

# Attracting Talent Across The Energy Transition Portfolio



## At a glance

- » With the global energy sector not projected to hit net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions until 2050, oil and gas leaders will need to secure the necessary talent in order to continue with the exploration and production of hydrocarbons.
- » But attracting younger and future members of the workforce into the oil and gas sector will be a difficult process that will require careful thought.
- » Given that we will all rely on oil and gas for a long time to come, it is in everyone's interest that its leaders are of the highest quality.

Clean energy, vital for addressing climate change, will be the focus of increasing investment, but there is a long way to go before the issues of scale and intermittency are resolved. For example, in 2021, renewable energy represented just 21.8 percent of energy consumed in the EU, itself a reduction from [22.1 percent](#) the previous year.

Like it or not, this means that oil and gas (O&G) will be needed to support today's needs, as well as future decades of economic growth, population increases and rapid urbanization. With the global energy sector not projected to hit net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions until 2050, O&G operators will have to secure the necessary talent if they are to continue with the exploration and production of hydrocarbons, in particular oil and natural gas. But this won't be easy.



Understandably, ambitious and purpose-driven individuals have flocked to the renewables sector, viewing it as not only an exciting and intellectually stimulating harbor for their career, but one that is also crucial to the future health of our planet.

Making the industry a desirable career option is now becoming a key priority for O&G leaders, but how should they go about it? How can they attract the talent so crucial to meeting humanity's needs while the energy transition unfolds?

## Growth in investment

A good starting point for O&G advocates is that they are not likely to be short of funding any time soon.

War in Ukraine, the ensuing energy crisis, plus the prioritization of energy security mean that O&G companies have, in the words of a recent [Deloitte analysis](#), “been given a clear mandate to secure supply in the short term while transitioning to cleaner energy in the long term”. In addition, [Fitch Solutions’](#) forecast shows investment of 7.5 percent growth to \$595 billion on capital expenditure for the year.

Such predictions reflect what Starlee Sykes, Archaea Energy CEO and former SVP of GoM & Canada, is observing in the market. “There has been a general increase of capital flowing in,” she said. “It has felt like this was always coming — demand had been tempered but not destroyed, and it has now rebounded.”

## Complex talent requirements

But even with money beginning to pour in, when it comes to retaining and developing potential leaders the task ahead is stark. Claudio Granata, director of human capital and procurement coordination at Eni, points out there are evolving requirements facing leaders in the sector.

“The complexity and diversification of the business has generated new needs in managing and developing existing talent and integrating new recruits,” he said. “This is not only to fill the roles required to deliver business results, but also to bring in the extra innovation and new mindset which is needed for pursuing energy transition. Eni has already taken steps to discover the necessary human talent needed to enable innovation, focusing not only on the necessary skillset, but also on the leadership capabilities and on cultural fit; Eni is investing in talent development systems, in the internal academy, as well as in consolidating collaborations with the academia to create innovative solutions and training modules consistent with the business evolution needs.”

While it might be possible to hire talent from the renewables sector in order to help propel portfolio decarbonization, discovering fresh areas for resource exploration presents a wholly different type of challenge. Many might not come running to support an industry very much the target of public ire, regardless of its current importance in supporting everyday life.

The CEO of an American independent exploration and production company admits that recruitment challenges abound. “In general, it is much tougher to attract talent, particularly young and new talent,” he said. “The poor economic performance by the industry in the past, energy transition, the rise in ESG and societal concerns around fossil fuel extraction, all hamper our ability to attract talent — this doesn’t inspire people to come into the industry.”

That said, the appeal varies from country to country — a point that Agnieszka Kmiecik, senior vice president for people and social engagement at TotalEnergies, is keen to stress. “There are many factors which determine how attractive we would be in a given country,” she said. “But primarily, it hinges on each country’s individual energy strategy and its wider population’s access to energy.”

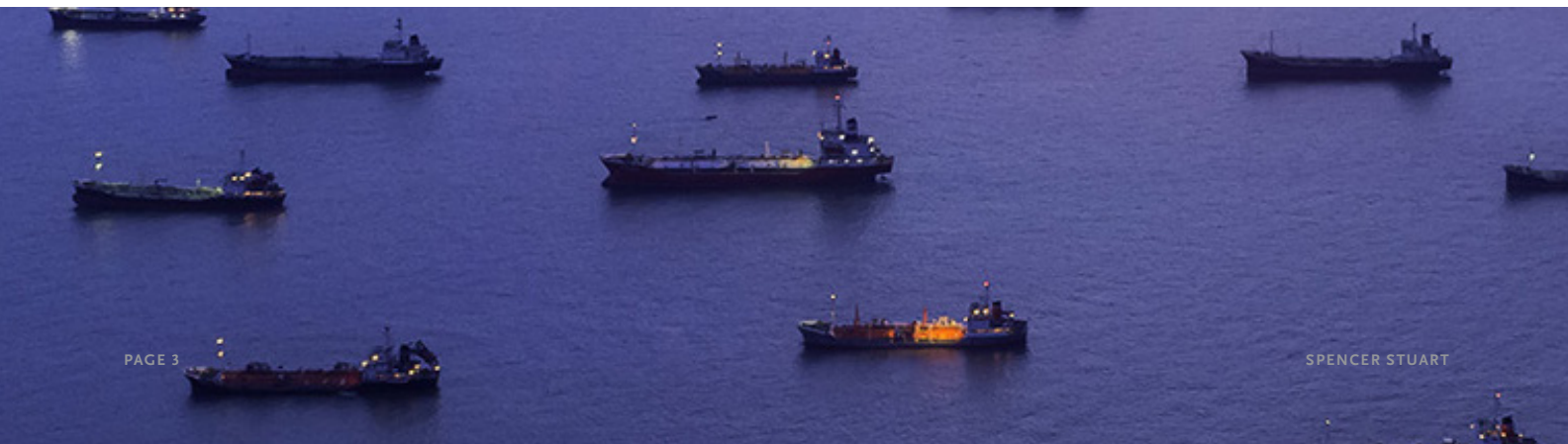
## Rethinking hiring strategies

So how can O&G companies go about strengthening their reputation and appealing to potential recruits — wherever they are in the world? A number of considerations may sway some to join the sector.

