



# Raymond A. Mason School of Business

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LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS PODCAST

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## EPISODE 199: AMANDA EVERSOLE – INFLUENCING WITH INTEGRITY

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### Amanda Eversole

My job is not to try to convince every single person in this country, 330,000,000 people, to love oil and gas. But what we want to do is to provide some level of energy literacy. So there's an understanding of the importance of being able to produce energy in this country.

### Female Speaker

From William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is Leadership & Business, produced by the William & Mary School of Business and its MBA program. Offered in four formats the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive MBA. For more information, visit [wm.edu](http://wm.edu).

### Ken White

Welcome to Leadership & Business, the podcast that brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world. Sharing strategies, information, and insight that help you become a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host, Ken White. Thanks for listening. Energy, it's always a hot topic, and the American Petroleum Institute is happy to be a part of the discussion. API is a 100-year-old trade association that represents all segments of America's natural gas and oil industry. Its 600 members produce, process, and distribute the majority of the nation's energy. Amanda Eversole is API's Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy Officer. Among other things, she's the face of oil and gas in Washington, DC. Interacting with influencers and government officials to inform them about the issues pertaining to American oil and gas. She visited William & Mary recently, and after spending time with business school students, she sat down with us to discuss the American Petroleum Institute, energy in the US and abroad and influencing with integrity. Here's our conversation with Amanda Eversole.

### Ken White

Well, Amanda, welcome. Thanks for joining us. You've had a long day, but thanks for taking the time to be with us.

Amanda Eversole

It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Ken White

So you've been in a couple of classes today.

Amanda Eversole

I have.

Ken White

What was that like?

Amanda Eversole

Fascinating. And honestly, I feel like I get more out of it than even the students. Being around the optimism of youth and being able to take time to focus on yourself and your leadership trajectory and the impact you're going to make on the world is such a gift. And if I knew then what I know now, I would have focused more on it at the time.

Ken White

Good questions from the students.

Amanda Eversole

Terrific questions. Students at William & Mary, I have to say, are so smart. I do not think I would get in if I had to apply today.

Ken White

Which is what I think all of our alumni say and feel that. Yeah, they are definitely special. It's truly a joy to walk into these doors every day. Yeah, they're so fun. So, the American Petroleum Institute, I find the mission is interesting because it lists a couple of different specifics, and one is promote safety across the industry globally. What does that entail? What's that mean?

Amanda Eversole

Yeah. We were founded more than 100 years ago to help our industry, and our employees understand how to do what we do, get oil and gas out of the earth, and bring it to markets in a safe and, believe it or not, sustainable way. And one of the most amazing parts of this industry is that we, and again, made up of so many engineers. We know how to optimize molecules, and we continually want to improve and get better, and we want to share those learnings with each other. So inside the beltway, people look at me, and they want to talk about the latest bill in the House or what's going to happen at EPA. Outside of

Washington, people look at me and say, oh, you're from API. Thank you for keeping me safe. And that is an extraordinarily important responsibility that we have because we, the industry, want to continually get better. Not just for our employees, for their families, for our communities, but because it's the right thing to do.

### Ken White

So I think when the average person hears safety, I'm not sure they know what that entails.

### Amanda Eversole

Well, a lot of what we do in oil and gas is working with heavy machinery and equipment and things at high pressures and in places that can be quite dangerous. And so it can be something at the beginning of as simple as the beginning of every meeting that we have. We give a safety moment. And so if we're in a corporate office, it could be something as simple as there are no planned drills that are scheduled to happen in the next hour. So if you hear any sort of alarm, treat it as a real-life issue, and here's where our muster point will be. But if you're in the field, the safety moment can be we had an incident, and here's how we're going to adjust because this happened, or the weather may be doing this, and here's how we're going to adjust our operations. Or here's something I read, and this is something that it would be important for all of us to consider. People don't fully appreciate when they think of oil and gas. They have this default narrative of what it looks like. Dirty and something that just is maybe not so positive, but when you really get to know the people of this industry and the ambition to continually get better and smarter. But at the core, we are about safety for our people and safety for the environment.

### Ken White

It's interesting if someone has not seen an industry with sort of a safety briefing in a corporate office. I remember the first time, and I went wow. If you don't come from that sort of a background, it's an interesting culture, isn't it?

### Amanda Eversole

It sure is. And I'll tell you, I learned early on things like holding the handrail when walking up to the stage to give remarks. I could give the very best presentation of my life. But if I'm in front of my members and I don't hold the handrail properly, somebody will say something to me because a safety incident, if it means tripping on a stair or a safety incident that could have ramifications in the field, they are treated equally. Safety is safety, and we have to take it really, really seriously.

Ken White

And those in industries who take it seriously know exactly what you mean. Yeah, that's so interesting. Also, looking back at the mission, what does a strong, viable US oil and natural gas industry look like?

