—the energy sector as a whole. So, he quickly became enamored with learning more. I think one of the things that people don't understand, unless you grew up in the energy sector, is the global reach and the true technology understanding and software backgrounds that most of these companies have, and how they've become the backbone of these organizations. And, on the ESG

side of it, it's really understanding the societal impacts and how energy can and does improve the lives of everyone in the world in a responsible way.

HE: One of the biggest retention problems has obviously been the cyclical aspect of the industry and the layoffs that come at times. Do you see that starting to change and have more stability creep in?

JG: The cyclicity of the oil and gas industry is always going to be a challenge. I believe that companies now, after this most recent cycle, understand the need to not just recruit, but also retain really good employees. I believe that companies are now really focusing on trying to hire those that are going to stay with the organization for a long period of time. The mantra of doing more with less has never been more widely spoken amongst leadership teams as we are hearing it now. I think that's because it's a focus on the employees that we have and getting the absolute most out of them. Reward them as much as we can, both in terms of career progression, but also in terms of compensation and knowing that when there are bad cycles, which in a commodity market there always will be, you can realize that your job should be and hopefully will be safe.

HE: Could you elaborate on the role Preng & Associates is playing in the overall effort we're discussing?

JG: Preng & Associates has been very fortunate to be able to sit with a lot of these senior-level leadership teams to really help them to define and develop their younger talents. We're constantly looking at individuals that maybe have a 15-, 20-, 30-year runway. Here's the things that this person can bring to the table. And really having those open conversations and really stretching the minds of those that are looking to hire people that fit within a specific box. Thinking outside that box is what's going to continue to innovate and lead the energy industry.

HE: Looking forward, how do you see energy jobs continuing to evolve and change?

JG: There will always be a need for energy. I've never been more bullish about the energy markets. I believe that we are just scratching the surface of this energy revolution. Traditional oil and gas will not be going away anytime soon. We're also fortunate enough that we have all sorts of alternative forms of energy, including wind, solar, carbon capture, hydrogen and nuclear. As long as we continue to develop as a world, I think that the employment market has never been stronger. But, it comes back to adaptability, and it comes back to being able to really work within teams and understanding how to truly adapt in these markets. ■

Navigating the Crossroads

The oil and gas industry has both a need and an opportunity to embrace the digital transformation while engaging the next generation of its workforce.

In an age where technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace, we find ourselves at a pivotal crossroads. The digital revolution is reshaping industries, transforming how we live, work and interact with the world. As global economies adapt to this rapid change, sectors that have long been the backbone of progress are now reimagining their roles and strategies. Among these, the oil and gas industry stands out as a key player.

The late 1700s saw the Industrial Revolution transform manufacturing and energy production, creating an immense demand for petroleum. Today, the oil and gas sector faces a critical crossroads defined by two major forces: the need to embrace digital transformation and the challenge of engaging a new generation of workers.

First, digital transformation is at the forefront. As technology advances rapidly, the sector is integrating data analytics, automation and artificial intelligence into its operations. This shift is essential for improving efficiency, increasing safety, reducing costs and enhancing decision-making. Embracing these technologies is not merely an option but a necessity to stay competitive.

Second, the industry is actively addressing workforce engagement. Companies realize they are better off by addressing head-on the expectations of Millennials and Gen Z, who prioritize work-life balance, career growth and meaningful impact over financial compensation. This requires a strategic approach to attract, retain and develop young talent.

Additionally, the industry is leveraging advanced technologies to reduce emissions and enhance sustainability. And we do this while maintaining the sector's critical role in powering economies. It's no small feat.

Managing this involves significant investment and a shift in mindset. Companies must foster a culture of innovation and growth. This cultural shift is vital for bridging the generational divide and attracting a diverse talent pool capable of driving future advancements.

Currently, the oil and gas industry faces a critical challenge: engaging the next generation of workers—Millennials and Gen Z. Research shows that younger generations are often less engaged in their jobs compared to their predecessors, seeking better opportunities and showing less long-term commitment. However, this presents an opportunity to cultivate a more dynamic, innovative and successful workforce.

Gen Z, the newest entrant into the workforce, brings



**MOLLY
DETERMAN**

Energy Workforce & Technology Council

distinct values and expectations shaped by its experiences. I think it's a huge opportunity for us that Gen Z prioritizes meaningful work over compensation. The oil and gas sector has a compelling story to tell, particularly regarding how it tackles complex challenges, enhances sustainability and reduces emissions. With 72% of Gen Z motivated by jobs that positively impact society, it's crucial for the industry to clearly communicate its role in addressing these issues.

Additionally, Gen Z is deeply immersed in technology, averaging 10 hours a day online and

using digital platforms for job searches. Companies are successfully engaging with potential employees through platforms like TikTok. By meeting Gen Z where it is, the industry can attract tech-savvy individuals who are essential for driving innovation.

Next year, Millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce, yet only 29% report being engaged at work. While this might seem concerning, it highlights a significant opportunity for companies to connect with them. To do so, organizations must understand that Millennials value purpose, transparency and open communication—attributes that may challenge traditional approaches but are crucial for attracting and retaining top talent.

A remarkable 87% of Millennials consider professional growth essential in their jobs. While annual promotions may not be feasible for everyone, offering lateral moves, special projects and skill-building opportunities can enhance employees' resumes and encourage a more skilled and versatile workforce. By prioritizing career development, the oil and gas sector can transition potential flight risks into loyal, long-term employees.

As we look to the future, it is clear that the oil and gas sector can continue to face any challenge we're given. Just as the Industrial Revolution redefined our approach to energy, today's digital revolution offers an opportunity to redefine how we operate and engage with emerging talent. By building cultures of innovation and growth, the industry bridges generational divides and can harness the full potential of a new workforce. The future of oil and gas is not just about what's beneath the surface; it's about the transformative power of the talent we cultivate and the innovative path we chart for the years to come. ■

Molly Determan is president of Energy Workforce & Technology Council, the national trade association for the global energy technology and services sector. She is also a member of Hart Energy's E&P 40 Under Forty class of 2021.

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November 7, 2024 | David L. Lawrence Convention Center | Pittsburgh, PA



of the Marcellus Shale

At the 16th Annual DUG Appalachia Conference, industry leaders from across the basin will share their perspectives on tackling today's challenges while reflecting on the region's contribution to energy independence, lower energy prices, and economic growth through job creation and investments in infrastructure.

This year, the 20th anniversary of the Marcellus Shale marks a significant milestone in the energy sector, celebrating two decades since the discovery and development of one of the largest natural gas fields in the United States.

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By The
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35

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Energy Enrollments Inch Higher as Students See Multiple Paths to a Career

An improving outlook on global demand for oil and gas lures a new generation to study fossil fuel development at top energy programs around the U.S.

ANDREW PRATT, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Enrollment is on the rise at top U.S. petroleum engineering and energy graduate programs, say administrators at universities that have long supplied new talent to the energy space. Many are enticed by the improved outlook for oil and gas demand. Others are excited by emerging opportunities in low-carbon power. And some are driven by innovation in alternative fuels.

At 22 schools worldwide reporting first-year enrollments in petroleum engineering programs, the number of first-year students rose from 535 in 2022 to 745 in 2024, according to data collected by Lloyd Heinze, professor emeritus at Texas Tech University.

Energy master's programs also are seeing increases as employment opportunities in both oil and gas production and new technologies rise amid predictions that a steady surge in demand over the next 25 years will boost investment in both legacy and emerging energy production, school administrators told *Oil and Gas Investor (OGI)*.

Historically, student interest waxes and wanes with the oil and gas industry's fortunes. The shale revolution sent enrollments soaring to a peak of 3,206 first-year petroleum engineering students in 2015, Heinze's data indicate. But OPEC set the stage for a steep drop in commitment to the discipline when it flooded the market and sent per-barrel prices to \$20s in a bid to curtail U.S. production. For two years, the price lingered at less than \$50/bbl while the worldwide supply/demand dynamic rebalanced.

Before crude prices could regain momentum, the COVID pandemic that began in 2020 decimated fuel demand and further depressed student interest in oil and gas career options, school administrators told *OGI*. The best and the brightest prospects at universities were taking different career paths than oil and gas production, just as a generation of industry veterans were retiring during the "great crew change" of the last decade.

Administrators say they saw interest wane both at energy-focused MBA programs such as those offered at Texas Christian University and the University of North



"Although this generation of students has been told that oil and gas are going away,

I think they're realizing that this is not the case. They now believe it's possible to have full careers."

JENNIFER MISKIMINS, department head, petroleum engineering, Colorado School of Mines

Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), and in the petroleum engineering programs at schools that include Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Austin (UT), the Colorado School of Mines, Texas Tech University, the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and Pennsylvania State University (Penn State).

Fueling the Future

Today, rising enrollments are fueled by a growing awareness that prospects for a long career in energy are bright, university administrators say. The data supports investment in all types of energy development and production, a trend that is already paying dividends for graduates.

"Although this generation of students has been told that oil and gas are going away, I think they're realizing that this is not the case," Jennifer Miskimins, head of the petroleum engineering department at the Colorado School of Mines, told *OGI*. "They now believe it's possible to have full careers."

At Penn State, though fewer international scholars are enrolling, more U.S. students are enrolled in petroleum engineering classes because graduates are getting jobs, said Hamid Emami-Meyodi, program chairman of petroleum and natural gas engineering.

"Demand for energy has been increasing, especially



COURTNEY ROBINSON/PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Pennsylvania State University students explore oil and gas careers.



“We have 120 incoming (first-year students) this year. That’s our largest class in 10 years.”

MATTHEW BALHOFF, department chair, petroleum and geosystems engineering, University of Texas at Austin

after the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia war, and students are seeing that industry is trying to hire,” Emami-Meyodi told *OGI*. “Our job placement was 90% last year and almost 100% the year before.”

Both Texas A&M and UT, two of the most prolific U.S. educators of petroleum engineers, say the industry is recruiting and hiring their graduates.

Administrators at the schools say they are concerned that universities might not be able to ramp up to meet demand.

“We have 120 incoming (first-year students) this year,” Matthew Balhoff, chair of the petroleum and geosystems engineering department at UT, told *OGI*. “That’s our largest class in 10 years.”

Texas A&M granted 39% more petroleum engineering degrees in the 2024 academic year than the previous year and has seen its sophomore class grow by approximately 50% in the current school year, said Tom Blasingame, head of Texas A&M’s department of petroleum engineering.

Both programs adopted strategies of restraining enrollment during boom times, with the goal of matching degrees granted to industry demand so graduates wouldn’t struggle to find their first jobs.

Oil prices have been high enough, long enough that they are expecting strong industry demand for graduates now entering the pipeline.

Blasingame cautions that UT and Texas A&M will find it hard to expand rapidly if industry demand for graduates surges higher than anticipated.

“Texas A&M currently produces almost 20%” of the bachelor’s degrees in petroleum engineering in the U.S., Blasingame said. UT and A&M could face “significant challenges” boosting enrollment if smaller programs cannot increase enrollment to meet demand like UT and A&M are doing now, he said.

Careers of Consequence

Petroleum engineering is experiencing renewed interest despite an anti-fossil fuel slant in the mass media, and teaching in grade schools and high schools that disparages the oil and gas industry, all school administrators said.

This lack of realism and balance is unfortunate because skilled and motivated petroleum engineers will be needed both to increase oil and gas production and perform the subsurface research needed to develop economically viable carbon capture, hydrogen storage, and geothermal and nuclear energy power generation, said Stephen Arbogast, director of the Kenan-Flagler Energy Center at UNC.

“This is not like marketing toothpaste. You are going to have a consequential career,” Arbogast told OGI. “Nothing moves, nothing gets made without energy. And if you want cleaner energy in the future, you’re going to have face the problems that come with it.”

Mature students aware of the potential in energy production are stimulating enrollment in the energy MBA program at UNC, Arbogast said. In addition, the university is developing a strategy for expanding

undergraduate offerings, he said. UNC today offers only a limited number of seats for undergraduates in its MBA-level energy classes but is planning an undergraduate program, he said.

“There are companies that want to bring in bright undergraduates and train them internally,” Arbogast said.

Professors and administrators point to U.S. Energy Information Administration projections that the world’s population will grow by 1.8 billion people by 2050, pushing up demand for fossil fuels as well as spurring development of renewables, low-carbon power generation and carbon-capture technologies.

Government-incentivized efforts aimed at slowing climate change have expanded opportunities for energy-development employment without diminishing the need to teach skills needed by the traditional oil and gas industry, said Thomas Bates, an adjunct professor at the Ralph Lowe Energy Institute at Texas Christian.

Diversified Options

While TCU’s energy MBA program attracts mid-career professionals who already work in oil, gas and utility roles, significant enrollment growth also is coming from students who aren’t aiming for a job in fossil fuel production, Bates said.

Though the use of fossil fuels is forecast to grow, TCU is seeing some students who “may want nothing do with Chevron or Exxon [Mobil],” he said. Instead, they are interested in joining emerging startups or companies that are developing non-traditional technologies to reduce carbon emissions and provide cleaner energy, he said. TCU has responded by offering a broader selection of courses and training.

“Energy agnosticism is now a bedrock of our MBA program,” said Bates. “We offer skills training in both



“This is not like marketing toothpaste. You are going to have a consequential career.

Nothing moves, nothing gets made without energy. And if you want cleaner energy in the future, you’re going to have face the problems that come with it.”

STEPHEN ARBOGAST, professor and director, business school’s energy center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



“Being an engineer is about solving problems—any kind of problem.”

MARSHALL WATSON, chairman, department of petroleum engineering, Texas Tech University

traditional oil and gas and in the industries that are developing in the energy economy. If you want solar or wind, we have classes on our menu.”

Marshall Watson, chairman of the Department of Petroleum Engineering at Texas Tech, said he is confident that the school prepares its students for a career in energy whether they apply their knowledge at traditional E&P operators or startups that are pursuing innovations in subsurface technologies such as geothermal, carbon capture and sequestration, and nuclear power.

“Being an engineer is about solving problems,” Watson said. “Any kind of problem.”

The petroleum engineering curriculum at Texas Tech has evolved twice since 2016, a reflection of the continuing changes in technology that are changing how wells are drilled and managed, Watson said. Texas Tech researchers are exploring more efficient ways to produce and store hydrogen as well as work out the technical, legal, social and regulatory details of innovations in carbon capture and produced water management.

The school manages research into the use of horizontal wells to make geothermal energy and build underground systems for hydrogen extraction. Texas Tech announced in July that it is part of a project studying if molten salt can generate electricity economically using water from Permian Basin drilling and production activities.

Like many schools with an engineering tradition, Texas Tech is benefiting from federal grants for low-carbon energy production and is helping students acquire knowledge in emerging technology, Watson said. At the same time, students continue to get intensive, hands-on training in drilling, well management and application of data analysis at the university’s Oilfield Technology Center, a short distance

from campus. Part of that training includes an ever-increasing emphasis on data and the processing of data, Watson said.

A flood of available well statistics is driving major changes in how petroleum engineers are trained to manage drilling and production, said Watson and Runar Nygaard, director of the School of Petroleum and Geological Engineering at the University of Oklahoma.

Data Driven

In the recent past, standard procedure for engineers working to maximize production from a well was to create physical models of the site and study the chemical and geological makeup of the surrounding rock and soil, Nygaard said. Now they can often rely on computing power alone to analyze data from nearby wells and determine what will work without building a physical model, Nygaard said.

“You will see a production engineer probably collect data from maybe 500 wells” in the area where that engineer is trying to maximize production, Nygaard said. “He will look at commonalities among wells like his own, and instead of doing any physical or chemical modeling of his own well, use a data-driven model based on data from those other wells” as a guide to the best ways to achieve the highest production.

The change has put data analytics classes on every university’s curriculum for energy students, and their importance will grow along with the surging usage of artificial intelligence (AI) computing power and big data collection, administrators say.

Faculty “are using AI and data analytics to help decarbonize chemical processes used in industry,” said Hanchen Huang, dean of the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology at Oklahoma State University, which offers a petroleum engineering minor in its chemical engineering program.



“Energy agnosticism is now a bedrock of our MBA program. We offer skills training in both

traditional oil and gas and in the industries that are developing in the energy economy. If you want solar or wind, we have classes on our menu.”

THOMAS BATES, adjunct professor, energy institute, Texas Christian University



“We’re still way behind other industries in data collection, but it’s changing rapidly.”

