2007 NA-YGN
Critical To Success (CTS) Results

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NA-YGN CTS Committee Members
Michael Kurzeja, NA-YGN CTS Committee Lead, Exelon Power Labs,
Aarika Harris, Arizona Public Service
Douglas Harris, Arizona Public Service
Alan Grant, Southern Nuclear Operating Company
Amy Buu, NA-YGN President, Westinghouse Electric Company

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I. Introduction

At the 2006 NA-YGN Annual Workshop, NA-YGN conducted a small focus group study to understand the young professionals’ work environment and career management. The results that this small study yielded were well received throughout the industry. In response, NA-YGN decided to develop an on-line version of this survey and distribute it to their entire membership. In doing so, NA-YGN hoped to vocalize our generations’ thoughts on what is “Critical to Our Success” as young professionals of the nuclear industry.

II. Executive Summary

“Critical to Success” not only is the title given to this survey, it is the central theme, which runs throughout. NA-YGN wanted to understand what young professionals needed so that we can be the solution to the industry’s aging workforce issue. We discovered, though, that “Critical to Success” proved to have many definitions.

Demographic information was collected in order to understand the basis for determining what they believe is critical to their success. For example, a person who has a low household income and lives in a very high cost of living area might emphasize monetary incentives and higher salaries in their definition of “success”. On the other hand, a higher paid individual living in a low cost of living area might say that success is linked to technical expertise or competent co-workers. The assumption is that each person defines “success” differently, and the persons’ demographic information could play a large part in that definition.

Beyond demographic information, participants were asked a series of questions related to job satisfaction, career development, recruitment and relocation. The data collected from these questions identified how “Success” is defined and if it is actively pursued. The data also highlights opportunities where the industry can assist individuals in helping them achieve their optimal potential. Furthermore, the data denotes influences in job satisfaction and reasons for voluntary termination of employment.

All of the data collected in the “Critical to Success” survey provided insight into the young professionals of the nuclear industry and from this data, one central theme emerged. They are engaged, motivated, and seeking opportunities. Companies should focus their recruitment and retention efforts on providing more leadership opportunities, better compensation and an improved work/life balance.

The young professionals in the nuclear industry want to be part of the solution to the challenges that face this industry now and in the future. We are here. We are ready to learn. With some guidance, we can become the next generation’s leaders.
III. Methodology & Data Collection

After the 2006 NA-YGN Annual Workshop focus group session, NA-YGN decided to formalize the process. NA-YGN commissioned a committee of its members to be formed. The mission of this committee was to develop and distribute a survey followed by data collection and analysis.

With the help of all levels of leadership throughout the industry, the committee developed questions that would yield relevant information. After coming to consensus on the form and structure of the survey, it was distributed to NA-YGN’s entire membership. An email was sent to NA-YGN’s membership, which encouraged its members to participate in the survey through a secure on-line site.

The survey consisted of 30 targeted questions and a free response section. 12 of the questions were utilized to develop background information on the participants. This background information was necessary as the survey tool utilized provided anonymity to the participant. The remaining questions were used to ascertain the participants’ perceptions on various aspects of job satisfaction and career development. The free response question at the end was used to obtain feedback to improve future surveys.

In Section V: Survey Results, two data attributes were considered in providing summaries of the data for questions 1-12. One attribute was related to the average importance rating, as most questions were ranked on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest rating value. The second attribute was in regards to the number of responses. The percentages reported will be the summed percentage of responses for those who indicated 4 and 5 on the ranking scale. Only the top three values were reported for each attribute.

100 NA-YGN members participated in the survey. While this represents only a small portion of the membership, clear trends were established during the analysis. The current data was also compared to the results from the 2006 focus group session to further validate any themes that emerged. It should be noted that the data collection method in the 2006 focus group session allowed free responses between participants while this survey had pre-determined responses. This became relevant in explaining some of the delta values between the surveys.
IV. Demographic Information

Years with the Company & within the Industry

81% of the survey respondents have worked for their companies for less than 5 years. 50% of the respondents have worked for their companies for less than 2 years. 68% percent of respondents have less than 5 years of nuclear experience.

Figure 1

Number of Years with the Company

![Pie chart showing the distribution of years with the company.](image-url)
Figure 2

Years of Nuclear Experience

- Less than 1 year: 21%
- 1 - 2 years: 21%
- 3 - 5 years: 26%
- 5 - 7 years: 18%
- 7 - 10 years: 9%
- More than 10 years: 5%
Current Role within Company

51% of the respondents classify themselves as Professionals or Engineers and 29% are classified as new hires, students, interns, and co-ops. Senior engineers / representatives make up 14% of the respondents, and the remaining 6% consist of management, principal engineers, and team leaders / supervisors.

