

## **Gen Y seeks responsible employer who listens**

*Virginia Galt*

*Globe and Mail Update*

*Friday, Nov. 18, 2011*

When Agnico-Eagle Mines Ltd. recruits, the gold producer finds it takes more than generous wages, stable employment and advancement opportunities to dazzle the most sought-after young prospects.

More often than not, it comes down to this: Prove that you're worthy.

Increasingly, before they sign on, prospective employees want to know what Agnico-Eagle is doing to protect the environment, how it gives back to the communities that support its mining operations, what its health and safety record is, how the company treats its own people, and what the corporate values are.

"They don't want to work for a company that's in the paper every day with bad news ... or has a bad reputation in terms of social responsibility," explains Louise Grondin, senior vice-president of environment and sustainability.

Although the national unemployment rate is high, strong global demand for metals has ignited a war for talent in the mining sector. The best candidates have a lot of options, and they want to work for organizations whose values align with their own, Ms. Grondin said.

Emma Leith, 27, believes Agnico-Eagle has a good story to tell. She helped write it.

The political science graduate from the University of Western Ontario joined the company four years ago because it had a reputation as "an excellent employer."

Now, as sustainable development co-ordinator and one of the authors of Agnico-Eagle's annual corporate social responsibility report, Ms. Leith has first-hand knowledge of the company's broader impact as well – particularly in Northern Canada, where the firm is training and developing the Inuit work force and supporting local entrepreneurs through its procurement policies.

Company representatives are even going into the local schools, prospecting for the next generation of workers.

"I am so excited with everything we are doing," Ms. Leith said in an interview on her return from Nunavut, where Agnico-Eagle runs its Meadowbank Mine, a fly-in operation 70 kilometres north of Baker Lake.

Inuit made up about 40 per cent of the Meadowbank work force in 2010. The company, in partnership with the territorial government and Inuit leaders from the Kivalliq region, is operating a training program to provide more young Inuit with “sustainable skills” that will position them to take advantage of employment opportunities in Nunavut and beyond.

While the senior management team has been together for 25 years, the majority of Agnico-Eagle’s employees are between the ages of 25 and 34. Many of the mine managers are in their early 30s – most promoted from within as the company expanded from operating one mine to operating six in the span of four years.

These young employees embrace the company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) values, and they are constantly making recommendations to improve them, Ms. Leith said. What’s refreshing, she added, is that their opinions are valued.

“There’s virtually no separation between senior management and the younger, newer people. They take the time to listen ... to our ideas and our thoughts on what direction we should be taking,” said Ms. Leith, who works out of the corporate head office in Toronto.

“For somebody like me to have the ear of the president, I think, is a pretty rare occurrence [in most Canadian workplaces].”

When Agnico-Eagle recruiters hit the career-fair circuit on Canadian campuses this fall and winter, they can refer prospective candidates to the 106-page CSR document that Ms. Leith helped prepare. The report meticulously tracks how the company performed against the targets it set for itself on a number of fronts: health and safety, energy conservation, waste management, greenhouse gas emissions, working conditions, promotion of women and other workforce diversity measures, charitable donations and community engagement.

They can read about the establishment of a dental clinic for families of workers at the Pinos Altos Mine in Mexico and the measures Agnico-Eagle employees took to protect peregrine falcon chicks found nesting in quarries that had been established to supply building materials for an access road from Baker Lake to the Meadowbank Mine.

Ms. Grondin says, when she joined the company 10 years ago, “there were two people in environment at Agnico – me and the other guy. Now there are 40 or 50 in the whole company.”

Reading about the company’s CSR culture is one thing; living it is another, Ms. Grondin says.

“Recruitment is the first step through the door, but then you want people to stay.”

On this measure, she said, the company does well. “We have a very low turnover.”

Generation Y and the desire to ‘do good’

Corporate social responsibility ranks “quite highly” for Generation Y workers – those employees 30 and under – who are in a position to choose where they work, according to Adwoa Buahene and Giselle Kovary, co-founders of n-gen People Performance Inc., a Toronto-based company that specializes in recruitment, retention and engagement.

“The challenge is that Gen Ys hold organizations to their CSR policy. If they join and they feel that the organization is not living up to the policy, they will become disengaged, leave the organization and, even worse, will use social media to broadcast their negative thoughts.”

There are a number of other factors that make a company an employer of choice for Gen Y, such as: meaningful, engaging work and the opportunity to build skills; access to the latest technology; working with friends and co-workers in the same age group; a collaborative work environment and management style, and an organizational capacity for fun.

So what turns them off?

- Stodgy, traditional companies – “they will join and stay for the money for a while, but then will leave looking for greener pastures.”
- Managers who are not interested in them as people, or their career progression.
- No clear line of sight between what they are doing and the big picture.
- “When the cost of doing anything [long hours] outweighs the benefits [work-life balance].”