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## greenlight

recruiting for  
a greener future  
in the energy industry



*Sue LaVerne, Head of Retail Human Resources and Maria Antoniou, Director - Human Resources - E.ON UK*

### Reportage from HR forum in October

Most of us can name at least a few of the seven deadly sins, but Maria Antoniou, UK HR director for power company E.ON UK, can reel them all off - the seven deadly sins of the energy companies, that is.

According to research by E.ON UK, the public sees the big power companies as greedy, unfair, wasteful, polluting, complicated, complacent and

intrusive. Small wonder, then, that they are facing an enormous skill gap, and a somewhat tarnished image. Not to mention the small matter of finding an environmentally acceptable solution to the world's energy problems.

Speaking at ResourceBank's 15th HR Directors' Forum in October, Maria and her colleague, Sue LaVerne, E.ON UK's Head of Retail Human Resources, described the challenges facing the power industry at a time when it is more often in the news for bad reasons than good, and when engineering is such a long way from most young people's idea of a dream job.

ResourceBank

“It’s been interesting that there have been so many similarities between E.ON UK and Pitney Bowes in terms of skill levels, especially around engineers, age profile, and the number of people leaving in the next five to ten years.”

Jonathan Forde *HR director*  
Western Europe Region, Pitney Bowes



“It’s always good to see what other organisations are doing, and to see how we can tailor it to our own organisation.”

Sonia Sharples *Head of HR* Poundland

“The most significant thing tonight has been hearing about the lack of information out there about the opportunities for people to work in the energy industry.”

Geoff Hall *Head of Human Resources*  
World Duty Free



“It was particularly interesting that Maria and Sue were speaking from the point of view of the industry, rather

than a single organisation. This is one of those times when companies have to work together.”

Victoria Woodison *HR director* –  
UK and Ireland Gate Gourmet

Sue set the scene, describing E.ON UK (formerly Powergen) as one of the world’s biggest investor-owned electricity and gas companies, with 94,000 employees and annual sales of €87bn. The company employs almost 17,000 people in the UK, from those in the energy distribution business, affectionately known as “Holes and Poles”, to highly qualified engineers. Sue described it as an incredibly varied organisation, with a mission to lead the way to “a future where energy is secure, low carbon and available at a fair price.”

While E.ON UK has very clear ideas of what it wants - and needs - to do, the reality, especially in today’s economic climate, is proving more challenging. Maria, taking over from Sue, spoke of the situation they’re facing as “an HR challenge for a green world”. The sector suffers from a small skills base - there are limited numbers of people with experience in the new technologies (around sustainable energy) in particular. Energy companies find it difficult to attract new people into the sector - 34,000 new learners are needed. Existing employees, schooled in more traditional energy methods, need to



Huw Davies, *HR Director - UK, Aliaxis* and  
Jon Forde *HR Director - Western Europe Region,*  
Pitney Bowes.

upskill. Maria told her audience that 47,000 days of refresher training are needed just to keep the current workforce competent. People moving into energy from other sectors also need extensive training. So, unusually, the sector is facing, simultaneously, a skills shortage (with 28,000 people - 80% of the current workforce - due to leave it over the next 15 years) and a skill gap. The challenges are enormous - but so are the opportunities. NGOs, Maria said, have forecast that 3.4m people will be working in green energy in the coming years. The sector just needs to find them.

So what is E.ON UK doing to tackle these problems? They are, Maria said,

## Magnet group

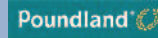
ResourceBank is proud that its successful partnership with the Magnet Group, part of Nobia UK, is to continue for 2010.

Going into its eighth year of operation both sides have worked closely to further evolve the Magnet Resourcing Centre (MRC), to continue to ensure delivery of the best quality candidates to Magnet in the most cost efficient manner.

The importance the business places on its employees has been further highlighted by Magnet Group being announced as Winners of 2009 National Training Award for their New Colleague Induction Process recently.

rail industries. E.ON UK has, she said, committed to the National Skills Academy (power), and is working hard to remedy the government's poor perception of the value of engineering and technical skills. And they've built a close relationship with the Sector Skills Council.

