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Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Report 2008-2009



Australian Government

**Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency**

Project Details

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Executive Summary

Energetics is a specialist management consultancy in the business of climate change. In partnership with our clients, we help them transition to a carbon-constrained environment by managing risks, achieving cost reductions and identifying new opportunities. Our aim is to achieve climate change commitment – from the top to the bottom line.

This company is comprised of 5 state offices in NSW, VIC, QLD, WA and the ACT. The Head Office is based in North Sydney. At Energetics, we have a passionate and enriching workplace culture as well as a strong commitment to the environment. Feedback gathered from staff, both formally and informally, indicate that Career Development and Communication are two key areas of challenge.

Table of Contents

Project Details	2
Executive Summary	3
Table of Contents	1
2. Analysis.....	2
2.1. Recruitment and Selection.....	2
2.2. Promotion, transfer and termination.....	3
2.3. Training & development	3
2.4. Work organisation	4
2.5. Conditions of service.....	4
2.6. Sex-based harassment	4
2.7. Pregnancy, potential pregnancy and breastfeeding	5
3. Issues Prioritised.....	6
3.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction.....	6
3.2. Retention.....	6
3.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination	6
3.4. Work/Life Balance	6
4. Actions Taken	7
4.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction.....	7
4.2. Retention.....	7
4.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination	7
4.4. Work/Life Balance	8
5. Evaluation of Actions Taken.....	9
5.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction.....	9
5.2. Retention.....	9
5.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination	9
5.4. Work/Life Balance	10
6. Future Actions	11
Contact Details	12

2. Analysis

a) To analyse issues of concern for women at Energetics Pty Ltd the following activities were considered:

- the Workplace Profile,
- rates of promotion,
- turnover trends,
- exit interview data,
- policies effective or in action (e.g. Affirmative Action Policy, Harassment and Discrimination policy, EEO policy),
- informal/social activities, and
- informal feedback to HR.

b) When considering the seven employment matters in relation to the findings of the Workplace Profile the following issues presented:

- Women represent 40% of the total Energetics workforce.
- Female representation at all levels is less than that of male representation.
- All salaries were comparable with the exception of Executives.
- There are more female employees in flexible working arrangements than men: ratio is 7:1.

2.1. Recruitment and Selection

During the reporting period, the overall growth rate at Energetics was approximately 30%. Energetics recruited 43 people in total, of which 17 were female. Therefore, females represented 40% of total recruits.

Due to high growth and demand for our services and in order to retain a high quality of output, sourcing skilled and talented employees is a high priority for Energetics. We have responded to this challenge by recruiting a full time employee dedicated to sourcing staff who can better understand both the business needs and the requirements of the roles. This allows us to source candidates from a wide pool of talent and allows us to actively seek suitable candidates without any discrimination to gender, age, race etc, especially in the area of engineering/consulting.

To eliminate any gender bias in recruitment, we use behavioural interviewing techniques, which focus on the position and competencies required for the position. We have a clearly articulated list of values and attributes we use to hire people into our business to assist retention and cohesion.

Energetics also offers an employee referral bonus to staff that have successfully referred a new member to our team. We believe that introduction of new team members through existing staff has a

more effective result as we will attract like minded individuals who have a better chance of fitting with our culture and company vision.

2.2. Promotion, transfer and termination

Out of 16 people promoted in the reporting period, 8 people were female. Hence there is a 50% probability of a female being promoted within Energetics.

During the reporting period, 11 Females were awarded 6 star awards in recognition of their exceptional customer service, making up 30% of all awards given to Energetics' employees. Note that our 6 star awards are supported by nominations for excellent service by our clients.

There were a total of 7 (30%) female terminations/resignations during the review period. Of those female employees that were exit interviewed, the primary reason for leaving was that they were looking for alternative employment.

Employees are also given the opportunity to work in another office/region within Australia through utilising our relocation program. This program allows relocation costs to be covered by Energetics and allows employees to experience working in another region whilst minimising the costs in moving to another State. In the reporting period, a total of 6 employees partook in the relocation program out of which 1 employee was female.

2.3. Training & development

During the reporting year, Energetics funded a range of internal and external training programs for employees including:

- LCA (Life Cycle Assessments)
- NGER (National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting)
- One-2-Five® (Software package)
- Energy Assessments
- QA/Project Management
- Coaching
- New Manager Training (Developing management expertise)
- Learning to Lead
- Leadership Coaching
- "Brown Bag" Training (Consists of informal meetings during lunch in which staff are invited to share information).
- E-Team (Consists of a dedicated group of Energetics' employees who represent the broader Energetics' family and train Energetics' employees in how to act as an environmental role model for our clients and partners).
- Great Barrier Reef Foundation (Three employees were selected to attend a 3 day field trip to Heron Island in August 2008)

The opportunity to attend work related training courses, both external and internal is available to all employees.

