

Governing Energy

No Newbies!

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The industry and society in general continues a major demographic change as the older so called Baby Boomers retire as the Millennials enter the workforce. This “Shift Change” may expose organizations to an unacceptable level of risk.

New entrants must be trained and deemed competent to take over the tasks of the previous tenant. Moreover, they must meet a certain minimum high bar to even be considered a contributing member of the team.

For example, medical students begin working with patients early in their careers but only after attaining a high level understanding of the job requirements. Years later they will become Board Certified Physicians but the initial level of proficiency must still be quite high.

Aviation is another High Reliability sector whereby the first solo by a pilot is followed only after extensive training and experience with an instructor (mentor). Only after a long vetting process does one *captain* an international “heavy” commercial airliner.

Takeoff, navigation and safe landing are a set of necessary expertise before leaving the ground the very first time alone. Both the pilot’s safety as well as those on the ground depend on this high minimum threshold—not to mention damage or loss of the aircraft asset.

In the recent Wall Street Journal (WSJ) article, *Nuclear Family: Navy Sub Culture Relies on Rules, ‘Odd Couple’ Matches* the journalist advances the theme that it is ‘Not OK to Be New.’ⁱ The critical systems and living conditions aboard a modern submarine requires a high minimum technical, leadership and teaming level of expertise from all hands.

Young Ensigns are not given any real responsibilities but prior to promotion they are expected have upped their game significantly—they hit the ground running so to speak as a newly promoted Lieutenant Junior Grade. One surmises that if they cannot demonstrate this ability they may not be the opportunity to continue along this career path.

The WSJ writer states what is often known but not expressed, this model is inherent in the nuclear submarine culture. Isn’t that true for the other sectors mentioned herein? Isn’t it true for the oil and gas industry and your organization?

How does your organization assure that the high entry level bar is met for critical positions?

About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of three books and has written extensively about the field of operations management. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling operations excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years--his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of social relationships.

End Notes

ⁱ <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB20001424052702303873604579495792882460298?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB20001424052702303873604579495792882460298.html>