RUNAR NYGAARD, director, school of petroleum and geological engineering, University of Oklahoma

Huang said OSU is developing a degree program, a certificate, and micro credentials in energy engineering and management that will “incorporate management with a technology flavor.”

Thirty years ago, companies could collect data on a typical well once a month, said Miskimins of the Colorado School of Mines. Now companies can install sensors that can gather billions of bits of data over a well’s lifetime.

The possibilities created by this flood of statistics flowing in real time are so significant that supermajor Chevron funds a Colorado School of Mines program that allows students to minor in energy data management, Miskimins said.

“We have all that data—now what do we do with it?” Miskimins said. “They can’t just hire a data analytics person. They need a petroleum engineer who understands data analytics or a data analytics person who understands petroleum engineering, or they will get a lot of wrong answers to a lot of their questions.”

Nygaard said the industry is pushing for more emphasis on data instruction and AI because the combination could lead to automation of drilling and production processes. Automation could be the key to bringing down costs to acceptable levels for drilling and operating new wells, he said.

“We’re still way behind other industries in data collection, but it’s changing rapidly,” Nygaard said. “We’re doing much more data collection today than we have ever done.”

Catching Up

Nygaard is working on a project now that includes sending him detailed production statistics in real time from a North Sea well, he said.

“I am able to review that data on the cellphone I am talking on at this moment,” Nygaard told *OGI*. “The sponsors hope the project will provide insight into how they can automate more of the drilling and production processes.”

While federal grants for developing alternatives and carbon capture are welcome, Nygaard said the industry’s need for trained petroleum engineers focused on increasing production will continue to grow.

Over the last four years, the federal government hasn’t shown much interest in investing in research just to increase oil and gas production, Nygaard said.

Yet getting more oil from each well is a problem that the next generation of petroleum engineers will have to tackle, because drilling technology still extracts only a small percentage of the oil and gas in most fields, especially in unconventional sites where fracking technology is not as effective as in shale, Nygaard said.

“Recovery rates are still in the single digits,” he said.

E&P companies will continue to search out the

easiest and most economical places to drill, but they are facing questions about how they will extract oil and gas from ever more geologically and logistically challenging fields and wells.

“We are past the low-hanging fruit already. I’d say we are on the medium-hanging now,” Nygaard said.

E&P companies are eager to tap graduates who have studied how to boost production, including those with knowledge that will assist experiments in using methane and CO₂ to push up hydrocarbons in unconventional fields, Nygaard said.

Petroleum engineers will need to reduce the costs of tapping both conventional and unconventional wells and bring their expertise to fields in the Middle East and other locations where even fracking technology over years has not yet been applied in significant ways, Nygaard said.

“Eventually, the world is going to need those hydrocarbons,” Nygaard said.

Oil companies have the connections to find the people they need for exploration and production projects, Miskimins said.

Finding Funding

Petroleum engineering schools have “incredibly tight” relationships with the private sector, Miskimins said. Private-sector experience and connections are common among all the university administrators leading major petroleum engineer programs, and advisory boards include industry professionals who can help students get the right training and find work when they complete their programs.

Still, recent market conditions have forced companies to be cautious about funding training and research, affecting both the funding and activities of universities with energy-focused programs, Miskimins said.

Where some 90% of research funding came from private industry more than a decade ago, about 65% of support comes from the traditional oil and gas industry today and 35% comes from government and other spending on “energy evolution research into such areas as carbon sequestration, methane emissions reduction and geothermal,” Miskimins said.

Current research efforts may be too heavily weighted toward new types of clean energy production rather than on finding and producing more fossil fuels economically, Miskimins said.

Industry is showing interest in boosting research, Texas A&M’s Blasingame said.

“We are seeing significant interest in research collaborations with the oil and gas industry, with numerous projects and consortia with industry evolving at present,” Blasingame said.

Administrators said one of the major contributions



DYLAN WONG/TEXAS A&M

Students network with oil and gas industry recruiters during a Career Enhancement Event at Texas A&M in August.

to the push for cleaner energy is finding ways to reduce pollution created by oil and gas production. That includes reducing methane leakage and finding ways to reuse or clean up contaminated water.

“Faculty in petroleum engineering are working with industry partners on EOR methods and to improve exploration and recovery of energy sources in a way that is more sustainable and environmentally friendly,” said OSU’s Huang.

Indicators are that fossil fuel production will be a stronger career choice than first-year students realize when they first arrive at the School of Mines, Miskimins said.

The school is providing energy industry data and forecasts to its students soon after they start classes so they can make better informed decisions about their career paths. Barring an unexpected development, fossil fuels usage is going to remain

strong for decades, Miskimins said. “Fossil fuels go from maybe 65% of the (total energy) mix down to about 50% in 2050. So yeah, you lose 15%. But then when people start to realize that oil and gas are still half of it, that seems to get students thinking a little bit more about where most opportunity lies,” Miskimins said.

While fossil fuels are on track to continue to dominate energy production for decades, energy MBA students at TCU will be glad to work for a company that has a vision for helping solve the world’s energy problems, Bates says.

“They know that the biggest challenge of your working lifetime is going to be, how are we going to produce energy and where is the right formula going to come from?” Bates said. “They are super enthusiastic about working toward that goal.” ■

THE CLASS OF 2024

Oil and Gas Investor proudly presents its ninth class of Forty Under 40 honorees. Learn more about the young leaders who are guiding the energy industry into the future on the following pages.





**FORTY
UNDER 40**



MAGGIE ALBRECHT

Senior Staff Reservoir Engineer, New Ventures, Utah and Colorado
Anschutz Exploration Corp.

AGE: 40 | Denver

Maggie Albrecht was always destined to go places in her career, but she didn't imagine, growing up in a Chicago suburb, she'd be traveling in "helicopters, personnel baskets and some questionable airplanes." She's also driven all over North Dakota, ventured into the oil patch on geology field trips and worked in business units that achieved production of 100,000 boe/d. "Though any one of those things on its own is just another day at the office for so many in this business," she said, "I am grateful for the many opportunities I have had to witness the wide scope and complexity of this industry."

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

Professionally, I am most proud of the first two papers I co-authored, which covered aspects of our modeling approach. Both papers were written while on maternity leave with a demanding 1-month-old infant. I presented both papers at URTeC, with one receiving an award for best in its theme (geochemistry).

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

As a reservoir engineer, I have been a part of several teams tasked with challenging subsurface modeling projects, from conventional water floods in Equatorial Guinea to modeling hydraulic fractures in unconventional plays in North America. These projects required integrating a host of data over time and space, and calibrated models were used to inform business recommendations regarding field operations and capital investments. Meeting these challenges required curiosity, commitment, and close collaboration on multidisciplinary teams of subject matter experts. These types of projects were made possible by the support of companies and a broader industry community committed to investing in new applications of technology.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am particularly inspired by the industry leaders that have

achieved great success, then use that success as a platform to share their time, knowledge and talents for the betterment of humanity. These leaders that educate the public on our industry, seek to influence policy, collaborate with related industries such as geothermal, shape universities, and connect people and ideas at industry technical conferences have a level of persistence and foresight that I hope to emulate.

Which career milestone did you reach sooner than you had planned, and what helped you reach it earlier than expected?

An important milestone in my career so far has been successfully prioritizing my family in the city where we wanted to live while working on challenging, new problems. Throughout my career, I have always sought out opportunities that sparked my curiosity. From my first role as a drilling engineer in deepwater, to learning reservoir simulation and optimizing waterfloods, to understanding hydraulic fracturing via new applications of diagnostic tools in unconventional plays, every role I have taken has had a steep learning curve.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Be intentional about how you want to spend your time—with loved ones, life goals and your career. Professionally, I encourage engineers to work in the field early in your career. Seek out challenging work you enjoy and build competency in as many areas as you can quickly. But also, work on those areas that come less naturally, whether it is emotional intelligence, public speaking or building a network. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



CARINA ANTWEIL

Deputy Department Head of Houston Corporate
Baker Botts

AGE: 37 | Houston

Raised internationally in an energy industry family, Carina Antweil embarked upon her career as a deal lawyer at Baker Botts, which she describes as “a true partner to the oil and gas industry.” Antweil managed a busy workload as an associate while caring for two young children at home, yet still achieved her goal of promotion to partner at 34, making her the firm’s youngest partner at that time. She manages a department of more than 40 lawyers with this approach: “Above all else, being prepared to pivot at any given moment in our ever-changing industry is imperative.”

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the fact that I had my two children as an associate and managed to maintain a busy practice and achieve my ultimate goal of being promoted to partner at Baker Botts at age 34 (making me the youngest partner at my law firm at that time). It is not easy being a working mother in any industry, but I am proud of how my husband and family have supported me. I could not have done it without their support and the support of my law firm.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am motivated by the challenges facing the oil and gas industry today and inspired to contribute to the challenge of balancing energy transition with energy stability. Society needs more energy than ever before, and the challenges that come with this place intense pressure on all of us to achieve results in a manner that is more environmentally responsible.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

I want to contribute to the industry in a meaningful way, primarily by assisting my clients in the oil and gas industry as they aim to solve the most pressing issues facing their customers and our society at large. This will be both a short-term and long-term goal of mine, though time is of the essence in our industry.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Be ready to learn. Our industry is changing faster than anyone could have imagined, and that creates big opportunities for anyone who would like to participate and contribute to the energy transition. Enthusiasm and grit will take you far.

“One of the best pieces of advice I ever got from a mentor was, ‘Never make a decision when you’re feeling angry.’ In other words, cool off and revisit the issue with a calmer mindset. It works wonders.”

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I think there will need to be many technological innovations in the industry in order to meet the energy demands of our future. I think many of these technological advances are already underway. I also think there will need to be overwhelming buy-in that diversity and inclusion is essential to the future of the industry. We are well on our way to getting there, but there is still much work to be done on the DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] front. We need diverse perspectives participating in the industry in order for it to thrive.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I believe this is a group of young, motivated, thoughtful leaders, all ready to engage together to solve tomorrow’s energy challenges. It is unusual to find this kind of energy (pun intended!) and we should capitalize on it. We are more thoughtful about the impact of our industry on our globe than those who came before us, which brings a different perspective to the table. It is no longer taboo to want to produce energy in an environmentally responsible manner. ■



ADAM ARTHUR

Executive Vice President - Crude Oil • Energy Transfer

AGE: 36 | Dallas

A self-described eternal optimist, Adam Arthur has adopted the mindset of approaching every problem as an opportunity. He has found that outstanding leaders inspire those around them by leading through example, to “join your employees in the trenches.” Arthur applies this to his own management style. “I strive to always have pace and create a sense of pressure,” he said. It helps to keep him and his team always looking for new solutions as well as to solve problems with creativity.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

The most consistent leadership quality I have seen in our space is being a leader that leads by example. That can mean a lot of things, but to me it means you don't ask anyone to do anything that you wouldn't do yourself. In my time at Energy Transfer, I have observed countless managers/leaders jump in and roll their sleeves up to work alongside their teams vs. delegating and pushing work down. I do think the willingness to join your employees in the trenches is more prevalent in the oil and gas industry vs. others. To me that is the clear sign of a good leader.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

My dad told me when I started working: “The best job I ever had was the one I have right now.” Early on, I adopted that mentality. This has allowed me to stay focused on the job at hand. Right now, my primary goal is to continue to provide the best service and optionality to our customers and to continue to build the best team possible.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

Two things: 1) I still learn something every day, and that is exciting to me. 2) The relationships. This business is still very relationship-oriented. The places I have been and the people I have met have broadened my view far beyond what I ever thought, and some of the friendships I have made I know will be for life.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

It's got to be a willingness to embrace change. The under-40 crowd started in the workplace with a totally different set of tools than generations prior. As technology continues to help us work more

“It is the people who raise their hands and say, ‘I’ll do it’ that find themselves in the most likely position to get noticed and excel.”

efficiently, I think the under-40 group can help others be early adopters of new technologies and get them comfortable with the changing approaches to problem solving.

What or whom do you credit for helping you develop leadership abilities during your career?

I played football throughout high school and college. I didn't realize it at the time, but the leadership styles I observed during my athletic career really helped me to decide what kind of leader that I wanted to be. I learned so much from several of my coaches on how I want to approach working to achieve a goal. I try to apply the things my teammates and I responded positively to in my daily approach to managing people. I realized from many of them that a “one size fits all” approach doesn't work and that it is important to be able to tailor your style to who you are trying to lead.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department?

I strive to always have pace and create a sense of pressure. I have found that this helps keep me out of getting into a rut and keeps me thinking about how to solve problems with creativity. I also am an eternal optimist. I like to approach every problem as an opportunity. Lastly, we spend too much time at work in our lives not to have fun. I try to bundle all these things together and I hope that it will have a lasting impact on our group. ■



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DANIEL BROOKS

Land Manager - Uinta Basin and North Texas • Crescent Energy

AGE: 40 | Houston

"I'll tell you," said Daniel Brooks, "not every 'opportunity' was what I 'wanted' to do, but looking back, is what the team needed from me at that time. So, I seized the opportunity to learn, grow and look for ways to continuously contribute at a high level." He is most proud of his breadth of experiences that span multiple functions and leading interdepartmental teams. To be a successful leader requires the courage to stay humble in decision-making, Brooks believes, but also the courage to know when a decision must be made and make it.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Transparency, clarity, courage, integrity, awareness and an honest business-minded approach come to mind.

It is critical to maintain transparency within the organization, which aligns back to the values of the organization—we should all know with crystal clarity where we are headed, why we are headed in that direction, and what is the ultimate objective or ultimate measure of success.

I believe a good leader in our industry also exhibits courage—the courage to speak up and support not only the collective/easy-to-follow ideologies but to also have the courage to hear the counter-narrative/story. Also, courage to do the right thing. Finally, courage to stay humble in decision-making—hear other perspectives, learn from one another and collectively find the best/most efficient way forward—and to know when a decision must be made, make it and drive forward.

Integrity, as I've heard Alan Simpson, former senator of Wyoming, say, "With integrity, nothing else

matters; without integrity, nothing else matters."

From an awareness perspective, it is crucial to understand how the business is breathing—understanding the "heartbeat" of the organization. I think that also blends into understanding the team's needs/wants/attitude in daily tasks—then, critically, taking action to ensure those are addressed. From an external perspective, that means staying aware of not only our industry but also the macro-level economy, political scene and world events.

Honest approach to the business means let's look hard at ourselves and stay honest to each and every decision or step in the journey. If we may have strayed, we call ourselves on it and correct. Externally, that means staying honest in our efforts to be good stewards of the communities in which we operate, and maintaining good relationships—not simply because that is right, but because that is the only way to do things as a community.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Patience without being complacent. I would also say, stay eager in learning, whether that is graduate-type course work, professional development material, etc., but enjoy learning, or find a way to enjoy learning. Have a sincere passion for learning the organization—learning what and how the team operates, why they operate that way, and how we can be better team members. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



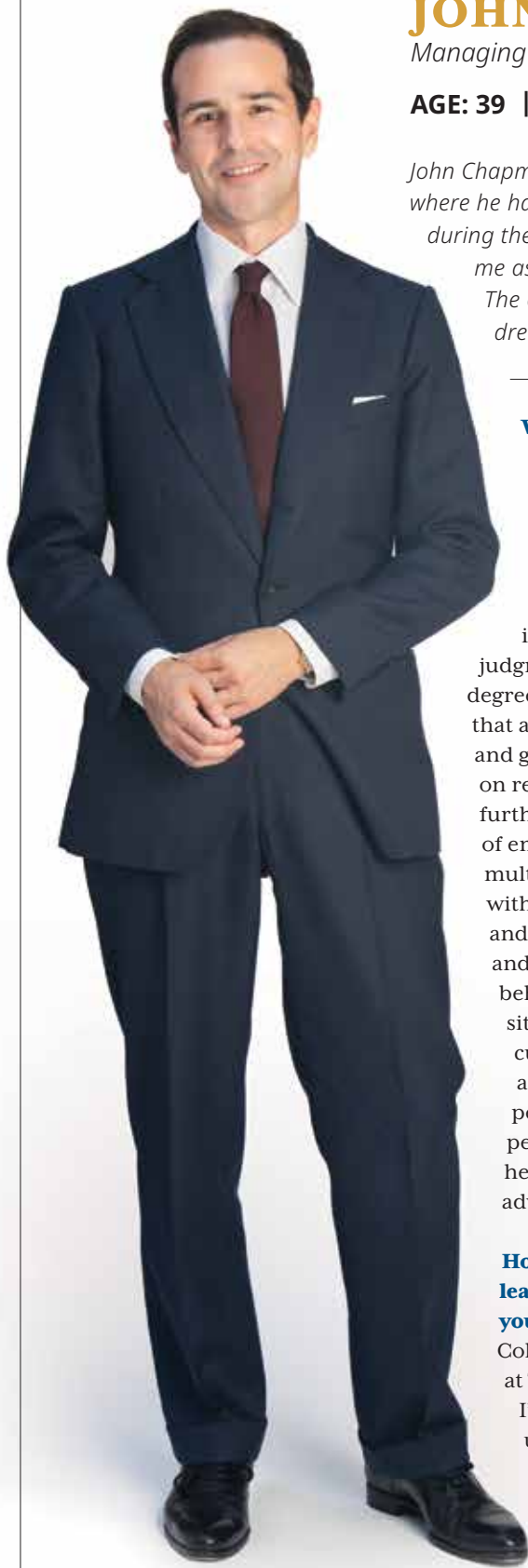
CONGRATULATIONS TO **DANIEL BROOKS** FOR BEING NAMED ONE OF OIL AND GAS INVESTOR'S “**FORTY UNDER 40!**”



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JOHN CHAPMAN

Managing Director • TPH & Co.

