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Workforce Issues

Energetic Women: Discovering the Power of Connecting

When Stephanie Menning decided to hold a leadership conference for women in the energy industry, she wondered if she would be able to draw 60 women to attend. However, the hotel required her to book 130 rooms in order to get an affordable rate, so she had to set her sights much higher.

Much to her delight, she filled the rooms – and then some. “More than 200 people attended our first conference, including seven men!” said Menning, founder of the group, Energetic Women. The organization’s mission it is to increase the pool of promotable women in energy operations and engineering.

“The first conference was just phenomenal,” said Kris Nichols, Vice President of Nicor Gas in Naperville, IL, who agreed to chair Energetic Women last year at Menning’s request. “It was a really eye-opening experience in how many women were just aching to have networking opportunities like that across the industry.”

Menning is Vice President of Gas Services for Midwest ENERGY Association in Minneapolis, MN. She formed the group in 2007 to help women recognize their skills and utilize those skills to move into leadership positions.

“Say there are 20 skills listed for a job,” she said. “Studies have shown that men will apply if they have 12 of them. Women won’t apply, even if they have 18 of them. That’s just a mindset. We’re trying to help them realize they already have all the talent, they just need to sharpen the knives in their drawers.”

The response has been overwhelming. To date, roughly 2,100 people have signed up for email alerts informing them of upcoming events, such as a second conference being planned for June, 2009 in Scottsdale, AZ. In addition to last summer’s conference, Energetic Women hosts webinars, online discussion groups and posts a number of resources on its web page, www.EnergeticWomen.org.

Heidi Swanson, Director of US Gas Dispatch and Scheduling for National Grid, is a member of the group’s Leadership Team. She said she hopes Energetic Women can help boost the number of female applicants for mid-level management positions. As someone who does a lot of hiring for her company, she knows how tough it is to find qualified applicants, and finding female applicants is even tougher.

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Workforce Issues

Family changes or the desire to return to school often pull women away from jobs that involve shift work which can limit or challenge their advancement in operational roles. Networking, connecting with mentors and other opportunities provided by Energetic Women can help steer women into positions that allow them to get ahead.

Nichols said women often don't realize that sometimes they need to make a parallel move in order to eventually move up.

"You need a broad amount of experience in your career in order to have a broad base for future leadership potential," she said. "The path upward is not a straight one. It winds around a bit. We use the word 'courage' a lot in speaking to women at these events. We tell them to go seek out a position to round out their careers and not worry about whether it's a promotion. That takes courage."

Nichols said she pulls from her own experiences when trying to help motivate other women. Joining this group has helped her understand the responsibility she has to do that.

"Because I've gotten to this position in my career, it is really important for me to reach out to other women," she said. "And I had never thought of that before. I just focused on adding value to the company and being competent."

Nichols also believes that keeping an open mind has been critical in helping her to succeed.

"I was very open to new opportunities. I never said 'no' if someone said, 'We've got this project or this position we'd like you to take.' I always looked at it to see how I could add value. I think it's paramount to not be afraid of trying something new and to make sure you are adding value."

Through Energetic Women, Menning hopes she is adding value to the industry by creating an opportunity for women to recognize their skills and the ways they are uniquely qualified to fill the openings in management created by retiring Baby Boomers.

"A lot of these women have already worked in the industry for many years," she said. "Everyone's running into the problem of brain drain and an aging workforce. Why not tap into the resources that already work for the industry? We want to grow the leaders that are already there."

Best Practice Spotlight

Energy Companies Find Well-Matched Recruits in the Military

When *G.I. Jobs* magazine put together its 2008 Top 50 list of the most military friendly employers in the country, it was no surprise to find the name Southern California Edison (SCE) among the honorees.

SCE is so committed to hiring military veterans that some departments, such as its security force, are overwhelmingly made up of former members of the military, said Marreena Appleton, Staffing Manager for the San Clemente Regional Office.

"This company is very proud of its veterans and we like to support them in any way that we can," she said.

Appleton said SCE recruits directly from Camp Pendleton, conveniently situated across from its nuclear power plant, and from all branches of the military.

