

THE SNC GROUP

Pay: COMPETITIVE	Atmosphere: EXCELLENT
Benefits: GOOD	Job Satisfaction: EXCELLENT
Promotion: VERY GOOD	Communications: EXCELLENT
Job Security: POOR	Personal Development: EXCELLENT

❖ ❖ *The core business of Montreal-based SNC is engineering and construction in a worldwide market, but the organization has diversified into manufacturing (ammunition and solar energy), mining, power production and printing. The overall group, with about 4,000 employees, had revenues of more than \$206 million in 1984 (82% from core activities). Net income: \$7.4 million*

AN EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE SURVEY IN 1985 GAVE SNC MANAGEMENT a reading of the organization's spirit even before the results had been tallied. A high 82% of the staff showed the interest to respond by filling out a 119-question form.

One of those questions was: Is doing a quality job important to you? The average response on a scale of one-to-five (from "not important at all" to "the most important thing in the world") was a remarkable 4.6.

How important is a stimulating job to you? The average answer was 4.7. How important is the future of SNC to you? Score: 4.4. How willing are you to do your utmost for the company? Score 4.5. How much do you like your job at SNC? Score: 4.0. How much do you like the company and respect it? Score: 4.0.

It would be misleading to attribute all of that enthusiasm and dedication to the fact that SNC is a totally employee-owned company, because only 11% of all the employees are shareholders. In other words, SNC has a lot more going for it than its unusual ownership arrangement.

For one thing, there's the opportunity for learning and self-development. SNC runs in-house courses in fields ranging from intermediate management (for selected employees) and safety to computers and computer-aided design. Since employees work in both French and English, the company also offers (for a \$100 fee,

80% reimbursable) courses to improve skills, in both languages.

Engineers at SNC can move quickly into management. In addition to formal training for them, the company has an on-the-job development policy. "We have to put them in situations where they can learn about management," explains Jacques Daoust, vice-president, personnel.

For example, SNC will place a promising 34-year-old engineer in charge of a relatively small, \$2-million project and let him grow from there. "After 15-20 years," Daoust says, "you have people who can manage \$500-million, \$1-billion, \$1¹/₂-billion projects. And they're giants because not many in the world can run projects like that."

At SNC, personal development isn't confined to engineers either. For instance, a female manager during her seven years with the company has been able to change fields almost regularly, taking on more responsibility with each move.

"I knew nothing about micrographics. Now I know," she says. "I knew nothing about computers. Now I know. I'm branching off into office automation. That's why I'm so happy to come to work every morning and stay [on in the evening] if necessary."

While the company (like all project-oriented organizations) can hold out no ultimate job security, project work does offer an enormous variety to the employees. The spice of variety includes geographical change, because SNC operates worldwide.

The company not only attracts individualists, but it encourages them to remain so, employees say. One financial man in international marketing, who has spent two of his six SNC years overseas, has been given the opportunity to choose his own assignments.

"That's something of course that not many industries or companies can offer - the possibility of broadening your horizons, of making both horizontal and vertical moves throughout the organization," he says.

A male engineer in the mining and metallurgical group likes "the adventurous spirit at SNC." When outside mining projects dried up, SNC decided to start up a mining company of its own, "which has brought work into the division and a whole new area of excitement."

Employees describe a very informal organization with open communication in every direction. "We're a company that's considerate," one woman says. And that applies even to the way

layoffs are handled.

In short, SNC is a pleasant, stimulating, multidisciplinary and multicultural place for bright people to work, whether professionals or support staff. The staff is young (half of the people are between 35 and 45) and well educated (the average employee has 15-16 years of formal schooling).

Before joining SNC, a female secretary used to try to move on to a new company every two or three years just to alleviate the boredom. "I've been here at SNC for 15 years, and every day is as if I've just joined," she says.

And then there's the possibility of becoming a shareholder, no matter what your field and level, if you're recommended by your bosses and chosen by a review board. The board judges by your merit and commitment, and allocates the number of shares (up to a maximum of 2 1/2% of the total) by your past and potential contribution to SNC's profitability.

Employees purchase the untraded shares at book value (\$5.51 a share in 1984, up considerably from \$1.97 in 1975). If needed, the company will not only arrange loans, but also help out with 60% of the interest costs. Dividends are used to repay the principal.

As with all good things, you can't take it with you. Employees must sell their holdings back to the company in stages - a third at age 55, another third at age 60 and the final third at age 65 retirement.

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