

OPITO'S SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION TRAINING PROGRAMME – Dec 2012

OPITO is the industry owned skills body which develops a sustainable, safe and competent workforce for the oil and gas industry. Over half a million offshore oil and gas workers in 40 countries are trained to OPITO safety and competency standards and there are 127 OPITO-approved training centres around the world delivering OPITO's 103 industry standards.

Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) research, conducted by OPITO last year, suggests that the oil and gas industry will require an additional 10,000 staff over the next 4-5 years in order to deliver new oil and gas project plans that the industry has identified.

The OPITO report also shows that 66 per cent of contractors and 62 per cent of operators are experiencing problems in recruiting suitable employees in particular occupations. Engineers: senior, project, design, control, mechanical, subsea; geologists, geosciences, reservoir; skilled craft and technicians (machinists, tool dressers, electrical, instrumentation and hydraulics technicians, fitters, offshore technicians and welder fabricators, liquid and gas flow metering staff.

As well as running a highly successful modern apprenticeship scheme over the last 12 years, OPITO has recently piloted a transformation training programme (TTP) to bring experienced workers in from other industries and upskill them so they can start a new career in the oil and gas industry, where experienced staff are highly sought after.

The Transformation Training Programme (TTP)

The TTP is a 12-week training programme which takes a competence based approach to upskilling skilled workers who have gained knowledge and experience in other industries. It provides the oil and gas industry with a structured mechanism for replenishing the workforce and managing upturns in the long term. The model ensures that core key skills sets will be re-utilised and not lost if there has been market failure or downturn in these other industries.

It is in no-one's interests in industry to have cost inflation and/or delayed projects due to lacked of skilled people – and this programme ensures a much better industry demand/skills supply situation. The programme consists of four disciplines – electrical, mechanical, instrumentation and process (a 12 week course covers one of these key disciplines). With a potential predicted shortage in mechanical and electrical technicians, this is where the focus of future programmes would lie.

Prior to development of the OPITO Transformation Training Programme (TTP), training was (and in some instances still is) conducted on an ad hoc/piecemeal basis i.e. when an employer approaches a training provider or college. However, the downside of this is that there was no adopted or recognised industry standard or qualification. It also means industry will not need to spend money on recruitment costs, as the candidates are presented to them for interview with the skills, competencies and attitudes that industry needs and expects before further workplace development can occur.

From a Government point of view, this upskilling model supports the aims of Post 16 in terms of prioritising skills development and better alignment of funding of colleges and training providers around key economic sectors with large numbers of job opportunities.

Pilot Programmes

OPITO approved two college partners to deliver the pilot programmes to its quality standards, ensuring that the highest industry standards were used in delivery. Following the first successful pilot course which was delivered by Forth Valley College (FVC) to meet skills gaps identified in the Falkirk area due to recession (which led to over 80% employment), positive feedback from the drilling sector led to a further programme being delivered through Aberdeen College.

This programme was undertaken by some of the skilled workforce facing redundancy from the RAF Kinloss/Lossiemouth bases and OPITO worked closely with the services placement personnel as well as Skills Development Scotland. The programme led to 100% employment – several candidates were given two offers of employment.

On both occasions, the TTP was funded by Skills Development Scotland who provided funding to the college partner to deliver the programme. The FVC programme was run through the PACE/Training for Work programme in conjunction with the local Job Centre Plus. The Aberdeen/RAF programme was based around funding support for re-training services personnel.

Way Forward

Through the pilots, the Transformation Training concept has been proved as a successful and ideal long-term model for bringing talent into the oil and gas industry in a collective and cost-effective way. The aim is now to scale-up the pilots in 2013 as follows:

- ✓ OPITO will work with industry to establish specific and clear industry need within technical disciplines, based on clearly defined job roles, and secure employer support for the concept - enabling better alignment of industry demand with the supply of a skilled workforce at the right time;
- ✓ OPITO to act as a managing agent to deliver a value-added product and service and the single pivotal link between industry, government funders and learning providers;
- ✓ Key output and return on investment is ultimately securing people into jobs within the oil and gas industry.

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