



REPOWER
Unsere Energie für Sie.

Not afraid of new challenges!

Corinne Zehnder is Head of Strategic Projects at Repower. In this function, she experiences the evolution in the energy sector first hand and actively drives the change through innovative projects.

Bettina Charrière interviewed Corinne Zehnder

Mrs. Zehnder, you are responsible for strategic projects at Repower. With the profound changes currently taking place in the energy sector, you must be quite busy these days, right?

Yes, of course - it is a demanding task. The energy sector is at the beginning of an important transformation. There is a lot of room for innovation, but you need staying power: the topics are complex. You need to assure the continuity of the established services despite all the new developments. I am excited that my job gives me the opportunity drive the change actively!

Which are the most important challenges for Swiss energy utilities?

The global trends such as Big Data, Industry 4.0, new types of mobility and cloud computing will have a strong impact on the energy sector. The technical progress accelerates the change, for example for storage solutions, but the question is when will which solution reach market maturity? It is not only about interpreting the trends properly, but also about implementing the solutions well. You have to focus on the essential - otherwise, you risk scattering your resources.

How is Repower approaching these challenges?

Repower relies on its innovative power to develop new products with a true value added for our customers. Main priorities are digital solutions and e-mobility. Repower can build on its experience from other, fully liberalized markets - for example from Italy, where we have been operating successfully for many years.

Digitization, smart grid, smart home, block chain, prosumer, e-mobility and so on: are the energy utilities even capable to keep up with the pace of all these diverse developments?

Yes, with an intelligent approach a well-positioned energy utility is certainly able to keep up. A clear focus is important. You have to pick your topics and implement your projects with excellence. Keeping up is also a challenge for the employees. In general - and this not only in the energy sector - employees must be more and more flexible and adapt to new situations. The cycles are shorter nowadays, for products and businesses as well as for the roles of the collaborators.

In the past, you planned your career with a ten-year horizon - today the phases are much shorter. In the energy sector, the traditional tasks such as power generation and distribution are characterized by long-term investments, whereas the new digital business activities are driven by fast, short-term developments.

Corinne Zehnder



Corinne Zehnder is Head of Strategic Projects at Repower since 2015. She studied economics at the University of Zurich. Already during her studies, she was interested in the energy sector and worked at Sulzer Turbo. Subsequently she was responsible for product- and risk management for green power at Axpo. Then she joined EKZ/enera and completed her training as a certified energy trader.

Corinne Zehnder is married and mother of two children. The family - including her dog - is very important to her. She finds relaxation in nature or singing in the choir. As an outgoing person, she likes to travel and is interested in languages. Her motto: "pursue innovative and visionary ideas while keeping both legs on the ground".

Does an energy utility have the required resources and competences to deal with all the new topics?

There are topics that a utility can absolutely address on its own. In other cases, I would rather recommend to seek partnerships in order to bundle ideas, resources and competences.

Does it make sense for every single utility to develop its own solutions?

It makes no economic sense. The costs for product development, marketing and ICT-systems are very high. Through collaboration with suitable partners, you can share the costs and risks. I am talking about partnerships with other utilities, but also about partnerships with technology partners for the development of specific products. For a successful partnership, the objectives must be aligned and the partners must be willing to build a shared business model. This works only in a balanced situation, where each party can benefit.

Which advice would you give small and medium sized utilities?

The strengths of small and medium sized utilities lie in their local presence and well-developed customer relationships.

Building on this base, they can offer innovative, „smart“ products. The products must have a clear value added

for the customers. This can consist in a monetary benefit, but also in more comfort, security or ease-of-use. Sometimes you don't have to look very far. Even "small" measures can have a big impact, if they simplify the lives of our customers. Particularly the fields smart home and security offer interesting possibilities. But watch out! The product development can be extremely costly, and the road to a successful product ready for the market is usually longer than you think. You can shorten the cycle and reduce risks with adequate partnerships.

Energy Strategy 2050: opportunity or risk for the Swiss utilities?

The Swiss Energy Strategy 2050 is definitely an opportunity that you have to capture - and this is exactly what we are doing at Repower.

How are you personally dealing with all the many challenges?

Most importantly, don't be afraid of new challenges! This takes some courage. It certainly helps if you are open-minded and embrace new opportunities. My natural curiosity is also advantage. This summer I will travel to Silicon Valley with my family - I am very excited about this trip. I hope to get a glance of the new developments that will reach us in the future. Fortunately, Switzerland is well positioned with a balanced mix of research organizations and established, successful companies.

Thank you, Mrs. Zehnder, for the interview. We wish you a lot of success with your projects!

The logo consists of the letters 'CM' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, positioned within a white rectangular area. This area is part of a larger blue graphic element that curves upwards from the bottom right corner of the page.