Amanda Eversole

Right now, there is a lot of debate about energy. Some even say we are in a global energy crisis, in part brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which sent supply and demand into a tailspin. Supply was depressed. Demand continues to increase in a post-COVID world. And so my job is to help ensure that the American companies producing here and around the world have a climate in which they can continue to do that. We have an obligation to do it in a way that is environmentally responsible, that our product is both affordable and reliable. I think of that as the trilemma because if any one of those three things is out of balance, then we have a problem. And so we are continually working across the regulatory space, across federal, state, and local levels of government, to ensure that there is a good understanding of the role that American energy plays, and specifically oil and gas, in helping our citizens live the daily lives that we rely on energy at every moment of the day and night.

Ken White

So those messages do you target the quote-unquote, average citizen? Is that part of your advocacy?

Amanda Eversole

Absolutely. So we talk to government officials, and we talk to the American people. My job is not to try to convince every single person in this country, 330,000,000 people, to love oil and gas, but what we want to do is to provide some level of energy literacy. So there's an understanding of the importance of being able to produce energy in this country. Presidents dating back for more than 50 years, Republicans and Democrats alike, have called for American energy independence. And the great news is that we have it today in this country, and unfortunately, in some cases, government is working at odds to try to accelerate a transition. And we can talk about that, but a transition away from oil and gas to something different and at a time when that's not technically feasible. And so my job is to try to make sure we understand the role that energy plays, the role that the importance of being energy independent. And there are things geopolitically, like the war in Ukraine, that give us a moment as a country to step back and say our allies in Europe were far over-levered in terms of dependence on Russian gas. And once again, the United States of America and our private sector has stepped up to make sure that they did not have to suffer this winter. But it's not going to stop there. We are now a net exporter of petroleum around the world. That is an important responsibility. But we have to ensure

that we can continue to produce so we can continue to help our friends and allies around the world.

Ken White

Do most people understand how much we do produce? Because I was surprised on the website to see the graphic for the year 2040. Wow. Almost half of the energy oil and gas. Do most people get that?

Amanda Eversole

I don't think so. I think energy is one of those commodities that, unless you are out of it, you don't think about it.

Ken White

We'll continue our discussion with Amanda Eversole of the American Petroleum Institute in just a minute. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business. This year the Financial Times, Princeton Review, US News and World Report, and CEO Magazine have all named the William & Mary MBA program one of the best in the US and the world. If you're thinking about pursuing an MBA, consider one that has outstanding faculty, excellent student support, and a brand that's highly respected, the William & Mary MBA program. Reach out to our admissions team to learn which of our four MBA programs best fits you. The full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive. Check out the MBA program at William & Mary at [wm.edu](http://wm.edu). Now back to our conversation with Amanda Eversole of the American Petroleum Institute.

Ken White

So, obviously, so much talked about in the vehicle space, electric vehicles. So in your job, how do you address that, and to whom do you address that?

Amanda Eversole

So electric vehicles are certainly a topic of a lot of discussion, and I should say that a number of my member companies have great investments within the EV space, whether it's a charging station, whether it's in battery storage, any number of different aspects. And so we are, at our core, one of our principles. We can see on our website, [api.org](http://api.org) we have a set of ten principles. And one of our principles, of course, supports free markets and free trade. And what's so important about that is that when we talk about EVs, there is an inherent market distortion that's been put in place through subsidies. And I believe personally that there's a role for subsidies in incubating new industries and new markets and new growth, but at some point, there should be a level playing field. And so, there is a question right now around the long-term viability of the internal combustion engine versus EVs. And fundamentally, we don't often think about when you turn on the light

switch or when you plug something in. You expect energy to come out. But people don't often think about where does that energy come from? And so it's not a zero-sum game. It's coming from somewhere. Sometimes it's natural gas-powered power plants and natural gas. The switch from coal to natural gas in the generation of electricity is the single biggest reason why the United States have had 20 years of decrease in emissions and have beaten the world by a long shot. And that's because of natural gas, which is a fossil fuel. And there is a reason why there are groups and others who want to see fossil fuels being kept in the ground, for example, to try to demonize natural gas because they see it as a way to keep fossil fuels around for longer. I'm an optimist, and I happen to believe I want to get the largest benefit for society using the best technology that we have today. And that best technology and that best way, if that involves natural gas, then by golly, I think we should continue to do it because it's the right thing, and it just makes good sense.

Ken White

So you have a story to tell, obviously. Right. And you are a lobbyist. That's part of your role.

Amanda Eversole

That's right.

Ken White

Yeah. Do you enjoy that?

Amanda Eversole

I love it.

Ken White

Yeah. So what's that like? I'm so surprised by how many people don't understand that role or don't think a whole lot about that role. So what do you do as a lobbyist? What are some of your goals?

