

Positive outlook for chemicals management and control jobs market

With national substance notification and hazard communication regulations being implemented around the world and work beginning on the final and likely most onerous REACH deadline in 2018, plus several sector specific regulations requiring special expertise, it is not surprising that demand for people with skills and experience dealing with chemicals management and control issues remains fairly healthy.

In fact, 2013 was the best year in terms of sales for European firm Nonstop Recruitment, according to Abid Kanji, country manager and specialist recruiter for toxicology, ecotoxicology, and regulatory affairs. The assessment of John Sherratt, business manager with placement firm VRS Regulatory, is that in the UK and Europe, overall demand for regulatory personnel continues to outstrip supply. "The upcoming deadlines for REACH and CLP and the BPR, plus Chemical service providers the overall growth in the chemicals sectors, are having a very positive impact on the



job market for chemicals management and control personnel," he says. In 2013, environmental fate specialists and ecotoxicologists were once again in greatest demand, as was the case in 2012, some of which Mr Kanji attributes to demand for external testing and some to the movement of individuals. The situation was not so bright, however, for people with REACH experience who were looking to change positions following the May 2013 deadline. That should change in 2014, though, as Mr Kanji agrees that more REACH and CLP activity will lead to the creation of new positions in these areas. There should also be steady demand for toxicologists and agrochemical compliance specialists, but he does not expect to see an increase in demand for regulatory personnel in the cosmetics sector. In addition, he notes that much of the job growth will take place in the UK and Belgium, with little happening in Germany due to the slowdown of the economy there.

In the US, the chemical sector is beginning to recover after several very quiet years, and many companies are switching from a focus on cost control to one of investment, and as a result there is a pent up demand for all types of employees, according to Patrick Ropella, chairman and CEO of executive search and consulting firm Ropella. "We expect that growth will take off in the coming years, and companies will be in need of people

with expertise in all areas of business operations, from business development to regulatory to logistics," he says. Specific industry sectors that are seeing higher than average growth in the US include oil and gas, largely due to hydraulic fracturing, biobased chemicals production and agrochemicals, particularly those that are more active and can help increase yields in harsher climates. The chemical industry and many allied sectors have a challenging time ahead, though, according to Mr Ropella. A large portion of the current workforce, he says, is from the baby boomer generation, and many of these people will be retiring within a few years of one another and taking much of the industry's knowledge with them. At the same time, fewer young people are choosing to enter the fields of importance to the chemical and manufacturing sectors, so there will be a smaller pool of new recruits to fill those positions.

For the present, however, Mr Ropella does not see the impending shortage affecting salaries, which are rising only slowly, except in cases where people with a particular skill set are in high demand, such as in the textile industry, which is bringing manufacturing back to the US in order to leverage new technologies developed in North America that innovators are unwilling to take to Asia due to concerns over threats to IP protection. "With respect to regulatory personnel, demand is currently tracking with the growth of the economy, and we expect that trend to continue," he adds. In the lubricants industry, the number of companies seeking to fill chemicals management and control positions has increased in recent years, says Natalie Tidbury, senior recruitment consultant for lubricants and additives with Oil Recruitment. Most of the positions, she says, are for toxicologists, and companies can have trouble filling them because the salaries are not what skilled candidates are looking for. She does see some companies responding by looking for people with REACH and related



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experience, even for general positions. Staffing and job satisfaction trends For the second year in a row, Chemical Watch asked survey respondents working within industry and as service providers to share information about their salaries and career prospects. Below we summarise the results from the latest survey, and where it makes sense, compare them with those obtained for the 2012 survey. First, we wanted to know if the size of regulatory teams changed last year, and what is expected for the next 12 months. The numbers were very similar in both cases, with close to 55% of respondents indicating that no change occurred and no change is expected (Figure 3). It should be noted, though, that fewer survey respondents expect staffing levels to decrease over the next 12 months than actually did in the previous 12 months, which is in agreement with the predictions for growth in demand for regulatory experts to meet the requirements of REACH, CLP and other laws. DHI, according to Dr Tørsløv, intends to increase its staff in 2014, and is just one of many service providers that plan to do so. Separately, it is interesting to note the experience of the Shepherd Color Company, a manufacturer of pigments. In 2013, in response to the high level of customer inquiries that the company was receiving about regulatory issues, Shepherd created a full-time position with the responsibility of managing these information requests, says marketing manager Mark Ryan.