AGE: 39 | Houston

John Chapman began his career in restructuring investment banking, where he handled—among other assignments—casino restructurings during the 2008-2009 financial crisis. “It was quite the learning curve for me as a first-year analyst,” Chapman said. “That said, I loved it.” The challenges and complexity of oil and gas companies later drew him toward the industry.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Starting my career in restructuring taught me to evaluate imperfect information and make judgments under a high degree of uncertainty—skills that are applicable in the oil and gas industry. Working on restructurings also further developed my sense of empathy. You manage multiple constituencies with their own fears, goals and points of leverage, and people don’t always behave their best in those situations. Learning to cut through posturing and understand the perspectives of different people and groups has been helpful as a leader and an adviser.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department?

Collaboration is a core value at TPH & Co. and something I’ve worked hard to build upon. Our infrastructure group is constantly partnering with upstream colleagues and the integrated subsurface team, and

their perspectives on our infrastructure clients’ upstream customers and subsurface dynamics are crucial. I’ve also helped build partnerships across our broader platform at Perella Weinberg, both with our restructuring colleagues and with our chemicals group on chemicals infrastructure transactions.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

1. Always think about your clients, e.g., what they are worried about and how you can help.
2. If a colleague or client should be doing something differently, build trust and ensure you have the courage to tell them the truth.
3. Never stop learning—our industry is changing too quickly for any of us to be complacent, and that should be the fun part, in any event.

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

There are two categories that stand out for me. The first is the opportunity to advise the same client a second time because knowing that we have earned their trust and appreciation is incredibly rewarding. The second is being able to work with family- and founder-owned businesses. The heightened pressure and importance of the outcome to our clients, and the level of personal interaction and trust required, makes these situations among the most demanding but also the most satisfying. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

CONGRATULATIONS TO
**JOHN
CHAPMAN**

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MARK CLEVELAND

Vice President, Business Development • Civitas Resources

AGE: 37 | Denver

It wasn't just opportunity, but huge opportunity that drew Mark Cleveland to the oil and gas industry. "What other industry lets 20-somethings manage multimillion- and sometimes billion-dollar projects,, potentially all over the world? Oil and gas is such an exciting combination of using the best of science and engineering to make economic bets on what's going on miles underground that ultimately help power the world." Cleveland believes a good leader must possess a "bias for action" to avoid "paralysis by analysis. You'll never have a perfect answer," he says, "but I've found that taking action is almost always better than not."

What professional advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Know the details of your business and always take action. The only difference between doing something impactful and interesting is actually doing it. So, just do it.

What do you think young industry members have to offer that is unique to them?

I think there is a tremendous amount of energy and drive to make the industry better in all aspects—performance, environmental impact, and how people and company cultures are developed.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Sometimes big changes are difficult and there is always uncertainty. But demonstrating positivity and continued focus in the face of those can be a difference maker between making something transformational happen or not.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

Very early in my career, I had the opportunity to represent my company for reservoir engineering and development planning in some of our largest international joint ventures. It was initially intimidating flying to parts of Asia and to Algeria and working with far more experienced people, but I did the work and got to step into a ton of responsibility on really interesting projects.

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

Entering the Permian Basin last year. Doing a transaction

"I try to measure my career in terms of how well I understand things and how well I can make those things happen."

is a lot of work, but doing several at the same time, or in near proximity, isn't just two or three times as hard, but 10 times as hard, due to competing resources. Working with a great team, including key advisers, having a plan, and keeping focused on the overall goal were needed to make it happen.

Which transformations—approach, culture, technology or other—do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Approach and how the sector thinks about itself and how it brings value to others. We have been very focused on Lower 48 resource development for a long time, which required a lot of focus on resource play development skill sets. Opportunities in the future may require broadening technical skill sets to be able to engage in increasingly complex commercial and technical problems.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The endless challenges. Whether technical, commercial or regulatory, how do you create value and position your company or project for success? Overcoming that uncertainty and carving a successful path through it keeps me motivated every day. ■

Congratulations to Civitas' Mark Cleveland for winning the 40 under 40 Award.

Mark embodies the passion and entrepreneurship that helps drive our company culture to disrupt energy for good.



Mark Cleveland
VP and Operational Advisor



LYNDIE DRAGOMIR

Senior Director, Head of Global Sector and Channel Marketing
KPMG International

AGE: 40 | Houston

A good leader, Lyndie Dragomir has learned, must balance nurturing the team's growth alongside achieving organizational objectives. "Prioritizing the well-being and development of their team is as critical as driving toward financial and operational objectives," she says. Tasked with revitalizing multiple departments during her 13 years with KPMG, Dragomir cultivated a culture in which team members are valued as strategic contributors. "I have empowered them to have a more significant impact on driving the firm's goals," she says. "Fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation and aligning performance goals with the firm's growth objectives has not only improved the effectiveness of our marketing activities but has also

positioned the team as an essential part of the firm's overall business strategy."

Which transformations—approach, culture, technology or other—do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

The oil and gas industry must revamp its public image to continue attracting top talent. Despite fossil fuels accounting for 81.5% of global energy consumption in 2023, the industry often faces negative perceptions. The World Economic Forum suggests that the energy industry needs more skilled workers, such as trained engineers and geologists, as the industry has a higher proportion of high-skilled jobs than the broader economy. Attracting top talent is not just a matter of preference but a necessity for the industry to address the energy transition and growth.

To address the talent shortage, the industry must emphasize its crucial role in driving the global economy and its unwavering commitment to sustainability and innovation. By highlighting progress in reducing carbon emissions, implementing newer technologies and contributing to the energy transition, the industry can present itself as a forward-thinking and dynamic sector. This shift in perception is crucial for attracting a new generation of skilled professionals who are environmentally conscious and want to work in an industry dedicated to sustainable practices and shaping the future.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am deeply passionate about the oil and gas industry because of its significant role in the energy transition. I believe the energy transition is a pivotal

“I believe that ‘Your network is your net worth.’ Building and keeping a robust professional network has been crucial in my career, opening doors to new opportunities and collaborations.”

paradigm shift that will shape our future. I am committed to contributing to this transformation by understanding its complexities and navigating its challenges.

I want to change the negative view of the oil and gas industry. This industry played a crucial role in powering the Industrial Revolution and is essential to our global economy. It has led to significant advancements and improvements in quality of life around the world. While we will use a wider variety of energy sources in the future, the oil and gas industry will remain important for many decades.

Balancing these perspectives—respecting the industry’s legacy and advocating for sustainable, innovative solutions—fuels my dedication and passion. The challenge of integrating tradition with innovation and ensuring energy security while advancing environmental goals keeps me motivated and committed to my work in this ever-evolving industry. ■

“The most valuable advice comes from my parents who have always preached ‘don’t sweat the small stuff.’”

MEREDITH GIPSON



VIOLETA ALVAREZ



ERIC EICHLER

Executive Vice President and COO • FourPoint Energy

AGE: 39 | Denver

As a teenager, Eric Eichler joined his oil executive dad on business trips to Cairo. "During those years, I had a front row seat to the dynamism, community and spirit of exploration that are the best parts of the oil and gas business," he says. "After surveying the landscape of careers available to a new chemical engineering graduate, everything else seemed a bit boring!" His career has taken him to the frontier of the energy realm as one of the trailblazers of North American LNG exports. Eichler's proudest moments include working with a talented team to unlock a prolific new position in the Canadian Montney and developing the organization at FourPoint Energy.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Good leaders in oil and gas must be self-aware, emotionally steady and confident enough in their own abilities and limitations to give others the space to thrive. They provide ballast so their teams can weather the rough and uncertain waters for which this industry is known. Leaders should also be able to think holistically about risk and opportunity across multiple dimensions—regulatory, pricing, capital, subsurface and operations.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

At FourPoint, I strive to foster an environment rich in trust and ownership. Trust enables individuals to disagree with each other constructively and take risks in pursuit of innovative ideas. To remain competitive as a private equity-backed company, we need a culture that boldly questions the conventional wisdom. I also try to articulate a clear vision of what we aim to be: a nimble, return-driven oil and gas company differentiated by our technical

rigor, operational diligence and industry relationships.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

My advice to young professionals in the industry is to cultivate your relationships with your partner and family, surround yourself with people of high integrity and curiosity, and seek roles that challenge you to develop new skills. Also, while there is a place for remote work, the real world is where you will find unexpected ideas and discover mentors, best friends, confidants and co-founders.

Which transformations—approach, culture, technology or other—do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Having lived in Canada, Colorado and Texas, I know this industry is full of people who care deeply about protecting the natural beauty around us for future generations. Rather than competing priorities, people need both abundant energy and a healthy planet. It is often access to the former that affords us the ability to preserve the latter. We must rebuild public confidence in this industry as a partner in that endeavor—which means a genuine commitment to minimizing the impact of our operations and embracing innovations that will allow us to deliver cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



ERIC EICHLER:

LEADERS LIKE YOU ARE
WHAT CONTINUE TO MOVE
OUR INDUSTRY FORWARD

Congratulations on being recognized as a 2024 Oil & Gas Investor Forty Under 40 honoree. We are so fortunate to have you on our team.



FOURPOINT
ENERGY



ADAM ESPARZA

Corporate Development • Expand Energy

AGE: 37 | Spring, Texas

Adam Esparza was on the road to a hands-on career as a chiropractor when he took a detour to the oil patch. At the urging of his future brother-in-law, he landed a summer job prior to deciding to pursue a degree in petroleum engineering at Marietta College. That summer as a roustabout (a hands-on career), laboring alongside pumpers and field workers, and developing a passion for the energy industry made all the difference. "It was a rewarding and pivotal moment, forever altering my career trajectory," he says. Esparza, now working in corporate development at the newly formed Expand Energy, previously headed the corporate development team at Southwestern Energy that handled the \$24 billion merger with Chesapeake Energy. In that role, he provided

crucial day-to-day leadership and strategic insights to both senior management and the board of directors, ensuring a smooth and successful process.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

A strong leader is a blend of vision, communication and character. They can paint a compelling future, inspiring others to follow and then guide them strategically to achieve it. Effective communication, both clear and empathetic, is instrumental in building trust and fostering collaboration within the team. Most importantly, a leader's integrity serves as the foundation for everything else. By consistently demonstrating honesty and ethical behavior, they earn the respect and trust that empowers a team to thrive.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Leadership for me at Southwestern (now Expand Energy) has been focused around staying connected to the people I work with day in and day out. Connecting with teams and understanding what drives them while also providing a sounding board and voice for them is important to growing a team-first oriented culture.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

I was elected the Marietta College of Petroleum Engineering Industry Advisory Committee chairman in 2021, which was an honor surrounded by a group of peers on the committee from various industry groups.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The constant change in our industry and the evolution

"Making time for life outside of work is important to me; it's truly time you cannot get back."

of how big a part the U.S. oil and gas sector is impacting globally. People in the world need clean and affordable energy and it keeps me excited to be a part of that journey.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Go beyond your role—actively seek out new challenges and connect professionally and personally with colleagues across your organizations. Immerse yourself in company cultures and understand the bigger picture. Finally, expand your network by engaging with industry peers to stay informed and build strong relationships for the future.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I think everyone in our industry offers something different and that is what it takes to create a truly innovative and resilient sector. For those under 40, I think the creativeness and willingness to utilize new technology and processes has been incredible. Whether it is AI or other tech, they seem to be embracing change and truly push new ideas. ■

Southwestern Energy Congratulates

Adam Esparza

Corporate Development Director

on his recognition as one of Oil and Gas Investor
magazine's 2024 Forty Under 40.



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AMANDA FINN

Director, External Affairs • Ascent Resources

AGE: 37 | Cambridge, Ohio

At the heart of Amanda Finn's career is her ever-expanding network of personal and professional relationships. If you are in politics or energy in Ohio, you have heard of or worked with Amanda Finn. It all began when she started working on a campaign as a finance director for a congressional candidate in Ohio. She was able to parlay those successful efforts and relationships into the role she is in today. In 2023, Finn was not only the first woman to be elected chairman of the 76-year-old Ohio Oil & Gas Association, but also the youngest and the first employed by a shale operator. "I was able to work my way from a member, to a board member, to an executive member, to an officer in a matter of six years," she says. "Getting to know the membership, engaging the key players and understanding their needs and

wants for the industry, and proving myself as a knowledgeable ally all contributed to this success."

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department and company?

My department was non-existent when I arrived at Ascent Resources. When I started, it was a team of one to manage landowner relations, Ohio media calls, government affairs, site security and other various tasks for a few years prior to being able to shape and cultivate my team. Through the years I have been supported by upper management to create an external affairs team that is small but mighty. Getting the right people, in the right positions, integrating them into operations, and mentoring them through times of uncertainty has been the key to success with our external affairs department.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The continuous change in this industry is invigorating. There is not one day that is the same, not one issue that mimics the last and not one operational or external affairs initiative that can't be enhanced or progressed upon. I enjoy the fast-paced environment and the constant adaptation that is required to survive in this industry. The ability to be part of a company that continues to provide affordable, reliable and cleaner-burning energy for this country and the world is an exciting endeavor.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

Every year, Ascent Resources participates in the Marines Corps Toys for Tots program. We rally our

"I was a force to be reckoned with even at a young age. I always gave 110% into everything I did whether that was managing a pool at 15 or running a department now."

vendors and provide internal funds to purchase toys valued at over \$50,000. Our staff volunteers to walk families through our "toy store" and as they do they get to hear heartfelt stories of families who did not think Santa would be coming that year. Nothing else brings heartfelt joy like this opportunity to light up hundreds of faces on Christmas morning. I engage in several annual community giving initiatives and volunteering throughout the year in my role, but this is a unique and special experience not easily matched. The amount of smiles you can provide in such a short amount of time makes all the hard work worth it!

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

I think the most valuable advice I can give to a young professional in this industry is to network.

Network early and often! Be authentic and surround yourself with those who are leaders in the industry—pick their brains, ask questions and soak in as much information as you can. Learn from the past but anticipate and embrace the future. ■



Amanda Finn
Director of External Affairs

Congratulations Amanda Finn on your selection to *Oil and Gas Investor's* **Forty Under 40** for 2024!

Amanda Finn has been selected as an emerging leader in our energy industry! Her background in government affairs, landowner and community relations, regulatory and legislative initiatives and public policy provide her with a unique skillset allowing her to diplomatically and effectively tackle the key issues facing our company and our industry. She also serves as Chair of the Ohio Oil & Gas Association and is actively engaged on several committees for both OOGA and AXPC, along with other industry organizations.



Based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Ascent Resources is a private exploration and production company focused on acquiring, developing, producing and operating natural gas and oil properties in the Utica Shale. Through its subsidiary, Ascent Resources – Utica, the Company has grown to become one of the largest privately held exploration and production companies in the United States in terms of asset size and net production and the largest producer in the state of Ohio.

Ascent Resources | 3501 NW 63rd Street | Oklahoma City, OK 73116



ASHI GEBERKIDANE

Head of Performance Optimization • BPX Energy

AGE: 29 | Denver

Ashi Geberkidane was drawn to oil and gas because he saw how it shaped the global economy and decided that was where he needed to be. "I'm passionate about pioneering cutting-edge technologies and leading large-scale projects that shape energy," he says. To that end, Geberkidane is eager to learn from those who have shaped the sector, and counts among his career highlights the chance to meet and glean insights from industry legend Harold Hamm.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

One of my most memorable professional experiences was starting a commodity trading company in the Democratic Republic of Congo, focusing on cobalt and copper. The challenges were significant, from navigating complex negotiations with local stakeholders to overcoming logistical hurdles in a developing market. Early on, I built strong relationships with local industry experts, which became the cornerstone of our success.

