

A Responsible Business

An Interview with Rudolph (Rudy) Wynter, President, National Grid New York

EDITORS' NOTE In Rudy Wynter's more than 30-year tenure at National Grid and its legacy companies, he has served in several senior and operational roles, most recently as Chief Operating Officer of the company's Wholesale Networks & Capital Delivery business. He has also held senior positions of responsibility in National Grid's Shared Services, Customer Operations, Strategic Planning, Engineering, and Operations. He is the President of National Grid's New York business, leading the company's regulated energy delivery portfolio, which provides electricity and natural gas service to four million customers across the state. Wynter is a board member of the Partnership for New York City, Energy Insurance Mutual (EIM), Grid Wise Alliance and Green-Wood. He is also a member of The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Gas Association, and the Edison Electric Institute. Wynter earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Pratt Institute and has an MBA from Fordham University.



Rudy Wynter

COMPANY BRIEF National Grid (nationalgrid.com) is an electricity, natural gas, and clean energy delivery company serving more than 20 million people through its networks in New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. National Grid is transforming its electricity and natural gas networks with smarter, cleaner and more resilient energy solutions to meet the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As part of its commitment to a clean energy future, National Grid is a Principal Partner for COP26, the UN global climate summit, which will be located in the U.K. in November 2021.

Will you highlight National Grid's history and heritage in New York State and what have been the keys to the company's consistent industry leadership?

In New York State, we have a long tradition through our various legacy companies of providing natural gas and electricity service upstate and natural gas service in Brooklyn, Staten Island, parts of Queens and Long Island. We know our business is fundamentally linked to the overall economic health and well-being of the communities we're privileged to serve. Of course, the way we serve our customers has evolved over the

years. Today, we're focused on building a smarter energy grid, enhancing storm resiliency, promoting economic growth and preparing for the next generation of cleaner energy. In fact, we're transforming our electricity and natural gas networks with smarter, cleaner and more resilient energy solutions to meet the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero, including from the sale of electricity and gas to customers – a goal we announced last October.

We're doing this while keeping safety, reliability, affordability and customer service at the forefront. Our energy systems provide essential services to homes and businesses, and power economic sectors including manufacturing, healthcare, banking, nanotechnology, agribusiness, education, defense, medical research and development, transportation, entertainment and tourism, service industries, and much more. Though we're one of the largest energy companies in the U.S., we know one of the keys to our success is fostering local relationships with customers, communities and other stakeholders.

How do you describe National Grid's culture and how critical is culture to the success of the company?

Culture is very critical to our success. It's the differentiator that makes us unique as a company and it guides how our colleagues act, feel and think. Culture represents our unique personality, expressing our core values, behaviors and beliefs. It's a huge motivational force for our colleagues and motivator for people to come work for us. If we want to attract the best and brightest, we must have a culture in place in which people can thrive. We're a purpose driven organization and people want to work for a company that makes a difference. To keep culture meaningful and relevant to our colleagues, we must keep evolving to reflect today's world and business best practices.

Our culture is based on our three fundamental core values: Do the Right Thing, Find a Better Way and Make it Happen. These values allow us to put customers and communities first, be transparent in our operations, and help our most vulnerable customers in times of need. We're passionate about living our values and for us doing the right thing is also ensuring everyone is respected and can bring their whole, authentic self to work. This enables

colleagues to fulfil their potential, find better ways to work together and deliver on our ambitions as a business.

How did National Grid adapt the way it works to address the challenges caused by the pandemic?

Like other businesses, we had to pivot and adapt right away. Like always, we had to ensure the safety of our colleagues, customers and communities, while continuing to deliver essential electric and gas services. Thousands of office colleagues now had to work from home – unprecedented circumstances for our office-based staff. Our Information Technology colleagues did a superb job in ensuring we had the necessary tools and capability to connect to our systems and communicate with each other. For some crucial areas like our electric and gas control rooms, we had to sequester colleagues for weeks at a time to ensure we had proper levels of staffing and on-site management. These services could never be compromised, and our colleagues made huge sacrifices in being away from their families. Our colleagues in the field continued their essential work, in compliance with the latest PPE and COVID-protocols.

At the same time, we had to focus on providing solutions to customers who were – and still are – suffering from the pandemic's financial and personal impacts. We wanted to ensure customers knew we're in this together and committed to helping them throughout the pandemic. We took some actions at the onset of the pandemic, including:

- Donating nearly \$1 million across New York State to support hunger relief, human services agencies and others
- Providing enhanced economic development support to New York businesses producing critical pandemic supplies
- Pausing disconnections and fees, late payment charges and collections-related activities and offering flexible payment plans
- Launching extensive customer outreach through e-mails, letters, traditional and digital media, webinars, and calls to provide information on managing energy bills, offering flexible payment and billing options, and providing details on financial assistance and energy savings programs
- Encouraging customers who are struggling to pay their bills to contact us as soon as possible so that we can help

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• Offering the expertise of our Consumer Advocates to provide crisis intervention support for our most vulnerable customers, working closely with county Social Services and community assistance organizations.

