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Workforce Issues

Energetic Women Gain Momentum in Utilities

Three years ago Chantay Smith was a trainer for the customer contact center at AmerenUE in St. Louis. Her job frequently kept her on the road, taking her to cities all across Illinois and Missouri. She never had time to work on committees or network within her company to see how she could further contribute to the organization.

Then she went to a conference in Chicago sponsored by Energetic Women, a nationwide professional network dedicated to increasing the pool of promotable women in the energy field. The group provides important role models for women – an often untapped population in the energy industry – who may not see how to use their skills to get ahead. Presenters at the conference spoke about how to develop yourself professionally, add value to your company, negotiate, and let people know what you have to contribute.

The messages sank in. Smith made a lateral move that allowed her to develop new skills, spend more time in the corporate office and become involved in internal development opportunities. She recently helped form two resource groups under the direction of the Ameren Corporate Diversity Council: Women Influencing Success in Energy (WISE) and Multi-Generational Employee Resource Group (MERG). She believes these employee resource groups will bring added value to herself and to Ameren.

“I now feel more encouraged to work on these groups, formed from corporate initiatives, because of the information I received from Energetic Women,” she said. “I was truly inspired to do more to achieve my dream.”

Smith wasn't the only one. The work being done by Energetic Women is now being leveraged at several energy companies across the United States.

At Citizens Energy Group in Indianapolis, Millie Louissaint is working to start a women's networking group “to provide opportunities for others in the organization to freely express an interest in developing the operations side of the industry without feeling intimidated. When I expressed an interest in developing skills in operations, I was given an opportunity and I'd like to position myself to pass that on.”

Over at National Grid in the Northeastern United States, Heidi Swanson is working with the company's internal employee resource groups to leverage the programs of Energetic Women and complement mutual objectives.

Swanson, Director of Dispatch and Scheduling at National Grid, said the programs Energetic Women provides are reaching increasing numbers of people as their members branch out within their own companies.

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Workforce Development
(CEWD)

For example, a coaching webinar last fall was attended by more than 200 participants. National Grid's Asian Leadership Association (ALA) – which includes male members – promoted the webinar and publicized it over their four-state region, augmenting the session by providing copies of the presenter's book, and setting up "lunch and learn" forums where participants could discuss the session. More than 100 employees participated from National Grid alone.

"We were able to reach so many more people because of this," Swanson said.

"Something very satisfying we hear is that there are more and more women starting groups within their utilities, whether formally or informally," said Swanson, also a member of the leadership team for Energetic Women. "I think it reflects that this is more of a grassroots movement. It doesn't have to come from the top down."

In fact, part of the goal of Energetic Women is to give women the knowledge and confidence to take ideas back to their companies and work from the bottom up to not only make themselves more promotable, but improve their company's productivity and profitability in the process by bringing greater skills and value to what they do.

For example, Louissant, a gas district supervisor, has been building her negotiating skills through workshops sponsored by Energetic Women. Louissant is responsible for managing 22 union gas service specialists. A non-bargaining employee, she was initially intimidated by the process of negotiating for buy-in with the employees she managed.

"My manager has said to me in reviews, 'You are black and white in lines of your thinking and you tend to struggle with grey areas,'" she said. Through Energetic Women, she has learned to negotiate "the grey areas" and her supervisor has noted the improvement.

Smith said she gets so much out of the Energetic Women conferences that she would encourage anyone who is seeking leadership growth and mentoring to attend the annual conference this year. She's hoping to ultimately gain enough knowledge to work with WISE to provide members with workshops, skill building programs and speaker series on career development topics such as setting personal goals, executive image and successful contribution to the projects that add to Ameren's bottom line.

"My ultimate goal is to move up within the ranks, in addition to working on project management initiatives," Smith said, "With the skills that are gained from Energetic Women, perhaps one day WISE can start a project to provide developmental support for women at all levels within Ameren."

These are hardly unrealistic goals, said Stephanie Menning, one of the group's founders. The knowledge women need to reach them comes from listening to each other, she said.

"There are plenty of opportunities for women in the energy field," she said. "Women just need to make themselves more visible, strengthen their ability to influence, and build their support network. We just provide leadership training and give women an opportunity to connect."