2.4. Work organisation

Employees continue to benefit from flexible working arrangements from the promotion of working from home and flexible working hours. The total number of Energetics employees that have flexible working hours is 16 (casual/part time). 11 of these employees are female, which is 69% of the total number of employees who have flexible working arrangements. Energetics also has an employee who works full-time and is able to work these hours across 4 days a week. Energetics also allows the flexibility for employees to work from home if they have to care for a sick child or have other personal life commitments. Hence Energetics provides flexibility in working hours and arrangements to ensure we continue to attract and retain our female employees in the workplace.

2.5. Conditions of service

We continue to assess and evaluate our policies and practices to ensure they are discrimination free, competitive in the market place and respond to the needs of our employees. We are currently developing the following policies:

- Relocation
- Remuneration and Benefits
- Ethics
- Work/Life balance
- Employee Performance Management
- Career Progression/Succession Planning
- Employee Recognition Scheme
- Grievance Handling

Salary analyses are conducted annually against competitive market rates to attract and retain high calibre candidates. Comparison of salaries of male and female employees within similar employee categories indicates similar salaries are within similar bands and are comparable.

2.6. Sex-based harassment

Energetics recognises it is the right of every employee to be able to attend work and to perform their duties without being subjected to any form of harassment and is fully committed to its obligations to prevent harassment in the workplace and in client relations. We have a policy on harassment and anti discrimination which is detailed and thorough and available to all staff through our intranet. The understanding of these policies is reinforced internally through a compulsory HR quiz which is completed as part of the Induction process.

Exit interview data indicates that no female staff members left the organisation as a result of sex based harassment. No formal complaints have been lodged in the reporting period. We are also developing a Grievance handling policy to allow any employee grievances to be addressed in-house in a timely and confidential manner.

2.7. Pregnancy, potential pregnancy and breastfeeding

During the reporting period, a total of 7 employees took maternity leave which is 14% of total female employees, all with the intention of being the primary caregiver to their newborns and the intention to return to work.

Of the 7 female staff that took parental leave during the reporting year:

- 5 are still on leave
- 2 returned to work on a permanent part-time arrangement.

Energetics is proactive in retaining and developing female employees following maternity leave and ensures they feel welcomed when they return. In 2008, Energetics introduced a parental policy which allows all permanent and part time employees who have completed at least 12 months continuous service with Energetics to take up to 52 weeks of parental leave. Depending on the employee's length of service, part of this leave is paid. This policy reinforces our commitment to attracting females into the business as well as structuring support for primary care givers by allowing the flexibility for parental leave to be taken by either gender and providing monetary support in the form of paid parental leave. Energetics also offers a "Keep in Touch" scheme for all employees on parental leave. Managers contact the employee to keep them abreast of major changes in Energetics and will also include invitations to Energetics' events during the period of leave. Employees can also elect to work on a part time basis during the period of leave.

3. Issues Prioritised

3.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction

Historically, engineering consulting is primarily dominated by men. As a result, Energetics previously found it to be a greater challenge to recruit and attract women into the industry. As Energetics is now a specialist management consulting company, recruitment should not be as limited as we are now targeting male and female employees with a broader range of backgrounds and not primarily engineering.

3.2. Retention

Energetics' tracks a rolling 12 month turnover analysis which has been steady over this reporting period. At the end of the reporting period the turnover rate was measured as 17.83% and the lowest turnover rate during the reporting period is recorded as 14.52%. We are actively working on reducing turnover by introducing retention strategies to further reward and progress our valued employees.

3.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination

The proportion of women in senior and executive roles across the organisation is lower than men and, as a result, Energetics acknowledges the challenges of promoting women into these roles.

3.4. Work/Life Balance

Energetics understands that work/life balance can be seen as a significant issue for women who balance both their families and their careers. Energetics recognises the importance of work life balance to the productivity and creativity of our employees and we continue to support work life balance and create higher overall job satisfaction for our employees.

4. Actions Taken

4.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction

As part of Energetics' overall strategy to recruit and retain women in all levels of the organisation, Energetics has developed and implemented a range of strategies. The Energetics recruitment process focuses on:

- matching the skill requirements of the job with the skills of the prospective employees,
- using behavioural based questions and criteria as part of interview process, and
- merit-based selection.

