

**PROWESS Forum**  
**“You’ve Come a Long Way Baby –**  
**Evolution of the Work Environment in the Oil and Gas Industry.”**

The session started a keynote address and a panel discussion. Gillian Apps opened the panel discussion with a talk titled “Reservoirs and Sand Castles: One Woman’s Perspective on Managing Complexity,” which centered on the benefits of being flexible in one’s life in order to achieve balance between personal goals, such as raising a family, and career. Gill shared some themes of her life- the challenges and joys of being a working parent and skills for a successful and rewarding career. She also emphasized the importance of delegation, humility, networking, self-esteem and communication.

The panel was comprised of women with a range of years of experience, from more than 30 to less than 10, diverse backgrounds and tenure with industry organizations. Following Gill’s kick off, the panelists shared their experiences from their early days and observations on industry careers. The panelists compared the industry environment for women at the start of their careers and now and reflected on what may have facilitated these changes.

Below are a few of the insightful comments from the panelists and participants:

- From my internship to full-hire I have not experienced any major issues as the result of my gender.
- I think I have felt more ‘singled-out’ as being a younger hire than being a woman.
- Another challenge I have faced is that some women can be competitive with other women and I see this as a real detriment to the continued advancement of women.
- I would say that women are now primarily recognized for their skills and what they bring to the table. We have a track record of success; there are plenty of excellent women high in our organizations, both in management and in the geoscience disciplines. We have role models and peers.
- Technology has been both a benefit and a curse.
- There should be ways to be work in our chosen field without having to give up something as fundamental as getting married or having a family.
- Strong & assertive women leaders can still be perceived as difficult while more soft spoken women leaders can still be perceived as mousy and not effective.
- The O&G industry still lags other industries with the number of women executives. 30 years from now, I envision a woman being CEO of a super major who’s married with a family and her husband also has a career of his own.
- I believe a big benefit for women today is that we do have some female role models we can look up to that we didn’t necessarily have 30 years ago.
- In the 80s and 90s (and still today), women were often pushed into management roles. As a result, many talented technical women were siphoned out of the technical pool, leaving few women to take roles as technical leaders.

The PROWESS seminar celebrated pioneering women in our industry, addressed opportunities for further evolution, and gave suggestions to guide new generations of earth scientists in the challenging and rewarding (technical/leadership/managerial) career paths available to them today. The group agreed much gratitude and respect was owed to the pioneering women who stuck it out in hard times in the early days because they loved the science. All agreed these women made the industry environment better for all of us. The panel concluded that women in the industry have indeed come a long way, but there is still a ways to go.