

Photos: personal archive



Ana Zambelli,
Managing Director Private
Equity at Brookfield
Asset Management.



IN HER VIEW, ADVERSITY LOOKS LIKE AN OPPORTUNITY

“Since I was growing up, I have learned that we must not let ourselves be defeated by adversity. The path will be rocky and stumbling is inevitable, but our force lies in knowing to get back up, to believe in our ability and to strongly embrace opportunities”.

That statement, by Ana Zambelli, offers an insight into the determination of this executive – who has accumulated experience in seven cities in five different countries, over 22 years devoted to the oil and gas sector – as well as the courageous thinking of someone who believes that nothing is impossible and that there are always options.

While still at the UFRJ (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), studying Mechanical Engineering, Ana joined Schlumberger without really knowing anything about the market, and ended up as the president of the company in Brazil. She recalls, "I fell in love with the company during the selection process, which included a weekend at the operational base in Macaé, with hands-on activities. I felt like a real engineer!"

During that path, which included a master's degree and two post-graduate specializations, she perceived that it was necessary to be resilient, not only to deal with the male dominance in the profession, but to handle the working conditions. She clarifies, "At that time, the conditions in the field were arduous, the operating equipment was very heavy and the installations were limited, in the bathrooms and even in the cabins for overnight stays".

On the other hand, working with cutting-edge technology, extremely complex operations, the focus on safety and the environment when other industries didn't even talk about those issues, as well as the broad diversity of nationalities, made the profession interesting for Zambelli, who saw Oil&Gas as one of the few industries that actually transcends barriers and makes people feel much closer to one another.

After 16 years, some changes of scenery, as she entered the senior management of companies such as Transocean and Maersk, working both inside and outside Brazil, until she felt it was time for

a change of direction and choose some different options. With this move, she made the transition from executive board to supervisory board. She spent two years at Petrobras and one at Braskem.

Following that experience, she opted for something a bit more radical. She says, "The financial market has always attracted me, because of the variety of businesses, so when I got an invitation from Brookfield, a company that I admire very much, with an incredible track record in Brazil, accepting it was the natural thing to do". Ana is the managing director of the Private Equity arm of Brookfield Asset Management and observes that, "It is intense and challenging work and I am learning a lot and just loving it".

In the sphere of challenges, she believes the biggest one, for men and women in the corporate world, is to reconcile the professional life with the personal one. She emphasizes that, "As executives, we give up a lot of our private life, for the company, for the business, so deriving great satisfaction from one's work achievements, and having the support of the family, is essential to getting through it and overcoming the major challenge of being happy with the choices we make". She says that this balance became consolidated with motherhood and it helped her to work on values such as empathy, fairness, openness, patience, resilience and the ability to listen, adding that, "This was only possible with the support of my son, Lucas. He teaches me every day to be a better person

and motivates me to lead people along that path. It is also thanks to family and friends, with whom I never miss an opportunity to share good food and good wine”.

LEAVING BEHIND A LEGACY, BUT NO INTENTION OF SLOWING DOWN

The long journey and the desire to leave some kind of legacy for the industry are not reasons to think about taking her foot off the accelerator. She comments, “I haven’t even thought about the possibility of slowing down or what to do when I stop, but if I had to choose today a legacy to leave behind, it is recognition by the market that gender diversity adds value to the business”.

Zambelli recognizes that globally the industry is going through a major transition and that, since the 2014 crisis, with the sharp drop in oil prices, a series of fresh crises has prevented it from returning to the previous levels. She also sees the competitiveness of renewable energy, as well as the potential of this new market to have an even greater impact on the transition from fossil fuels to a cleaner energy matrix. Speaking from experience, she affirms, “In my view, the success of the Oil&Gas sector in Brazil will lie in knowing how to use the oil resources to set up opportunities for the expansion of gas within the Brazilian energy matrix”.

