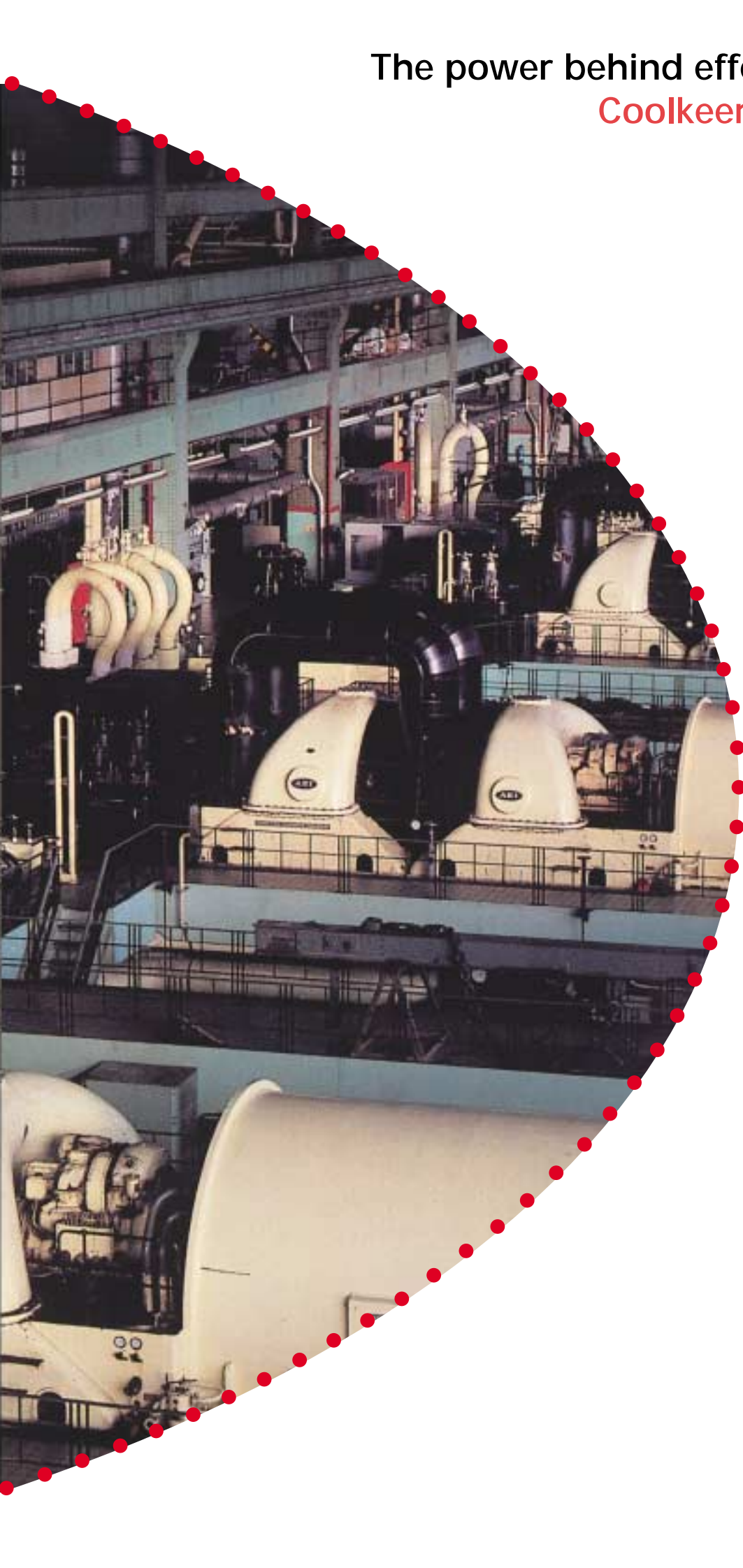


# The power behind effective staff training

## Coolkeeragh Power Limited



### The Business Benefits

In the power industry it is critical that staff are fully competent.

Coolkeeragh have implemented competency-based training throughout their organisation and are aware of the benefits which can be attributed to this training:

All training is focused on achieving competence

Operators are responsible for the assessment and development of their staff

NVQs aided the achievement of Investors in People

Environmental training was linked to the level of competence for achievement of ISO 14001

New pay spine was introduced linked to achievement of competence by staff

Developed multi-skilling and flexibility

NVQs enabled training to be evaluated

The full story inside



Richard Sterling & Charlie Nicell

## Coolkeeragh Power Ltd

Coolkeeragh Power Limited is situated close to the port development at Lisahally and was the subject of a management and employee buyout on 1 April 1992 as part of the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. The company is jointly owned by the employees (majority shareholder) and the Electricity Supply Board International (ESBI).