One vivid memory is the day we secured our first major deal after months of intricate discussions and overcoming numerous obstacles related to infrastructure and regulatory requirements. This journey taught me invaluable lessons about team building, capital raising and risk assessment. The experience was particularly meaningful because it highlighted the importance of trust, collaboration, team dynamics and strategic thinking in achieving success in such a challenging environment.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

My career goals are deeply intertwined with my passion for the oil and gas industry. I firmly believe that safely

providing cheap, reliable energy is not just a commodity but a catalyst for positive change in society. With this mindset, my short-term goals focus on maximizing the safety, efficiency and productivity of our current operations. By safely optimizing every facet of our business, I aim to enhance the return on investment, ensuring that every dollar invested contributes significantly to the overarching mission.

In the long term, I aspire to adapt to the evolving needs of the industry and play a pivotal role in its transformation. I am committed to leading initiatives that drive innovation and performance, positioning our company at the forefront of the energy sector.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Two key pieces of advice for young professionals in the oil and gas industry are: First, don't be quick to jump to conclusions. Take the time to understand different perspectives, as there is significant value in appreciating diverse viewpoints. Second, focus on expanding your networking capacity. Engage with others to enhance your understanding, development and growth as a professional.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

In my leadership role within the oil and gas industry, I prioritize driving performance efficiency by focusing on leading indicators. I assess existing processes to identify opportunities for improvement, introducing new tactics, tools and guidance to enhance operational effectiveness. By fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement among the teams, I ensure we remain agile in responding to industry demands and achieving sustainable growth. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

MEREDITH GIPSON

Director, Renewable Energy Development • Republic Services

AGE: 33 | Phoenix

Earlier in her career, Meredith Gipson learned the value of slamming on the brakes to make forward progress. She was working on a midstream M&A project when her team was directed to pivot to a different transaction. "Bringing a project team to a screeching halt and redirecting momentum towards a new target asset with similarities and many glaring commercial differences was a huge challenge," she says. Success required staying the course toward the ultimate goal of the project and keeping her team focused on closing the deal, even if the transaction's landscape had changed. It speaks to the value Gipson places on her role as a mentor and nurturing talent. "Taking on high-stakes projects and relying on relationships with colleagues who provided honest feedback pushed me to develop problem-solving skills and learn how to manage complex teams."

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Embrace challenges, build a strong network that will support you throughout your career and stay curious, learning new industry trends and technologies.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am motivated by the challenge and impact of our work in this industry and its impact on a global scale. I find that both exciting and fulfilling.

What do you think young industry members have to offer that is unique to them?

Young industry members bring fresh perspectives and a strong grasp of emerging technologies. They are more open to new ideas and approaches, which is vital for innovation and transformation in the industry.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

There will be a need for cultural shifts and adaptability. Embracing a culture of sustainability and doing so swiftly will be crucial for the industry to thrive.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Decisiveness, especially under pressure;

Communication must be clear and effective to foster a quality work environment; and

Adaptability: The oil and gas sector is dynamic and leaders need to navigate changes in regulations, market conditions and technology.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Throughout my career, I have recognized the value of nurturing talent. Early in my career, I was active in producing Lunch & Learns for internal organizations. That has evolved into taking on more of a mentorship role for younger professionals.

What or whom do you credit for helping you develop leadership abilities during your career?

Taking on high-stakes projects and relying on relationships with colleagues who provided honest feedback pushed me to develop problem solving skills and learn how to manage complex teams.

Community service/hobbies/interests:

I was an active volunteer at Bo's Place family bereavement center [in Houston]. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, skiing, surfing or sailing. ■



VIOLETA ALVAREZ



PAUL GOLOB

Data Scientist • Coterra Energy

AGE: 31 | Houston

Paul Golob's career has been driven by an insatiable curiosity. "The oil and gas industry, especially upstream, deals with a lot of unknowns," he says. "We don't have a full understanding of the physics or the driving mechanism for what makes a productive well." For someone who since youth has enjoyed the pursuit of the unknown, petroleum engineering was a natural fit. But his natural curiosity propelled him beyond that, as he became a mostly self-taught programmer and statistician, resulting in his position as a data scientist and reservoir engineer who champions the role of machine learning. "Oil and gas has made huge strides in becoming more involved in the digital transformation," Golob says. "I would like to be a beacon within that journey."

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Don't shy away from the difficult problems. The problems that everyone is avoiding—be the one to take them on. Even though it may feel insurmountable at first, the person you will become on the other side is invaluable. Also, embrace new technology, as it is intended to make you more efficient if you make it work for you.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

A different worldview. The world has changed so much in my short life and even in my time as a professional within the industry. Leveraging computers for efficiency has become a mainstay in our lives and the industry. Within my own experience as a young engineer and data scientist, I have seen an evolution in thinking within the industry. It is no longer a question of if it is possible, it is a question of when we can implement it. I

believe we are only scraping the surface of the digitization that is going to eventually change the industry as a whole.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

As a technical leader at the company, I strive to help anyone interested in expanding their knowledge set. I have spent a fair amount of time mentoring other engineers to become more data literate. When I was a reservoir engineer, I separated myself by understanding and leveraging how the company's data was structured. Most corporations use relational databases to serve up data to the rest of the company via SQL or other queryable means. Understanding how to interact with these systems can be extremely valuable for people who want to analyze data or build tools to help with workflows.

I try to extend my hand anytime somebody wants to learn more about leveraging data. Being conscious of people's varying skill sets is very important in mentoring. I try to meet people where they are and help them get to another level without ever being critical about something they may not understand. The programming world can seem daunting and overwhelming to people unfamiliar. Finding a corner where the given person understands and is comfortable is imperative to build a foundation of confidence such that they can expand on their own. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

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Entry is free, and winners will be featured in the May 2025 issue of *Oil and Gas Investor*. Additionally, the awards will be presented at SUPER DUG 2025, taking place from May 13-15 in Fort Worth, TX.

Deadline for submissions is March 31, 2025.

Contact: meainfo@hartenergy.com with any questions.

HART ENERGY



BRIAN E. HALCHAK

Manager of Environmental Services, QMRV/NextGen Gas • The Williams Cos.

AGE: 31 | Pittsburgh

Brian Halchak's first hint that his career was about to take flight at the Williams Cos. was when, as an entry-level engineer, he was assigned to evaluate the potential for drone use. "I was able to come up with a variety of ideas which led to the purchase of a few drones to test them out," he says. "I spent a year going around and testing drone technologies for use in safety inspections, pipeline monitoring, 3D modeling, vegetation health, methane leak detection and more."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Compassion: A successful leader needs to have the ability to connect with their team on a personal level to build trust with them. Having empathy and actively listening to their thoughts, ideas and concerns are critical to building effective teams.

Decisiveness: Leaders in the oil and gas industry are often faced with difficult decisions that require immediate action. Making the choice to step into a leadership role requires the understanding that there is a responsibility to evaluate and make decisions, even when they are hard or unfavorable. Oftentimes, decisions also need to be made quickly. The leader must have the technical aptitude to be able to rapidly and effectively decide on the best path forward without approval from senior leaders. Doing what is right, regardless of perceptions or what others think, also often leads to tough decisions that leaders need to stand by.

Composure: Maintaining poise and clear thinking under pressure or in stressful situations is critical. A leader is looked up to and

their emotions are reflected in how team members react to situations. Maintaining composure in challenging situations will help the team move forward and solve problems more effectively.

Who is your mentor?

The biggest mentor that I have had throughout my life and career is my father. He was an officer in the United States Army, and the best advice he gave me as I entered into my career was to understand to the best of your abilities the challenges that the people in the field face. His experience was that the best leaders he worked with in the military were the ones who started out enlisted and worked their way up to being officers. He would always tell me that their perspective was extremely valuable because they truly understood the work of their teams, because they had done it in the past. Throughout my internships and early career, I leveraged this advice to be put into positions that allowed me to work directly with operations at Williams, in some cases job shadowing or doing their job with them, so that I can gain that perspective.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I believe there is a need for the oil and gas industry to advance its culture and technological mindset. Fostering a culture that embraces change, flexible work arrangements, digital innovation, experimentation and a data-driven approach to decision-making can foster innovation and help recruit top talent that is needed to progress the industry forward. Embracing technological advancements will help develop intelligent assets that can optimize solutions, support autonomous operations, manage data from a variety of different sources and control risk for operators. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

CALLIE HAMILTON

Managing Director • Prudential Private Capital Energy

AGE: 39 | Dallas

Callie Hamilton saw the “sheer fun of the challenge” in oil and gas and wanted in. “With the constantly evolving technologies and macroeconomic backdrop, combined with the voracious need for capital, there is never a dull moment as a capital provider in the energy industry,” she says. But there are meaningful moments that offer their own challenges. “Coming back to work after having my daughter was the most daunting challenge of my career,” Hamilton says. “Sometimes in your career (and in life for that matter!) you have to take each moment, each day at a time and eventually the roadblocks that seem so unsurmountable just disappear. Over time, I gained the perspective of seeing the benefits of raising a daughter who gets to witness her mom working in a demanding role while managing to maximize both work and life.”

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Education. Better education for the general public on the reality of the conflicting demands and challenges the energy industry faces across the globe. A more candid conversation, free of the tones of animosity and separatism, on how it will take the collective to broaden and diversify energy availability in a responsible manner across the globe.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

The best lesson I have learned over the years is that goodwill matters; give people your time in a genuine and candid manner.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department?

I think where I have added the most value for my group is constantly working to identify and implement process improvements where needed, proactively finding ways to operate more effectively and efficiently. In the investment underwriting process, it can be easy to get lost in the details, so I have worked with our team to develop new forms of various memo and model forms we frequently use to make our work products more efficient to draft, check for accuracy and compare across transactions. These process improvements have allowed our team to

focus more time on the critical analysis and less on the creation of the internal material.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

Energy is the obvious lifeblood of the global economy and a basic necessity for all productivity so it cannot be ignored as an institutional investor looking to deploy capital. While certainly challenging, I think it is an exciting time to be working in the oil and gas industry when so many variables and considerations beyond profitability are increasingly part of the conversation.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I think the younger generation of leaders has the advantage of finding their voice at a juncture that coincides with a major systemic shift in the culture of the oil and gas industry. As the oil and gas industry must evolve to survive, from a model of turning a quick profit to creating more lasting, yielding entities, the younger leaders will be able to adapt without the entrenched patterns of the past. ■



VIOLETA ALVAREZ



RYAN HEALY

Vice President, Production • Encino Energy

AGE: 38 | Houston

An enthusiast for camping, hunting and fishing, Ryan Healy moved into the oil and gas industry because he wasn't happy working indoors. "I wanted a job that got me outside in a fast-paced environment where I could learn something new every day," he said. Healy landed the position of field supervisor for Range Resources at age 23, a career leap that he attributes to his work ethic. "I was considered for that role because I made myself available for any role in the organization that I would add value to."

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

I like building and developing new teams. I have done this with close to 20 teams at this point in my career. I also like helping co-workers overcome their doubts and accomplish tasks or projects they didn't think they were capable of completing.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

I think an effective leader should have a servant-style leadership. The leader should thoroughly understand their team and how to leverage individuals within the team to get the best consistent results for the organization. A leader needs to be prepared and well organized so their expectations can always be clearly understood from others.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

I worked on and was the lease operator for one of the first horizontal Marcellus wells. It was an extremely successful project that helped put the Marcellus Formation on the map as one of the premier oil and gas plays.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

This industry has provided me and my family a lifestyle that I never thought was possible. I also believe this industry provides so many positive impacts for so many different aspects of our daily lives.

What or whom do you credit for helping you develop leadership abilities during your career?

I would say my two biggest influences on my career

"I have often provided teams or other employees leadership books that I like that fit my management style."

would be John Applegath [previous Encino vice president of production operations] and Ray Walker [Encion COO]. When I first started in oil and gas, they were in my eyes the perfect example of a leader. They were respected, well liked and expected the highest level of execution—and built their respective teams accordingly.

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

Network with as many folks as your time allows and make sure to always be prepared for any opportunity.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I think this group, in particular, has enough experience and a unique ability to leverage technology to help continue to improve the overall performance of the industry.

What has been your most challenging project to date?

I think the most challenging project I helped manage to date was growing a field office from 8.5 MMcf/d to over 2 Bcf/d. When I started with that team, there were five of us and when I left, that team had over 120 employees. I think throughout those years I learned a lot about how to make a team successful and how to develop talent to accomplish projects safely and efficiently. ■



Congratulations, Ryan Healy,

for being named one of Hart Energy's 2024 *Oil & Gas Investor* Forty Under 40 honorees. You've made a profound impact at Encino Energy, in the communities where we operate, and on the entire industry. Thanks for the important role you and your team play in producing sustainable, reliable American energy.



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PAUL HEERWAGEN IV

Managing Partner and CEO • Selenite Energy Partners

AGE: 40 | Oklahoma City

“The oil and gas business is in my blood,” Paul Heerwagen says. But he was drawn to the industry by more than just his immersion from a young age as his father’s career took his family to various international locales. He was also fascinated by the way the work is done. “The complexity of the business excites me because it demands collaboration among multi-disciplinary teams to achieve shared goals. This combined effort fosters lifelong learning and ongoing growth opportunities, both across disciplines and in response to the industry’s dynamic and cyclical nature.”

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

With a renewed focus on capital discipline and environmental and social responsibility, I think the industry is pointed in the right direction regarding the overall sustainability of the business. The model has been laid out and it is now incumbent upon us to make good on our promises and execute the plan. This will require a cross-functional effort and require everyone to pull in the same direction—discipline across the industry benefits everyone while a lack of discipline leads to a zero-sum game.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

The energy business is a fast-moving and dynamic industry. Young professionals who are able to recognize opportunities (whether inefficiencies in the market, overlooked assets or ways to personally add value) will differentiate themselves.

However, success will be determined by the individuals that are willing to do the work

when no one else will or by those who are willing to take a calculated risk when something is out of

“You have the opportunity to learn from everyone that crosses your path.”

favor. In my career, it was sometimes (often) the seemingly small opportunities, to which I said yes, that developed into really significant career milestones. I would also add that, while it does not come naturally to me personally, the value of diligently networking cannot be overstated. This is a relationship-driven industry and every opportunity we have had at Selenite, beginning with its inception, has been in some way catalyzed by the relationships that our team has built over the course of our careers.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

I think it is important to be both dynamic and adaptable. This is a cyclical business that is driven by constant innovation and shifting investor, regulatory and consumer demands and expectations. Being open to new ideas and being able to pivot when necessary is critical. It is also very important to be inquisitive and then really earnestly listen to the responses your questions are prompting. Decision-making in this industry is heavily reliant on cooperation across disciplinary functions—land, engineering, geo, finance, etc. No one person, or discipline, can or will ever hold all of the answers in a vacuum. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

At Carnelian, we take pride in partnering with today's leading energy industry entrepreneurs, such as Paul Heerwagen



We congratulate Paul on his selection as one of *Oil and Gas Investor's*

Forty Under 40 honorees. Paul's leadership, strategic thinking and commercial acumen have been critical to the continued success of Selenite, and we are grateful for our longstanding partnership

with Paul, Margaret, Lindsey and the rest of the Selenite team.