Figure 3

General Description of Current Role/Title
Upward Mobility of Young Professionals

44% of our respondents have never been promoted. Comparing this statistic with the data from questions 1 and 2, promotions were received on average, shortly after the second year of employment. Fifty-one percent of respondents had a promotion within the last two years.

**Figure 4**

*Time Since Last Promotion*

- 44% Not applicable
- 33% Less than 1 year
- 18% 1-2 years ago
- 3% 3-4 years ago
- 3% 4 years or more ago
Individual & Combined Household Incomes

43% of our respondents have a household income of $50,000 - $80,000. 17% of our respondents have a household income of $110,000 - $140,000. Their household income was double the three most popular segments of the individual income question ($55,000 - $70,000). This may suggest that 17% of respondents have spouse / partner who have a salary equal to their own.

Figure 5

Annual Household Income

- Less than $35,000: 22%
- $35,001 to $45,000: 10%
- $45,001 to $50,000: 11%
- $50,001 to $65,000: 10%
- $65,001 to $80,000: 10%
- $80,001 to $95,000: 7%
- $95,001 to $110,000: 4%
- $110,001 to $125,000: 2%
- $125,001 to $140,000: 2%
- $140,001 to $155,000: 2%
- $155,001 to $170,000: 2%
- $170,001 to $185,000: 1%
- $185,001 to $200,000: 1%
- $200,001 to $215,000: 2%
- $215,001 to $290,000: 3%
- More than $290,000: 3%
Monthly Mortgage / Rent

86% of the respondents have a monthly mortgage or rent payment between $500 and $2,000. 40% of the respondents have a mortgage or rent payment in the range of $500 - $1000; representing the majority.

Figure 6
Purchase Price of Home

34% percent of all respondents rent either a house or an apartment. Of the 66% who are homeowners, no particular house price seemed to stand out as being most popular. 18% bought their houses for $125,000 - $150,000, which is the most popular category, however many other price categories contain roughly equivalent numbers of respondents.

Figure 7

Purchase Price of Home (excluding those renting)
Commute Times

Average one-way commute times varied evenly over the range presented. However, 53% of all respondents have average commutes 30 minutes or less. 36% of respondents have commutes between 30 and 60 minutes. 11% of the respondents have commutes of greater than 1 hour.

Figure 8

Average Commute Time
V. Survey Results

Question 1: Which skills are required for your job?

The majority of the participants indicated that the top three skills required for their job were Attention to Detail (90.1%), Communication Skills (89.1%), and Teamwork (81.2%). Of these four skills, Attention to Detail received the highest average importance rating at 4.48. By comparison, the 2006 study indicated that the top four skills were Written & Oral Communications skills and their Education Background, Technical Knowledge and/or Expertise.

It is interesting to note that 51% of the participants rated “Experience” greater than a 3 on the importance scale and with the lowest average importance rating of 3.5 as a required skill for their roles in their company.
Question 2: Which skills do you excel at to do your job well?

The majority of the participants indicated that they had higher than average competencies in the following areas: Computer Skills (73.3%), Communication Skills (74.3%), and Team Work (85.1%). Skills that were ranked highest in regards to average importance rating were Team Work/Interpersonal Skills (4.21), Computer Skills (4.09) and Communication Skills (3.97).

Although respondents indicated that they feel Technical Knowledge is one of the top required skills for their job, they do not feel it is a skill to which they excel at for their jobs. Only 14% of the respondents indicated that they were skilled/able to train others in regards to their Technical knowledge. This also is representative of the results determined during the 2006 survey which had technical knowledge as it lowest rating, yet also defined by young professionals to be a required skill for their jobs.

Figure 10

Skills to Which YPs Excel
Question 3: Which Characteristics of your job, don’t you enjoy?

The top three characteristics least enjoyed by the participants were relative to their job dissatisfaction were Negative/Resistant Co-workers (56.3%, 3.58), Lack of Authority/Ownership/Responsibility (49.5%, 3.51), and Unrealistic Expectations (46.5%, 3.44).

In contrast, the results of question 5 indicate that 53% of the participants identified their colleagues (4.37) as the reason they like their jobs. It is very apparent how important fellow colleagues play into young professionals’ job satisfaction.

Figure 11
**Question 4:** Which actions would you recommend to your employer to increase your job satisfaction?

The top three actions recommended to employers to increase job satisfaction included improved pay raises (70.3%), assignments with defined goals (68.3%) and defined career path/development opportunities (65.3%). This was similar with the 2006 results where having a defined career path and improved pay raises were highest rated improvement suggestions.

