

How Women Are Contributing to Saving the Planet

By Morice Mendoza

Every year several thousand women gather at the small seaside resort of Deauville in France, also known for its casinos, for a major think-fest at the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society. Unlike many comparable events, the Forum's programme always devotes a huge amount of its time to social and environmental issues. It soon becomes obvious why: the women who attend are passionately interested in the issue.

There may be a biological reason why women are more likely to give these issues such a high priority. The American anthropologist and writer Helen Fisher has argued that women's brains work differently to men's in her book, *The First Sex – The Natural Talents of Women And How They Are Changing the World*. Fisher says that one of the differences is that women tend to engage in more long-term thinking. 'As women make decisions, they weigh more variables, consider more options and outcomes, recall more points of view, and see more ways to proceed.' It is possible, therefore, that women are more hard-wired to respond to the bigger challenges facing business leaders above and beyond the task of delivering greater profits and shareholder returns.

To test this theory, I selected a number of companies at the top of the Corporate Knights Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations list, published in 2010. The ranking uses environmental, social, and financial data to short list down from an initial universe of 3,000 stocks. In selecting ten senior women leaders, all of whom have executive or non-executive directorships at the top sustainable companies, I explore their contribution to sustainability in the companies concerned and more generally. The result suggests that women are making or are certainly in a position to make a significant contribution to readying their companies for the challenge of building organisations that contribute to saving the planet while making good profits.

Beth Comstock, Chief Marketing Officer & Senior Vice President, General Electric

Starting her career in local television production in Virginia, Beth Comstock went on to work for NBC, CBS, and Turner Broadcasting. In 2003, she became GE's first Chief Marketing Officer for 20 years, just at the time that the company under Jeffrey Immelt was responding to the challenge presented by climate change. In 2010, GE was named the number one Most Sustainable Company in the Corporate Knights list.

After a two year stint as the head of integrated media at NBC Universal, Comstock became deeply involved in the company's drive to reduce environmental damage while developing a profitable business in cleaner technology products and services. This was marketed under the brand, Ecomagination. In 2009, coming out of one of the toughest years to face any business for decades, GE reported that across five years, Ecomagination had generated \$70 billion in sales and they had invested \$5 billion in clean technology R&D over this period.

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John Elkington

John Elkington, a world authority on sustainability, recalls that, 'GE was not a favourite of the global green and sustainability movements during Jack Welch's long tenure as CEO, when it was muscular in its resistance of any and all challenges to its environmental performance. That changed profoundly when Jeff Immelt took over as CEO.' Elkington is not surprised to find that women are at the heart of this green initiative. In addition to Comstock, for its first three years, another woman at GE, Lorraine Bolsinger was VP of ecomagination. Today, she heads GE Aviation Systems. 'GE seems to be displaying new forms of emotional intelligence alongside its traditional market clout - and it has been no great surprise to find a number of powerful women, including Beth Comstock, at the heart of all this.'

Barbara Kux, Member of the Managing Board, Siemens AG

Siemens chief executive Peter Löscher made history when he appointed Barbara Kux to the managing board, the first appointment of a woman in the company's 160 year history. An INSEAD MBA, Kux had worked for major corporate brands: Ford, ABB, Nestlé, and McKinsey. Her most recent job before Siemens was Chief Procurement Officer at Philips. At Siemens, ranked the sixth Most Sustainable Company this year, Kux is in charge of the company's huge supply chain management organisation and its \$42 billion procurement budget. As Chief Sustainability Officer, she is also responsible for Siemens' portfolio of environmental products and services which generated €23 billion in fiscal year 2009. They include a range of products and services from grid connections for offshore wind farms to diesel electric drives for ships.

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Ann M. Fudge, Non-Executive Director, GE, Novartis, Unilever

Ann Fudge is on this list because of her non-executive board role at GE, the number one Most Sustainable Company on Corporate Knights' list. Fudge was formerly the CEO of Young & Rubicam Brands. A Harvard MBA and BA graduate of Simmons College, Fudge has recently been selected by President Obama as a bipartisan member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, which has been asked to make recommendations on how to reduce the national deficit to Congress this December. She is also on the programme advisory panel of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As non-executive director of GE, Novartis, and Unilever, Fudge is at the centre of the corporate drive towards sustainability. Talking to the website BigThink.com she said: 'The way I like to think about sustainability in business is that anyone running a business has to think about the business both in the short term and over the long term and we always have those pulls and tugs constantly in terms of business strategy.'

**Charlene Begley, Senior Vice President
and CEO, Home and Business Solutions,
GE**

Charlene Begley has enormous influence over GE's ecomagination platform as the head of its \$8.4 billion appliances, lighting, and intelligent platforms business. Begley worked in many of the company's major businesses including automation, transport, plastics, and enterprise solutions. Now, she is working at the heart of efforts to reduce energy consumption in home and industrial premises. President Obama wants to see smart meters installed in homes to monitor energy usage, so as to drive behaviour towards efficiency. GE under Begley's charge is looking into just such 'real time' smart meters to drive down energy usage.

'Begley is working at the heart of efforts to reduce energy consumption in home and industrial premises.'