Coolkeeragh Power Limited's main business is the generation and supply of electricity. The power station has an installed capacity of 420 megawatts combining both steam and gas turbine generators. Maintenance and operation of the plant is carried out by the company's own professional engineers.

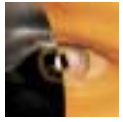
Although the company is reducing in size, due to its contract expiring with NIE in April 2002, it is fully committed to the training and development of its staff to meet company and individual objectives. The common values of the company

focus on the need for respect for the individual, two way communication, agreeing common goals, equal opportunities for all, flexibility, innovation and a fair days pay for a fair days work. Coolkeeragh worked in close partnership with the trade union to implement a single salary spine, this ensures that all staff are rewarded equally and it is based on them being assessed to a competence level in their specialism.

As a major business in the Londonderry area, Coolkeeragh Power Limited recognises the role it can play in improving local environmental awareness. A prime example is the initiative of bringing industry into the classroom by providing industrial visits and short and long term work experience. Charities also benefit from generous contributions given by staff through the charities committee whilst many staff members undertake personal fund raising activities for charity.

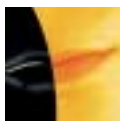
*“Given the amount of money spent on training, evaluation is essential. NVQs provide a good tool to assess the effectiveness of training.”*

## The NVQ Programme



A training needs analysis was carried out in Coolkeeragh

Power Limited in 1996 to identify areas in the company which could be developed. The outcome indicated that the way forward for the company was multi-skilling and flexibility of the workforce. The organisation decided the best way to do this was to look at the NVQ process. The organisation held discussions with their trade union to explain the NVQ process and the reasons behind implementation. Initially the trade union was sceptical, but this has been dispelled over the years as the benefits to the staff and organisation have emerged.



Coolkeeragh worked with the Electrical Training Association

which has close connections with the power industry and they commenced their implementation plan with a pilot consisting of 8 candidates, 2 from each of the shifts. This allowed them to evaluate the process before implementing it fully. Coolkeeragh has approved centre status with their external verifier visiting twice a

year. They work in close partnership with the external verifier who looked at their systems and procedures and decided on the most practical evidence route for them as an organisation. The assessors are the candidates' natural supervisors, which allows assessment to be an integral part of the job. It also means that the assessor is there at all times if the candidate has any problems or wants to discuss anything regarding the NVQ process.



The organisation very effectively uses a unit award process

rather than a full NVQ award process. All departmental heads have NVQ documentation and any employee taking on a new skill has to work to, and be assessed, at this level of competence.



The full human resource function is geared towards

competence. In order for staff to be placed onto the first stage of the salary spine they have to prove competence within their job role. The organisation has also designed company specific units to work alongside the NVQ.

employer  
case  
studies



Evidence of the support and recognition given by the organisation is demonstrated by a presentation of the certificate to the

candidate and the immediate increase of their salary. The Managing Director's yearly report and accounts to shareholders puts great emphasis on the benefits of training and development being linked into this competence based system within the organisation.

*“The organisation decided the best way to develop multi-skilling and flexibility was to look at the NVQ process.”*

## Employee Benefits

Progression within organisation

Pay reward linked to their level of competence

Fear of developing new skills has disappeared

More focus on their job roles

More motivated and confident

Employees know the company is committed to their training and development

## The Future

The current contract between NIE and Coolkeeragh Power Limited is due to expire in April 2002. It is the company's vision to establish a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine Power Station by 2002/2004. The company's aim is therefore to develop multi-skilling within their organisation to enable them to release staff to set up the new Power Station, while ensuring the staff left are fully competent to run Coolkeeragh and decommission it. The company is therefore introducing personal development plans for all staff to ensure the future demands of the staff and company are met.

For further information on NVQ implementation and general NVQ information please contact:

The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority

2nd Floor, Glendinning House, 6 Murray Street, Belfast BT1 6DN

Tel: 028 9033 0706 Fax: 028 9023 1621 e-mail: [infoni@qca.org.uk](mailto:infoni@qca.org.uk)