An additional recommendation that received high average important ratings was for employers to provide feedback/recognition of performance (3.89).

**Figure 12**

Recommendations to Increase Job Satisfaction

![Graph showing recommended actions to increase job satisfaction with average importance ratings.]

- Define career path/development opportunities
- Assignments aligned with defined goals
- Pay raises
- Provide feedback/recognition for performance
- Better accountability
- More flexible work schedules
Question 5: Which characteristics of your job do you enjoy?

85.2% of the participants rated their colleagues as the most important factor in supporting their job satisfaction (highest average importance rating of 4.37). Other characteristics which the participants enjoyed include: Problem-Solving (82.2%) and Challenging Work (67.3%).
Question 6: Which reasons support your staying with your company?

Approximately 72% of participants rated potential opportunities within their organization as the most important reason for continuing with their current employer. Young professionals noted that potential opportunities were also the highest rated reason in the 2006 survey. Pay (70.3%) and Enjoying the Work (64.4%) were additional factors as to why young professionals are remaining with their current employer.

**Figure 14**

Reasons Why Yps Stay With Their Employers
Question 7: Which reasons would you consider leaving your company?

77.2% of the respondents indicated that the top reason they would consider leaving their company is better pay.

Other highly ranked reasons that would be given consideration were related to Other Opportunities (72.3%) and Family (68.3%), both with average importance levels above 4.00. While the data about other opportunities reflects previous results, the data concerning family situations does differ considerably.

During the 2006 survey, family situations were the sixth highest ranked reason but its importance was only slightly above average. In advancing to these level, family situations has displaced several reasons previously perceived as important including lack of upward mobility and a dislike of management. This anomaly can likely be attributed to having pre-determined responses versus free response.

Figure 15

Potential Reasons Why YPs Would Leave Their Employers
Question 8: Which barriers prevent you from doing your job well?

Participants indicated that the top barrier preventing them from doing their job well is related cumbersome processes and procedures (59.4%, 3.64). Additional barriers include Organizational issues (46.5%) and Inadequate Training/Resources (34.7%). Administrative work was also defined as a barrier as it received one of the top three highest average importance rating values (3.06).

This diverges considerably from the 2006 results in that the clear trends, which were established in the previous survey data, were not substantiated with this corresponding data. Organizational issues, inadequate training and lack of support were all highly rated issues previously. While in this survey none of these displayed any greater significance than all the other options presented.

Figure 16
Barriers for YPs
Question 9: In your opinion, which skills do your employers’ value?

Many of the participants believe that the most valued skills by employers were related to being results driven (89.1%), Efficiency (76.2%), and the Ability to Learn (68.3%). This again corresponds to 2006 data, which had efficiency and results driven as the highest rated response.

Respondents also indicated that in their opinion, employers place the least amount of value in a “Work Comes First” philosophy (3.61), which indicates there is some value to having a good work/life balance.

![Figure 17](image-url)

Figure 17
Question 10: How far would you be willing to relocate for a job in the nuclear industry?

70.3% of participants indicated that they would be more than willing or very willing to locate to another part of the same state or province. 66.3% indicated that they would move to a nearby state/province and 57.4% would only move locally for a job. 22.3% of the participants would be more than willing or very willing to move to another country for their job in the nuclear industry, however, 46.5% would not be willing to move to another country.

Figure 18

**Distance Yps Would Be Willing to Relocate For Nuclear Industry**

- [1] Not Willing
- [4&5] Most Willing
- Average Importance Rating
Question 11: Would you recommend a peer to consider joining the nuclear workforce?

98% of participants indicated that they would recommend a peer to work in the nuclear industry.

Figure 19

Would you recommend the Nuclear Industry

Yes 98%
No 2%
Question 12: Do you actively help recruit or hire new workforce?

41% of participants indicated that they have actively recruited within the last six months or a year. Of those that have not actively recruited, only 3% stated that they are not interested in this type of activity. The other 56%, while not actively recruiting have not been afforded the opportunity. This would suggest that young professionals are willing to assist in their company’s efforts to attract new personnel.

Figure 20

Do You Actively Recruit

- Yes - within the last 6 months: 20%
- Yes - within the last year: 21%
- No, but I haven't been asked: 56%
- No and I'm not interested in this type of activity: 3%

Legend:
- Green: Yes - within the last 6 months
- Red: Yes - within the last year
- Blue: No, but I haven't been asked
- Yellow: No and I'm not interested in this type of activity
Question 13: How important is having a mentor to your professional development?

The vast majority of respondents think that a mentor is important towards professional development. Of the 84% of participants that think a mentor is important, 58% stated that a mentor was very important to professional development. In fact, only 1% of all participants don’t think a mentor has any value in their professional development.