Former military workers often possess precisely the skill set SCE is looking for. For example, a Navy Engineering Laboratory Technician (ELT) fits directly into SCE's Assistant Nuclear Chemistry Technician position, she said. And the Navy's nuclear engineers make excellent candidates for mid-level or upper management jobs.

To find military personnel interested in transitioning to the private sector, SCE participates monthly in Camp Pendleton's Transition Assistance Program, which teaches resume preparation to military personnel and informs them about job opportunities. SCE also takes part in military job fairs and uses employment agencies to identify former military personnel suited for hard-to-fill positions, such as instrument and control technicians. The company also advertises in military publications, such as *G.I. Jobs* and on military-focused websites such as www.helmetstohardhats.com.

"We are everywhere when it comes to the military," Appleton said.

That's not the only reason SCE made the 2008 Top 50 list. The magazine identifies several criteria, including assets dedicated to military hiring, percentage of new hires over the past year, policies for reservists and call-back to active duty, internal training opportunities, and veteran outreach.

An important component of becoming "military friendly," said Appleton, is being prepared to hold jobs open for workers who get recalled to active duty. SCE makes allowances for those situations by hiring temporary workers, asking other employees to absorb additional duties for the short-term or cross-training workers interested in moving around.

"We tell them, 'Your job is here when you get back,'" she said.

SCE is not the only energy company to make *G.I. Jobs*' Top 50 list. American Electric Power is one of seven companies routinely included since the list was first published in 2003. Southern Company has been on the list for the past three years, while Exelon and Progress Energy joined the list for the first time in 2008.

For more information on SCE's program, contact Marreena Appleton at appletm@songs.sce.com.

To see a complete list of the Top 50 most military friendly companies for 2008, visit http://www.gijobs.com/uploadedFiles/site_components/GIJ.TOP50.2008.List.pdf.

The Power Source

Summer Camps Help Students Get Their Hands Green

Looking for another way to connect with middle and high school students in your area? How about hosting a Green Energy Summer Camp?

Camps are a great way to spend time showcasing your company, the energy industry and your commitment to the environment. They also teach important skills to students and foster a sense of excitement among the young workers of tomorrow.

CEWD has developed a Green Energy Summer Camp Toolkit to help get you started. The kits are tailored to middle and high school students, and show organizers how to cover a broad range of green energy topics and projects over a five-day period. Renewable energy sources are covered, along with other means to provide cleaner energy, such as emissions reductions, nuclear power and low-sulfur coal.

Middle school students learn what it is like to spend a day in three different energy industry jobs and how to make their homes more energy efficient. High school students design a green campsite, present their ideas to a mock city council and learn about different energy careers. Both age groups learn about solar energy and how to build a model wind turbine.

The toolkit includes curriculum, teachers' guides, materials lists, agendas and other resources necessary for holding a Green Energy Summer Camp. To learn more, [visit here](http://www.cewd.org/toolkits/camp/09summer/summercamp.asp)
<http://www.cewd.org/toolkits/camp/09summer/summercamp.asp>

Adding Job Locations to the Get Into Energy Google Map

Want help getting exposure for your company on the Get Into Energy website? Take a few minutes to add your company's job location to the GIE Google Map.

Here's how:

Go to <http://www.cewd.org/jobbased.asp>.

Input your company's job location information. You can add more than one. For example, you can input your corporate headquarters as well as various job sites or power plants. Just be sure to input each one separately.

Then add a link to your company's recruiting site to steer traffic to any job openings you might have. Don't forget to describe your job location as well!

Job locations will then appear at <http://www.getintoenergy.com/careerresources.asp>.

Plugged In

CEWD South Regional Meeting

March 2-3, 2009

New Orleans, LA

For more information, [click here](#).

CEWD Southeast Regional Meeting

April 16-17, 2009

Location: Juno Beach, FL

CEWD West Regional Meeting

May 18-19, 2009

Location: TBD

CEWD Midwest Regional Meeting

June 29-30, 2009

Indianapolis, IN

CEWD Northwest Regional Meeting

July 27-28, 2009

Location: TBD

CEWD MidAtlantic Regional Meeting

August 24-25, 2009

Pittsburgh, PA

Northeast Regional Meeting

October 26-27, 2009

Location: TBD

CEWD Annual Summit

October 7-9, 2009

Indianapolis, IN