From: Clanon, Paul
Sent: 7/1/2012 9:09:15 AM
To: Bottorff, Thomas E (/O=PG&E/OU=CORPORATE/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=TEB3)
Cc: Cherry, Brian K (/O=PG&E/OU=CORPORATE/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=BKC7)
Bcc:
Subject: Re: Karen Austin profile in the San Jose Mercury News

Good to see.

On Jul 1, 2012, at 8:56 AM, "Bottorff, Thomas E" <TEB3@pge.com> wrote:

> Very nice article on our CIO.
>
> Tom
>
> http://www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_20967323/karen-austin-pushes-pg-e-further-into-digital
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> **Karen Austin Pushes PG&E Further Into the Digital Age**
>
> By Dana Hull
>
> Mercury News, June 29, 2012
>
> When **Karen Austin** was offered the job as **PG&E's senior vice president and chief information officer** she was thrilled. A veteran technologist who spent 27 years at retail giants Kmart and Sears, she thought working for one of the nation's leading utilities would be a new challenge. She was also excited to move from Chicago to Northern California -- ground zero of the technology revolution.
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> But when she arrived at PG&E in June of last year, she was stunned by how poorly the utility, which has 20,000 employees and 5.4 million residential customers, used technology.
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> Crews in the field largely inspected gas lines with rolled up maps and took notes on paper and clipboards. Record-keeping was a notorious disaster. There was no wireless Internet access at PG&E's San Francisco headquarters, and company computers ran on 10-year-old operating systems that took forever to boot up in the morning. Some employees had BlackBerry devices, but it wasn't possible to integrate work email on an iPhone or iPad.
>
> **Austin**, 50, is determined to change all of that. She's one of several new executives who have been brought in to overhaul operations and focus PG&E

on a back-to-basics mission: serving customers with safe, reliable and affordable gas and electricity. **Austin** leads all of PG&E's information technology systems and technology initiatives, from cybersecurity to further enabling the development of the smart grid. Her team includes 1,600 people, and she reports directly to **President Chris Johns**.

"I'm at my best when I'm doing something new and different," said **Austin**, who grew up on a farm in Ohio and now has an office with a gleaming view of the San Francisco Bay. "There's a lot we can do to improve the experience of our employees in the field. The better IT supports our employees, the better they can support our customers."

PG&E is still haunted by the 2010 San Bruno natural gas explosion that killed eight people and torched a residential neighborhood. The fiery explosion occurred after a power failure at a PG&E terminal in Milpitas caused pressure to spike along the gas transmission line, ultimately blowing open a crater 72-feet long and 26-feet wide.

Subsequent state and federal investigations revealed that many of PG&E's records of its gas pipeline system were inaccurate or missing. Records showed, for example, that the pipeline that exploded in San Bruno was a solid piece of seamless pipe when in fact it was welded.

Austin is now spearheading a major effort to digitize PG&E's gas records using GIS, or geospacial information systems. GIS makes it possible to capture, manage and analyze all kinds of geographically based information, which is key when you're trying to keep accurate, up-to-date records on miles of pipeline.

When **Austin** first went in the field with PG&E workers who perform gas leak surveys, she saw guys slowly walking with 20 pounds of bulky detection equipment and taking notes on a paper "leak log."

"They literally had to take baby steps," said **Austin**, who scoured the market for new detection devices that weigh far less, are more ergonomic to hold and allow employees to walk faster, so they can survey more miles each day. Their GPS-enabled tablets capture exact locations where they enter information.

Earlier this year, **Austin** led PG&E to become the first utility to sign on to the White House's "Green Button" challenge, named after an online tool that lets consumers download energy usage data from their utility's website in an easy, standard format. The hope is that consumers will agree to share their energy data with third-party developers eager to create smartphone apps, text message alerts and other tools that will empower consumers with easy-to-understand information about their energy use.

"In a very short time, **Karen** has established herself as an IT leader among

California's utilities and a role model for the growing cleanweb sector," said Aneesh Chopra, who until recently was the Obama administration's chief technology officer. "Her pioneering commitment to the Green Button is a perfect example."

So far, roughly 2.2 million of PG&E's electric customers have signed up for online "My Energy" alerts, while more than 150,000 customers have downloaded their own energy-use data via the Green Button.

"People are using this data to more effectively manage their energy use," said **Austin**. "We are now looking at what to do to take it to the next level."

Companies that do business with PG&E have noticed a significant shift in the culture of the utility.

Don Reeves runs services and operations for Silver Spring Networks, a fast-growing Redwood City startup that provides the hardware, software and services that allow the smart grid to function. PG&E is one of its biggest clients.

"**Karen** is trying to move mountains," he said. "I was at a meeting at PG&E last week, and for the first time ever I saw PG&E employees with iPads in a meeting. That's a huge change."

Reeves says **Austin** has also brought a can-do attitude to a utility not known for moving fast.

"Previously the IT group had nothing to do with the SmartMeter program," said Reeves, referring to the new and controversial digital meters that some customers claim can cause health problems. "There was often breakdowns of communication and a lack of coordination. Karen's philosophy is that IT is a core asset that needs to be integrated into all aspects of the business. She wants to know what the action is -- how do we get this done?"

Within PG&E, **Austin** is known for making relatively simple but long overdue, changes: upgrading computers, expanded Wi-Fi, being able to use iPhones for work email, getting rid of annoying Muzak on phone lines.

Compiling the gas records is the most daunting item on her vast to-do list, but she has many other initiatives in progress. PG&E bills are being redesigned to make them easier to read and available in Chinese and Spanish. Call centers will be revamped so that customer service representatives have more information about PG&E customers and their energy usage at their fingertips. And she plans to greatly expand the use of social media to inform customers about everything from winter storms to summer heat.

"The IT department used to be off on its own, and everything was a three-year,

$20 million project," said **Austin**. "We now have IT aligned with each business unit, and we're moving much faster. My philosophy is: let's get this done in six months."

KAREN AUSTIN

Job: Senior vice president, chief information officer at PG&E

Previous jobs: President of consumer electronics at Sears; CIO at Sears Holdings Management Corp.; SVP, CIO at Kmart

Education: BS in computer science, Trine University, 1983

Family: Married with two daughters

Residence: Mill Valley