

Your Career in **NUCLEAR**

*The Right Recruiter
Can Help*





As most nuclear professionals are aware, major changes are taking place in the industry with the potential to affect many. Not only has there been pressure on budgets and staffing, plant closures are now an unpleasant reality, too. Two experienced nuclear power veterans, Keith Gilbert of Gilbert Consulting Services, and Paul Kluskowski of TR Financial Management, explore some of the challenges and opportunities presented by these changing times.

Paul: Keith, you and I have had a business relationship through TR Financial Management Group for over a year now. In that time, we have had some interesting discussions regarding the nuclear power industry's employment situation. I appreciate your willingness to capture and share some of these as nuclear power workers are facing some special and unique circumstances these days.



Keith: Yes, there are really two major themes at work in the nuclear power industry and both will persist for some time to come:

- 1** Industry experts estimate that approximately 40% of the nuclear work force will have reached retirement age by about 2016-2018.
- 2** The low cost of natural gas along with tax incentives for renewable electric supplies are holding down the price of electricity. This makes for challenging financial times in nuclear (especially for unregulated markets), contributing to the plant closures we are seeing.

The bottom line for industry workers is that there will be some challenges, opportunities and no shortage of change.

Paul: If a person finds himself/herself at a site that announces an impending closure, or just wants to make a change for other reasons, then what steps should be taken to make for a smooth transition?

Keith: As with any major life event, try to view it as a challenge rather than a threat. This helps put you in control of your future. (Paul's note: For more on this strategy, refer to the book "Super Better" by Jane McGonigal. Outstanding resource!)

Next, consider your timeline and goals. This will be different for everyone and greatly influenced by the worker's age. For younger workers with a long time horizon, it probably makes sense to cut your losses early and move on before the tidal wave of departures begins in earnest. With more experienced workers, consider the timeline to a successful retirement. If a person is 10 years or more from retirement, then a permanent position at a different site should be explored. If a person is within 2-5 years of retirement, then consider either contract opportunities, or sit tight where you are. Oftentimes, high value workers will be offered retention bonuses in these situations.

Paul: Should someone be offered a retention bonus, what are some considerations before accepting?



Keith: Ask yourself: What am I giving up by accepting the bonus? A retention bonus is essentially payment for holding a dead-end job for a specified period of time. Consider the missed opportunity cost for the time period. Workers in this position may be less marketable after the retention period for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is a flood of candidates hitting the market.

Paul: *Any other considerations for people making a significant employment change?*



Keith: There are many unrecognized pros and cons to any major career change. Permanent positions involving relocation can be quite stressful in the short-term and come with time commitments. International work can be appealing from a salary perspective but family may not be able to live nearby. Contract work is also appealing from a wage standpoint but travel demands and uncertainty around the next contract can be unsettling. All of these factors need to be weighed along with spousal and family considerations. And of course this may be set against a backdrop of an impending layoff schedule. There is no “perfect” opportunity, so you have to evaluate and know your priorities.

Paul: *So, who can people turn to for some informed advice regarding these important issues?*

Keith: Certainly an experienced recruiter can help manage expectations regarding an employment change. Not only will the recruiter have real insights into hidden opportunities and compensation packages, but also there are post-placement discussions regarding intangible factors. All of this can help remove some of the uncertainties and facilitate more informed decision-making.

Paul: *How does a person find the “right” recruiter and start a dialog?*

Keith: Look for someone with at least 5-10 years’ experience in your target industry, and favor this over your job description. In other words, an engineer in the nuclear industry should look for a recruiter who does a variety of placements in the nuclear industry rather than a recruiter who places engineers in a variety of industries. A deep, industry-specific network of contacts really pays off.

Next, be aware that some recruiters work in search firms and others in placement firms. Search firms are contracted with fees paid by employers to find the right candidate for a particular position. This type of placement is “free” for the candidate and oftentimes can be a life-changing experience. The downside is that you may not necessarily land a new job. Placement firms, on the other hand, are more committed to finding a new position for a specific candidate. However, the individual will be paying for this service and it can be thousands of dollars depending on the level of service.

