

Christian Feisst

Senior Manager, Utilities

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group



Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, a 15,100-foot peak in Tanzania, Christian Feisst felt the force of nature in the raw. “Up there, where the air is so thin, you realize that you have to deal with nature. You can’t retreat; you can’t change your mind. But really, we are all in that position, every day. We just don’t realize it.”

The recognition that, in the end, we must deal with the natural world is one of the things that drives Feisst in his work with the utilities industry. He has spent his career trying to figure out how human beings can live in balance in the natural world. His focus on energy and utilities might seem in contradiction to this statement, but he realized early that mankind—for all our isolation from nature—must sooner or later cope with the natural consequences of our actions. Feisst’s goal has been to chart sustainable ways to source, distribute, and use energy with the least negative impact on the environment on which we all depend.

Feisst found himself in the utilities business more or less by accident—an accident he has since come to appreciate. As a student of business administration and economics nearing graduation at the University of Hohenheim, he was required to write a thesis. A consulting firm, A.T. Kearney, was willing to work with him on his thesis—a tremendous advantage because the firm offered resources that Feisst could not access on his own.

Feisst says the management at A.T. Kearney gave him three choices of topic for his thesis: electricity, electricity, or electricity—and his career in utilities was launched. At the time, few people were talking about energy, and Germany was deregulating its utilities,



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

so it was an exciting time to be delving into energy.

With his thesis completed, Feisst had amassed a huge trove of knowledge about utilities and energy. A.T. Kearney hired him as a consultant to the utilities industry. He worked in this area for about two years—and then the Internet frenzy hit. Feisst wanted desperately to switch to consulting with service providers—but Kearney insisted he stay with utilities. Though initially disappointed, Feisst later realized that he was in the right place: a place where he could make a difference, not only to his clients, but to the world at large.

Feisst was exposed to the idea of Smart Grid early in his career. “It was a concept that made complete sense to me,” he says. “Smart Grid is about making better use of finite resources. It enables us to use energy more wisely, but it also enables us to fold in sources of renewable energy like solar or wind. Renewable energy sources tend to be unpredictable, and you need an intelligent system to manage unpredictable resources.”

“Smart Grid is one of the most important infrastructure projects in the entire world,” he concludes with conviction. “It’s one of the primary ways that we will heal the world.”

Feisst joined Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the company’s strategic global consulting arm, from the position of principal with Booz Allen Hamilton. He was intrigued by the idea of being able to consult on business operations with access to the technology that makes business transformation possible. He covers every major area along the electricity value chain, focusing on the core disciplines of power generation and transportation and distribution grids. He is particularly interested in helping disparate organizations collaborate to make Smart Grid a global reality.

When he is not healing the world, Feisst spends his time with his wife and young son in Munich. A former member of the German national table tennis team, he no longer plays competitively, but still enjoys the game. He and his family take frequent trips to Italy, which he describes as “a beautiful country with great food and wine, a beautiful way of life.”