

# CGI Leading in Smart Grids

**It's rather difficult to miss CGI as the most diversified firm in the global market place for smart grids, and IDC MarketScape has definitely noticed. In their vendor assessment (IDC MarketScape: Worldwide IT Professional Services for Utility Smart Grid 2014 Vendor Assessment) 1, IDC has named CGI as one of the three global leaders for smart grid services. With this recognition, NRG Magazine looked into what made the firm stand out over the rest, from CGI's perspective.**

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Jos Siemons is responsible for the Smart Energy portfolio within CGI, Netherlands. He takes care of solutions relating to demand side management, managing renewables and then of course managing smart grid solutions, most importantly. He's the one that has made it clear to NRG Magazine that there are quite a few operational aspects that CGI excels in, when compared to competitors. “CGI's approach to smart energy is a combination of having a vision and applying that vision to practice,” shares Jos. That vision focuses on the fact that the world is changing in terms of energy and mobility. Where some believe that renewables and electric vehicles may threaten energy grids, CGI finds the perfect opportunity to create an ideal balance. Throughout the process of developing solutions, the end user remains the main focus to ensure successful rollout in the end.

In collaboration with different countries and partners, CGI applies their knowledge to practice and continues to evolve by learning from every project. They are currently involved in high-focus smart grid projects such as InovGrid in Portugal and Low Carbon London in the UK. They also provide asset, resource and workforce management systems for 60 top utilities in North America and hold long-term outsourcing relationships in Portugal, Brazil, UK and France. 2 In the Netherlands, as frontrunner on smart grids, CGI is developing new solutions on EV charging, developing open smart grid platforms, and running the central market facilitation systems. To add, in the UK, they have been recently appointed as the Data Service Provider for the roll-out of 53 million smart

gas and electricity meters. Jos explains that “CGI in the Netherlands is a pioneer when it's about smart grids – we are not waiting until the compelling event is there, we are acting as entrepreneurs to develop solutions for the future.” Although there is no real business case yet for smart grids, CGI does not hold still on innovation and continues preparing for the future of smart energy. By investing in these innovations, they can set the stage for smart grids, learn through their practice and enhance their vision, as necessary.

CGI is also acclaimed to have a diversified portfolio of services, many of which are available globally. Jos shares some insight about the solutions CGI develops: “our vision involves building innovative solutions for the market, that are offered as services and are available across multiple countries, not just the ones in which they are developed.” For example, they have developed EV charging solutions in the Netherlands, but now have the services running in six different European countries. Of all these solutions, one of them stands out the most and is most sought out, globally: CEMS. CEMS, in full form is known as the Central Energy Management System and is a solution for demand side management. In short, CEMS (e.g.) supports clusters of smart houses of the future, equipped with smart appliances and smart meters that measure the supply of energy to the home and can provide incentives to influence the energy demand and create flexibility. This is to help occupants make smart decisions about energy usage. The CEMS project is in pilot phase at the moment, located in Zwolle and Breda, in partnership with Enexis. Enexis has recognized the need to invest in

innovation as well to propel the smart grid movement, as well. Else Veldman, Manager of Innovation at Enexis: “Enexis stimulates its customers to change their behavior and use energy for their daily life at alternative times to reduce peak load. In this way, less investment in network capacity is needed. In order to achieve this, the application of ICT in our distribution grids is vital.” So far, the pilot project has shown first insights such as end-users being flexible to move the energy consumption, and that financial incentives are the best driver. The final results of the CEMS pilot are expected to be delivered in 2015.

So why has the recognition of being a leader in smart grids been well deserved by CGI? It comes down to two things – most smart grid companies focus either on IT services or on operational technology but CGI's strength is that they focus on both, IT and OT. “When talking about smart grids, it's crucial to implement the combination of the two because smart grids are connecting all kinds of devices in the field (like solar panels, charging points, and smart homes) and then follows the implementation of CRM billing systems. We integrate these aspects and that is where we differentiate ourselves from others,” Jos says. There's one more aspect that defines CGI as a global leader in smart grids and that is the fact that they are very well informed about the processes in the utility market and, with this, they are able to find well fitting IT solutions for the market processes and offer the right implementations. ●

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=EI246402>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cgi-group.co.uk/utilities>