

Hiring and Retaining the Next Generation of Nuclear Professionals

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A new generation of nuclear professionals is entering the workforce with attitudes, values, and beliefs considerably different than previous generations. Advanced technology, fast paced team activities, instant communication and quick decision making are just a few of Millennials' expectations in the work environment.

A "once in a generation" opportunity exists to improve nuclear station performance by welcoming the next generation and encouraging their active engagement. A key requirement is that they retain our strong, intrinsic commitment to nuclear, radiological and personnel safety –areas that may not yet be high on their value list. This challenge may be addressed, in part, by considering the affective domain in the hiring, training, and retaining of new employees.

The usual approach when recruiting candidates involves evaluating their work history, past performance, and cognitive ability. However, consideration to the affective domain should also be addressed. Piaget notes, "At no level can we find a behavior or a state which is purely cognitive without affect"(Clark & Fiske, 1982). Examples of essential skills that fit into the affective domain are: respecting diverse opinions and contributions of others; interacting with other teams to achieve corporate goals; and taking responsibility for one's actions and consequences. These skills are external expression of internalized attitudes, beliefs, and values.

The new generation of workers has aspirations beyond extrinsic rewards that motivated past generations. They expect that their contributions will be sought and highly valued –that they are truly making a difference. Application of affective domain concepts addresses these aspirations by matching where organizational needs and the individual's competence and passion intersect.

This paper develops the implications of the affective domain on the hiring and retention of the next generation of nuclear professionals who will contribute to the continued quest for excellence in all aspects of nuclear power.

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