It's an uphill struggle, as both Sue and Maria admitted, but all about education. The energy companies themselves need to promote the sustainable energy sector as an attractive place to work. If they don't, as Maria told her worried looking audience, the lights will start going out across Britain - literally.



Poundland's ambitious growth strategy maximising current market opportunities has provided a specific resourcing need which ResourceBank has been delighted to solve.

The value-store sector, currently experiencing "massive growth", said Sonia Sharples, Head of HR, Poundland, is opening 43 new stores between April and November this year. Each shop required a new Manager and up to two Assistant Managers. With Manager turnover at around 12 per cent, Poundland had "a constant search for talent to come into the business," she said.

Sharples said placing large volumes of staff quickly was the main driver behind the new outsourcing deal, which will see ResourceBank Lite (RBL) source staff, rather than make specific HR savings. The unpredictable nature of when former Woolworths stores became available was also problematic. "The financial savings of outsourcing to RBR have come from our being able to take up all the opportunities to open new stores. Outsourcing has meant we can get the Managers in place in time to open," she added.

RBR is also conducting a review of recruitment at Poundland as part of the retailer's plans to restructure the HR function next year. Sharples said this was likely to involve merging the current recruitment and training team with the specialist arm to form a generalist function.

taking an unusual approach, beginning with their brand. Energy companies are seen, in Maria's own words, as "social pariahs", so E.ON UK has launched a high profile campaign, aimed at putting across a consistent brand and message, making both the public and potential employees aware of their corporate values and commitment to sustainable energy. Ever aware that they need to recruit young staff, they've even used YouTube, and Maria is especially proud of their concertina-style, menu-inspired graduate recruitment pamphlet, which she describes as "looking like something you'd find in a Slug and Lettuce" - without the beer stains!

But perhaps the most striking news of the night was that the six big energy companies - E.ON UK included - are working together. This time, rather than seeing each other as competitors, they have acknowledged the severity of the problem, and accepted that the best way to tackle it is as an industry. Maria spoke of begging the government for a "joined up approach" to the skill shortage, and her belief that the situation has become a case of déjà vu, with the energy sector facing problems already experienced by the motor and

# up up and away

## more than just hot air



October saw the launch of a competitive new service for RBR to provide a cost-effective solution to candidate response and selection.

RBR Lite generates candidates via a variety of internet advertising routes, screens the response and then forwards the best candidates

to the client. Poundland and LA Fitness have already trialled this service successfully. If you are interested in finding out more please do call us on 01952 281 934, email us at [enquiries@resourcebank.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@resourcebank.co.uk) or visit our website: [www.resourcebank.co.uk/lite](http://www.resourcebank.co.uk/lite)

## news...

### Pitney Bowes delivers...

Pitney Bowes have extended their relationship with ResourceBank with their announcement to outsource their entire recruitment function. Following TUPE consultation ResourceBank were delighted to welcome members of the existing PB resourcing department into the newly created team consisting of personnel from both companies.

"This is another exciting development for us and we are delighted to add Pitney Bowes to our growing list of prestigious international clients" said Richard Pearson. "The 3 year contract

gives us an opportunity to develop a really strong recruitment strategy and build value added relationships across this complex and dynamic business".

The new team will assume responsibility for the entire resourcing process and expect to recruit c.300 people in the next 12 months.

Pitney Bowes operate from 70 different locations and the resourcing team will be split between their European HQ in Harlow and ResourceBank's main office in Telford.

**ResourceBank**

recruitment solutions partner



### AGA warms up again...

Well done to the Aga resourcing team for securing the contract for what will be our third year of partnership. Despite a not-surprisingly tough year for Aga, the team have continued to support the group and particularly the retail network with a steady supply of well qualified candidates.

Aga announced the merger with Rangemaster in July and is now known as Aga Rangemaster.

The iconic Aga brand has held up well in 2009 and all the signs are that 2010 will see further growth within the group.