

## Inside CIGRE Paris 2024: Industry Insights and Grid Innovation

In late August, I went to the biennial CIGRE conference in Paris France in my capacity as an Executive Advisor to APC Media to interview thought leaders who are working at the core of the global second age of electrification and energy transition. My goals were to better understand and report back to our readers current electric power industry challenges, trends, solutions, and what makes experts so passionate about CIGRE Paris. While I have been to Paris several times over the last couple decades, this time was special. Not only because my wife and I connected with a Paralympic athlete on the flight over, followed her progress at the games, experienced the city-wide Olympic celebrations in the evenings, but among the record-breaking 11,000 CIGRE participants, I am most grateful to have reconnected with so many long-time industry colleagues and engage and interview numerous industry leaders in a diversity of roles from C-suite to technical expert.

During the six-day event we scheduled interviews with sixteen thought leaders including C-Suite representatives, Peter Cunningham with Camlin Group, Dr. Bahadir Basdere with Trench Group, Holger Ketterer with SGB - Smit Group, and Stéphane Page with Condis. We also interviewed globally recognized technical experts in leadership roles including Jacco Smit with Tennet, Seamus Allan with Dynamic Ratings, and Diego Robalino and Niclas Wetterstrand with Megger. All the one-on-one interviews encompassed the similar questions requesting perspective on what the industry challenges and trends are, what solutions they are bringing to market, and what they are excited about here at CIGRE Paris 2024. **Stéphane Page did a great job summarizing the current industry: "We are living in an unbelievable moment in our industry, investments in electrical infrastructure are just massive."**

The topics ranged from switches, bushings, transformers, cable, protection, monitoring and test equipment. All our guests were seasoned industry veterans, and they all expressed an excitement about our industry's growth, the like they have never seen before. **Seamus Allan noted that "One of the biggest challenges at moment is the knowledge gap that is emerging" and Holger Ketterer stated that with "One of biggest challenge in the near future is the need for skilled labor."**

Some of the solutions our guests identified are the acceleration of standardization, better production planning through partnerships, monitoring to direct risk mitigation and reduce workforce knowledge requirement, investment in production, technology based technical services to replace knowledge gaps. **In short: "Explore. The grid does not come to you. You need to go into the grid."** (Jacco Smit)

This was my first time attending CIGRE so I had several surprising first impressions. In a word, the CIGRE conference is about relationships. Relationships that enable learning, problem solving and make business happen in the electric power industry. CIGRE does not produce standards, but the technical brochures created by study committees made up of delegates from countries around the world are often the industry golden standard for the basis of IEEE, IEC and other national standards. If you're familiar with the IEEE T&D Conference and tradeshow, this event is similar in scale, but I found it to be far more compact, accessible, and intimate. The two main amphitheatres are surrounded by a multilevel tradeshow and breakout rooms of various sizes. This means one can go from a commercial discussion in a vendor booth to a

panel session with hundreds of attendees or a technical committee session in a few steps. In my experience, paper "poster sessions" are generally poorly attended, but not at CIGRE. The poster session area was packed, and the energy and excitement were palpable. Each poster station with its large monitor screens and a presenter were well attended by multiple people. Even the papers selected for oral presentations in one of the amphitheatres were different than most conferences. They were grouped by topic, each contribution was only a few minutes, and questions were only taken after the presentations on a given topic were complete. This unusual process enabled over a thousand papers to be presented in poster or oral format covering the breadth of power system topics exposing the attendees to a buffet of new and thought provoking ideas. If CIGRE 2026 is not already in your business travel plans, I recommend you reconsider.



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I hope you enjoy the interviews as much as I did and that you take away valuable insights that can positively impact our collective efforts to meet our society's goals to upgrade our grid, the cornerstone of our modern civilization. I would like to thank all our interviewees for their insights, APC Media production team, and my employer, Osmose Utility Services for their commitment to advancing thought leadership in our industry.

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With over 30 years in the electric power and energy industry, **Ben Lanz** is responsible for Osmose (Osmose.com) technical outreach and education efforts and is the immediate past Chairman of the Board of the Power Delivery Intelligence Initiative (PDI2.org), a nonprofit dedicated to disseminating grid investment best practices. He is a senior member of IEEE PES and ICC, and a voting member of DEIS, IAS, ACP, CIGRE, SaRA & NETA. He has chaired IEEE technical committees associated with power system reliability, protection, and testing, has published over 100 papers, articles and technical conference contributions on the subjects of power system reliability, asset management, design, work practices, longevity and diagnostics, and is a regular guest speaker at numerous conferences and seminars.



Photo: Ben Lanz