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MELANIE HILL

General Manager, Shale Production • Danos

AGE: 36 | Houston

Funny how the oil and gas business can grow on a person. When she started her career, Melanie Hill imagined herself happy with a finance job in which travel was defined as a daily commute to the office. But when an opportunity popped up to join the operations side of the energy business, she seized it and headed to the airport. "Now, 15 years later, I am traveling all over the Lower 48 visiting Danos employees and customers," she says. In her position as general manager, she is one of the few women in senior operational leadership. "I credit Danos for their support and commitment to people and community. Their actions, such as community

engagement, align with my values and make my achievements even more meaningful."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Effective communication with employees, customers and communities is vital. Leaders must be transparent and capable of managing diverse stakeholder interests. In addition, leaders should mentor future leaders and empower their teams to make decisions, innovate and reach their goals.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Finding a mentor and seeking their guidance is a crucial aspect of career development in any industry, including oil and gas. By actively listening to mentors and incorporating their advice into your professional journey, you can accelerate your growth, navigate challenges more effectively and build a solid foundation for a successful career in the industry.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The industry offers diverse career opportunities across various disciplines, from engineering and geosciences to finance, project management and sustainability. This diversity allows professionals to develop and explore different career paths. Personally, I have worked in many of the different areas including finance, commercial, management and operations.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

Having grown up with rapidly changing technology, many young professionals are entrepreneurial and

"I have worked in many of the different areas [of the industry] including finance, commercial, management and operations."

innovative. This allows them to be more willing to challenge traditional ways of thinking and to explore new business models, partnerships and technologies that drive industry progress.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

In today's world, the industry must be more agile and adaptable to market fluctuations, geopolitical shifts and regulatory changes. This involves streamlining operations, reducing bureaucracy and fostering a culture of innovation and quick decision-making.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Throughout my tenure at Danos, I have prioritized safety and continuous improvement. By fostering a culture of safety, we have not only improved our operational efficiency but also ensured the well-being of our workforce. Additionally, I try to encourage a mindset of continuous improvement by implementing regular feedback sessions and promoting innovative solutions to help solve challenges. ■

“I’ve learned a lot through experiencing some new challenges for the first time and having to figure them out in real time.”

BROCK NIEZGODA



VIOLETA ALVAREZ



JAKE HOOD

Director of Finance • Brazos Midstream

AGE: 31 | Fort Worth, Texas

Jake Hood learned quickly how small teams can make big impacts in oil and gas. His group of a few talented and motivated individuals navigated capital restructuring and other challenges to help Brazos Midstream develop its assets in the Delaware Basin, where it is a leading midstream provider. "At Brazos, I have been empowered to lead several large-scale M&A opportunities," he says. "These experiences quickly highlighted how much I have yet to learn, but I relied on our team members from various disciplines to develop analyses and presentations. Regardless of the outcome, going through the legwork of these deal processes has been incredibly instructive and rewarding."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Strong leaders in this industry build and maintain valuable networks, understanding that collaboration is key to success. They surround themselves with intelligent and ambitious individuals and are the first to credit their teams for success. They possess the courage to take calculated risks and treat people with respect, providing the necessary support for their teams to innovate and achieve.

Which career milestone did you reach sooner than you had planned, and what helped you reach it earlier than expected?

We launched a new company, Brazos Midstream III, via an acquisition in late 2021. I hadn't expected to start a new venture that early in my career, but fortunately, we had an ambitious team ready to seize the opportunity. Working with our equity and debt capital providers to establish a new entity and gain a foothold in a new basin was an invaluable experience.

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

We've recently experienced a highly volatile commodity price environment due to events like Winter Storm Uri and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with both crude and natural gas trading at negative levels in the Permian. In my finance role, these situations completely flipped my usual way of thinking. The team and I worked hard to generate novel and untraditional solutions to provide a high level of service to our customers while maximizing economic benefit.

"Taking calculated risks is fundamental to success, and empowering and entrusting your team is essential."

Our successful efforts reinforced that we can continue to navigate these types of unprecedented challenges.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

This industry is dynamic and ever-evolving, constantly presenting new problems to solve, which keeps me engaged and motivated. I enjoy working with the people in our industry—they are intelligent, thoughtful and collaborative, making every challenge a rewarding experience.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

The oil and gas industry must strive to improve its communication with the public, emphasizing the critical role it plays in providing affordable energy for the growing global population, which is vital to human welfare. It is important to dispel misconceptions and highlight the benefits that reliable energy sources bring to society. Advocating for the positive impacts of the industry can reshape public perception. ■



Brazos
Midstream

CONGRATULATIONS
Jake Hood

on your achievement of being
named one of 40 under 40 in
the oil and gas industry

40
under
40





BRAYDEN HUDSON

Vice President, CFO • Trellis Energy Partners

AGE: 36 | Fort Worth, Texas

Soon after Brayden Hudson started a new job as controller of his company, he was given a deadline to get a \$100 million deal completed in less than two months. The company had no debt in place and not enough equity to close the transaction, but Hudson set his financial wizardry in motion and got it done. He is the kind of guy willing to jump in and learning new. "Because of that and my work ethic," he says, "I was given responsibilities in turbulent times within various organizations, which ultimately led to my promotion as CFO."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

This industry is transaction-based so it requires some long days and nights. Being able to anticipate tomorrow's needs is a necessity. We are a relationship-based industry, so being friendly and helpful to everyone and not doing things to go behind people's backs or hurt them is important.

What or whom do you credit for helping you develop leadership abilities during your career?

The relationships I have developed along the way. I've had senior leaders at each company I've been at who have been open and willing to help shape me. They have taught me a lot about the industry, how to treat people, and how to work hard.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

I aim to lead by example. I also give people the freedom to be who they are and what they are good at. I want everyone to work together, respect one another and feel the ability to speak up when needed. I do expect the team to work hard and put in the effort, but also get to relax and enjoy life when slower times happen.

Who is your mentor? What is the most valuable advice they have given you?

One of the two best pieces of advice came from a prior CFO I reported to. He always told me I couldn't see the forest for the trees and taught me to step back and look at everything. He also told me to "play dumb," asking lots of questions even if I may know the answer because multiple perspectives and more knowledge was always helpful.

"I believe a lot of luck follows hard work."

What advice would you give other young professionals in the industry?

I believe a lot of luck follows hard work. Stay the trail and believe in yourself and those around you. Take time for your family and friends and those relationships you have professionally. Be respectful and helpful, not for the sole purpose of serving yourself, although good things tend to come back around.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I still foresee the industry as pivotal for future energy inputs for the world. I enjoy the declining nature of the asset as it challenges us each and every day. I hope to see new technology and new ideas out there and how we can marry all this to a better future.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

Energy and new ideas. They aren't set in their ways and can challenge the standards.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Technology is the biggest thing. We need to keep the best and brightest in the industry as well and not lose them to other "attractive" industries. ■

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AUSTIN HUGHES

Senior Vice President • Petrie Partners

AGE: 30 | Houston

The biggest M&A transaction in the world in 2023 was Exxon Mobil's \$65 billion merger with Pioneer Natural Resources and Austin Hughes was all over it, generating key analyses for Petrie Partners' client, Pioneer. The "deal was one of the most challenging, given the small circle of knowledge about the potential transaction over a long period of time," he says. "It required focus and attention to every detail and, in the final months, the flexibility to be on call 24/7."



Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

I was responsible for much of the analyses Petrie Partners generated to support the senior leadership of Pioneer Natural Resources in its negotiating with Exxon Mobil. Petrie Partners was chosen to advise Pioneer on this crucial transaction not only for our excellent advisory work, but also because of Pioneer's confidence that our firm could keep the largest oil and gas transaction this century under wraps for an extended period of time. Our team fulfilled these roles diligently and thoughtfully and it was an honor to serve on such an historic deal.

A specific point of personal pride arose from being assigned the responsibility of devising a succinct summary of various merger analyses ahead of pivotal interactions between the companies' CEOs. We updated this one-page table at least daily for weeks. That document became a sort of negotiation Rosetta Stone for efficient translation between exchange ratios, implied offer prices, stock price

premiums and pro forma ownership profiles, ultimately being referred to as the "famous Petrie slide" by executives on both sides of the transaction.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Increased collaboration and education on a global scale would help immensely as our industry works to fulfill the largest demand for energy and natural resources the world has ever seen. I'd like to see more pragmatism throughout the industry, recognizing that addressing growing global energy demand in the decades to come will require all types of energy and technologies, while also moving the needle on decarbonization efforts.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

During my recent wedding, a gentleman I have looked up to my entire life and the namesake of my firm, Tom Petrie, offered a poignant public tribute I will never forget. After recounting for all the attendees how much he had enjoyed working with me on a jointly authored article on energy policy and geopolitics, Tom highlighted what he viewed as my unique skill sets. He described how in a boutique-sized organization like Petrie Partners, the senior partners would rely on me to seamlessly act as the bridge between themselves and the junior bankers, and, as needed, to do the work of each of them. In other words, I am adept at wearing a lot of hats and I relish the challenges that come with that broad responsibility. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

Congratulations Austin Hughes

on being named to
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the Energy Industry



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MARSHALL HUNT

COO • Petro-Hunt

AGE: 40 | Dallas

Marshall Hunt represents the fourth generation of one of the most storied names in the oil and gas business, but he was still expected to work his way up in his family's company. "I started working for Petro-Hunt right after college graduation," he says. "I was sent to North Dakota to begin working in the Land Department. I spent three years living and working in the Williston Basin, traveling around to different towns and counties doing title and leasing efforts. I gained a lot of experience quickly, and had many memorable experiences negotiating leases with the farmers and other land owners in the area. I also was able to learn more on the operations side as the Bakken play was emerging during the end of my tenure in North Dakota."

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud?

Starting and growing a couple of different businesses that my brothers, cousins and I founded.

Seeing that we were able to take these startups and grow them in to substantial businesses with real holdings was fun and exciting.

In addition, the work achievements at Petro-Hunt, which has included growing our asset base and production in a substantial manner over the last 15 years, along with divestures and acquisitions to better position the company.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

I believe that you have to be hungry and have a strong work ethic. You also need to be willing to empower your team and colleagues to make decisions and advance the goals the company has outlined. You also need to be authentic and have integrity in this industry.

How have you exercised leadership

to help shape your company?

In this industry, you have several different departments that all have to row in the same direction. Being able

to break down silos within an organization is important, and ensuring all the different departments in the organization are collaborating is very important. If you allow for a "silo" mentality you will lose efficiency and that will lead to lesser results and higher costs.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

Working for a family business and waking up every day striving to continue to build on the current family legacy and building for the future generations that hopefully enter the business. Also, knowing all the good that our industry provides for people domestically and globally. Knowing that the product we produce allows us in the developed world to enjoy all the privileges we have today such as cooling and heating our homes, propelling autos and planes, and much more that we take for granted in our daily lives. Also, that one day those in the developing world may have access to the same luxury.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Continue to develop technology and invest and innovate. In many cases, we are only getting a small portion of the hydrocarbons out of the ground (4%-8%) compared to what is in place. How can we continue to enhance recovery? Continuing to invest in technology and innovation will help recover more reserves economically. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



www.petrohunt.com

SHIRLEY IKE

Global Director, Digital Consulting • Wood

AGE: 38 | Houston



Crossing the pond from her home in the U.K. to the U.S. plunged Shirley Ike into the deep end of her career pool. She only planned to stay for half a year, but significant turnover in her team left many projects in disarray. Her responsibilities expanded from her role in product optimization for the Americas to leading the growth of the digital transformation and innovation team. It all led to her current position as a global director within the digital consulting team. "The relocation presented a 'sink or swim' situation," she says, "but by effectively managing the team through a difficult transition, I was able to demonstrate my capabilities and earn greater responsibilities that have accelerated my career progression."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

To be an effective leader in the oil and gas industry, you need a solid understanding of the business you are tasked with leading. This foundational knowledge of the industry's technical operations, processes and challenges is crucial for making informed decisions.

Alongside this industry expertise, strong commercial acumen is necessary to balance technical considerations with the realities of finance, profitability and market dynamics. Moreover, the oil and gas sector is renowned for its dynamic and ever-changing nature. As

such, adaptability is crucial for leaders to have. The capacity to quickly respond to changing regulations, technologies, market conditions and pivot

strategies, accordingly, is key to maintaining a competitive edge.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, exceptional communication skills are a hallmark of successful leaders. The ability to build cross-functional, often geographically dispersed, teams and align them with the organization's strategy is a key differentiator. Leaders must be adept at inspiring and enrolling their teams, as they are the backbone of the organization's success.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I firmly believe that the transformations in approach, culture and technology are all essential for the energy industry to thrive in the years to come. We must take a holistic and far-sighted view that goes beyond just profitability, and encompasses environmental, social and governance considerations.

This broader, more sustainable approach is crucial because we have a responsibility to ensure there is a viable future, both for our industry and the planet as a whole. We must continuously work to limit the negative environmental impact of our operations and champion sustainability at every turn. This is not just the right thing to do, but a strategic imperative as we navigate the energy transition. Equally important is the social aspect of our transformation. We need to continue to foster a culture of collaboration, inclusivity and fairness, ensuring that all our people are treated equitably and empowered to contribute their unique talents. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

“What matters most to me are the people I have met and befriended along the way, who come from all corners of the planet.”

MAGGIE ALBRECHT



VIOLETA ALVAREZ

BRAYDN JOHNSON

Geoscience Manager – Haynesville • Expand Energy

AGE: 39 | Oklahoma City

Brady Johnson's father and grandfather worked in the energy industry, but that career path, he had firmly decided, was not for him. As a college freshman, however, he found himself needing to fulfill a lab science requirement and picked Intro to Geology. It was a fateful choice. By the end of the semester, he had switched his major to geology, and a later internship with Chesapeake Energy confirmed that this was where he had to be. "During this time, the Barnett Shale was exploding with activity in Fort Worth," he says. "I was hooked."



What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

A good leader in the oil and gas industry must possess humility, curiosity, patience and a willingness to get involved in the work. These qualities help leaders build strong, cohesive teams capable of navigating the industry's complexities and driving their organizations toward long-term success. By embodying these traits, leaders can inspire their teams to innovate, persevere, and excel in a highly volatile and competitive industry.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

I exercised leadership in my role to influence Haynesville Geoscience to create better business outcomes such as drilling cost savings, consistency in execution, and capital efficiency. I focused on bridging the gap between Drilling and Geology departments by fostering collaboration to improve execution. Asking drilling peers what pain points exist and how we can improve opened opportunities to change targeting practices that resulted in immediate reduction of program

nonproductive time. The synergy between Drilling and Geology led to reduced drilling costs, marking advancement in operational effectiveness.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.


One of my most memorable professional experiences was working with my dad, who served as both a mentor and a technical adviser. One of the most significant insights I gained from him was how to think differently than most geologists.

My dad emphasized the importance of a holistic view of production data and reservoir characterization. Instead of focusing narrowly on individual aspects, he taught me to consider the broader picture—how various elements interact and influence each other within a reservoir. This approach allowed me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the systems we were working with, and leverage that understanding into new ideas and innovative solutions.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

Providing essential energy: I am passionate about contributing to the global energy supply. The world is in dire need of energy sources that are not only affordable and reliable but also lower in carbon emissions. Working in this industry allows me to play a part in delivering such energy solutions, which is both fulfilling and impactful. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

A portrait of Braydn Johnson, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a white button-down shirt. The background is a mix of blue and white geometric patterns, including a large blue triangle on the left and a white triangle on the right.

Expand Energy would like to congratulate Braydn Johnson, Manager – Geoscience, for being recognized as one of Hart Energy’s 40 Under 40.

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TONY KROSCHESKY

CEO • Merit Advisors

AGE: 35 | Dallas

What does it take to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry? "You must have an obsession for winning," says Tony Kroschewsky. "In our industry, we face an assortment of challenges, not to mention volatile commodity prices... you must know how to make money and lead your organization in that manner." Kroschewsky started winning from the start, graduating college just as the shale business was starting its boom. "I knew I wanted to be in a position to accelerate my career path, starting in energy investment banking in Houston was the logical choice. There isn't an industry that has better people than the oil and gas industry, and because of that, I wouldn't have it any other way."

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

Along each stop in my career, I've been fortunate to be on teams where we have generated significant value for our stakeholders. We had tremendous success in the recapitalization of Oil Patch Group with SCF Partners, and numerous years (in a very tough period for oil and gas equities) of double-digit returns at Brenham Capital with over \$1 billion of capital under management.

However, I am most proud of the team we've assembled at Merit Advisors and what we've been able to accomplish for our clients. Over the last three years, we've reduced our clients' cash operating costs by over half a billion dollars. Our clients have been able to reinvest this capital back into their businesses and enhance returns for their equity holders.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Global demand for energy and power will only continue to grow. As leaders, we need to educate the world around us on the various options to solve for that. In the U.S., we collectively lack the fundamental

understanding of what it takes to power our homes and businesses. We quickly forget that every major recession since WWII was preceded by high energy prices. If we could take the politics out of it and focus on human flourishing, we could be working together to continue to develop the safest, cleanest and most reliable source of energy on the planet.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

As the world has developed, the key ingredient for economic growth and human flourishing has been access to cheap and reliable energy. I believe our industry is committed to delivering this in the cleanest and safest way possible. Oil and natural gas will be the essential part of the energy value chain for decades to come, and getting to work toward the mission of delivering this cheap, safe, and reliable energy stream to the world with incredibly talented colleagues, clients and friends is a dream come true.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Focus on what it takes to be successful today and be intentional about your future. People are the most important part of anything you do, so take care of your family, friends, colleagues and employees, because you can't do much in life without them. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

MERIT ADVISORS IS HONORED
TO HAVE OUR CEO

**TONY
KROSCHESKY**

ON BEING NAMED
OIL & GAS INVESTOR'S
FORTY UNDER 40

“ I am most proud of the team we've assembled at Merit Advisors and what we've been able to accomplish for our clients. Over the last three years, we've reduced our clients cash operating costs by over half a billion dollars, our clients have been able to reinvest this capital back into their businesses and enhance returns for their equity holders.