There are some companies facing budget issues, however, according to NCEC's Mr Haggarty. "An annual survey of our customer base revealed some uncertainty about future prospects, with more than half of respondents facing noteworthy budget constraints and one in seven either going through or expecting an imminent reorganisation of their department," he says. Importantly, though, despite this uncertainty, his customers remain upbeat about the areas in which they work, with nearly three quarters continuing to feel positive about the impact of chemical regulations. With respect to career progression, survey respondents also saw greater opportunities across the wider jobs market than they did within their own companies, with 63% seeing good prospects in the overall market and just 35% feeling positive about their chances of moving to a better

position if they stay with their current employer. Notably, nearly a quarter of survey participants feel that their opportunities for advancement are actually poor if they don't move elsewhere. "In 2014 and coming years," says Dr Staab of REACH ChemAdvice GmbH, there will be an increasing demand for professionals in regulatory areas related to REACH and CLP. Their jobs will be secure and there will be opportunities for career development." This sentiment is reflected in the results of the Chemical Watch survey. Nearly 41% of respondents believe that job prospects are good within their country, while only 10% see them as being poor. The numbers are even more positive when survey participants consider global opportunities; 57% see global job prospects as being good, while just 4.7% gave a negative view. Notably, these results are similar to those obtained in 2012 (43%/10% and 59%/4% of survey respondents thought their job prospects were good/bad in their country and globally, respectively).

The outlook of Acta's Ms Bergeson supports these results. "Chemical management professionals are very much in demand if they are good, creative, and efficient," she says. "The demand is great for chemical product stewards that are proficient technically and versed in global chemical product regulation, particularly in the EU, Asia, and South American geographic areas. This need will not decline in 2014, and professionals that keep abreast of developments, both regulatory and science policy related, will experience job security and job satisfaction given the tremendous interest these regulatory programmes are inviting." WIL Research's Mrs Boivin also expects that people working in chemical management should have job security for the upcoming years. "With the increasing complexity in the field of regulatory compliance (not just in chemicals, but also in agrochemicals, biocides, etc.), companies adhere to their specialists in this field, and job changes at the level of senior regulatory affairs managers are limited.

The Chemical Watch survey results support this belief. Both when considering their own roles and all roles, 67% of survey participants felt as secure in

their jobs in 2013 as they did the previous year. With respect to job satisfaction, 60% of survey respondents said they were satisfied with their work, with 27% taking a neutral position and just slightly under 13% indicating that they were unhappy with their positions. These numbers should not be surprising, according to Bibra's Mr Copestake. "The demand in recent years for good quality but pragmatic advice has meant that our own company has been able to incrementally expand, but the challenge has been to successfully manage and train staff to a level that satisfies and builds on the integrity and reputation of the consultancy. However, working with a diverse range of clients, operating in various sectors, and dealing with the many faceted challenges of chemical control legislation and risk assessment, there is no concern about loss of significant job satisfaction," he says.

Salary trends

The results of the Chemical Watch salary survey include the responses of people in a wide range of positions. We are grateful that they were willing to share this information, which has again enabled us to provide useful data on salaries, pay rises, and bonus levels in the global chemicals management and control community.

Of the survey participants, 32% were specialists/technicians, 29% were project/team managers, 24% were senior managers, and 11% were directors/associate partners. Juniors/trainees government officers each accounted for 4% of the respondents. The average salary is broken out by job title in Figure 8. The range of average salaries was surprisingly small, covering €38,700 to €46,000, with regulators and scientists earning the least, and regulatory affairs managers and consultants earning the most. There is, however, more variation in average salaries when considering the type of organisation. Survey respondents working in "other manufacturing" earned the highest average salary (€45,800), followed closely by participants with positions in the chemical and allied industries (€45,600) and with service providers (€44,000). People working for consumer product companies and trade associations earned the lowest

average salaries (€38,600 and €39,800, respectively), other than those who placed themselves in the “other” category (€38,500). There was not much difference in average salaries when considering company size, although they did trend higher in larger companies. Participants at companies with over 250 employees earned an average of €44,700, while those at medium-sized organisations with 50-250 employees earned an average of €42,700, and those at firms with less than 50 employees earned an average of €41,600.

Interestingly, company location has a significant impact on earning potential based on the results of the Chemical Watch survey. Those respondents lucky enough to work in Europe received the highest average salaries by far, earning an average of €51,300. Professionals in North America, meanwhile, earned on average only slightly better than two thirds as much as their European counterparts (€34,500), which was barely above the average annual salary of €33,000 in the rest of the world, not including Europe, and way below the overall average.