

## SaskPower uses Strong Interest Inventory® tool to find new roles for employees displaced by new technology

Smart-meter technology is making some roles redundant. SaskPower need to prepare people for career shifts.

SaskPower's Advanced Metering Infrastructure project is a technology upgrade on a massive scale. The project sees half a million 'smart' meters being installed throughout Saskatchewan, replacing the familiar mechanical meters on homes and buildings.

The new meters replace another familiar sight: the door-to-door meter reader. But thanks to an innovative career management program that includes assessing career interests, the Regina-based public utility is easing a tough transition by helping meter readers find new employment opportunities.

"The project will displace 97 meter-reading employees," says Kelly Oman, change lead with the infrastructure project. "Our overall career management program runs the whole gamut of staff," she notes, "but we rolled out the program for meter readers first because we identified them as a group that would need career support immediately."

Oman is involved in providing that support, working with meter readers one-on-one to help them figure out their best option for a new career and put together a plan to get there. "They average 17 years' service time, and their average age is 47," she says.

### Business Challenges

- Helping people find new careers when new technology makes roles redundant

### Company Profile

SaskPower was established in 1929 by the provincial government and is the principal electric utility in Saskatchewan, Canada. It serves more than half a million customers and has more than 3,000 employees, making it a major employer in the region. Staff are located in 70 communities.



## Solution

To meet the challenge of helping long-standing employees see beyond the end of their current position, SaskPower's organizational development group created a training workshop that incorporates the Strong Interest Inventory® assessment. Workers take the assessment in preparation for the workshop; the facilitator then debriefs them about their results and how they relate to self-awareness. Sessions are available for groups of 10 to 12 learners. One-on-one sessions are also available.

"We chose the Strong tool because building self-awareness is part of our comprehensive approach," says Oman. "Our main goals are redeployment and retraining. But you can't put a plan together until you know where you want to go. SaskPower has about 600 job descriptions, but people in the field aren't always exposed to those roles. They don't see the full scale or scope of positions and career paths available. It has helped people to broaden their horizons and consider paths they wouldn't have considered or hadn't ever thought of."

Once participants realize how many choices they have, says Oman, they still need support from the facilitator: "There is instant interest. But the hard part, once they've done the Strong tool and seen their options, is not to get paralyzed by the choice. The next steps are to walk them through and narrow their options to what is viable and meaningful for them."

## Solution

- Use Strong instrument
- Show employees what other careers are available within SaskPower
- Provide guidance and support for transition to new roles

“ People generally don't get tired of learning about themselves. One person told us, 'I wish I had done this 20 years ago. ”

**Kelly Oman,**  
Change Lead  
Advanced Metering Infrastructure  
project SaskPower



## Results

The workshops are having an effect. Of the original 97 meter readers taking part, 80 remain. "People are starting to make their move," says Oman.

Another sign of success is that survey feedback shows that 94% of participants consider the career management workshops valuable. "People generally don't get tired of learning about themselves," says Oman. "But if you've been in the same job for a long time, it's a little scary to step out of that box. One person told us, 'I wish I had done this 20 years ago.'"

For Oman, helping people discover new career interests and find new roles within SaskPower is a reminder of what she values about her own role. "That's one thing that keeps me staying: the opportunity for multiple careers with the same company, with training and educational support. There are lots of opportunities beyond what you see every day. You may need to get more skills or move to another location, but you will have support."

## Results

- Successful redeployment of 83% of redundant roles
- 94% of workshop participants say the workshops were valuable





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