Energetics has also taken on board a full time internal recruitment coordinator who can understand both the business needs and the requirements of the roles. It has proved to be more cost effective and quicker to have an internal recruiter whilst also creating a more personal approach to finding and employing the right fit of candidates. A full time recruiter also allows Energetics to fully benefit from our Employee Referral Scheme and widen our pool of candidates through a range of business related networks and contacts. As a matter of coincidence, the recruitment coordinator is also female.

4.2. Retention

An internal retention strategies report was written in July 2008 which analysed the current demographics of the Energetics' workforce as well as an analysis of turnover. Analysis of salaries, exit interviews and employee catch ups were also conducted.

Several strategies have been suggested for Energetics to focus on:

- Setting up a reward and recognition program – we are currently developing an Employee Recognition Scheme.
- Providing greater clarity to career progression – we are currently developing a Career Progression/Succession Planning Policy.
- Offering flexible working arrangements for women returning from maternity leave.

4.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination

Opportunities for men and women to be promoted are encouraged internally before advertising externally. All promotion is on merit and we ensure that opportunities are available equally to all employees.

We are looking at new developments in Learning and Development, including e-learning facilities, central records for all courses that an employee has undertaken, provision of more internal courses, and more formalised mentoring and mapping of the skills/attributes required to attain the next step in an employee's career.

We are also developing a Succession Planning and Career Path Development Model and policies so as to enhance career experiences and improve career preparation and management.

Exit interviews are conducted to identify ways in which Energetics could better manage their human resources.

4.4. Work/Life Balance

For the last several years, Energetics has been providing more flexible working arrangements to employees as we understand the fact that work and other life commitments cannot be easily separated. Currently a total of 16 employees are working on a part-time or casual basis and Energetics also allows the flexibility for employees to work from home if they are required to care for a sick child or have other personal life commitments. Webmail and Intranet access can be easily set up from home and many professionals are also supplied with a lap top to enhance the convenience of being able to work in another location out of the office, such as at home. We are also now starting to provide employees with smaller and more portable lap tops to make travelling and working from home more convenient and user friendly.

5. Evaluation of Actions Taken

5.1. Recruitment, Selection and Attraction

Employees of Energetics have remained the organisation's greatest asset. Employees are approachable, passionate and unlikely to engage in office politics. Female's represented 39% of total recruits and one of these hires was a female Executive.

5.2. Retention

The return to work rate for women on maternity leave is 100%. Energetics offers women who have returned to work after maternity leave flexible working hours such as part time working arrangements.

Salary analyses is conducted annually against competitive market rates to attract and retain high calibre candidates and a comparison of salaries of male and female employees within similar employee categories indicates similar salaries are within similar bands and are comparable.

To actively reduce turnover, part of our strategy has been to reward our valued employees. Alongside 6 star awards, for above and beyond customer service, Energetics is currently working towards developing other methods of congratulating employees for their achievements. Part of this involves the development of a new Employee Recognition Scheme.

Another reward offered was for three Energetics employees to participate as ambassadors on a field trip to Heron Island as part of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation program, with all expenses paid.

A Career Path Development policy model is being rolled out so that the training and development needs of all employees will be identified and responded to. This is to ensure that career plans are in place with appropriate coaching plans and training provided. This model has been developed to directly reflect the comments received in exit interviews and employee catch-ups.

We are actively working on reducing turnover by introducing retention strategies to further reward and progress our valued employees.

Energetics also tracks and reports 12 month rolling turnover in a monthly board report.

5.3. Promotion/Transfer and Termination

Eight women were promoted internally which accounted for 50% of the total number of promotions at Energetics. Two notable promotion highlights include a female Technician who was promoted to become a Senior Professional, as well as another female Professional who was promoted to become a Senior Professional. As mentioned earlier, Energetics is working on implementing a Succession Planning Policy so that Energetics can continue to identify talented employees and provide education to develop them for key roles within the company.

Energetics is looking at new initiatives in Learning and Development, including e-learning facilities, central records for all courses that an employee has undertaken, provision of more internal courses, more formalised mentoring and mapping of the skills/attributes required to attain the next step in an employee's career.

5.4. Work/Life Balance

Energetics has been successful in driving Work Life Balance initiatives which have assisted employees to be productive and healthy in their work and personal lives. Energetics gives greater flexibility in how our employees work, which also assists us in attracting and retaining employees. The Work Life Balance initiatives currently available are parental leave and flexible hours provisions such as flexible start and finish times and the flexibility to work from home.

To expand on these initiatives, Energetics also plans to create a policy, structure and programs around Work Life Balance.

6. Future Actions

Conduct an Employee Opinion Survey in 2009 and include some questions that specifically relate to the needs of females in our workplace.

Create a “return to work after maternity leave” pack for women.

Provide greater clarity to career progression and investigate options to increase number of females participating in Executive and Senior Professional roles.

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