

Member Profile

An Interview with WCD Member Ana Zambelli

By Judy Macdonald



Director, Petroleo Brasileiro SA (Petrobras), former chief commercial officer, A.P. Moller-Maersk, and WCD member, Brazil

Q1. You recently became an independent director for Petrobras which is an oil, gas and

energy company, based in Brazil. Can you tell me about your path to joining the board?

I have twenty-one years of experience in the oil and gas market, working for three major multi-national corporations (Schlumberger, Transocean and Maersk). During this period, I lived in six different countries and held many different positions in operations, HSE, HR, and commercial. I also continued developing myself through a master in petroleum engineer and advancement management studies on innovation and strategy.

After almost ten years in executive roles, a role on the board of directors gives me the opportunity to support Petrobras in their long-term strategy.

Q2. Disruptive innovation is prevalent throughout the energy sector. What are your observations on how companies can stay relevant?

Disruptive innovation requires challenging the status quo, and the conventional business models. Most companies have innovation as part of their strategy; however, it must be imbibed on the company culture and the mind set of employees.

Q3. We all know that men still comprise the majority of corporate board seats, but countries such as Brazil have taken legislative steps to require more diversity on the boards of state controlled companies. Can you explain the current landscape as a result of the mandate?

Without affirmative actions, countries like Brazil could take almost 80 years to close the gender gap in the market. So, legislative actions are critical to accelerate this process. The Brazilian Congress is analyzing legislation that imposes 30% participation of females on boards of directors for state controlled companies by 2020. This can be a significant step to inspire private companies to follow this direction on boards and in the C-Level.

Q4. What is your advice for women who are seeking their first board seat, especially those in Latin American countries?

Prepare yourself! A great curriculum includes having a strong education and background, combined with practical experiences. Then, the next step is to find the right network where you connect your professional skills with company needs. It is also critical to have emotional intelligence.

Q5. In your opinion, what are the key skills that boards are seeking today?

In my view, boards are seeking diversity of thoughts. The most effective boards have multidisciplinary teams. Members with different skills can complement each other while supporting management. Expertise in key areas such as governance, compliance, operations, finance, HR and technology can be a very powerful combination of strengths.

Q6. Ryan Lance, CEO of Conoco Phillips said in a recent *Forbes* interview that “the oil industry is doing a better job of hiring women, but keeping them remain a challenge.” As an experienced energy executive who has worked for Maersk Drilling, Transocean and Schlumberger, what are your thoughts on why women leave the industry and what can be done to increase retention?

Slow career progression, fewer opportunities, lack of recognition, inflexible working schedules, and lower salaries are some of the reasons why females leave the industry.

Affirmative actions from the companies are critical to increase retention. Policies must respect the different needs between males and females, and allow equal opportunities for career progression.

Q7. From your personal experience, what are the most critical things boards should consider when entering BRIC markets?

BRIC markets represent great opportunities for growth, however it comes with high risk. Local knowledge and experience are critical for an adequate risk management when entering new markets.

Q8. What is one of the most eye-opening/important things you have learned while serving on boards?

The transition from an executive role to a board member role is the most difficult aspect of serving the board. As a board member, you give strategic directions to the long-term performance of the company and support the CEO, while he/she, leads the organization to execute the strategy. To be an effective board member, you must understand that your contributions will be long-term and no longer in the day-to-day as an executive.

Q9. When not working, what is your favorite activity?

I love to run. When I go running outdoors, I relieve my stress, organize my ideas and develop creative solutions for my concerns.

Q10. What are your goals for the next five years?

Among my many goals for the next five years, I would like to support the development of the new generation of female management in Brazil.

There are too many talents among the Brazilian females, and we must take advantage of these talents to support the industry growth.
