

The Power of Networking: ‘Bridging’ the Gap between Student and Working Professional

Ryan Thomas Lemiski¹

¹Nexen Energy ULC, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Abstract

If I were to describe my first four years of experience working in the energy industry, I’d use one word: rollercoaster. Since graduating with a Master of Science (earth and atmospheric sciences) degree from the University of Alberta in 2010, I have already been exposed to three different roles by three separate employers! One of these moves was by choice; the others were forced upon me. It’s been quite the ride, but not a unique experience. Many young professionals are currently faced with this reality.

The purpose of this talk is to chronicle my experiences during the transition (or ‘bridge’) between university and the working world, and provide students, young professionals, and seasoned industry professionals with an appreciation of some of the challenges young people face in today’s energy industry. A discussion of my early involvement with professional organizations and the networking opportunities that occurred as a result of my volunteer activities will also be presented. In many respects, the reason I am employed in today’s competitive job market is due to the network I built through involvement in professional organizations. The importance of networking is constantly stressed on the path to a successful career. During career fairs and trade shows students are reminded to ‘build your network.’ These instructions are sometimes confusing and can leave students feeling helpless. My early career experience has taught me that networking is not a daunting task. In fact, building an international network is as simple as volunteering, extending a hand and saying ‘hello.’