Amanda Eversole

At my core, I'm an advocate. I represent the members of the American Petroleum Institute. We have 600 member companies ranging from very large, integrated global energy companies to smaller, single basin upstream providers to mom-and-pop service and supply companies that may have just a couple of employees. And because we represent that entire value chain when we internally amongst our membership come up with a policy position, and we have a very complex set of governance and committees and ways of coming up with various policies, but when we externally go out and say, this is what the

industry thinks. It allows members of Congress. It allows regulators. It allows people to say, okay, this is where the industry is. Now they may not always agree with us, by the way, but then my job is to bring the facts to the table. My job is to bring the folks impacted by the policies to tell it and explain unintended consequences so we can come up with the best possible outcome. In my view, to have a free and vibrant industry that upholds that responsibility to the public to provide affordable, reliable, and cleaner energy.

Ken White

So the role sounds like part scientist, part negotiator, part educator.

Amanda Eversole

Chief diplomat.

Ken White

Yeah. Wow. A lot of balls in the air for that particular role.

Amanda Eversole

Absolutely.

Ken White

How did you end up with the advocacy part of the job?

Amanda Eversole

I started at API almost five years ago as the chief operating officer. And so I really looked internally the CEO, and I sort of joked that he was up and out, and I was down and in. And so things like putting in new technology systems, understanding the financial systems that we had that needed to be upgraded using really the finances to drive better decision making internally. How do we help educate, really think about our trade association like a business? And what I would say to my CEO very frequently is we should be running our business just exactly like you expect your teams to be running yours. And just because our product is information or our project is advocacy or standards or certifications doesn't mean that we shouldn't have that same level of discipline in running the business. So I did that for almost four years, and then we had some leadership changes on the team, and I was asked to step into this advocacy role. We had fixed a lot of the internal systems and, structures, components, and so I have an opportunity to now be much more externally facing, and I love being the face of oil and gas in Washington DC. It is my great, great privilege.

Ken White

The lobbyist environment ecosystem is interesting. It's not nearly as big, I think, as many people think. What is it that you like about it?

Amanda Eversole

I like convincing people of why oil and gas is so important. And it's funny because when I came to the industry and when I came to API, I did not have a careers background in oil and gas. In fact, I knew almost nothing. And so sometimes people joke and say, well then, how did you get that job? Well, I knew how to run large, complex trade associations, and so that COO role made a lot of sense. And one of my first jobs was to put together a strategic plan for the organization with a huge amount of input from the industry. And at that time, and one of the reasons why I was drawn to oil and gas is we were in an inflection point. Really the debate in society had moved to a point where it wasn't if climate change or talking about the science. It had really moved to what are we going to do about it? And companies and business models, and investment strategies were evolving at a rapid rate, and the trade association, which is a reflection of that broader industry, needed to change and evolve too. And I felt like my skills of bringing my voice to the inside and helping to be part of a solution again back to that optimist part of me being part of a solution inside without 30 years of experience in the industry allowed me to ask the simple, innocent question that sometimes was the very hardest. And that has been an unbelievable pleasure and gift in my career.

Ken White

And I would assume a lot of those questions that you were asking, you get asked now.

Amanda Eversole

I do.

Ken White

Yeah. So, you got the answers before the questions are asked. There's obviously passion in your voice. I can tell by looking at you there's a real passion. And we often ask guests on the podcast how important is it that you have a love for the job in order to succeed. How do you feel about that?

Amanda Eversole

Thank you for noticing. I do love my job. I feel so lucky every day that I can get up and represent the men and women of this industry. And yes, I spend a lot of my time in Washington, but some of my most valuable time is people outside of spending time with people outside of Washington. And the reason is, and you and I were talking about this beforehand is, it's not just we're really powerful lobbyists, or we are able to influence,



though we work hard at that, and we do it with high integrity and respect and all of those things. But when you look in the eyes of somebody on an offshore platform and says, thank you for being at API, you keep me safe, man. That keeps you going because they mean it, and it's true. And so people think of us for lobbying. Half of what we do is that safety and sustainability of our operations, our people, and our communities.

### Ken White

That's our conversation with Amanda Eversole, and that's it for this episode of Leadership & Business. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business, home of the MBA program, offered in four formats the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive MBA. Check out the William & Mary MBA program at [wm.edu](http://wm.edu). Thanks to our guest, Amanda Eversole, and thanks to you for joining us. I'm Ken White. Wishing you a safe, happy, and productive week ahead.

### Female Voice

We'd like to hear from you regarding the podcast. We invite you to share your ideas, questions, and thoughts with us by emailing us at [podcast@wm.edu](mailto:podcast@wm.edu). Thanks for listening to Leadership & Business.