

CRIPPS SEARS & PARTNERS

40 | CELEBRATING FORTY
YEARS OF SUCCESS

HR Aberdeen Networking Forum 27.10.16 – MINUTES

Recruitment

- The Forum began with discussion of recruitment practices during energy sector downturn. While some in management wary of hiring someone who is “over-skilled” for a position (on the basis that they soon depart when things picked up), there were benefits to what these individuals could bring to the business. These recruits usually very grateful to be in a job, and more willing to prove themselves. Concerns raised that this gratitude may be short lived, due to over-skilled recruits having heightened expectations regarding career progression.
- Cost benefits discussed of avoiding contractors and agency workers in favour of fixed term employment contracts. Expectations also managed if fixed-term employment linked to a particular project. Feeling that employees previously over-promoted before the downturn due to skills shortage. Now renewed focus on hiring people where key part of role is helping bring on others and aid succession planning. More direct approach being taken with candidates during recruitment interviews.
- A more sympathetic approach to flexible working arrangements has opened the door to a wider pool of skilled and experienced candidates who may not wish to move their main residence to the North East. Flexibility can be delivered as part of a benefits package when financial constraints in place. However, existing employees often reject part time roles as an alternative to redundancy on basis that their partner has already lost their job.
- New importance placed on job security by job applicants. Queries raised regarding effect of job insecurity on matters of health and safety.
- Discussion of approach towards attracting graduates to the industry in light of job stability concerns. Moves towards recruiting more apprentices (rather than graduates) to make the best use of apprenticeship levy. Advantage of having someone combining work with study: may take a role within the business having had 4 years of relevant work experience. Uncertainty regarding how apprenticeship levy will work in Scotland, given that the levy is national whereas apprenticeships are a devolved issue.
- General acceptance that there is not enough work for graduate engineers to carry out. Challenge of making sure that graduates attain their competencies where opportunities reduced to exercise discipline are reduced. Industry must strive to make sure that a generation of skilled graduates are not lost, creating a skills gap long term

Gender pay gap

- Discussion of approach to gender pay gap reporting obligations, with final form regulations yet to be published by Government. General acknowledgement that this issue has not been

CRIPPS SEARS & PARTNERS

40 | CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS OF SUCCESS

prioritised by energy industry, due to other concerns. However some operations looking at gender pay gap as part of overall approach to diversity policy.

- Emphasis on need to create a sensible narrative so that any gender pay gap percentage is not just viewed in isolation. Discussion of how women can cluster in certain disciplines (e.g. HR) which may not form part of a traditional route to board level. Also clustering at certain levels of seniority, which needs to be addressed.
- Lessons needing to be learned from other industries so that talent is sufficiently promoted. Understanding that there is only so much employers can achieve, without the support of society as a whole. Difficulties in changing culture and behaviours offshore which would not be tolerated in an office environment. Challenge of increasing diversity in workforce, not just in terms of sex. Benefits of having different viewpoints round the table.
- Discussion of characteristics needing to be shown by management during this downturn to try to maintain employee engagement: authenticity, energy, transparency, empathy, and keeping communication lines open. Employees must be empowered to help management face challenging environment so that conversation moves from redundancies to contract wins. Responsibility of management to control the mood of the company.

Dealing with the downturn

- Recognition of fact that most of the available cost cutting measures have already been carried out. Key challenge is to find more work. External consultants able to help with lessons learned after contract losses. New emphasis on using senior executives, rather than traditional business development team, in tenders.

Andy Atwell, CMS, 3 November 2016