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British Gas Services summary

Introduction

British Gas is part of the Centrica Group. This is a multi-national company, operating in the UK and Europe and the UK's largest energy supplier. British Gas Services (BGS) is the arm of the business that deals with installing and maintaining services, rather than gas supply. To deliver these services effectively, BGS needs the right staff, with the right skills.

Human Resources (HR)

One of the most important resources for developing a business is people. Human Resource Management (HRM) is the process of managing a business's people. BGS people have an important role as much of their work is in direct contact with the public. Residential customers expect top class service at competitive prices. Engineers therefore need to have both technical skills and good people skills. BGS acquires and keeps this workforce through carefully recruiting, selecting, retaining and training. Retention is particularly important as it costs a lot more to recruit new staff than to keep the ones already in post.

Training

BGS has established the British Gas Academy to provide training for its workforce. There are three main routes:

- an apprenticeship programme delivered in training centres
- traineeships that provide a way for new recruits to learn about the gas industry and gain relevant skills
- technical training for all its engineers throughout their careers.

Training covers technical skills and knowledge as well as other skills such as communication and problem-solving, so that engineers will be able to listen and deal with people well.

Workforce planning

Workforce planning helps an organisation to assess its current and future staffing needs. Managers forecast how much the market for gas will grow and this helps them to decide how many engineers will be needed in the future. Demand is driven by two key sets of customers - those with service contracts and those who call for assistance with one-off problems. Demand for both these services has grown recently, so BGS has had to recruit more staff. Training is also vital to keep engineers updated on technical changes.

Recruitment

BGS recruits from a diverse variety of backgrounds to reflect its diverse customer base. In particular, it is working to recruit more women engineers and has won awards for its efforts in this area. All candidates need to show good academic qualifications and be able to demonstrate people skills. BGS uses an online application form. This includes a questionnaire to identify what candidates value about work. The results are colour-coded. A red result suggests the candidate will not have the right fit with the company. Applicants with amber and green results are invited to interview.

Selection

Selection takes place at the BGS assessment centre and has three parts:

- an interview based on the online questionnaire
- role-play of customer service situations
- a manual dexterity test.

The scores from the tests and exercises are combined to decide who is offered a position.



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Conclusion

BGS needs to recruit and select carefully to ensure it has the staff and skills it needs. In this way, BGS customers are assured that engineers have the right levels of skill and qualifications to carry out a first-class job.