For example, there are the geographic opportunities to gain experience overseas, often considered an important factor in leadership development, that await — O&G workers are in high demand in countries ranging from Australia to Azerbaijan. And then there’s the opportunity to help prevent blackouts and safeguard power for the most vulnerable in society, as well as learn how to use state-of-the-art engineering and technology.

A good example of this is TotalEnergies’ recently formed organization, [OneTech](#), which is made up of about 5,000 of their technical staff to work on a mix of technical and scientific challenges across both renewables and O&G projects. The company is justifiably proud of this initiative as it showcases a wide variety of opportunities to new and existing talent to work across fuels, natural gas and electricity.

This type of initiative can be valuable evidence for defenders of the industry to utilize but Agnieszka Kmiecik believes that in her own company’s case, the outlook is already far from negative. “Even in France, our data is not bad in terms of brand reputation amongst graduates,” she said. “From 2022 we are in the top ten amongst graduates and we are top six in female engineers. On average, we receive between 170-180 CVs per job advertised.”



At the same time, though, it remains incumbent on O&G companies to appeal to the values and social priorities of potential recruits and this may well require them to course correct when needed. For Greg Hill, COO and president, exploration and production at Hess Corporation, this should start with better communication about the importance of the sector to the security of supply. “I think what the industry must do is get more facts out in the general population and potential recruits,” he said. “Hydrocarbons are a force for good and will be around a long time. The immediate challenge for energy is not to eliminate hydrocarbons but rather to reduce their emissions footprint. This is a great technical challenge to solve without compromising the benefits of cheap, reliable, secure energy.”

This technical challenge is not to be underestimated. Much has been made of the potential of carbon capture and storage (CCS), for example, but turning promise into reality is far from guaranteed. For example, in 2022, the International Energy Agency found that capturing carbon dioxide from the air is the [most expensive application](#) of carbon capture and the ability to scale up CCS is decades away.

## Wanted: future leaders

As well as aligning with the values of prospective recruits, there also need to be strong and inspiring leaders in place capable of tackling challenging situations and dealing with potential public controversy. But where can such leaders be found? After all, other industries, as well as the public and third sectors, all hunger for similarly talented individuals to join their ranks. What can the O&G sector do to stand out from the crowd?

Emma Marcegaglia, former chairwoman at Eni, says that a good first step would be to spotlight its wider societal benefits. “We need to introduce the concept of energy accessibility for developing countries,” she said. “There’s a part of the world that is struggling to progress and they can’t do it with renewables only. It’s a matter of social sustainability as well; gas is needed because it generates the resources for investments in renewables.”

The American CEO we spoke to agrees that the sector needs to focus more on its external narrative. “For most organizations the chief component is to think about customers, marketing, value proposition and be able to tell the story. Rather than being an inward-looking organization, we need to change the skillset and have more external focus on stakeholders.”

But it’s not just about the messaging. Claudio Granata says that leaders will also need to be inspirational figures. “They have to lead by example with passion, resilience, empathy and humility,” he said, a point echoed by Greg Hill. “They will need to be “much more ‘in-tune’ with the hopes, dreams and desires of their employees,” he said. “The need for people to want to come to work at your firm is more important now than ever.”



## Career beginnings

Attracting younger and future members of the workforce into the O&G sector will be a difficult process that will require careful thought. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is a generation which prioritizes environmental protection; for example, [80 percent](#) of American teenagers expect climate change to affect where they live and whether to have children.

The American CEO we spoke to concedes there is much to do. “It’s hard to compete against the narrative of ‘old and stodgy’ within the background of new technology and concerns around climate change,” he said, “But there is also very little appreciation of how long the transition will be. Population growth and higher living standards in the developing world means we must expand energy production and the societal narrative is becoming more balanced.”

When it comes to targeting younger workers, Starlee Sykes believes that there are many perspectives to take into account. “It’s about understanding technology, influencing geopolitics, the scale of the industry and so on,” she said. “It can be hard to get that across to some.”

For Agnieszka Kmiecik, it comes down to generating a sense of mission. “From what we can see in various surveys, when considering an employer, what matters for the younger generation, other than traditional sources of motivation such as opportunities for learning and development and compensation, is a purpose, a mission, an opportunity to contribute,” she said. “Being part of the energy transition is huge in terms of purpose as long as you, as an employer, have a clear transition roadmap. If this is non-existent or not clear then the attractiveness could be challenging, because the longer-term employability is more problematic.”

Emma Marcegaglia, meanwhile, remains optimistic about the sector’s recruitment prospects. “This is the best possible moment to attract talent,” she said. “The narrative is that we are not going back, and we are looking for the best way to look forward and are looking for the best talent to support this.”

## Striking the right balance

Today, the O&G sector finds itself in a somewhat unusual position. Investment is proliferating and its services and products are in increasing demand as the world strives to balance energy security, affordability and sustainability.

But since the energy transition will take decades to unfold, we will all rely on O&G for a long time to come. This means that it is in everyone's interest that its leaders are of the highest quality.





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