How proud are you to see the strength and resilience of National Grid’s workforce during this unprecedented time?

I’m so proud of how our colleagues have risen to the occasion in the face of the pandemic. They continue to show incredible strength, courage and resiliency, adapting to the changes required to safely and reliably serve our customers. Many of them went the extra mile in providing food and essential care items to support our neighbors and first responders in the communities we serve. All our “business as usual” activities – storm restoration, customer service calls, infrastructure upgrades – were made more complex by COVID, but our colleagues have performed admirably throughout, no matter what the obstacle.

How critical is it for National Grid to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you discuss the company’s efforts in this regard?

As we reflect on a year of historic change throughout our country, we’re reminded of the need to continue to combat racism and intolerance. This was an opportunity for us to take a hard look at how we can recommit ourselves to pursue long-lasting change. In the last year, National Grid introduced its Responsible Business Charter, which identifies where the company can have the most impact on society. Within this charter, the company has laid out several targets it must achieve to advance inclusion, equity, and diversity, including hiring, promotions, retaining diverse colleagues and transparency around progress. We’ve made good progress so far – we’ve hired a Global Chief Diversity Officer, put in place dedicated resources to support our Inclusion and Diversity efforts, and increased training and development opportunities for our colleagues – and we will continue to build on these key actions. I’m pleased that we honored Juneteenth as a company holiday beginning this past June for all our colleagues, encouraging them to use the time away from work as a day of reflection and to celebrate Black communities, particularly in the neighborhoods where they live and work. Providing a level playing field for our colleagues for upward progression, creating

more inclusive environments on our teams and really celebrating our differences, are more important now than ever.

What do you see as National Grid’s responsibility to the communities it serves and to being a force for good in society?

We’re committed to be a responsible business in everything we do. We do this first by delivering the electricity and gas that our customers and communities rely on. We’ll always do this reliably, safely, and in a fair and affordable way. We apply this responsibility every day based on our values – doing the right thing, finding a better way and making it happen. Society expects it of us, and we know we can make a positive impact.

We’re also committed to shaping a sustainable economy for all, in partnership with others in our industry and beyond. We have a responsibility to demonstrate our contribution to society more broadly – whether that’s by making sure young people today become the problem solvers of tomorrow, or in tackling climate change by reducing our own emissions through our own net zero plan, and helping our customers use energy more efficiently.

Responsibility and transparency have always been important to us. Over the past few years, we’ve taken a hard look at where we can create the most positive impact on society. We adapted the way we manage our business responsibly, looking at everything from our strategic investment process to our role in the community and our business processes and policies. We’ve identified where we can have the most impact on society: the environment, the communities we serve, our people, the economy, and our governance. For each, we have set out commitments and how we will achieve them.

Another initiative I’m very excited about is something we’re calling Project C – C standing for community. We began Project C on September 17 with a day of service, furthering our proud partnership with the people and communities where we live and work. When you think about all our businesses in New York, we have a deep, rich legacy of community engagement. Project C provides us with more focused attention and resources tying together some key issues around the state to really launch a concerted effort to be there for those communities more than we’ve been in recent years. Key issues Project C will focus on include environmental justice,

workforce development, deeper community engagement and volunteerism.

National Grid has a strong presence in New York. How is the company supporting New York’s recovery and rebuilding efforts from the pandemic?

We must continue to support all our customers, especially those most vulnerable from the impacts of the pandemic. Making sure they have the resources they need from us, and pointing them to assistance programs outside the company too. I also see a recommitment to businesses across the state – especially small business – who’ve been overwhelmed from changes to the economy due to the pandemic. Our local economic development and energy efficiency programs can play a key role in recovery. We know regional, county, and local economic development organizations have limited resources to support the entirety of their business communities under normal circumstances, let alone when there are seismic shifts in the economy. This is true even of communities that possess robust and diversified business ecosystems. That’s why we’re launching a Small Business Technical Assistance Support Grants initiative to provide funds for regional or local economic development partners to provide direct outreach and technical guidance to small businesses in our service territory. To complement this, our customer area is launching a program of value-added services specifically targeted to small businesses.

How is National Grid working to build the energy workforce of the future?

We’ve always valued reaching out to young people and promoting STEM education. The youngsters of today will be our colleagues of tomorrow. The energy industry is at a critical moment as we need to help enable the transition to the cleaner energy future we all want and need. We see our business playing an important role in that transition. Our net zero goals, while ensuring no customers are left behind, will offer exciting and challenging times for our colleagues. With all that, we’re committed to developing the next generation of engineers and energy company workers who are well-prepared to address the long-term needs of our industry. Through our comprehensive STEM programs, our partnerships with educational institutions, vocational schools and veterans’ groups, we’ll help build the energy workforce of the future. ●