For more information on Energetic Women visit www.energeticwomen.org, or contact Stephanie Menning at stephm@midwestenergy.org.

Best Practice Spotlight

Duke Energy Supports Hands-On Learning for Students

Consistently, there are calls for educational reform in the United States because our children are not ready to compete globally in science, technology, engineering, and math careers upon completing their education. Roger Lewin, anthropologist and science writer, pinpointed part of the concern stating, “Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.” Invent Now, who develops products and programs with strategic partners such as the United States Patent and Trademark Office to emphasize the importance of invention in society, is addressing that concern through a program called Camp Invention.

Camp Invention is a hands-on STEM-based summer program for first through sixth grade students held at schools, churches, and community centers nationwide. The programs last one week and consist of five activity-oriented modules that are aligned with state and national education standards. The program is designed to build life and work skills such as teamwork and brainstorming.

In 2009, Duke Energy provided scholarships to students in its service territories who could otherwise not afford to attend the program. The company will provide additional scholarships in 2010 so that even more students can experience the positive impact of the program. One parent reported the program brought about a significant change in her child.

“Going into the Inventor’s Showcase...,” which is held at the end of every program’s week so the participants can show off their creations, “... I thought that I was just going to see what my child had taped and glued together. I left realizing it was his curiosity, confidence, and creativity that were stuck together in a fascinating new way.”

Duke Energy also supported the development of the new Power’d™ curriculum, which will be part of the Innovate program in 2010. The premise of the Power’d™ module is that participants need to help a scientist figure out how to power robotic creatures with new types of energy. Children will spend the week building, powering, and exploring the capabilities of their creature while learning about solar, wind, and hydro power.

The Camp Invention program provides an extraordinary opportunity to develop educators in addition to students. As program instructors, educators experience the inquiry-based learning process in which children explore and learn to solve a problem with support (rather than being told the answer). Thus, the program facilitates a paradigm shift from traditional teaching methods and better equips the teachers to engage students in STEM learning. One teacher, as quoted by the Camp Invention home office, exclaimed,

“Camp Invention empowers teachers to teach science the way it should be taught. It really puts the students at the center of the student experience. I’m excited to bring this into my classroom. Camp Invention is a spark that truly gets teachers excited about science!”

With educators excited about teaching STEM subjects, children gain a stronger interest and there is a greater chance they will pursue STEM careers.

“By developing critical thinking skills and generating student interest in STEM early on, Camp Invention supports Duke Energy’s goal of developing a diverse future technical workforce in the communities it serves,” says Cindy Angelelli, Managing Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Workforce Strategy.

For more information on the Camp Invention program, go to www.campinvention.org or contact Patti Holmes at pholmes@invent.org.

The Power Source

Business Coalition Strives to Double STEM Grads by 2020

Lacking a sufficient number of job applicants with the appropriate educational credentials?

Well, help is on the way.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) has joined with roughly 40 other professional and trade associations to form the Business & Industry STEM Coalition, a group pushing to double the number of American grads (to 400,000) holding degrees in science, technology, engineering or mathematics within the next ten years.

Still in its early stages, the coalition is already pressing lawmakers to increase federal funding to promote science and mathematics and encourage young people to pursue careers in these fields. The broad-based coalition includes members from the energy, aerospace, manufacturing, biotechnology, computer and even entertainment industries, as well as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

By bolstering math and science programs in our schools and making science careers more appealing to today's youth, the Coalition hopes to ultimately improve the competitiveness of the U.S. workforce.

"I fear that our nation for some decades now has basically given up on providing world-class education to its primary and secondary schools, and now it's tearing into the core of our great public system of higher education," said Charles Vest, president of the National Academy of Engineering, at the Coalition's launch at the National Academy of Sciences in early March.

"This is unacceptable. Period. The time has come to slay the dragon of complacency and to regain our national will to excel," Vest was quoted as saying in *Roll Call*, one of several news outlets that covered the campaign's launch.

CEWD, long committed to promoting STEM programs in our nation's schools, sees the Coalition as an important force in garnering broad-based support for its goals of improving basic math and science skills for the skilled workers of tomorrow.