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FRAZ MALIK

Regulation Advisor • Shell Trading & Supply

AGE: 39 | Houston

Immersed in oil and gas since childhood as the son of an accountant for Pennzoil, Fraz Malik envisioned himself as a legal subject matter expert in the industry—"an indispensable member of a team [who] could provide sound advice." It didn't take him long to get there. His team manager selected him as an emerging talent, which positioned him for opportunities to lead people and projects, and exposed him to prominent leaders in the organization to learn what makes them great leaders. "While I have hit many small milestones throughout my career," he says, "I believe being identified as an emerging leader and continuing to develop is taking me on the pathway towards my next and larger milestone."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Communication and integrity are key proponents of becoming a good leader. Creating a workplace culture where it is safe to speak up and discuss items without judgment is motivating.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

I would tell young professionals to be intellectually curious and to be flexible and adapt to change. The oil and gas industry is constantly changing and it is important to be able to adapt and transition quickly. I also believe it is important to challenge the norms and perspectives to come up with new and creative ideas as a part of the energy transition.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I absolutely enjoy working in the oil and gas industry because of the direct impact it has on our day-to-day lives. In particular, working within trading and supply, there have been various challenges, such as working within a complex geopolitical landscape during a time of

heightened tensions. Tackling these novel challenges and navigating the regulatory landscape is exciting and rewarding.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I believe that young industry members come in with a unique perspective as they ask the question: why are we doing the same thing we've been doing for the last 10 years? At times, I believe professionals within the oil and gas industry have gotten used to doing things as they've always been done and processes may not have been challenged before. I believe young professionals ask questions and are trying to streamline things, whether it be through artificial intelligence and machine learning or through simplifying antiquated processes.

Which transformations—approach, culture, technology or other—do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

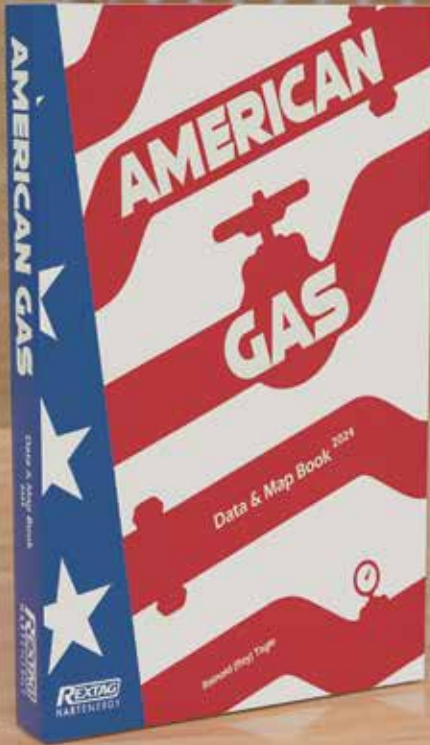
I believe the industry is already undergoing a digital transformation, however, as this is occurring, it will be important for the oil and gas industry to be able to adapt to changes quickly. As technology rapidly develops, there will be use cases for automation, artificial intelligence and blockchain technology. Oil and gas companies should anticipate some of these changes (and the associated regulatory space) instead of reacting to changes. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

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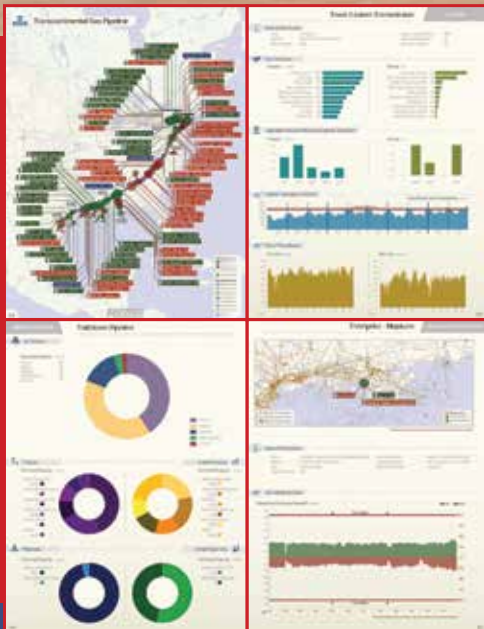


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BLAKE McKENNA

President and COO • XCL Resources

AGE: 37 | Denver

Blake McKenna may not have always wanted to join the oil and gas industry, but the co-founder of XCL Resources at age 31 had long been primed to lead. He credits his father for providing key mentorship wisdom. "Growing up, I was always eager for the next thing, and he would remark that "in order to be a candidate for something, you have to first be content not having it," he says. "Identifying and empowering individuals to their maximum potential within a team, and then incentivizing them for their achievements is my favorite part about being a leader." His early career path took him to the Colorado School of Mines, to the oil field as a roughneck on a drilling rig and to an internship at EOG Resources, where he was "hooked for life."

Community service/hobbies/interests:

I have volunteered at crisis pregnancy centers for young mothers alongside my wife, and currently work with migrant refugees seeking asylum. I enjoy everything active and outdoors with family and friends, especially skiing and powerlifting.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Humility is my big one. A leader's job is to elevate others to success via an ownership mentality. Owners are incentivized and carry ultimate responsibility for everything within their world. A good leader can enable others rise to their potential and celebrate their success.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

We give the upside to as many people as we can. Good teams share in the victory, but it takes the effort and desire to let others share in the group's success.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

If you want to be a leader, you need to quickly learn that it's not about you. It's about others. The more you make your work about the team that surrounds you, the more responsibility you will find willingly comes your way.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

Long term is to grow a continued focus on building and empowering teams. Short term is to build some boundaries around my time and focus on the most important things.

"Get weird, wildcat a little and take some risks!"

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The people. The oil and gas industry has a unique culture of very competitive and relational individuals. I love every minute of it.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

It's almost always going to be energy and creative thought. Innovation usually, though not always, rests with the young and eager. When I first started in the industry, this age range was sparse, and the industry had become fairly stagnant after two rough decades. But as soon as oil prices went up and the young men and women came streaming in, it came to life with new innovations and momentum.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Without a massive technological change, we are becoming a business increasingly existing on operating margins as our remaining undeveloped locations get drilled. Progress in a period of asset blow-downs is tough without risk and creativity. Get weird, wildcat a little and take some risks! ■

“Young industry members, those under 40, have a unique advantage: we are the tech-savvy generation.”

ASHI GEBERKIDANE



VIOLETA ALVAREZ

KYLE McQUIRE

President and COO • Peak 10 Energy

AGE: 39 | Houston

Kyle McQuire, who co-founded Peak 10 Energy in 2023, has an appreciation for the complexity of a company and how it should influence leadership. "You need to be able to synthesize information from many different sources and specialties to make decisions in strategic ways," he says. "You cannot simply focus on the specific path that got you to where you are, whether it be finance, engineering or accounting. As such, you have to build a strong team and trust their work and judgment while also building a culture that is comfortable with candid and constructive debate." Also, knowing what to do when things go south, particularly with a new organization, is essential. "Everything never goes perfectly, especially when you're going 100 mph. Recently we've had to answer for some of the things that haven't gone right and I've ensured that the buck stops with me."



How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

In this early stage of our company, we have many moving parts and many people contributing in various different ways.

I have made sure to drive collaboration and transparent communication among different technical functions, consultants, financial partners and board members. This includes encouraging junior team members to communicate points directly to financial partners. Additionally, taking responsibility for failures and giving credit for success is important.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Learn as much as you can and work as hard as you can in your early career. Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't be afraid to fail. Also, make sure to dig through

the well files and read the notes on the paper logs.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

The people in this industry are so gracious, smart and innovative. I am always encouraged by the interactions I have with colleagues; hearing what they're doing and how they're advancing their part of our industry.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

My long- and short-term goal is to build Peak 10 Energy into a long-term sustainable cash flow generating company. I want to grow it into a company that will withstand the inevitable economic cycles that we all know will come. Our team knows what that will take and we are doing the work to make that happen.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I think that there needs to be continued and potentially increased focus on domestic oil exploration. The biggest challenge I see to our current success is the known parent-child depletion risks in our unconventional plays. This may become an issue in the next five years or it could be in the next 15, but eventually we will need to replace these massive reserves that we've discovered over the last decade. Whether that's testing deeper (or shallower) reservoirs in our existing basins or testing new concepts on the fringes of the existing plays, we should be searching for the next big thing(s). ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



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JOE MELLO

Vice President and Team Leader • Netherland, Sewell & Associates, Inc.

AGE: 36 | Houston

Early in his career as a reservoir engineer for Exxon Mobil, Joe Mello was assigned to work offshore California to identify optimizations that could enhance the facility's bottom line. "I gained a huge appreciation for all the different pieces that have to fall in place for a successful offshore operation, all the knobs that you can turn to improve an asset's profitability, and the importance of viewing assets with a mindset that integrates surface and subsurface disciplines," he says. "That experience really opened my eyes to the huge potential that can remain overlooked at oil and gas assets, hiding in plain sight or inhibited by organizational inertia. I learned to never take a lack of historical action as evidence that

something isn't a potentially valuable idea worth investigating—that's something I still apply when working on oil and gas A&D projects today."

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

Complex technical challenges are abundant. There are endless permutations of reservoirs to evaluate—for hydrocarbon production and carbon sequestration—so there's always something new to tackle. That variety keeps me engaged and excited to come to work every day! My CCS [carbon capture and sequestration] work in particular is also exposing me to new segments of the energy industry that have not had much need for oil and gas evaluation services in the past—ethanol producers, capture equipment manufacturers, "green" investment funds. I'm energized by meeting new people and learning about the needs and concerns of other areas of the broader energy industry.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department?

By leading and growing NSAI's CCS project evaluation team, I have found opportunities to collaborate with my colleagues on CCS projects to further enhance their expertise, and I have positioned NSAI to serve the entire carbon value chain from production to sequestration over the long term. The typical services we provide around reserves evaluations extend organically into CCS evaluations, so I have needed to focus on sharing the workflows that I use and the unique considerations that are more important in CCS than the upstream side of the industry, as opposed to needing to train on the core technical skills that are needed, such as the use of dynamic simulations.

"Always try to seek out new skills and experiences—you'll never know what opportunities may arise from having your own unique blend of insight."

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Right or wrong, policymakers around the developed world seem to be heading towards incentivizing decarbonization. But hydrocarbons are just so useful in terms of energy density, abundance, cost and utility for things like plastics and chemicals that I don't think demand for them will diminish quickly. In order to thrive in the future, I think the oil and gas industry needs to embrace the CCS sector as an integral and necessary part of the hydrocarbon value chain going forward and strive to develop projects over the next decade that demonstrate the safety/security of storage and the scalability of CCS to the public. The oil and gas industry has the people with the technical expertise, the infrastructure, and the safety culture to make CCS work at scale, so it makes sense that we as an industry should take a leading role in developing these projects and ensuring we maintain a societal license to operate as long as there is demand for hydrocarbons. ■



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LANE NEAL

Managing Director, Technical • Quantum Capital Group

AGE: 39 | Houston

Lane Neal was drawn to the oil and gas industry because it is, well, cool. "I can still remember being a very young child going to work with my dad [a petroleum engineer] for 'weekend duty' where he had to handle morning calls with the rigs he and his team were running, and being fascinated by the cool technology in the office," he says. Neal developed his knack for technical problem-solving and joined the industry as an engineer, but in 2020 made the leap to oil and gas energy finance. "This opportunity has allowed me to expand my skill set, financial acumen and overall capabilities as not only an engineer but aspiring future CEO in ways that I never imagined possible."



What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Servant leadership:

This is one of the most critical skills that a good leader exhibits. Nothing is more galvanizing for a team than a leader who not only talks the talk, but is willing to get their hands dirty, who truly has skin in the game and helps their team accomplish goals.

Humility: The best leaders are ones who are open to be challenged and encourage their teams to come up with new ideas.

Great communication skills: The best leaders are those able to clearly communicate expectations, quickly correct if a project is going in the wrong direction, and articulate clear goals for the team that allow for a common vision.

Strategic thinking: The best

leaders can anticipate the needs of the business and position

their teams to provide solutions, sometimes even before the problems present themselves.

What or whom do you credit for helping you develop leadership abilities during your career?

My career arc has had a lot of particular twists and turns which, at the time, have seemed like difficult situations but have ultimately provided me with an irreplaceable perspective and ability to understand potential risk and upsides that has truly made me the engineer and leader I am today. I have grown to appreciate the concept that difficult situations truly develop great leaders (rough seas make great sailors) and in retrospect, I realize that there were situations I wish I had run toward instead of away from as I probably missed out on even more great lessons and development opportunities.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

It sounds cliché, but you can't control whether you are the most gifted, naturally intelligent person in the room. What you can control is how hard you work, how much you care, and how you treat people.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am truly passionate about helping to provide our world with clean and reliable sources of energy. I love what I do! ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



CONGRATULATIONS

TO OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL

LANE NEAL!

As Quantum continues to partner with leading energy and sustainability entrepreneurs across the energy value chain, Lane's technical expertise and leadership have been instrumental in optimizing our processes for both existing portfolio companies and future investments, allowing us to deliver clean energy responsibly.

We are excited to celebrate his contributions to Quantum and the broader industry as he helps drive technical progress across the sustainable energy ecosystem and throughout the communities in which we do business. His strategic thinking, collaborative spirit, and commitment to results help us to position Quantum as a leader and empower our team's success.

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ALISON NELSON

Vice President, Business Development • Tallgrass

AGE: 36 | Houston

Alison Nelson admittedly knew little about oil and gas while growing up in Hawaii, but a college internship at ConocoPhillips introduced her to the entire energy value chain and the diversity of careers in the industry. She has found her role in low-carbon energy solutions, where she recently commercialized one of the nation's first large-scale carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) projects and was architect of a joint venture involving Tallgrass, United Airlines and Green Plains that is expected to produce United's largest source of sustainable aviation fuel. Orchestrating the transactions, she says, "gave me the opportunity to demonstrate the creativity and drive that leaders in the

oil and gas sector need to succeed in the changing energy landscape."

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

My most challenging project thus far, but also one of which I am uniquely proud, is the commercialization of Tallgrass' Trailblazer CCS project. Trailblazer is the first CCS project to involve the conversion of an interstate natural gas pipeline to CO₂ service. When placed in service in 2025, the project will not only sequester millions of tons of CO₂ annually but will also position U.S. ethanol and agriculture to be an even more significant player in global decarbonization efforts.

Crafting and negotiating commercial structures in such a nascent industry to meet the needs of our customers and underpin a multi-billion-dollar investment required drawing from past experiences while also being comfortable with determining acceptable levels of uncertainty and risk.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

A good leader places an emphasis not only on what is accomplished but how it came to be. Driving results may make you successful in isolation, but a truly good leader delivers outcomes by inspiring others with their own actions, building trust by holding themselves and their team accountable to the same standards, and putting their team into positions where they can make the best use of their individual strengths and capabilities.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Since joining Tallgrass, I have helped drive its transformation from a traditional midstream company to one that is at the forefront of the low-carbon space

"If you are in the room, you are there for a reason."

by leading by example with my work ethic and also ensuring that the organization is aligned and understands our objectives.

I believe delivering results is contagious and motivates others to put forth the same level of effort. Providing an overarching vision, by consistently taking the time to ensure team members are aware of and appreciate our project-specific dynamics, maximizes those efforts.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Speak up. Don't hesitate to ask questions or share your perspective. Tough questions and unique perspectives can often lead to new and more effective ways of approaching a problem, and at the very least help prevent time-consuming mistakes. If you are in the room, you are there for a reason.

What are your long- and short-term career goals?

