
THE CAPABILITY CONUNDRUM

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AMEC Nuclear recognises that a skilled workforce is essential to the success of its business. In the current global climate, the potential for new build in the UK, new build underway in Europe and across the world and the acceleration of Clean Up programmes, the competition for skilled staff is fierce. So how do companies develop and grow their Capability?

What are the issues? There have been several initiatives undertaken in the UK to identify skills gaps. One example is an exercise undertaken by COGENT, the sector skills council for the Nuclear Sector, who undertook a comprehensive forward looking gap analysis for the industry in 2005 and who have now proposed a number of interventions to address the gaps identified, one of which is the creation of a Nuclear Skills Academy a second is the creation of Career Pathways.

Some of the gaps identified cover shortages of skills that we face today but, more worryingly for the future, the projected down turn in the numbers of young people studying Science and Engineering subjects, both in schools and Universities and a shortage of apprenticeship places in the UK paints a gloomy picture. Where will our future capability come from?

At AMEC Nuclear we recognise that we need to act now to protect our business and ensure we maintain, develop and grow our capability. We are working closely with COGENT to help to develop Career Pathways to encourage young people to the industry and we are delighted to have secured a place on the shadow board of the National Nuclear Skills Academy, an exciting project which will provide a focus for excellence in workforce skills development. Employers in the Nuclear industry have said that they want a Skills Academy that will provide national leadership in training provision and will move employers and employees from their current level of skills to those which will be needed to take these critical industries forward into a sustainable future in the UK.

In order for us to assess what we need for the future, the first thing we have to do is understand what we have today. Our key asset is our people, their skills and experience – their knowledge.

At AMEC Nuclear we have created a Qualifications and Experience (Q&E) register. This contains data on the qualifications, skills and experience of all of our staff. As well as allowing us to demonstrate to our clients that we have SQEP personnel, it allows us to understand what we have, our capability. This is a vital tool to help us run our daily business, it opens up the knowledge of the organisation to everyone.

Utilising the Q&E register we have undertaken a fundamental gap analysis to understand what capability we have and to identify any gaps. We now have both short term and long term plans in place to close those gaps, through training and development, multi- skilling, knowledge transfer from our highly experienced staff to our less experienced staff and ongoing recruitment.

On order to achieve our plans we will:

- Continue to support and expand our University network, to provide staff to help to keep course material current and provide mentors and supervisors. This helps us to ensure a pipeline of Graduate Trainees into our scheme.
- Continue to support local schools to play our part in encouraging children to take up Science subjects
- Continue to support COGENT to assist in the proposed interventions and with a growing blue collar workforce we are keen to ensure that the Nuclear Skills Academy is a success.