"A strong math and science background is critical and too often lacking in job applicants in the energy field," said CEWD Education Consultant, Valerie Taylor. "But it's not just the energy industry that would benefit from greater interest in and funding for these programs. The American workforce as a whole would be stronger."

To view the coalition's charter, go to <http://www.cewd.org/documents/stem.pdf>

State Consortia

When stakeholders from the energy industry, education and government combine resources, great strides can be made in developing a more competitive workforce.

That was the message delivered by CEWD members and staff March 6-9 at the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Forum in Washington, D.C., where they encouraged those in government to partner with others sharing an interest in developing America's future energy workforce.

Speaking to members of Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) from around the country, CEWD Executive Director Ann Randazzo led a discussion focused on the theme "Preparing a Competitive U.S. Workforce – Reflection, Reinvestment, Recovery."

Randazzo was joined by Mario Rendon of Pacific Gas & Electric Co., who shared success stories from the California state energy consortium; and James Lowery, of Centralia College, along with Troy Nutter, of Puget Sound Energy, spoke about work being accomplished by the Washington consortium.

“There are so many exciting things happening with state energy consortia today,” Randazzo said. “When Workforce Investment Boards join with these consortia, they are able to accomplish so much more. We hope to see even more WIBs get involved as a result of the information shared at this forum.”

Meanwhile, the number of state consortia continues to grow, she added. Just this month, Kentucky became the 26th state to launch an energy consortium.

Other Noteworthy News

Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for Community-Based Job Training Grants (SGA/DFA PY09-07)

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL, or the Department), announces the availability of approximately \$125 million in grant funds for Community-Based Job Training Grants (CBJTGs).

Community-Based Job Training Grants will be awarded through a competitive process to support workforce training for high-growth/high-demand industries through the national system of community, technical, and tribal colleges. In order to be eligible for consideration under this solicitation, the applicant must be either: (1) an individual Community or Technical College, such as a public community college, a nonprofit community college, a tribally controlled college, or a tribally controlled university; (2) a Community College District; (3) a State Community College System; (4) a One-Stop Career Center in partnership with its Local Workforce Investment Board, that specifies one or more community or technical colleges where education/training activities will occur; or (5) an applicant proposing to serve an educationally underserved community without access to community or technical colleges that meet the requirements in section III.A.5. See section III.A for additional information related to eligible applicants.

It is anticipated that awards will range from \$1 million to \$3 million. The exception is that applicants that include three or more community, technical, or tribal colleges will be considered "consortium applications," and may request an award ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million. See section III.B for additional information related to consortium applications. ETA expects to allot up to \$50 million of the total designated funds to organizations that have never received a grant through a CBJTG SGA.

Issue Date: March 15, 2010

Closing Date: April 29, 2010

[Full Announcement](#) (pdf format)

*From the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration web site at http://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm.

Upcoming: Mark Your Calendars!

Save the Date!

Workforce Strategy Center is hosting the second and third of our three-part webinar series based on our recent report, [Employers, Low-Income Young Adults, and Postsecondary Credentials](#).

April 6, 2010, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Helping Low-Income Young Adults to Attain Postsecondary Credentials:
Maintaining Employer Involvement.

May 4, 2010, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Helping Low-Income Young Adults to Attain Postsecondary Credentials:
Using Data to Support Employer Involvement

[Click here](#) for more details and to register for the webinars.

Wednesday, April 21 -

2010 IEEE PES Transmission and Distribution Conference and Exposition

Your support of the luncheon and the Job Fair provides you with an ideal opportunity—as an employer and a leader in the business community—to meet students from around the world. Employers can purchase a Job Fair table for only \$500.

Access the Job Fair reservation form now at:

[download the Job Fair booth reservation/info form](#)

Please contact Stephen Bourg at sdbourg@ieee.org for further information.

Regional Meetings: Save the Date!

May 17-18	South and Southeast Regional Meeting – Birmingham, AL hosted by Alabama Power
June 28-29 Tentative	Midwest Regional Meeting
July 19-20	Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting
Aug 13	National Forum
Aug 23-24	Northwest Regional Meeting
Oct 26-28	CEWD Annual Summit
Nov 8-9 Tentative	West Regional Meeting