

SECTOR ANALYSIS

ENGINEERING

The combination of skills shortages and major civil engineering projects will lead to a greater demand for skilled engineers „ and recruiters working hard to fill the roles

Engineering recruitment is booming as companies struggle to staff massive civil engineering projects in a market with skills shortages.

“The main issue is still the massive shortage of skills that dominates every changing trend in engineering recruitment,” Richard Spragg, director of engineering recruiter EPCglobal, told Recruiter.

The need for staff is shown by an increase in the number of vacancies advertised in the sector. The Monster Employment Index, which tracks millions of online job adverts, recorded a 34% increase in engineering vacancies compared to the same period last year.

The demand for engineers is set to be compounded by several large civil engineering projects taking place during the next 15 years.

The Crossrail project will create a new railway line in the South-East, costing £16bn. It is Europe’s largest civil engineering project, creating 30,000 jobs over the next nine years. The London 2012 Olympics is also expected to create 33,500 jobs in the construction sector, including engineering, and Gordon Brown has committed to building at least eight new nuclear power stations.

“The big projects will have an effect on staffing levels when they start to ramp up. Engineering companies are having to cast their net far wider and become quite aggressive recruiters,” Andrew Lee, editor of trade magazine The Engineer, told Recruiter.

Over the next decade the sector faces a huge brain drain as large numbers of engineers retire. Professional trades such as architecture, mechanical and civil engineering could lose up to 20% of their manpower to retirement in the next 10 years, according to the Sector Skills Council for construction, ConstructionSkills.

“The Baby Boomers are hitting the golf courses and projects are losing serious numbers of senior staff,” said Spragg. He suggested companies will do anything to retain their senior talent, often paying specialists over the odds to persuade them not to retire.

Fewer than 5% of engineers over 45 are women and Spragg said skill shortages could be solved in one

fell swoop if the gender imbalance is redressed.

Engineering companies are also taking steps to encourage more students to enter the engineering market. Craig Bines, sales and marketing director of JobsGroup.net, who is responsible for engineering jobs board JustEngineering.net, told Recruiter: “Employers are paying for university fees on the basis that they have a certain amount of commitment when students graduate.” He added that graduates are being given options to travel, as well as diverse job roles, as part of their package.

A spokesman for trade body the Engineering and Technology Board, which has been conducting research into engineering skills shortages, told Recruiter that firms can improve the situation by training staff to expand skills sets.

The energy sector is also seeing an increase in demand for personnel as the rising price of oil and gas encourages expansion. The government is committed to an increase in the number of nuclear power stations and meeting the EU’s renewable energy targets.

According to EPCglobal’s World Wide Salary Ranking, engineers in the oil and gas sector demand the highest average salaries at £71,000 per annum, 15% higher than the industry average.

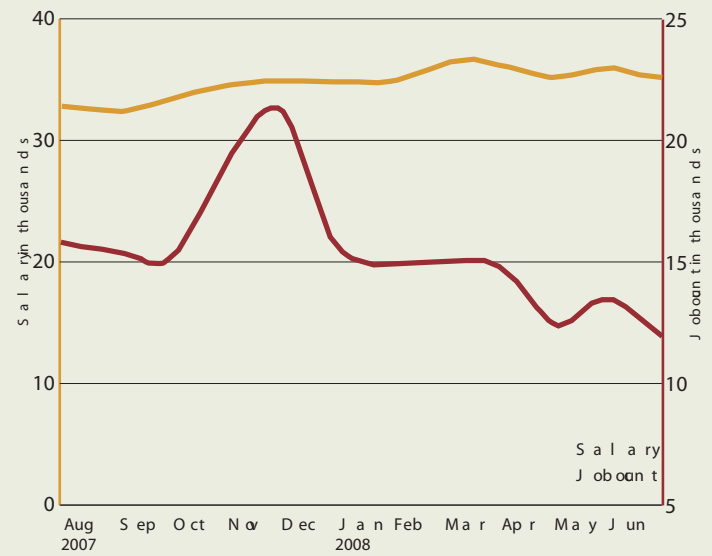
“The whole oil and gas industry is firing up at the moment, because the price of oil is going crazy,” Mark Kelly, project manager at oil and gas sector recruiter Browning and Henderson International, told Recruiter.

Lee said the hike in crude oil prices has led to higher investment in fossil fuel exploration and extraction in areas which were previously uneconomical. He said: “Employers are offering pretty competitive salaries and lifestyle benefits to encourage people to relocate.”

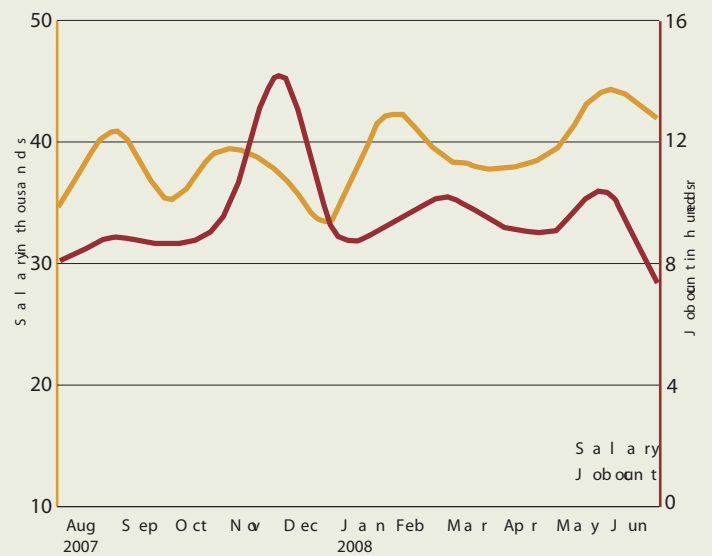
Average salaries in June rose £2,000 to £35,000 in England and by £6,000 in Scotland to £41,000, compared to the same period last year.

Sourced from reed.co.uk’s Market Index
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ENGLAND



SCOTLAND



WALES

