



THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

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There is no substitute for experience; that we know. Experience cannot be taught or Googled, it is the knowledge that can only be acquired from living and getting older. Experience is a valued commodity. It is why we have Boards of Directors, service awards and a corporate ladder. But, in the mindset that the experienced know best, the value of diversity of experience can easily be underestimated. Instead the courage, unique perspective and energy inherent in youth should be considered a resource to be used to address the challenges that the oil and gas industry faces. The Canadian Association of the World Petroleum Council (CAWPC) Youth Committee is out to prove that youth can, and should, play a leadership role when it comes to shaping the future of energy.

The CAWPC Youth Committee has brought together the best and the brightest young minds, within the Canadian oil and gas industry, to demonstrate the value of youth participation. They have branded their Youth Committee with the tagline “Let’s Talk About Energy,” which is the foundation of their vision: to listen and be heard in the energy debate.

The young professionals that sit on the Board range from ages 20-35, and represent all facets of the industry – from engineers to investment bankers, students to managers, multinational corporations to entrepreneurial ventures. This cross section of people ensures that a broad range of issues are brought to the table, and different viewpoints are represented.

For the Canadian oil and gas industry, having an engaged youth delegation encourages a more proactive approach to the future of energy. They have done this through research, events and an interactive website. The results have been amazing. By listening instead of telling, and focusing on the future rather than the past, they have cultivated a whole new way to look at energy. Some of the youth’s concerns align with what old generations worry about, but others are unique to them.



Training new field engineers and technicians to reach autonomous operational competency requires both classroom sessions and simulated wellsite locations using the same equipment as the engineer will meet when he enters the field.

Recently, Dan Zilnik, a Canadian Youth Committee Board Member wrote a paper titled *Youth, Energy and the Age of the Impossible*, (available for download at wpccanada.com). The goal of the initiative was to raise awareness of the challenges presented by a growing industry with an ageing work force and provide insight for companies and governments to tackle these challenges. He chose this topic due to the relevance of youth in Canada, and abroad. As young professionals think about the future of their careers, they want to know what is in it for them. If the energy industry cannot meet their needs, they will face problems of turnover or a brain drain. This would result in inefficiency and a lack of strong leadership going forward. Regardless of the challenges we will face in the next five, ten or fifty years, if you do not have the right people in place the best solutions will not be reached.

In his report, Zilnik conducted a global survey of young professionals to better understand the key factors driving youth attraction and retention within the oil and gas sector. His two findings are that due to increased global uncertainties young professionals are unlikely to spend their entire career at one company and that compensation and personal-value alignment are tied as the top priorities for attracting and retaining young professionals. The paper was presented to a large, international audience as one of plenary sessions at the 2011 World Heavy Oil Congress in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The presentation struck a cord with people, regardless of their age or nationality. For the youth, they saw it as a great forum for people to realise that they are not a mystery generation that is impossible to understand. They simply have different needs than past generations. For others in the room, it was an awakening to the concerns of young professionals and the magnitude of implications that would result if they do not get what they are looking for.

This topic was further investigated at the North American Oil and Gas Expo, but approached

in a different way. This time the CAWPC Youth Committee hosted a case competition for students. The task was come up with solutions for oil and gas companies to engage young professionals. The solutions the student participants presented included: revitalising the way the industry is perceived, having strong corporate training programmes in place for young professionals, cross-generational mentoring and engagement through communication strategies that are relevant to how young people communicate, by using technology like social media and blogging. The format of a case competition proved to be a great way to engage youth because no assumptions are made. You hear, directly from the source, what their issues, and more importantly, their solutions, are.

The CAWPC focus on youth and workforce planning is just one of the many initiatives they have been working on. Through the brainstorming of their Board of Directors they have never had a shortage of ideas. But, to further build on their philosophy that identifying issues that are relevant youth is the first step to leading change, they have recently reached out beyond their Board to include youth from all around the world using the web. They have dedicated substantial time and resources to set up a cutting edge website that enables blogging. The platform for discussion allows all youth, regardless of their age or where they live, to have a voice. Discussion topics include diversity/gender, the environment, social responsibility, human resources, technology, long-term supply and global business. The CAWPC is excited for the potential of their site. They are excited for the conversations that will be had, and the site's ability to be a powerful education tool to promote positive change in the industry.

Using both traditional and non-traditional tactics, the CAWPC Youth Committee has been able to grasp the issues that concern youth about energy. Their ability to bring multiple perspectives to the energy discussion has allowed great things happen. Join them to talk about energy at wpccanada.com. ■