Lastly, some firms focus on permanent placements, some on contract work and some on both. Know what you want and inquire early in the discussions.



Once you have identified one or two promising recruiters, send a copy of your two-page resume (professionally prepared, of course!) to those people and initiate contact. Nearly every recruiter is willing to have a preliminary discussion.

Paul: *When a person finds a recruiter that seems to be a good fit, what are some of the "rules of engagement?"*

Keith: We have some ideas that we share with everyone we work with. They include:

Be honest. Don't exaggerate your compensation, titles, accomplishments.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not share details of a proposed position with others. This can create any number of problems.

Be ethical. Don't use a recruiter to find a counteroffer for yourself.

Cooperate. There is a great deal of information required along with personal references, etc. Meet your commitments in a timely manner.

Communicate. Things can move quickly in the placement process. Return all voicemails and emails. Above all, do not disappear when the moment of decision arrives. You can always say no, but don't go silent.

Protect your reputation. Everyone wants to be treated with respect. If a placement doesn't work out, understand that the next one might. Stay on good terms with everyone you encounter. Remember, it is a small industry.

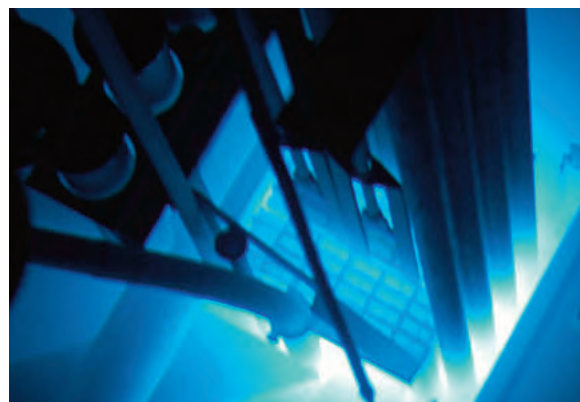
Paul: *What are some online resources that might help people in their career change endeavors?*

Keith: Here are a few that may be of interest to people (not an endorsement, just suggestions!):

1. www.best10resumewriters.com provides a list of independently rated resume writers.
2. www.Linkedin.com is a good way to connect with corporate hiring personnel.
3. www.jobhuntersbible.com is the companion website to the long-running, career advice book, *"What Color Is Your Parachute?"*
4. www.NukeWorker.com has many nuclear and utility job listings for review.
5. In addition, www.gcservices.com has a jobs board and much more content sure to be of interest!

Paul: *Thanks for your insights, Keith. How can people contact you if they have questions?*

Keith: I can be reached at **805-481-5105**, or keith@gcservices.com





Meet the Authors



Keith Gilbert is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a BS in Electrical Engineering (B.S.E.E. 1981), and he also held a Senior Nuclear Reactor Operators License (SRO) that permitted him to operate a commercial nuclear reactor.

After spending a decade in the nuclear industry in positions such as Nuclear Control Room Foreman, Technical Advisor, Operations Coordinator, and Senior Nuclear Training Instructor. Mr. Gilbert became a self employed consultant to the nuclear electric utility industry. As a consultant, Mr. Gilbert provided Engineering, Operations, Training, and Personnel Assessment services. He now focuses his attention on finding the right candidates to fill key positions in the nuclear power field as well as high-skill manufacturing industries.



Paul Kluskowski is a 25-year veteran of nuclear power plant operations. Earning his license at 22 years old, he is among the youngest ever to hold a NRC Reactor Operators license. He went on to upgrade to Senior Reactor Operator three

years later and held a license for 8 years in total. He has a BA in Physics and Math and graduated cum laude from Andrews University.

Mr. Kluskowski held a number of increasingly responsible positions including Reactor Engineering Supervisor, Operations Support Supervisor, and Work Control Center Manager. He now spends his time and energy serving members of the nuclear power community as an independent investment manager.

