

The Decade Ahead: Human Resources Trends to 2020

For the past eight years, the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada (the Petroleum HR Council) has been bringing stakeholders together to address human resources issues shared across the petroleum industry. That collaboration, along with the Petroleum HR Council's expertise, has led to the creation and distribution of a number of informative products on attraction, retention, and workforce development. Continuing with its focus on collaboration, the Petroleum HR Council hosted its first industry conference, *The Decade Ahead: Human Resources Trends to 2020*, this past April at the Carriage House Inn in Calgary. The conference provided delegates with key insights for long-term strategic human resource planning, as well as practical tools for short-term recruitment and retention issues.

Despite the economic downturn, it was made clear throughout the conference that there will still be a shortage of workers in the next few years. "Today's surplus is an anomaly," said Cheryl Knight, Petroleum HR Council executive director and chief executive officer. "We're actually going to lose more people to retirements than we will attract new entrants starting next year." In spite of the attention that has been focused around layoffs within the industry, it remains important to keep retention and recruitment strategies at the forefront.

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"Do we have a market labour crisis like we saw a year ago? Yes," said Kim McCaig, chief operating officer of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association and Petroleum HR Council chairman. "It hasn't changed. How we deal with it might change ... We have the luxury of some time that we didn't have a year ago." A year or two ago, when there was a hiring spree, the industry did not have a lot of time to figure out how to recruit and retain employees. Now, because of the turn in the market, companies will have some time to review their human resource strategies and plan for the future.

The launch of the Petroleum HR Council's project, *Labour Market Information*, supplied delegates with information on projected labour demand to 2020. While work in the industry may be slowing for the immediate future, there is little change in the number of people retiring from the workforce. The oil and gas industry is now in competition with all other employers in attempting

to replace outgoing skill and expertise, and much work is being done to better integrate women, immigrants, and Aboriginals into our industry. Due to exigencies caused by future expansion and losses from retirement, the top five positions expected to be in demand will include drilling coordinators/production managers; geologists/geophysicists; petroleum engineers; petroleum engineer technologists; and welders.

In order to assist members of the industry with their HR strategies, an online tool kit consisting of planning and implementation tools was developed as a result of the Council's *Increasing the Talent in Hard to Recruit Locations* project. The planning tools provide guidelines for developing successful long-term recruitment and retention strategies, while the implementation tools answer pressing questions about recruitment and retention issues. In addition to these tools, a model has been developed that shows the decisions workers make at all phases of their careers, and how a company and the industry can affect those decisions. The tool kit and the model were presented to delegates as a concrete way of assessing their individual HR strategy and to determine what they can do to improve their position in the industry.

In addition to the two project launches, there were also several breakout sessions for delegates to attend. The sessions covered a wide variety of topics, including Aboriginal awareness, the benefits of the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between British Columbia and Alberta, the oilsands workforce development strategy, and the importance of mentorship as a way to deal with impending retirements. The sessions gave delegates the chance to learn from experts and collaborate with their fellow delegates on solutions. "This is a good opportunity to have an open discussion among people from the industry. The petroleum industry can be quite competitive so having these open discussions is very beneficial," said Eva Patterson from MEG Energy Corp.

Delegates found the conference to be a valuable experience. "Most conferences only offer one nugget of information. This conference has about 18. I kept taking notes the whole time and learned a lot," said Heather Screaton, director of human resources at Osum Oil Sands Corp.

To conclude the one-day conference, the Petroleum HR Council wrapped with the local launch of its marketing campaign for www.careersinoilandgas.com, which ran in the Greater Toronto Area until the end of April. Attendees were receptive to the new campaign, which focuses on promoting www.careersinoilandgas.com as a central source of information on potential oil and gas careers, as well as the skills and training needed to make them a reality.

Many thanks go out to the delegates and sponsors for their attendance and participation. The feedback gathered at the Conference will be used to determine the Council's next steps in current and new projects. The Council's next conference is planned for the fall of 2011. ■

This monthly column covers current topics, strategies, solutions, and insights into human resources issues in the upstream petroleum industry. For more information on this and other Petroleum HR Council initiatives, please visit: www.petrohrsc.ca.