

BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP

Nigel Wright Recruitment is primed to assist satellite office development as the sector struggles with skill shortages

During the last decade, energy companies have invested £43 billion in the UK sector and job numbers have increased by almost two thirds. About 600,000 people are now either directly or indirectly employed in the burgeoning industry. Analysts anticipate that demand in the sector will result in annual employment growth of more than four per cent up to 2020 and job creation estimates range from 15,000 to 70,000, depending on whom you read. Crucially, the energy sector as a whole is experiencing high demand and career opportunities are prevalent in nuclear and renewables, as well as oil and gas.

However, despite this “golden era” of employment there is a significant lack of qualified and experienced people available to fill vacancies. As a result, companies are struggling to identify and retain the talent they need to facilitate growth in the UK and overseas. The key reasons for this shortage are twofold: on the one hand, the quantity and quality of graduates entering the sector is less than adequate, while, on the other, the most skilled and experienced professionals are either being lost to international markets or retiring. Between 25 and 50 per cent of the most experienced engineers are expected to retire over the next ten years.

It is a shortage of high level technical skills in particular that has led to recruitment problems. Managing Consultant at Nigel Wright, Anthony Broadhead, explained that businesses are finding it “difficult to grow, innovate and increase productivity” amid this climate of talent scarcity. Across the different sectors, companies are competing to hire the best people and there is a high demand for a plethora of “hard to find” profiles.

Broadhead noted that more needs to be done to make the sector attractive to new recruits. This is not only at graduate level (where there has been an increase in the number of students studying towards relevant subjects at university) but also to those coming from other industries, particularly “heavy industry” and the military. “The military is another increasingly popular poaching ground for energy companies as the engineering, project management and logistics skills developed in the armed forces are directly transferable,” he said. In terms of attracting expats back to the UK, Broadhead suggested that “the industry needs to raise its profile and persuade those living in Australia or the Middle East that the career and lifestyle opportunities here in the UK are worth considering”.



“THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO RAISE ITS PROFILE...”

ANTHONY BROADHEAD
Managing Consultant at Nigel Wright

Satellite offices have been another emerging trend as companies in Aberdeen seek to take advantage of the local talent pools in other major UK cities and regions, such as Newcastle, Liverpool, East Anglia, London and Bristol, which are ripe with people from industrial and engineering backgrounds. According to Broadhead: “In Aberdeen talent is not freely available and the situation has been described as a ‘recruitment war’; competition for people is fierce and, as a result, wages are increasing.” In the short term, Nigel Wright anticipates more companies based in Aberdeen to open satellite offices to alleviate immediate skill shortages.

In the last 12 months, Nigel Wright has assisted energy clients with recruitment at all levels in the UK and overseas, identifying people with a broad range of backgrounds, all with relevant “in demand skills”. Broadhead contends that Nigel Wright is well positioned to support the establishment of satellite offices because of its own national and international network of offices in the UK and Europe. One major subsea integrity business has already used Nigel Wright to hire staff for its office in Newcastle and Broadhead says Nigel Wright is anticipating more projects like this in 2013.

DIARY DATES

Forthcoming NOF Energy events include:

Subsea North East Showcase
September 19, St James’ Park, Newcastle

Oil & Gas Networking Lunch with AMEC. Sponsored by LV Shipping & Ferguson Group
September 17, Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgefield

New to Business in China? Practical Advice, Language and Culture Seminar
October 3, NOF Energy Offices, Durham

Oil & Gas International Business Visit to Malaysia & Singapore
October 7

Oil & Gas Networking Lunch with SNC Lavalin
October 9, Thistle Airport Hotel, Aberdeen

Energi Coast Networking Dinner
October 10, Wynyard Hall, Sedgefield

Networking Lunch with Douglas Westwood – Oil & Gas Industry Forecast
October 17, venue to be confirmed, North East England

Canapés and Conversation
October 23, AECC, Aberdeen

Oil & Gas Networking Lunch with GDF Suez. Sponsored by Exova
October 24, AECC, Aberdeen

Oil & Gas Networking Lunch with Reef Subsea
November 27, Hilton Tree Tops Hotel, Aberdeen

Subsea Networking Lunch with Aker Solutions
December 17, venue to be confirmed, North East England

More details on all events at
www.nofenergy.co.uk

AECC,
Aberdeen

