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In late November 2008 Ipsos Reid on behalf of the Petroleum Human Resources Sector Council conducted a small group survey of young adults (18-25 years old) in Toronto to gauge the perception of the Oil and Gas Industry and working in it.

The participants have very strong opinions about the oil and gas industry; a point made very clear during the gossip exercise that was used. In it, respondents had to identify how they felt someone who is 100% for the oil and gas industry would differ in appearance and opinion from someone 100% against the industry. Their findings were very revealing, as illustrated in the chart below:

<b>APPEARANCE and ATTITUDE</b>	
<b><i>PRO OIL AND GAS</i></b>	<b><i>AGAINST OIL AND GAS</i></b>
Male Physically Strong Confident Dirty Jeans and T-shirt Votes Republican Old Cowboy Heartless / Greedy	Not Clearly Defined by Gender Hippie Eats Granola Everyday Person Cares about Environment / Other People Logical Thinker

In terms of what we might call the “personality” of the industry, it is fairly clear that oil and gas is seen to be male-dominated and at least partly associated with themes of money and greed. The arguments of the above personalities for and against the oil and gas industry are listed in the table below:

<b>ARGUMENTS</b>	
<b><i>PRO OIL AND GAS</i></b>	<b><i>AGAINST OIL AND GAS</i></b>
Money Always needed / High demand Many jobs created (even indirectly) Passionate Industry Good Travel Opportunities Not 9 to 5 Short-term work commitment Working with Hands Political / Economic / Social Influence Cost of going Renewable is too high Everyone needs it	Environment – Pollutes Renewable is a good alternative Don’t like Reliance on Oil Greedy Industry – All about Power No Push to change as long as there’s oil Effects on weather / health Considers the Future Not Ethical - \$\$ not well distributed

One interesting thing to note is that the vast majority of people in both groups see working in the oil and gas industry to be more a short-term job than a life-long career. “Make your money, and get out” as a number of respondents said. Some of the key concerns with the industry circulated around the environment and the long term effects of using oil without significant consideration of switching to renewable sources of energy. Many spoke of the

future and long-term effects our use of oil has on the world as well as the societal power struggles it creates and any ethical issues associated with that. All of those that said they would support the pro oil and gas person, conveyed the job opportunities and income opportunities available as their main reason.

We asked the respondents to go on an imaginary “Guided Fantasy” through the process of looking for and landing a job in the oil and gas industry, and their experience in relocating and working in the industry. In terms of where they would begin their search, mentions included:

- Internet – Government websites, Monster, CraigsList
- Placement Agencies
- Friends in Industry / Word of Mouth
- TV Ads
- Newspaper ads

A very interesting finding when asked what types of jobs they would expect to find: Participants had almost no idea. The most common mention was general labour, with other mentions including site manager / supervisor, office work, rig hands, secondary services to the industry (ie. food services), electricians, plumbing, crane operators, and chefs. Almost no one had any clear sense of what was actually available to them within the industry. Most said that they would be moving to Northern Alberta to get these jobs, though some mentions of Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the East Coast were also noted.

The participants generally had a very bleak outlook on the workplace and work conditions. Common adjectives used to describe the workplace were:

- “In the middle of nowhere”
- “Freezing cold”
- “All men”
- “Smells bad”
- “Dark”
- “Dirty”
- “Expensive to live”
- “Drug abuse”
- “Sweaty”
- “Dangerous”

While most felt the pay would be extremely good for such jobs (\$3000 - \$5000 every 2 weeks), the perceived working conditions had nearly all thinking that a job in the industry would be a short-term placement at most. Though some said it could be a good experience, most believe the industry represented a chance to make a lot of money in a short period of time and come back home maybe 4-6 months later. Some even called moving to work in the industry a “desperation move” and is a short term “lifestyle sacrifice” to make good money. This is likely the greatest challenge to the Industry as they continue their drive to recruit people from the East to work in the oil patch. The largely negative perception of the working / living conditions makes the concept of a long-term career in the industry something very hard to grasp for this group.

Information that is important for these people to know if they were to consider a job in oil and gas includes:

- Salary Expectations (they want to see numbers).
- Work site location and expectations.
- Information on how dangerous the jobs really are.
- Honesty – Moving across the country for a job is a big deal, and they want to know what to expect.

Even at the end of these groups and having looked at all of the ads, there is a lingering feeling that the industry presents a good short-term opportunity to make a good salary, but not a long-term career option.

### ***Key takeaways***

- Jobs in the oil and gas industry are seen by participants in this category to be opportunities to make a lot of money in a very short period of time. Few if any saw long-term career potential in the industry.
- Many see the jobs as difficult and potentially dangerous, and the overall perception of the work environment was generally negative.
- Showing that the industry provides tangible (and significant) rewards to workers is key, with a strong base salary being paramount, but flexible hours and perks also being important.
- Other research Ipsos has conducted increasingly shows that the concepts of sustainability, environment, and community well-being are all increasingly important to Canadians. It will be important that material of this kind be emphasized on the website.
- Further, some of our recent online work is showing that communication via social networks and online communities is fast becoming a primary method of communication among young adults. Passive communication such as traditional advertising and email is being strongly challenged by more targeted and personalized campaigns on sites such as FaceBook.

From the Thursday Files

*A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.*

**- William James**