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THOUGHT LEADER

Thought Leader: Heidi Gill helps oil & gas companies reduce their impact (Video)

"In the communities' eyes it's not just the company — it's the industry."

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KATHLEEN LAVINE, DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Heidi Gill is founder and CEO of Urban Solution Group, which is focused on helping oil and gas companies figure out how to work with surrounding communities and reduce their impact.

[Heidi Gill](#) understands how important a home is, and the owner's desire to protect it from any kind of disruption.

Gill, 31, has worked in the oil and gas industry for three years, but before that she worked with people — and their homes — for a decade.

“My home is my castle — and people need to remember that people take pride in their homes,” Gill said.

“Your home is a place where you’re supposed to come to it and feel safe and comfortable. It’s emotional when things happen around a home.”

It doesn’t matter what the disruption might be, Gill said. It could be new construction down the street, and oil and gas development nearby, or a restaurant or bar setting up shop in the neighborhood.

“People don’t want those impacts. The question is, what can we do to have a successful business in close proximity to homes? How do we make it socially compatible, regardless of the industry?” Gill said.

So after she left [Anadarko Petroleum Corp.](#) (NYSE: APC) in May, where she oversaw the planning and execution of efforts to reduce the impact of drilling rigs and oil and gas operations on nearby neighborhoods, Gill founded her own company: Urban Solution Group.

Initially, Denver-based Urban Solution Group is focused on helping oil and gas companies figure out how to work with surrounding communities and reduce their impact. She expects to have five people on board by the end of the year and is working on raising between \$4 million and \$10 million to get the company off the ground.

“I’m passionate about sourcing oil and gas in the U.S. and I know it can be done environmentally and socially responsibly,” Gill said.

At Anadarko, she built mitigation plans that looked at existing conditions for noise, light, dust and odors before the drilling rig was moved into position. That baseline information is crucial to assessing the impacts of the rig, and proactively work with engineers, residents, local governments and homeowner associations ahead of time.

Urban Solution Group came about, Gill said, because she “wanted to do everything that I was doing at Anadarko, but be able to offer it to all our operators.”

Large energy companies hire staff to work with local communities, but smaller companies also need help, Gill said. “We need them to be just as successful, because in the communities’ eyes it’s not just the company — it’s the industry.”

“It’s so important for our industry and in Colorado there are so many people who want to live here — and it’s also on top of one of the most active oil fields in the U.S. [in the Denver-Julesburg Basin north and east of Denver],” she said.

She thinks the biggest problem between the industry and communities is the gulf in communication and understanding. “So many things can be helped with good communications,” Gill said, adding that even when a homeowner or community doesn’t want to engage, companies should try it anyway.

Gill’s company also bringing technology to bear.

After listening to complaints about soundwalls around oil and gas operations — the giant, temporary 30-foot tall walls of tan fabric erected to block sound, light, dust and odors — Gill designed a new kind of wall.

“Perception does matter, and the walls that are out there right now just don’t look good. They don’t look professional and clean,” Gill said.

Her soundwall, being manufactured by a Colorado company, can be put up and taken down faster, it’s stronger than others used in the field, and the outer layer can be printed. That opens up new possibilities on the visual front, she said.

“You could print a flower on the wall, make it look like stone, or even take a picture of the existing landscape and put it on the wall.”

Gill said she’s seen a “massive amount of interest” from communities and energy companies in her ideas.

“If we are going to put up a wall anyway for noise and environmental mitigation, why not offer a choice? Would you prefer one that looks like this? or like this.”

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