**Nancy McFadden, Senior Vice President
and Senior Advisor to the Chairman and
CEO, PG&E Corp**

California is at the forefront of environmental change for the better and former Al Gore deputy chief of staff Nancy McFadden is at the centre of things at PG&E, an electricity and natural gas supplier catering largely to Californians. The company's stated environmental mission is to achieve excellence beyond compliance through cleaner energy technology and new sources including renewables. It is investing heavily in solar energy to serve northern and central California and says it has prevented 135 million tons of carbon emissions being released because of its customer energy efficiency programmes. McFadden spent 20 years as a legal, political, and policy advisor at Federal and State levels. This included being a senior advisor to Californian Governor Gray Davis in addition to her work for Vice President Al Gore. McFadden is also on the advisory council for the Council for Environmental and Economic Balance, an organisation based in California.

Anne Lauvergeon, CEO, Areva and Non-Executive Director, **Vodafone**, **Total**, **GDF-Suez**

As head of the French state-owned nuclear power company, Areva, Lauvergeon is in a position to effect significant change in terms of sustainability. The company claims to have reduced its water consumption by 50%, its greenhouse emissions by 57%, and its energy consumption by 23%. It has also increased the amount of hazardous waste it is able to recycle. Under Lauvergeon's leadership, the company launched its 'CO2 Free' strategy based on nuclear and renewable energy. At Vodafone, ranked eighth in the Global 100 Most Sustainable Companies list, Lauvergeon has further opportunity to influence environmental and sustainable progress. At the moment, Vodafone's network accounts for 80% of its CO2 emissions – it is, therefore, committed to energy-saving initiatives to reduce this impact. For example, it is looking at more energy-efficient amplifiers and remote radio heads. It is also investigating ways to replace air-conditioned cooling systems with ones based on fresh air. Vodafone has set itself the goal of reducing CO2 emissions by 50% against a 2006-07 baseline by 2020.

Angela Braly, President & CEO, WellPoint and Non-Executive Director, **Procter & Gamble**

Procter & Gamble is number 13 in the Most Sustainable Company ranking. With its enormous role in the world economy producing and delivering some of the world's most famous consumer brands, the company can make a huge difference by changing its practices. Its vision is to have its plants powered by 100% renewable energy, and to have all of its packaging sourced from renewable and recycled materials. It aims for zero waste and to deliver popular products that also conserve the world's resources. In practical terms, this means making big changes such as replacing petroleum-based materials with ones created from sustainable sources, increasing the use of cold water washes in washing machines, and developing safe drinking water for children to name a few. While her non-executive role at P&G gives Braly some influence over these issues, her main job running the health insurance company WellPoint puts her in the middle of the storm in the US around healthcare reform.

**Anne Quinn, CBE Non-Executive Director,
Smiths Group**

Anne Quinn was a leading player at BP during the John Browne era when the company developed a firm commitment to green energy. She worked at the oil company for twenty years rising to become General VP of Gas & Natural Gas Liquids. However, in 2007 Quinn left just one year after Tony Hayward took over from John Browne as CEO. Hayward, now himself no longer CEO, focused the company on its core products and placed less emphasis on renewable energy and its commitment to the environment. For a brief period after leaving BP, Quinn worked as Managing Director of Riverstone Equity, an investment firm specialising in renewable and conventional energy businesses. In this, Quinn rejoined John Browne, then a Managing Director at Riverstone. Since 2008, Quinn has held two non-executive positions, one at the Smiths Group, and one at Mondi, a packaging and paper company. The Smiths Group, ninth in the Global 100 Most Sustainable list, produces a number of products such as threat and contraband detection devices (including sensors to detect explosives), medical devices, and engineering components.

**Marjorie Scardino, Chief Executive,
Pearson and Non-Executive Director,
Nokia**

Dame Marjorie Scardino is best known for her stewardship of the global publishing company Pearson, which includes a major educational publishing business as well as owning the Financial Times. However, she is also non-executive director at Nokia, sixth in the Global 100 ranking. The mobile company faces huge competitive challenges, especially from Apple. At the same time, it is in a position to drive significant sustainability changes. It is in the midst of developing greener products. For example, it uses biopaints for some its phones, which are based on vegetable oils not crude oils, it is beginning to recycle metals and is developing more energy-saving features on its phones.

Patricia A. Woertz, Chairman of the Board and CEO, Archer Daniels Midland and Non-Executive Director, P&G

Patricia Woertz is best known for her role as the chief of the agricultural processing company, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) which produces food ingredients, animal feeds, feed ingredients, and biofuels. The company is heavily committed to sustainable policies and is, for example, developing a carbon storage capability in rock formations and using filtering and water treating techniques to save billions of gallons of fresh water. Originally trained as an accountant, Woertz worked for much of her early career in the oil business, becoming at one point President of Chevron (Canada). There is likely to be a good meeting of minds on sustainability between Woertz and her board colleagues at P&G, in which their mutual experiences of environmental and sustainable innovation could be shared.

'...using filtering and water treating techniques to save billions of gallons of fresh water.'

ABOUT MENDOZAMEDIA

Morice Mendoza is CEO of **MENDOZAMEDIA**, a communications company specialising in diversity and sustainability. For more information: **www.mendozamedia.co.uk**.