The oil and gas industry is currently positioned to transform how we deliver energy solutions to our customers. While natural gas and crude will continue to be a significant and critical part of those solutions, our industry has the opportunity to reduce our own carbon footprint and to assist other industries in reducing theirs. My career goal, in the long and short term, is to positively influence the direction of the industry as we take on this new challenge. ■

FORTY 40 UNDER

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Congratulations to Alison Nelson, VP of Business Development at Tallgrass, on being named to a prominent Forty Under 40 list! Your vision and leadership have been instrumental in shaping the future of energy infrastructure. We are honored to work alongside you as you continue to lead with passion and purpose.





BROCK NIEZGODA

Partner • Gray Reed

AGE: 38 | Houston

Brock Niezgoda recalls a moment during a high-stakes negotiation of a multimillion-dollar deal when the energy executives, lawyers and investment bankers took a break. "Some of the midstream and upstream guys from Louisiana started discussing hunting squirrels and the countless ways to cook squirrel meat," he says. "The looks on the faces of some of the New York guys were priceless as some were clearly questioning whether or not they should be trusting these guys with millions of dollars of funding." Such is the diversity of the energy industry that an M&A attorney like Niezgoda loves. "With the vast mix of players in the industry, I enjoy the role of being a lawyer as we get to facilitate transactions that involve all of these parties and help tie the various components (and personalities) together."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

I think good leaders in the oil and gas industry need to be steadfast in their core principles, but always willing to learn and evolve. Change is constant, particularly in the oil and gas industry, as we see with market conditions, technology advances, regulatory changes and other factors. Failure to recognize when change is necessary or beneficial is also a failure of leadership.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your department and company?

I always strive to fight for the members of my team, but also recognize we're part of a bigger firm and will always respect the decisions of senior leadership in our firm, even if I or other members of my team do not agree with that decision. In those scenarios, I will publicly stand behind the firm's decision and promote it within my team. While we may not always agree, undermining the process and going against firm leadership only fosters dissension and ultimately

undermines your ability to lead.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

My advice to young professionals in the energy industry is to always keep learning. When I finished school, I underappreciated how much continuing education would be necessary to be successful in my career. The energy industry, and particularly the law, is constantly changing and keeping up with those changes is necessary for success.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I think the most important thing the energy industry can undertake to thrive in the future is to educate the general public more about the industry. There is a lot of distrust and disdain for the industry, and I believe a lot of that stems from a lack of understanding of the industry. In addition to educating the public on what the energy industry is currently doing to evolve and transition, the industry should also be more aggressive in educating everyone on the current impact of the industry on our everyday lives and the negative impact certain drastic changes to the industry would have on both our economy and our day-to-day lives, particularly if we don't have well planned and reasonable alternatives available. ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO
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ROBERT NORTON

Chief Commercial Officer • Deep Blue

AGE: 37 | Midland, Texas

Robert Norton had a good job at DCP Midstream and a clear, structured path to career advancement. It wasn't for him. "I took a chance to step out and join the team at Cureton Midstream, recognizing I was more at home in a nimble, private equity company," he says. "There, I was challenged daily to think outside the box about deal structure and financing mechanics. I was hooked." Norton's focus is on the long term. "Taking a short-term mentality leads to one party 'winning' with the other 'losing.' My whole career, I have approached my work with the long view in mind, knowing that leverage tends to change over time."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

A good leader demonstrates trust, authenticity, accountability and taking responsibility. Trust and authenticity are essential for effective customer service—whether they're external or internal customers—and successful negotiations. I've found that responsible leaders gain the full trust of their teams by taking ownership when things go wrong. Without these, leaders can struggle to foster transparent relationships with all stakeholders, which are critical for managing risks that are an inherent part of our industry.

Which career milestone did you reach sooner than you had planned, and what helped you reach it earlier than expected?

A huge milestone is my first entrepreneurial attempt. In 2020, I left a perfectly good job to go chase the dream of starting my own company. There was a large capital flight from the space and sponsors were not floating G&A [general and administrative] on unproven people or teams. I worked for 11 months unpaid while finding support from the team at Five Point Energy to pursue a strategy in the Powder River Basin and founded

Rio Blanco Energy—a water management company that partnered with a major operator in the basin to commercialize their water system. Despite market conditions changing and other more significant opportunities arising, Five Point remained committed to me, which opened the door to joining the Deep Blue team. With the support of friends, family and a few very close loved ones, I achieved the long-term goal of starting a new company, although the ultimate result looked different than I thought it would look from the outset.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

Young professionals bring a unique, collaborative perspective to the oil and gas industry. The shortened pricing cycles and increased volatility have led to significant headcount reductions and people forced out of the industry or to move companies, and those remaining have had to rely on each other more than ever. This environment has furthered greater intercompany collaboration, compared to the more secretive approaches of the past. Whether it be something such as proprietary completions design in an exploratory area or working together to be better allocators of infrastructure capital by sharing assets, young people in the industry are leaning on each other and helping to drive change and create value faster than ever before. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

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HAAVARD OESTENSEN

Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer • Kongsberg Digital

AGE: 40 | Houston

Haavard Oestensen's early career was marked by traveling around the world to deploy software for hydrocarbon accounting and production reporting. "As someone who graduated with a software engineering degree in Norway—with no plans of going into O&G—I remember finding it surreal to helicopter into a large new upstream installation offshore Nigeria," he says. "I was there to help install a part of the cargo loading solution and played a small but still important role in getting the export operation going. It was my first offshore visit, and the sheer scale of that operation has left an appreciation for the momentous nature of some of these industry projects. Since then, I've visited many remote and complex sites, but I don't think I'll ever forget that one."

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

As Chief Commercial Officer, I am in charge of our global commercial operations. As I took this role, it came with a mandate to restructure our commercial ways of working across the company's business lines globally, including defining all necessary roles, mandates and metrics to ensure our continued success. This was a challenge, but I am proud to say that we have a global organization that delivers on sales, marketing, partnerships and alliances, and customer transformation across the globe. Getting the organizational design right, along with hiring the critical L2 team, and helping them structure their respective teams has been essential. This happening in parallel with delivering on our high-growth demands makes for an interesting workday.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I have the benefit of working in an organization that is enabling some of the major shifts in how the industry operates through holistic digital solutions that are set to change the way industries work. Over the past 10 years, there has been a lot of noise and discussion related

"Try to avoid too many distractions."

to data capture, instrumentations and sensors as the industrial Internet-of-Things and cloud adoption have represented major investments across industry. Now we see the rise of generative AI as another disruptive force that purports to make a huge dent in industry operating models. I believe that, while capturing and putting data in the cloud, data lakes and other structures can be a good thing, we see a trend where companies are seeking better understanding of how this leads to direct value.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Try to avoid too many distractions. There's an art to staying focused and disciplined over time, and to establish some consistency in your work routines. Over time, I myself have taken an approach of choosing to do certain things and doing them well, rather than immediately jumping on the "next thing." This is not to say that you become ignorant of tectonic shifts that may happen—you need to look out for those and pivot your direction—but consistency in work strategies and being as disciplined as possible will yield results. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



Congratulations to our Chief Commercial Officer, Haavard Oestensen, on being named one of Oil and Gas Investor's prestigious Forty Under 40, a testament to his exceptional leadership in driving the digital transformation for Kongsberg Digital's clients.



“

Keeping up with industry shifts becomes possible with digital technologies that promote sustainable operational excellence through a digital performance model.

”

Haavard Oestensen,
Chief Commercial Officer, Kongsberg Digital



ELIZABETH PARKER

Vice President, Business Development • Birch Resources

AGE: 35 | Houston

Growing up, Elizabeth Parker was drawn to STEM classes in school, so when it came time to choose a college course of study, she naturally chose engineering, with a focus area of... pre-dental? While she spent two years in pre-dental, she was also studying a different type of drilling, petroleum engineering, which ultimately was the major she sank her teeth into. Her most challenging project was evaluating and closing the assets that formed Birch II. "I relied on my colleagues for problem-solving discussions, but also realized that the only way to overcome the challenges was to face them head-on," she says. "We have now fully integrated that acquisition, and the experience has better prepared me to successfully replicate this process in the future."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

A strong sense of ownership and accountability is essential. The leaders I admire most show tremendous support for their teams and adopt a servant leader attitude. This type of leadership fosters a positive culture, and I always seek to work with and for people with those types of attributes.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

I've honed my leadership style by observing others while also finding a voice and approach that aligns with my personality and strengths. A significant aspect of my role involves coordinating multiple groups within tight timelines, where clear communication and setting expectations are paramount. Our success in rapidly evaluating projects stems from a fully committed team, achieved through empowering individuals to take ownership and contribute effectively.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Integrity is hard to measure but easy to see. It's much easier to acknowledge mistakes and admit wrongdoing than to try to hide them.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

New challenges keep me motivated! Working predominantly in A&D and planning, I've witnessed the industry evolve from appraise and flip to full development, and from growth-focused to now inventory-focused. This ever-changing environment requires a constant evolution in strategy, which is exciting to witness.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

Young industry members have a unique ability to pivot. This group has lived both before and with the internet, and many of us started our careers during the early shale days. In college, I learned about conventional reservoirs, but my entire post-graduation career has been in unconventional.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

The industry must find ways to embrace new technologies while remembering traditional practices. AI and similar advancements can improve performance, but it's important to leverage the wealth of experience our industry has accumulated over the years. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



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ELIZABETH PARKER



As Birch Resources moves forward with its latest venture in the Permian Basin, Elizabeth consistently elevates the entire team through her leadership, commitment to improvement, and remarkable growth within our company.

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JENA RESNICK

Director, Environmental & Regulatory Compliance • Antero Resources

AGE: 37 | Denver

In her first management role, Jena Resnick learned the importance of being Jena Resnick. When she took over a group of seasoned professionals, one of the veterans resisted her efforts at team-building. "I chose not to push her, and decided to just keep doing and being myself," she says. "When I finally left the group two years later, that veteran employee ended up giving me the biggest hug, telling me that I was the best manager she had experienced in her career. This experience taught me to stay true to my authentic self as a leader and not to dwell on the perceived doubts of others due to my age and personality."

Which career milestone did you reach sooner than you had planned, and what helped you reach it earlier than expected?

I feel like I quickly catapulted up the ladder in my career. I went from an on-site consultant to an in-house Air Permit Engineer, to an EHS Manager to an EHS Director at a public company with a market cap over \$43 billion—all in about eight years. I think my quick growth can be attributed to my hard work ethic, the strong relationships I formed with my company stakeholders, my openness to continuous improvement, and my dedication to always going above and beyond expectations and my mentors.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

I think for the industry to thrive in the future, it must stay nimble and adapt, while remembering our core competencies. I also believe it is crucial that operators stay connected to the places where they are operating—through stewardship, investment in infrastructure and the local economy, and engagement with local needs and charities. This is a key component of Antero's success, and one that

has made me truly love my work in this industry.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Stay true to yourself. Be a role model for hard work and dedication. Go above and beyond your job responsibilities. Be curious and thirsty for knowledge. Times will get tough, but in the words of Dory, "just keep swimming!" and have faith in yourself. There will always be more seasoned professionals, with more experience and maybe even knowledge, who doubt you. But they can't argue with results. And seek out people in your organization that will have your back. Often people with different work styles and personalities can be your greatest asset. The friendships I've forged in the industry are some of the most important to me because we've been in the trenches together.

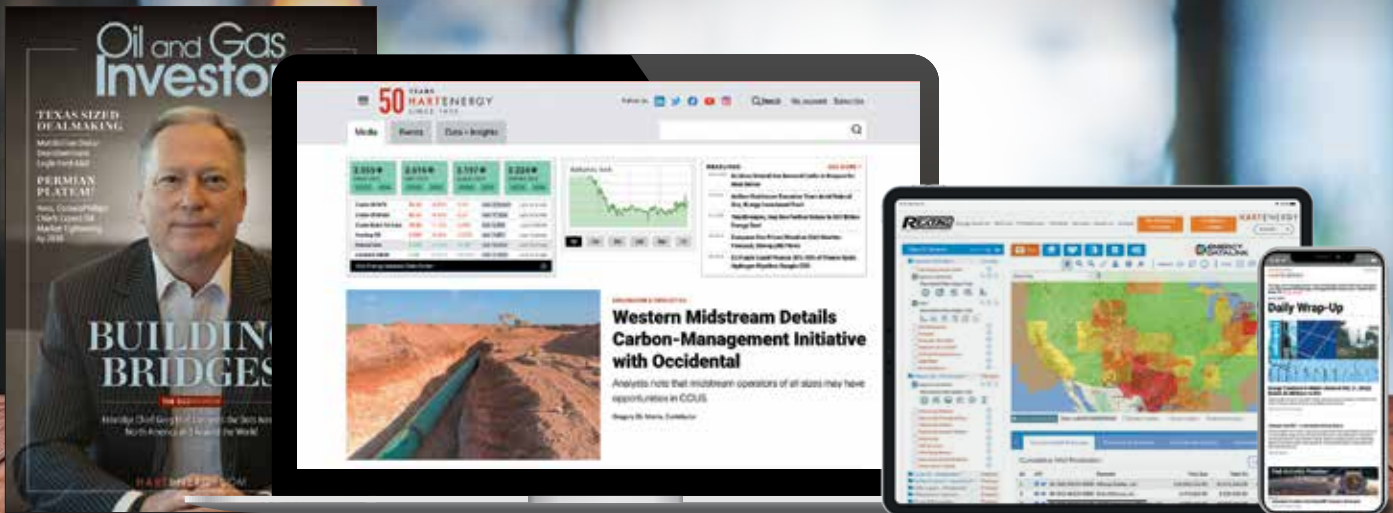
What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I stay motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry, and specifically air permitting, air compliance and climate strategy, because the opportunities to grow, improve, learn and develop new processes to identify and reduce emissions and climate risks are endless. I know that I can enact positive change within the companies I work for and the environment if I keep working hard! ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ

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TROY RUTHS

Founder and CEO • PetroAI

AGE: 38 | Houston

Much of Troy Ruths' focus at PetroAI involves well spacing and targeting in tight reservoirs, with artificial intelligence primed to have a big impact on recovery factors and exploitation strategies. "Making well groups economic requires understanding the nuances of how they share resources between propped and shear fractures," he says. "Developing this into a rigorous physics-AI system that can be used as a crystal ball allows anyone with data or geo characterization to find their optimal exploitation strategy, given the data and economics."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

I'm a big fan of technical prowess in leaders for oil and gas. Understanding the complexity of the reservoir and how we need to exploit it puts that leader in a position to see market forces, partner and value other companies in the industry, and be practical about what can change in the future.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

As an AI company, we get walked into the executive leadership team and build corporate strategy together, then in the same week have a staff reservoir engineer yell at us because they feel threatened by an AI making type curves. That's hard on the team. Consistency is much easier to handle mentally. I just try to keep the mission the focus of what we do. Bringing AI to this industry is an important step-transformation for the world. AI is an emerging market and so not everyone is meant to be a customer the first time they interact with it. A lot will diminish the value or take it out on us. But that's OK; that just means it's not for them yet.

Describe a memorable professional experience—something that may not be typical for industry members or that is especially meaningful for you.

I had a lot of memorable travel experiences when I worked for Chevron. I was an independent contractor, meaning I wasn't a "blue badge." So, I had to arrange a lot of my own travel independent of Chevron resources or help. That was easy for, say, Canada, but when I started going to more exotic locals it was a learning experience. For instance, in going to the expat camp in Lagos, [Nigeria], I was flagged and pulled aside from the rest of the group

and told my shot card was incomplete. It totally wasn't, but the gun on the guard said otherwise. I was watching the group start piling in the van to head to the camp and I had no way of getting there without that group. So, I slipped a \$100 bill in my passport and handed it back to the soldier to check the shot card again. Funny thing, looked complete this time and he let me go. Later, at the cantina, when I was sharing this story, the group laughed at me. Turned out I grossly overpaid.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

AI is going to reduce the workforce and de-risk the capital required to exploit reservoirs and make more challenging reservoirs able to be exploited. Think rapid assimilation of best practices as soon as the empirical evidence hits the public or data share databases.

What are your career goals?

I'd really like to develop a technical NOJV [non-operated joint ventures] business that partners on assets and investment programs that benefit from AI operating at scale and leveraging unique predictability of well performance from the subsurface. I firmly believe the next chapter of innovation in oil and gas requires operationalizing AI, and through my career I've seen AI mature into this promise. I started my career at Chevron running data science support for NOJV assets, and I'd love to complete this journey now that AI is here to make its impact on the world by cutting waste, reducing risk and increasing capital efficiency. I'd like to get started in shale, both domestic and international, then grow out to natural gas reservoirs and conventional EOR, and finally tackle rapid exploration and prospecting using seismic as an input. ■

AMRUTA SARDESHPANDE

Senior Project Manager, Solution Design • Hexagon (Asset Lifecycle Intelligence division)

AGE: 38 | Houston

On one assignment, Amruta Sardeshpande found herself in a remote location in France, unable to speak French but tasked with implementing a cybersecurity solution. Undaunted, she found a solution for connecting with people. "By leveraging a translator app, communicating clearly and concisely, preparing materials in advance and observing non-verbal cues, I successfully understood customer needs and guided them through the project work," she says. "In the end, not only did I leave the customer satisfied, but I also received some great recommendations for exploring Paris."

