

In conversation with...

Catherine Macklam is Sales & Operations Manager and Director for Q8Oils leading its activities across the UK & Ireland, as well as Vice-President of the United Kingdom Lubricants Association. She began her career in Total in a variety of customer service and marketing roles before moving to Q8Oils where she has spent the past fifteen years in various management roles including customer service, logistics, sales & marketing and more recently as UK Sales and Operations Manager responsible for the entire Q8Oils UK business.



Catherine, Q8's ultimate parent company Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is a fully integrated, upstream-downstream global oil company.

What benefits does this bring Q8 in serving its customers internationally?

KPC is ranked as the world's 7th largest oil company. As part of the global energy industry KPC supplies the world with vital oil and gas needs via diverse business activities which encompasses all aspects of the hydrocarbon industry. From onshore to offshore exploration, to production and refining, petrochemicals, marine transportation and retailing. For Q8Oils being part of this strong group in short gives us the benefit of being "A financially secure and long-term partner with Security of supply".

Where does the European lubricants sector sit within Q8's global strategy?

Although Europe is often regarded as a stagnant market in terms of growth, it still leads in terms of innovation and is the benchmark for the highest standards of lubricant technology for the rest of the world. Having a strong presence and involvement in Europe is important to being regarded as a global player.

Q8 has blending facilities in Antwerp and Italy, and a research centre on the European mainland. Why is it important for Q8 to own the technology underpinning its products?

Quality and innovation have always been at the heart of Q8Oils' business. The Research & Development centre helps us optimize existing products and

develop new innovative lubricants that can meet specific customer challenges. Owning the technology allows us enhance production, product application and quality control including health and safety and environmental issues. We invest strongly in technical research and product development and many of the additives we use in our lubricants are the result of our own formulations. This allows us to offer custom made solutions with a product quality and performance that is far above average.

'Innovation is very often only possible if you are in complete control of the product life cycle. Research and development, together with our own manufacturing facilities, ensures we are in control of our own destiny and not dependent on third parties for our future sustainably and success.

Whereas some lubricant companies specialise in a single area of the market, Q8 has a broad product portfolio covering many different sectors. Does having such a wide product portfolio bring any disadvantages?

As long as you ensure you have the focus and resources to support each product sector within your portfolio, then a broad profile is not a problem, it's an advantage. It gives you the strength and depth to ride the economic cycles and customers regard you as a more complete supplier. The disadvantage is when you do not have the resources available to you, but this is not the case with Q8Oils due to our parent companies' financial strength and commitment to the market and our customers.

In March 2021, Q8 divested its interest in the UK & Ireland to Certas Energy. How did this fit with Q8's business strategy in Europe?

Our primary route to market throughout Europe is through partners, therefore the partnership with Certas Energy lubricants fit our European strategy well. We do not see it as a divestment we see the partnership as an opportunity to maintain and grow our brand presence by choosing the most suitable channel to market and partner, with whom we continue to invest in marketing and technical support.

Sustainability is a key issue or our sector. What sustainability initiatives as Q8 undertaken?

Sustainability is at the core of Q8Oils' business and putting actions in place to embed sustainability in everything that we do and contribute to a more sustainable future. As part of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) and together with our sister companies, we are playing our part in contributing to the global development plan established by the United Nations. At the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development plan by the UN were 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). These SDGs are embedded into our sustainability strategy. An example of initiatives taken thus far is a water strategy which for Q8Oils focusses on the purification of rain. With 43500m² of surface, a lot of rain is collected in a year. At our Blending Plant in Antwerp, we have different circuits of water collection, this rain needs to be collected and treated before we can give it back to nature. We pump the water through several different purification techniques so that it can be reused in nature. This is independently monitored by a controlling organisation who report that the water is clean to be released. Q8Oils are proud to say that with initiatives such as this amongst others we help to achieve the UN SDG's.

You began your career in customer service and marketing roles. How have these helped you in your career and the different management roles you have held?

For me, one of the best skills you can develop is to simultaneously understand the relationship between your strategic decisions and actions and their impact on the operational side of the business and the customer. And just as important, the other way around. My time and experience in customer service, sales, marketing, logistics and operations have helped me see the broad picture of the business and

understand how each area fully interlinks and the impact on one when strategy changes in another. My starting point of customer service has given me the foundation to have the customer as a focus in everything I do.

You are one of the foremost women in the lubricants industry. What changes have you seen over the past twenty years in the way in which the sector has embraced more diversity and inclusion?

The industry has certainly embraced diversity and inclusion and there are visible signs of this being turned into action. I now go to industry events, meetings, etc and for example the number of female attendees has increased dramatically from 20 years ago. However, we still have some way to go, I believe that regardless of your age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc, every one of us needs to take personal responsibility for their own performance and progression and that of their team. I am not particularly an advocate of "Quotas" for example I believe the best "person" should get the job regardless of gender etc, however the challenge is ensuring that the 'job' is fully accessible to everyone. This is a key element in ensuring diversity and inclusion continues to flourish in our industry.

LINK
www.q8oils.com