

Managing Dual Careers: Work Life Integration in a 24/7 World

By Eve Sprunt

Abstract

Three Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) surveys and a Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG) survey that together collected over 10,000 responses provide valuable insights into how to enhance employee retention and increase diversity in management. Clearly, more women are working in the petroleum industry. The transition from a workforce largely composed of “dominant earners” to a workforce with many members of dual career couples is less obvious. The survey findings suggest that lifestyle differences between dominant earners and members of dual career couples introduce misunderstandings about career dedication and work ethics that can lead to attrition. Better understanding of how to manage people in dual career couples will enhance retention and advancement of women, because the majority of women are part of a dual career couple. The members of this new workforce are opportunity-driven, hard-workers, but the new lifestyle means that they are living with different constraints. Management composed primarily of dominant earners may not appreciate the relocation issues facing dual career couples. People without a spouse providing logistical support need more flexibility. Technology-enabled work-styles can be leveraged to build and retain a more diverse and highly productive and motivated workforce. To avoid prejudice, flexible work arrangements should be available to all.

Bio

Eve Sprunt, a consultant with 35 years of experience working for major oil companies, is currently SEG Second Vice President and was 2006 President of SPE. She became an Honorary Member of SPE in 2010. In 2013 the Society of Women Engineers honored her with their Achievement Award (their highest award). She was a founder and president of the Society of Core Analysts, has 23 patents, 28 technical publications, and has over 120 other publications. Her S.B. and S.M. degrees are from MIT (Earth and Planetary Sciences) and her Ph.D. (Geophysics) from Stanford. She led SPE and SEG surveys to collect data on factors impacting the workforce.