



Utilities Electrical Engineers Staffing - A Paradigm Shift!

Thought **Leadership**

COVID-19 has taught us business lessons from just about every angle, be it managing remote teams, managing supply chains, or steering varying customer demands. The experience has reset priorities associated with the essential infrastructure we all rely on, including the power grid.

A good roadmap for any electric utility as we slowly emerge from COVID-19 should be to invest in employees, deliver value to consumers, and treat suppliers and stakeholders fairly.

This holistic strategy is especially crucial to electric utilities at the pandemic height since it keeps safe electricity running to healthcare providers and other vital services. For those outside the utility industry, a reliable and robust power grid is something taken for granted.

While some critical functions can be executed remotely or outsourced, the industry faces an unusual challenge that many others do not. A substantial workforce share is vital to the business's continued operation and the sustained, reliable delivery of electricity, gas, and water.

With the requirement to work remotely and reduced staff to promote social distancing, utility companies have many compelling opportunities to save skillful employees and attract and retain the best talent.

Challenge presents Opportunity

- Unemployment in electric utilities has risen since the start of COVID-19, but not as much as other industries, given the essential services it delivers. In a downturn, utilities present job security and a fixed career path with regular pay and perks to those with required technical skills.
- It used to be challenging to attract experienced employees to rural locations where many utility companies operate. Utilities can offer field careers in regions with low density and lower-cost living. An increase in remote work systems for employees in corporate roles can pull a new pool of workers who live far from the office.
- Utilities can use predictive analytics to attract better talent that would have chosen other technology driven industries in the past.
- Hiring and talent management leaders can contemplate adding data analytics to evaluate potential and current employees and develop a data analytics training approach.
- Utility talent strategy must take into deliberation generational differences. Millennials tend to desire workplace camaraderie and social engagement. It is difficult for employees to relate personally with one another without sharing a physical space.
- Collaboration tools can help bring employees closer, virtually, while also encouraging creativity, problem-solving, and innovation that working in teams can nurture.
- Today, utility workers are recognized for the risks they are taking to keep energy, water, and other crucial services available for citizens and essential industries. Utility companies should highlight their vital role in drawing potential employees, especially from younger generations.

Aligning Talent Management with Business Outcomes

- Even though utilities are successful in drawing new talent, they are not able to mobilize them quickly enough to substitute the decades of expertise retiring from the workforce.
- By prioritizing abilities and roles according to both short-term operational and long-term goals to support the business, organizations can direct resources where they are required most. It can involve upskilling current employees and shift to new roles, as well as training new talent.

- Given the growing demands on the sector and the potential for lack of skilled workers, businesses should train employees in a wide range of trades to help in multiple roles.
- It demands a sound performance management system to recognize talent, including constant feedback rather than annual performance reviews.
- Organizations also can use data analysis better to understand the core abilities of their prevailing workforce and then use the findings to improve training programs.

Planning for a Pipeline of Skilled Workers

Now is the time to seize the experience from skilled workers, evaluate and address skills gaps, and improve clear career paths. Utility organizations should encourage employees who exhibit the required skills and have the standardized knowledge to deliver their work according to the company culture.

Another distinctive feature of the electric utility sector is that it is incredibly organized. As such, all the knowledge that longtime employees accountable for managing government relationships also requires to be captured. These employees recognize the complexities of legislation and the details of rate cases past and present. Their experience needs to be gathered and filed in an organized way so that new regulatory personnel can access it to drive the organization's best outcomes.

Closing Thoughts

There will be numerous consequences of this event. Finance will be one; the global supply chain will require consideration for all crucial recovery processes.

COVID-19 could help utilities evaluate their resiliency models to see if there are obvious factors that need deliberation and change based on the lessons learned from this event.

Utility companies should embrace succession and workforce planning in their strategic programs. The aim is to cultivate a deep bench that can handle their functions and, more importantly, groom leaders who inspire the workforce to tackle difficulties like we are currently experiencing.

By enhancing the focus on employee recruitment, education, and administration, utility organizations can overcome the current situation while developing a talented workforce for years to come.

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