

TECHNICIAN REVIEW

Executive Summary

In March 2000 Skills Foresight confirmed anecdotal evidence of an ageing workforce. The industry collectively recognised the risk of a technician skills shortage was a strategic issue which may affect performance and reputation if not managed by some sort of centralised approach. Working with UK Offshore Operators Association (UKOOA), Cogent completed detailed research into the employment levels of 'core production related Technicians'. This document outlines the review background, results and outcomes of the surveys to date.

The aims of the research were: *'to develop a clearer picture of the employment levels of technicians and their age profile'*. PILOT - the government / industry body, the Industry Leadership Team (ILT), the UKOOA Council and Operations & Technical Committee require this type of information to enable informed decisions for short and long term planning.

In October 2000 a subgroup of UKOOA Employment and Practices Committee (EPC) formed to undertake a technician review working with Cogent. UKOOA salary survey Job/Role Definitions were used in conjunction with descriptor statements for each of the technician occupations to form the basis of the survey examining the age profile of the population. The survey also aimed to determine the impact of company activities, changing working practices and new technologies upon manning levels. The survey was circulated to all EPC members in November 2000 with data collection closed out in February 2001.

An Industry Steering Group - drawing its members from the UKOOA and OCA (Offshore Contractors' Association) membership, supported by Cogent, & ECITB - formed to review the research findings and prepare proposals for presentation to, and agreement by, UKOOA Council and the ILT. In a bid to reverse ageing trends in the current workforce the strategic proposals developed presented a common approach to recruit and train additional technicians in three models:

- Modern Apprenticeship – school leavers
- Entrants with HNC – college leavers
- Skilled workers from other industries & the unemployed - mature entrants

The outcomes of the first Technician Review endorsed by PILOT were:

- Investment to recruit 150 trainees technician apprentices,
- Agreement of framework for annual review of future training requirements
- Development of an investment model for training for the long-term future.

A significant outcome from the 2001 research was that the industry (UKOOA) would contract the ECITB to recruit and manage the training of 38 trainees to alleviate future shortages. This number has dropped to 30 through natural wastage and has been discussed by the steering group. In the normal process - out with this 38 trainees - the Operators that were involved in Apprentice training used cogent as their managing agent a practice which continues today with the 2002 intake. The reason for the ECITB contract was initially based on cost.

The second Technician Review commenced in January 2002 working with representatives from both UKOOA and OCA member companies. The Industry Steering Group presented the proposals derived from this research to industry leaders and gained agreement to shared funding and allocation of 129 apprentices in 2002. A further significant outcome was the signing by industry leaders of “The Charter for the Oil and Gas Industry Upstream Technician Training Scheme”.

Cogent continues to support the sector Steering Group with the annual Technician Review process. The 2003 review saw the industry collectively support an intake of 112 technician trainees.

The 2004 Technician Review has been completed and the industry Steering Group are working with existing sponsors and the new operators entering the UKCS to agree the overall intake to the Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Programme. A copy of the research findings presentation to industry can be found on the Cogent Website – www.cogent-ssc.com