

Giving credit where credit is due

By Caron Hawco



I often feel perplexed when I hear an opinion leader flippantly state that the oil and gas industry takes short cuts when it comes to the health and safety of its employees and the environment. I am also frustrated by the lack of dialogue and the obvious information gaps in this conversation.

When it comes to issues relating to health, safety and environment, the petroleum industry hires the best. Period. They recruit highly educated experts who, in my experience, have a high degree of integrity and would never put people or the environment at risk.

Identifying and mitigating risk is a major part of the business. It's a daily practice. Bottom line: the human and financial cost of mistakes can be extraordinary when you are operating in a harsh offshore environment. It is simply unacceptable.

Additionally, the industry invests in and develops the best and latest technologies. For example, in less than a decade, there have been investments of over \$500 million in oil and gas R&D in Newfoundland and Labrador alone.

With oil and gas development in our harsh environment, the industry prioritized the pace of development of ocean-related expertise. Newfoundland and Labrador now has unparalleled capability and knowledge pertaining to the cold ocean, waves, ice and storms. This level of expertise has led to the formation of a cluster of independent companies, educational institutions, and world-class research testing facilities and resources that are creating some of the world's most innovative ocean technologies, including clean technologies.

While I can't list them all, it is worthwhile to highlight a few.

Pangeo Subsea is a marine geophysical-geotechnical company specializing in high resolution 3D acoustic imaging solutions. Specializing in locating geohazards in marine environments, Pangeo has about 70 people who are supporting the wind energy industry around the world.

Did you know that there is over a 50 per cent chance of injury or death if there is an incident when lowering a lifeboat during safety training? To address this serious industry problem, Virtual Marine has developed lifeboat simulators that include very realistic operational conditions. This enables people to learn while working in a

simulated environment which replicates the real environment, without the risks.

Rutter develops innovative technologies utilizing radar to detect oil spills, track icebergs, monitor ships, and measure ocean waves and surface currents. Interestingly, it is now working with the Indonesian Marine Police where their technologies are being used to enhance maritime law enforcement capabilities to reduce illegal activity in the waters surrounding the region.

By accessing the power of the genome, eDNAtec has developed DNA-based environmental systems that are revolutionizing how to assess, monitor and characterize the ocean. They offer industry a safer process and greater accuracy that is deepening our understanding of marine ecosystems.

Bottom line: Environmental stewardship is good for business. Companies that make this core to

their business drive innovation and loyalty from their customers, employees, investors, suppliers and communities. It's the right thing to do. And Newfoundland companies are making a contribution through innovation.

Does industry make mistakes? Unfortunately, they do. Are they acceptable? Absolutely not and industry takes every incident, regardless of size, very seriously. That is why our governments and regulators must continue to put the petroleum industry's feet to the fire. The bar must be high and industry expects this.

In a recent column, I spoke about the importance of communications for our local petroleum industry. People are often unaware or worse, misinformed. In this, my last column with Natural Resources, I must reiterate this message.

I'll also add that good communication is not a one-way conversation. It's through direct engagement, collaboration and transparency, when people can look each other in the eyes and create solutions together, that trust and understanding can take root. |nrm

When it comes to issues relating to health, safety and environment, the petroleum industry hires highly educated experts who... have a high degree of integrity and would never put people or the environment at risk.

Caron Hawco, ABC, PMP, is a communication and business strategy consultant and project manager, specializing in natural resources, public affairs, business development, trade missions, diversity, facilitation and media relations.

FEEDBACK

✉ dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

🐦 @NRM_Editor; #Insider