Which of your professional achievements are you most proud of?

I was selected to join a team of highly experienced and industry-leading executives to spearhead one of the organization's most crucial Smart Digital Reality Acceleration Project, which included a multi-tenant SaaS solution designed to provide a connected, insightful digital platform for industrial facilities. This project involved developing new product technology integrations with cross-functional teams (500+ people) located globally. This strategic initiative by Hexagon contributed to the company's competitive advantage and long-term success, providing me with significant visibility within the organization and the opportunity to demonstrate my leadership abilities.

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

I worked on a project with a customer in the chemicals industry where the project scope involved the custom development of a regulatory compliance reporting module. Understanding the compliance requirements was the first challenge, followed by designing complex workflows and user stories to meet the client's needs. I worked through the entire process of creating the custom module, from conception and design to testing and implementation. This project taught me the importance of stepping outside my comfort zone and instilled confidence in my ability to adapt. I learned that, regardless of the primary role, embracing multiple responsibilities, acquiring new skills rapidly, prioritizing effectively and delivering results

within project constraints is essential.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

My professional advice would be to develop a strong technical foundation through continuous learning and hands-on experience. In addition to this, cultivate essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership. These skills are critical for career advancement and effective collaboration.

My personal advice would be to maintain a healthy work-life balance by prioritizing time for family, hobbies and fitness. This will contribute to overall success and well-being.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

As a part of an employee onboarding program, I received the book "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Dr. Spencer Johnson. To this date, I find this book very relevant because it has taught me to embrace change and adapt proactively. This quality is crucial for leaders because technology is evolving rapidly. Leaders must possess the vision to adapt to these changes, which can pave the way for growth and new opportunities.

Secondly, effectively conveying complex information to both technical and non-technical stakeholders is critical because effective communication ensures that everyone is on the same page. This leads to better collaboration, teamwork and project success.

Building and maintaining relationships with your customers and team members is another essential quality that a good leader should have because this builds trust and team members feel connected and more motivated in their work. ■



VIOLETA ALVAREZ

DAVID SCHNEIDER

Reservoir Engineer • LLOG Exploration

AGE: 39 | Covington, La.

Early in his career, David Schneider was entrusted with leading a veteran group of reservoir engineers on a pivotal project. Under his leadership, the team drilled a successful deep-water development well and negotiated a high-value acquisition, all while navigating a complex merger process. This experience served as an extension of Schneider's academic background in mechanical engineering and business administration, imparting invaluable lessons in active listening and the importance of maintaining a positive attitude to ensure a team's success during challenging times.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

The best leaders ask the best questions and get to the heart of a problem very quickly. They also show genuine care and respect for their coworkers. I have been fortunate in my career to never have a bad boss, and I attribute that to working with people that have the qualities listed above. I do my best to emulate those characteristics in my day-to-day work.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

Leadership for me is probably different than most of the Forty Under 40 honorees, as I am an individual contributor, not a supervisor. LLOG has a relatively flat organizational structure, where the technical staff is encouraged to take an entrepreneurial approach to the business. As a reservoir engineer, my main goal is to do what I can to ensure all disciplines are moving in the right direction on our projects and provide the best possible information so we as a company can make correct decisions. So, to me, leadership is about building momentum

and consensus among my peers, while maintaining high expectations of myself and my work.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

At a high level, it is rewarding to work in an industry that supplies people with a relatively inexpensive source of energy.

At LLOG, I get to experience a wide variety in my daily responsibilities that keeps things fresh and challenging. It is helpful to be around self-motivated individuals that enjoy their jobs, so I make sure to do my part in that regard.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Build a strong technical foundation in your discipline. There is nothing wrong with leadership aspirations, but I would encourage anybody with those goals to first learn how to get into the weeds. The best decision I made in my career was where I took a perceived step back that ultimately made me a much more valuable part of the team.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

I think it is our responsibility to keep the next generation interested in oil and gas as a career choice. Much of what turns people off to oil and gas is the ups and downs of the business, but I think it's obvious now that no industry is immune to cycles. If you're good at math and you like problem solving, oil and gas is a fantastic career choice. ■



VIOLETA ALVAREZ

CODY SUTTON

Founder and CEO • Guide Energy Solutions

AGE: 38 | Prague, Okla.

Cody Sutton always knew he wanted to be in business for himself "someday." That "someday" arrived sooner than expected when he was 33 and founded Guide Energy Solutions. "An opportunity presented itself and, like most good things in life, you must seize the moment and time the market right," he says. "We founded Guide in April 2019 and we were cash flow positive in our second quarter as a company. That cash flow remained positive until two quarters post-COVID, but it was COVID that ultimately spurred Guide to grow out of Oklahoma and into the Permian Basin, where we support a large amount of our business today."

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Our industry is volatile, so we know we must prepare and diversify for the inevitable next turn in the market. Given this fact, I believe a leader in our space must be able to have vision for what is to come and be able to communicate to their team why we must do certain things when times are good, to make ourselves ready for when things might be less optimal. Staying disciplined in this regard takes a leader that is relentless, and they must be able to motivate their team to share in the same discipline. They must lead in a way that evokes compassion amongst the team, helping each other serve their clients, their communities and their co-workers well in everything that they do. Summarizing into a few words: vision, communication, discipline and service to others.

What keeps you motivated and passionate about working in the oil and gas industry?

I am passionate about what we do to create chemistry and the deliverability of that chemistry to the reservoir to make a difference in our industry, but I'm even more passionate about enabling the people on our team who are executing these things. I believe motivation to keep those passions burning comes down to setting meaningful short-term and long-term goals and revisiting them often with others!

I stay passionate because I set goals that

serve others. I believe my purpose for being on this earth is to serve others, and if I am earnestly seeking that purpose, I will find ample opportunities provided to me. If I am setting goals that have me doing something for others, I know that if I missed my goals, I didn't help someone else achieve theirs. To me, there are very few more motivating forces in this world than the feeling of letting someone else down. This has always driven me in sports, in my family and in my faith. I remain self-aware that what I am doing will impact others and my desire is to be one of the positive contributors that helped others.

What advice would you give other young professionals?

Find ways to build accountability into your life. This often starts with writing your goals, dreams and ambitions, but it takes hold by having others in your life that you can trust to hold each other accountable to the things that you both committed to. Knowing you are accountable to something and/or someone reinforces your drive and your will to achieve your goals. ■



VIOLETA ALVAREZ



WHITNEY WARD

CEO and Co-Founder • WestMont Energy

AGE: 39 | Dallas

Whitney Ward often finds herself saying, “the oil and gas industry was woven into the fabric of my being.” Her grandfather, a geologist who dedicated 20 years to Humble Oil before becoming an independent geologist in Tyler, Texas, inspired her and fueled her interest in oil and gas. “A small copper oil derrick figurine that once adorned his desk, and later his room in the assisted living home, now sits on my desk at WestMont,” she says. “This cherished memento serves as a constant reminder of his presence and the values of hard work and integrity he embodied.”

Community service/hobbies/ interests:

My husband and I are deeply committed to supporting orphans and children living in poverty, and we provide ongoing support to several foundations globally.

What has been your most challenging project to date, and how did you meet the challenge and accomplish your goal?

Storm Uri was undoubtedly the most challenging experience my team and I have faced. Those seven days were a defining moment, demonstrating our ability to navigate unprecedented events with creativity and integrity. Following the storm, an esteemed midstream company reached out, expressing how they used our strategies before and during the storm “as a playbook” for other marketers. This validation was a proud moment, showcasing our resilience and innovation. In that moment, I realized the true value of our “playbook” was not just the strategies we implemented but the exceptional people who executed them. That essence of teamwork and dedication became the foundation of WestMont.

What qualities do you think are necessary to be a good leader in the oil and gas industry?

Integrity, courage and respect are paramount. Navigating this industry with honor and moral uprightness inspires others to follow. Facing challenges, including once-in-a-century storms, with confidence can elevate you to new heights. And treating

others with respect fosters strong relationships and trust in your character.

How have you exercised leadership to help shape your company?

While I lead my team, I am also an integral part of it and our success is collective. My vision was to build a team and a company where, at the end of every day, every deal and every storm, we can all look at each other with pride and say, “WE, as a team, as WestMont, upheld our integrity in everything we did.” This unwavering commitment to integrity is the cornerstone of our unity and success.

What do you think young industry members as a group have to offer that is unique to them?

Young industry members contribute a unique blend of energy, technological proficiency, adaptability and collaborative spirit. These qualities not only invigorate the industry but also pave the way for a more innovative and resilient future.

Which transformations do you think the industry must undertake for it to thrive in the future?

Technological advancements will undoubtedly continue to enhance our operations and drive efficiency in unprecedented ways. However, we must not lose sight of the fundamental importance of relationships in business. At the end of the day, relationships are everything and what we believe at WestMont to be the foundational principle that will drive our business and carry this industry forward. ■

VIOLETA ALVAREZ



Congratulations, Whitney Ward

Oil and Gas Investor's

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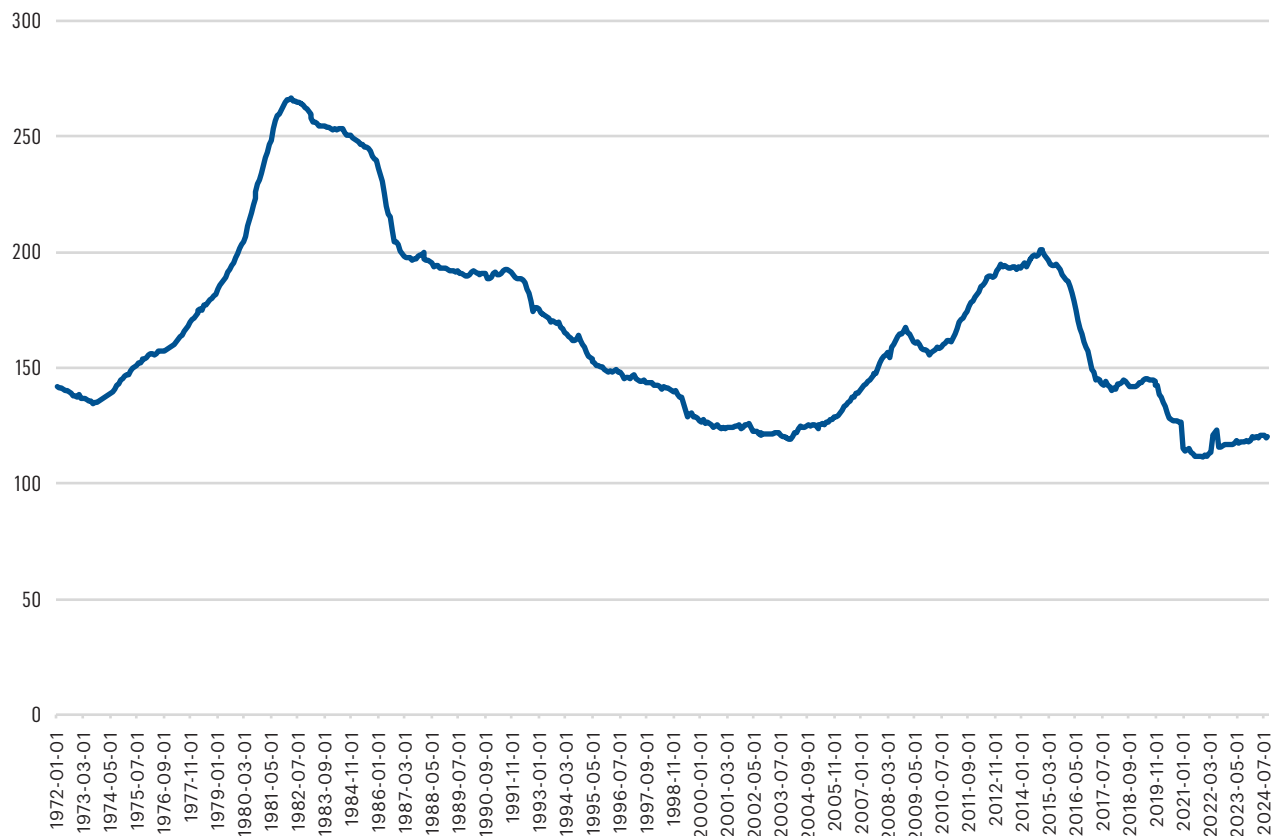
—CO-FOUNDER & CEO,
**WESTMONT
ENERGY**

Whitney Ward is the Co-Founder and CEO of WestMont Energy, a company leading the transformation of marketing efforts for producers in the oil and gas industry. With over 18 years of experience, Whitney has been instrumental in building lasting relationships and shaping the future of energy marketing. Her career, which began at Exco Resources during the Haynesville Shale boom, sets her apart as a visionary leader and entrepreneur.

WESTMONT ENERGY

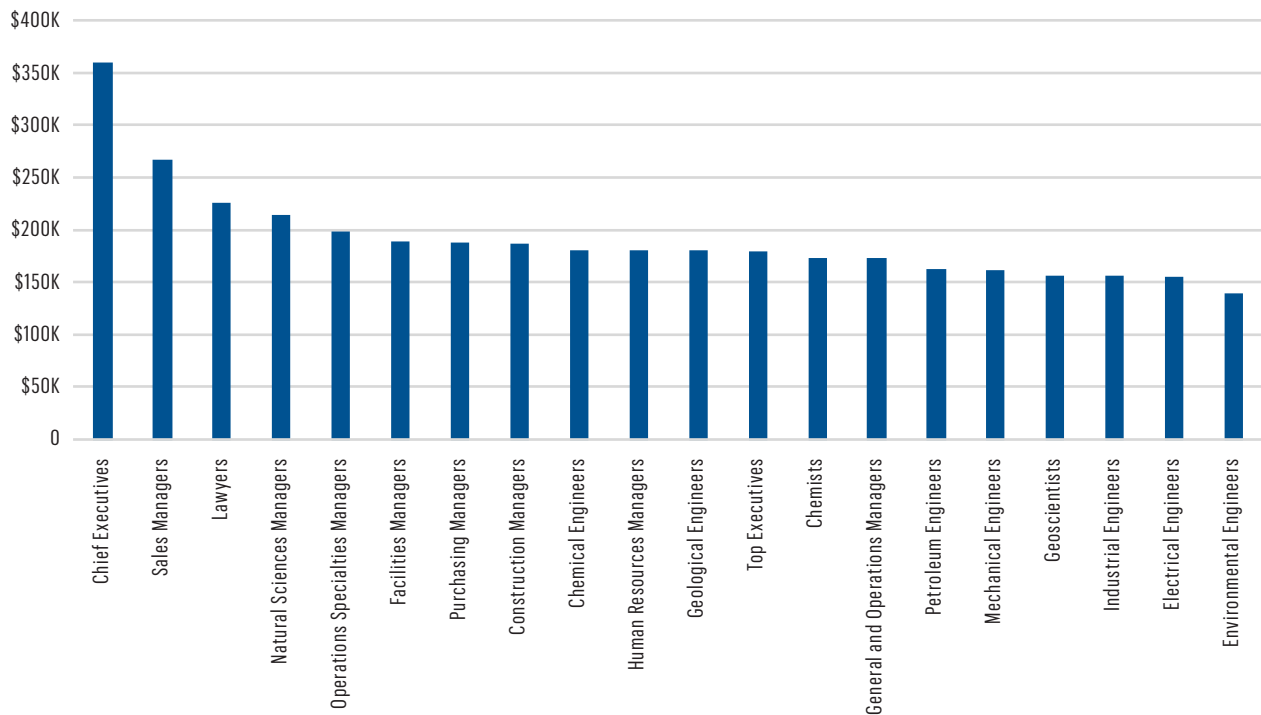
WestMont Energy is dedicated to providing tailored solutions for producers, optimizing production marketing strategies, and fostering relationships and innovation in the oil and gas industry.

Oil and Gas Employment (thousands)



SOURCE: FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ST. LOUIS

Selected Oil and Gas Salaries



SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS



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