

RPO Powers Recruiting for Major Canadian Energy Provider

One of today's most demanding recruiting challenges is competing for talent in a specialized industry. From manufacturing to IT and professional services, skilled and leadership-level talent are critical for business growth in any industry—and the world of nuclear power generation is no exception.

Today, Bruce Power provides 20 percent of Ontario's energy, operates the second largest single-site nuclear facility in the world, and is currently expanding its operations to meet tremendous growth in energy demand. The company was established in 2001 when a partnership of Canadian companies took over a government-run operation to form Ontario's largest independent power generator. Bruce Power operates six reactors, is refurbishing two additional facilities for completion in 2015, and has applied for new-build permission to expand facilities—but effective growth requires great talent.

To support planned growth and address talent needs, company leaders began an effort in 2006 to assess and redesign recruiting operations. There were several recruiting challenges. First, the company's culture reflected the legacy of its roots as a site-based operation of a much larger organization. The company lacked a clearly articulated model to establish expectations of leadership. There was an emphasis on technical skills over leadership capability when selecting new hires. A more focused performance management effort was needed, and, due to its remote location, the company had to draw from a limited talent pool for leadership and high-end technical roles.

Legacy recruiting operations were a chief concern. Bruce Power's roots had left it with a site-based HR team—competent in day-to-day administration, but not always equipped to fully address future challenges of talent assessment, acquisition and development. Strategic management of succession planning and workforce planning processes was needed, and, finally, the company needed an approach to address succession needs for key department manager and vice president-level talent.

To move forward, Bruce Power developed a comprehensive human capital management framework. The strategy looked beyond near-term tactical issues to focus on a desired talent “end state,” a vision that took a long-term view of talent operations. The resulting solution would require a broad approach to address all aspects of recruiting and talent management, and fulfilling that need would require a recruiting partner that could provide integrated services that spanned pre- and post-hire talent management processes.

The solution for Bruce Power involved a Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) effort that was directly connected to performance management and leadership development initiatives. Korn/Ferry International proved to be an ideal fit for such a broad-based talent management effort. Bruce Power engaged the executive search and talent management leader to provide an integrated solution—one that includes RPO from Futurestep, a Korn/Ferry Company and global provider of Strategic RPO.

The RPO operation officially began in late 2006. The initiative is driven by comprehensive planning, including extensive strategic planning aimed at defining leadership needs and critical competencies. Once an effective leadership model was identified, planners began assessing current leadership capabilities and identifying gaps. Using this leadership model, they determined succession planning needs and replacement planning for key roles.

A key component of the planning and succession management process was the application of behavioral competencies to help define needs, identify fit and facilitate leadership development. The methodology was based on 67 behavioral competencies from Lominger, now part of the Futurestep-Korn/Ferry RPO solution. The competency-based approach provided a consistent and actionable framework for defining recruiting needs, identifying talent, and fostering development of leadership from within.

Today, thanks to the comprehensive recruiting and talent management strategy, Bruce Power is now better equipped to foster the leadership to support its growing services over the next decade. Based on its leadership model, the company has achieved successful targeted recruitment for key mid-level management roles and critical VP positions.

Talent acquisition has included a blend of nuclear trained talent with top performers from outside the industry. A recent audit of the talent acquired demonstrated the vast majority are already exceeding performance expectations. The leadership team recognizes the critical role of succession, and they are proactively identifying, developing and managing talent to enrich the talent pipeline.

Performance planning and review processes are now based on consistent components and objectives for all leaders. A system is now in place to apply succession planning to identify senior leaders and provide them with enhanced support for further development.

The story of the Bruce Power recruiting and talent management effort reveals the importance of broad strategic vision in an effective RPO approach. An emphasis on building a foundation for talent development at the outset of a relationship can make the difference between an RPO engagement that delivers tactical support and one that delivers strategic value for long-term success.