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Business Involvement Needed at Every Stage of Succession Planning

Roman Dashkov, Chief Executive Officer of Sakhalin Energy LLC, spoke about the role of businesses in building a talent pool for the future development of the oil and gas industry.

– What is the role of today’s business community in building a talent pool for Russia’s fuel and energy sector?

– It is the most direct one. It encompasses the entire training system for nurturing young specialists and future professionals in the industry. Building a talent pool is an integral part of our company’s mission – we need to establish a centre of excellence grounded in years of professional expertise, drawing on both international and Russian best practices. The first step is to understand what a 'talent pool' is and what functional tasks it is expected to perform for the long-term evolution of the industry. Our focus is on the education and science system, which is directly linked to business needs for skilled labour.

It should also be noted that industrial development hinges on the intellectual improvement of human resources. This is underpinned by two key stages of knowledge acquisition – theoretical education and practical experience – followed by further refinement of skills throughout one’s professional development. Between these two stages, however, we must ensure the proper development of a professional personality that aligns with the demands of the evolving economic landscape.

Structurally, this process can be divided into the stages of school education, vocational training, and higher education. Further training is an ongoing process that needs to be emphasised and based on a scientific and applied approach. Managers and specialists should directly partake in formulating improvement proposals, conducting R&D, collaborating with research institutions and design offices, and should be given opportunities to defend their doctoral theses. Through their thesis work, managers and specialists can consolidate or summarise their scientific and practical insights into guidelines and training materials for upcoming professionals.

This is only possible if the business community is engaged at every stage of developing and shaping the talent pool, spanning from specialists to industry leaders.

– The authorities are also keen on supporting graduates. How can the state policy be implemented at the corporate level?

– The first step is to establish a corporate governance framework that outlines key activities and business processes aimed at ensuring the company’s sustainable development. Each business process should include opportunities for professional growth and career advancement based on employee performance evaluations during the reporting period. This process includes criteria and indicators for self-improvement covering both strengths and weaknesses.

A corporate governance system incorporating the business process of rewarding and incentivising employees, makes it clear to each employee how and when they should pursue development paths to become part of the company’s and industry’s talent pool. The CEO’s role is to create a unified HR policy and a training and development system based on assessments of economic realities and

the company's growth prospects. The HR manager must ensure that appropriate internal regulations are in place to implement this system targeting the creation of a robust talent pool.

– Are you collaborating with partners to find ways to develop the talent pool in the region?

– Yes, we are actively working with regional authorities. Our Company is a member of the HR Directors Club, chaired by the Governor of Sakhalin Oblast. We run their HR initiatives through our business processes to assess areas where maximum synergies can be achieved.

We are involved as a business partner in the technical development of the SakhalinTech advanced campus. Three new laboratories – for electrical engineering, chemical analysis, and materials science – will train specialists tailored to meet the economic needs of Sakhalin.

We have also expanded our collaborations with universities receptive to business partnerships. Notably, we are launching an MBA programme with the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration and Sakhalin State University to train future managers. Our shared objective is to establish a graduate school of corporate governance on the island.

Is this your initiative, or has there been a request from the state?

– While this is a regional initiative, we realise the importance of corporate executives thinking on a national scale. Each industry is independent in its professional processes, yet there are fundamental aspects common across all companies. For example, no business can function without a reliable electricity supply.

– Is it possible today to preserve professional expertise of working dynasties, and how crucial is this in today's world?

– Consider the oil and gas industry, where city-forming companies constitute a professional cluster. All the major socio-economic factors in the region have been shaped by the company's production and business activities. Indeed, such companies often employ entire labour dynasties, who, along with their family values, pass down, from one generation to the next, essential professional knowledge and career guidance in its most fundamental sense. This serves as a potent self-regulating mechanism for building the region's talent pool, but it is vital to cultivate, not suppress, the aspirations and interests of young people, preserving their motivation. The most important thing is to instil core values for the professional growth of graduates.

The principal aim of the talent pool system in the fuel and energy sector, as in any industry, is to ensure that our accumulated professional expertise is preserved and can be enhanced in accordance with the conditions of the industry's development.