

USEC NEWS CLIP SERVICE

United States Enrichment Corporation - Corporate Communications

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Enrichment
executive
optimistic

Special Edition

BY BRUCE SANDERSON

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CULTURE CHANGE

USEC brings new style to diffusion plant

BY BRUCE GARDNER
SUN BUSINESS EDITOR

About a year ago, Steve Polston, manager of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, began holding "town meetings" with employees. He would go from building to building, meeting with employees and hearing their ideas for improvements.

At one of his first meetings, he heard a good example of why such gatherings were necessary.

"A worker presented an idea I thought was a good one," Polston said. "I was impressed he had it typed up, with sketches. He said he had made the suggestion two to three years ago, but nothing happened."

This time, the employee's suggestion was adopted quickly, a visible example that things have certainly changed at the huge plant in the 18 months since the U.S. Enrichment Corp. took over the nation's uranium enrichment enterprise from the Department of Energy. The town meetings are just one of a host of changes USEC and Martin Marietta Utility Services, the plant's operating contractor, have made since slipping out from under tight federal regulations. Production costs and payroll are dropping as a result.

Paperwork has been slashed, the bureaucratic maze has been straightened out and tedious reports that once gathered dust in filing cabinets are endangered species. And, most important, good ideas no longer get lost in the labyrinth.

"There is tremendous potential — and always has been — in the people who work in the enrichment enterprise," said Richard Kingdon, vice president of mar-

keting for USEC. "What USEC has the opportunity to do is to release the constraints, which I think were more psychological than real. ... People are coming up with quite startling suggestions."

"When customers visit the production facilities, they can tell the difference — by the appearance of the facility, by the enthusiasm of the people. ... The key for management is uncorking the bottle and getting the skills and ideas of the people focused in the right direction."

Polston said that although the efficiency of the operation has increased markedly since July 1993, he is no "critic of DOE. They did their mission well. Their mission was national security, weapons ... and they did it well, and they did it safely. When we became a commercial business, we started having problems because commercial enterprises are not DOE's strength.

"DOE has a lot of different programs they oversee, so they have a very general set of rules that do not fit specifically to the gaseous diffusion plants."

The change is enormous from an environment where federal rules not only told people what to do, how to do it and when to do it, but told the enterprise's competitors what its prices for nuclear fuel were to a corporate setup.