National Grid uses BCS Professional Development Expertise to put Professionalism into Practice

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National Grid is one of the world’s largest utilities, owning and operating gas and electricity transmission and gas distribution networks in the UK and US. The company in its current form was created by the merger of National Grid and Lattice Group in 2002. This merger marked the start of a major change programme for the new company, then known as National Grid Transco.

A staff survey and conference in 2004 revealed that following this period of significant change staff were concerned predominantly with the following:

- Few promotional opportunities
- Lack of commitment to staff development
- Clarity of roles
- The increase of outsourcing/out-tasking
- The flat structure that was emerging
- Continuing change within the organization

A further staff survey reiterated that career development, appropriate and targeted training, and better access to the leadership team should continue to be the top priorities.

Following a tender process a successful relationship was established with BCS, and the SFIAplus model was used as a basis for defining the IT roles specific to National Grid.

The Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) is the high level UK Government backed competency framework describing the roles within IT and the skills needed to fulfil them. SFIAplus contains the SFIA framework of IT skills plus detailed training and development resources to provide the most established and widely adopted IT skills, training and development model reflecting current industry needs.

The company used SFIAplus to articulate an IS business strategy and deliver a series of core competencies.

Interest in the project was generated by means of communication bulletins and a series of teleconferences designed to brief members of staff prior to their attendance at a development centre. Over 150 IS staff attended 22 centres. At the development centres staff took part in a variety of activities, tests, and interviews, culminating with a one-to-one feedback session with a trained assessor.

The feedback sessions provided staff with the opportunity to discuss career aspirations, strengths and potential areas for improvement. The outcome of this discussion was a clear development plan. For the organization, the development centres and one-to-one processes provided a detailed skills audit that has formed the basis for a varied programme of improvement steps and development interventions.

The IS team intends to build on the project and continue to promote organizational and individual development on an ongoing basis to ensure that IS within National Grid continues to be competitive in a constantly changing environment. An excellent start has been made with recognizing the contribution of individuals and linking individual achievement and potential to organizational needs. This is creating an environment where development planning is the norm and is seen as a priority activity, which results in tangible benefits for all. Most importantly, all of the activities have been successfully integrated in a coherent plan that supports the execution of our business strategy.

In the near future National Grid IS hopes to have this IS development process accredited by the BCS as a further sign of National Grid’s commitment to “best of breed” development of its IS staff.

For further information contact the BCS on:
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