

Ms. Energy Fix-It

She helps power the world and fixes it when it breaks down

By Mary Welch

Anne M. McEntee grew up the youngest of seven children, the daughter of a blue-collar General Electric employee. The close-knit family worked on a lot of projects together that mainly focused on fixing things.

“When I was little, my family was very hands-on in terms of building things. My dad would buy old snowmobiles and lawnmowers and we would fix them up because we didn’t have the money. Fixing things up taught me a lot, like how to problem solve and work with tools. It’s the foundation of everything I do.”

Well, frankly, it’s a long way from rebuilding engines in upstate New York to being in control of the servicing and maintenance of utility and power plant operations around the world.

As general manager of Power Services for GE Energy, McEntee is responsible for the upkeep and installation of about 2,000 power generation sites in more than 100 countries, including sites whose energy comes from gas, or coal-fired turbines.

McEntee leads GE Energy’s Power Services division, a \$3.3 billion division that provides outage management, performance upgrades, parts and repair services and training for the power generation industry.

“We basically help power the world and keep everything running,” she says simply. “A power plant is no different than a car. If you want it to remain reliable, you need to give it yearly maintenance and be on the lookout for

problems. If something breaks, you get a spare part and fix it. It’s the same with the huge power plants, except you’re working with big turbines. But, they still need to be cleaned and monitored so that they can run efficiently and burn fuel efficiently.”

McEntee’s team, which consists of about 1,700 employees (about half of whom are in the United States), deals with about 2,000 outage “events” a year across the world. “We get the calls

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when you least expect it,” she says.

“But we also have a very technical diagnostic center where we can monitor the machines and identify issues before they happen. We might notice that the vibration levels on a turbine are changing, and we can shut it down and execute a series of tests to see what the problem is and fix it.”

Her original career goal was to be a math teacher. “I always loved math, the fluidity of it. I can see the application

of math in what I do. To me, math was always fun.”

She went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., earning a bachelor’s in applied mathematics. She continued on at RPI, earning a master’s in mathematics and a doctorate in applied math. She received a National Science Foundation scholarship in 1998 that was aimed at promoting women in math, science and engineering.

She hadn’t planned on following her father into GE, but after a presentation by the company to RPI students, she was hooked and began her career as a program manager within the Quality Six Sigma function at GE Power Systems. She subsequently took on assignments in quality, manufacturing/operations and sourcing.

In 2003, she was named the Energy Services Sourcing Leader and was responsible for deal negotiation, purchasing system integration, fulfillment, vendor-managed inventory and quality of all sourced materials.

In 2005 she was appointed general manager for GE Energy’s Quality organization. She was named to her current position in 2007.

McEntee knows she is a trailblazer and recognizes that she is often tested. “I get it. It’s not malicious, but the people I’m around want to make sure that I deserve the position,” she says. “Some will try to pull one over on me. I don’t rebuild turbines,” she says, “but I know the tools, and I know what needs to be done.”

Oh yes, when she’s not busy at work, McEntee plays with her young daughter – taking apart toys and putting them back together. ♀

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Photo By Allison Shirreffs