Figure 21

Importance of a Mentor
Question 14: If you said, yes to having a mentor, which characteristics do you value in a mentor?

When asked about important mentor characteristics, most respondents placed a high value on various communication skills. Over 89% of all participants think it is very important that a mentor is Easy to Talk To. Other highly desirable qualities in mentors was those who provided good advice and professional direction (84.2%) and if they are flexible and willing to work with young professionals (84.2%).

Figure 22

Characteristics Valued by Mentors
Question 15: How important to you is "skill diversity" for professional development (e.g. job rotations to learn other areas of the company)?

The vast majority of respondents think that skill diversity is important towards professional development. Of the 91% of participants that think that skill diversity is important, 51% stated that it is very important to professional development. In fact, only 1% of all participants do not have any interest in job rotation or enhancing their “skill diversity”.

Figure 23

Importance of Job/Skill Diversity
Question 16: Have you defined what "Career Success" means to you?

Most respondents have defined “Career Success” in their terms. In fact only 29% of all participants have not defined what a successful career is to them.

Figure 24
"Career Success Defined"
Question 17: Have you taken any steps recently to manage your career (i.e. identification of your short-term and long-term career goals)?

Almost exactly, those who have defined “Career Success” have also taken steps recently to manage their career. 73% of participants stated that they took some action recently to manage their careers.

Figure 25
Has Taken Steps to Manage Career

73%
27%
Question 18: Have you identified what you need to do to achieve your definition of “Career Success”?

While many respondents have defined “Career Success,” fewer have identified a path to achieve it. Only 57% of those who participated have identified a path for “Career Success,” compared to the 71% of respondents who have defined it and taken steps to achieving it.

Figure 26

Path for Career Success Identified
VI. Conclusions

It is apparent from the data that each person defines what “Critical to Success” is somewhat differently. However, there are several trends that resound with exceptional clarity. The young generation in the nuclear industry is engaged, motivated and looking for opportunities. Opportunities consistently ranked highly as a motivator for job satisfaction and for those seeking other employment. Coupled with lack of responsibility being identified as a dissatisfactory characteristic, one can infer that the young generation is looking to assume leadership roles within the industry.

Typical of other Gen X and Gen Y, the young professionals of the nuclear industry are also seeking a better work/life balance. However, the demographic data combined with varying survey results suggest that compensation levels are a major concern as most young professionals are attempting to cope with housing costs as a percentage of household income at historically high levels.

As the industry continues to expand, demands on the workforce continues to increase as well as the competition for talent. Companies that account for the workforce trends identified within this study will be better equipped to retain and attract young professionals of their organization.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the team members whose effort in making this a reality was invaluable. Most of all we would like to thank the participants who volunteered their time so that the voice of the youth generation in nuclear could be shared to the nuclear industry.

References

What’s Critical to Your Success?  2006 Focus Group Study
### Appendix: Table of Survey Responses to Questions 1-10 & 14

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<td>Inadequate Training/ability to find resources</td>
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<td>23.76%</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
<td>16.83%</td>
<td>6.91%</td>
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<td>4.95%</td>
<td>15.84%</td>
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<td>2.97%</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
<td>25.74%</td>
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<td>23.76%</td>
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<td>Motivation/Drive</td>
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<td>7.92%</td>
<td>29.70%</td>
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<td>27.72%</td>
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<td>Work comes first philosophy</td>
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<td>Another country</td>
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<td>9.90%</td>
<td>20.79%</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>18.81%</td>
<td>22.77%</td>
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<td>Another part of your present country</td>
<td>11.88%</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
<td>33.66%</td>
<td>20.79%</td>
<td>25.74%</td>
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<td>A Nearby State or Province</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>22.77%</td>
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<td>29.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same State or Province</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>20.79%</td>
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<td>Only locally</td>
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<td>8.91%</td>
<td>11.88%</td>
<td>29.70%</td>
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<td>17.82%</td>
<td>45.54%</td>
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<td>Gives good advice and or direction for my next career</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.88%</td>
<td>27.72%</td>
<td>56.44%</td>
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<td>Outreaches to me from time to time</td>
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<td>39.60%</td>
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<td>Flexible and willing to work with me when I call</td>
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<td>38.61%</td>
<td>45.54%</td>
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<td>Easy to talk to</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>Has the same professional interests</td>
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<td>Has the same personal interests</td>
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<td>14.85%</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
<td>21.78%</td>
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<td>Has the same cultural background / family life</td>
<td>20.79%</td>
<td>23.76%</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
<td>14.85%</td>
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