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## Energy Auditor Performance : Do we need to check it ?

Before we attempt to discuss the topic, it will be worthwhile to find out the existing scenario in the country about the professional called "Energy Auditor". Let us start with the knowing what type of people are engaged in this profession.

### **1.0 Profile of an Energy Consultant or Auditor:**

Not many in our country really understand about the creature called 'Energy Auditor'. They are normally supposed to advise (sometimes unsolicited) the users of energy on how to use it more efficiently and suggest ways for energy conservation but often they end up just doing "Energy Conversation". Actually, this breed is not very old, hardly about 25 years old. Every year new consultants are born, thanks to the engineering colleges and universities offering courses on energy management where they are 'trained' to manage energy efficiently. But except for those lucky ones who manage to get job in govt agencies, not many survive. This scenario might perhaps change for the better with proper enforcement of the provisions of the EC Act, 2001.

There are various types of Energy Auditors or Consultants in our country.

#### *"Sarkari Energy Consultant" (belonging to Govt supported Organizations)*

This type of breed of energy consultants were born some times in middle of 1970s after the first oil price hike which came as a shock to the whole world. (The oil price hike not the birth of "sarkari" energy consultant ! )They all work for government agencies and have all the resources in their hands but least time to actually make an impact. Mostly, they are kept busy in organizing seminars, workshops, radio and TV programmes, training programmes etc.

Every year ritualistically they organise programmes on energy conservation day, oil conservation week, Oil & Gas Conservation Fortnight international Sun day and many such occasions. Their other jobs include planning for energy conservation awards, solar cooking competitions, save energy campaigns and women rallies. With the enactment of "The Energy Conservation Act-2001" the strength of Sarkari energy consultants is expected to grow. They have the maximum life span because of financial security and govt support.

#### *"NGO Energy Consultant"*

There are some Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), exclusively working for promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy devices. While a few are funded by some of the top industrial houses and international organisations, most of the NGOs are actually proprietorship firms controlled by a single person. Energy Consultants working with NGOs are very enthusiastic in the beginning when the concept is new to them. Soon their enthusiasm vanishes when they realise that it is not their cup of tea nor there is much money to be made.

The insecurity of the job totally makes them disinterested in the job. Some of them are thrown out (or situations are created for them to resign) not for their non-performance but because of their potential threat to the authority of power centers in the organization. Their average life span varies from 6 months to about 5 years, although there are energy consultants who are working with some reputed NGOs for more than 15 years due to their proximity to the bosses controlling the whole show.

#### *"ESCO Energy Consultant "*

The Energy Consultants working in Energy Services Companies (ESCOs) or Large Consultancy Organisations are put in this category. Most of these these companies are actually front organisations of some industrial houses manufacturing energy efficient equipment. Obviously, their role is to push these energy efficient products manufactured by their promoters. Till recently, there were not many such organisations in India. Recently, some ESCOs have been recognised by BEE and IREDA and not finding much response in the private sector, they have started working on govt buildings under shared saving contracts. The energy consultants working with these organizations are actually more interested in increasing business volumes rather than real energy savings.

#### *"Individual Energy Consultants"*

There are two categories of individual energy consultants. The first category belongs to those individuals who over estimate their capabilities and earning potential in this profession and soon after the reality dawns to them, they close their shop. These energy consultants last for about 6 months to 1 year.

The other category belongs to proprietorship consultancy firms, with two- three enthusiastic engineers who have some expertise in their own field and are really committed to the cause. Although technically strongest in their breed, they lack necessary instruments and other facilities due to pertinent shortage of funds. They are very optimistic (or fool hardy) in their attitude and feel that one day will come when their role will be appreciated by the society and they will get due recognition. A sense of duty and commitment towards the cause keeps them ON till either the lady luck smiles on them or they have sold out all their assets and no one is willing to provide further loan to them. Their life expectancy depends on their luck or how much property they have to sell in order to survive.

## **2.0 The need to check energy auditors performance**

Once we have understood the background of the people behind this profession, it will be easier to discuss the issue of checking their performance. In my opinion, it is the most appropriate time to ask this question and it will be better if Bureau of Energy Efficiency takes serious note of the points which will be brought out by the writers on this topic. The BEE is already having the mandate under "The Energy Conservation Act, 2001" to not only specify the qualifications and experience of energy auditors but also to keep a check on the quality of the work to be carried out by the accredited energy auditors. Thus there is certainly a need to monitor the quality of work being carried out by energy auditors. But practically what type of quality control system should be in place and how it shall be implemented remains to be answered.

Before attempting to answer the questions raised in the issue, I would like to register my protest about the statement that "The Energy audits should be outlawed". This statement projects all the energy auditors in bad taste. I think the person who has made this statement is not aware about the ground realities under which the energy auditors and consultants have to function, specially under Indian conditions, where so many barriers are still present even after 2 years of existence of BEE.

I would also like to also differ with the opinion that good energy audits can not be done for lower amounts. It is a myth that only those who have sophisticated instruments can carry out meaningful energy audits. Instruments are certainly necessary for accurate measurement of energy consumption but with a good knowledge of equipment and system design, a technically sound engineer can often manage with the existing instrumentation and metering system. Further, many a times, the measurements taken are found wrong due to the malfunctioning of instruments or due to human error involved. Here it will not be out of place to mention that PCRA (Petroleum Conservation Research Association) is one of the organization responsible for low rates of Energy Audit charges. PCRA is a cash rich organisation funded by oil companies and they are happy even if they get Rs. 5,000 for conducting the energy audit since it is extra revenue for them. Similarly, some ESCOs are carrying out energy audits for low amounts because it becomes a starting point for them to get bigger business of shared savings contract etc.

### **3.0 The suggested quality control mechanism for energy auditors performance**

Based on my field experience of last 13 years, I would like to suggest the following steps for introducing quality control mechanism for energy auditors performance :

#### **3.1 Classification of the Energy Auditors**

It should be recognized here that all the energy consumers actually don't need and also can't afford the services of highly qualified accredited energy auditors. Hence it will be prudent to have a classification of energy auditors based on the needs of energy consumers. They can be broadly classified as :

- BEE Accredited EA or Accredited Energy Auditor (AEA)
- Non-BEE Accredited EA or Certified Energy Auditors (CEA)

For both the categories, the passing of certification examination must be compulsory. However, suitable provision for weightage /Marks shall be given for minimum nos. of years of working experience in maintenance/ operation/design/ selection of equipment and processes. The second category will help those certified energy auditors who are neither able to start their own accredited energy audit firm nor they are interested to join one as an employee .

#### **3.2 Allocation of energy consumers**

All the designated consumers under the purview of EC Act, 2001 may be allocated for BEE Accredited Energy Auditor firms and other consumers who don't fall under the purview of the EC Act may be given separate license to work as certified energy auditors/consultants. They may also be utilized by BEE for creating awareness/ school education, conducting baseline studies, situation analysis etc.

#### **3.3 Study of quality control mechanism adopted by other similar bodies**

A detailed study may be carried out to find out how similar professional organizations like Institute of Chartered Accountants are ensuring the quality of work. Professional ethics required to be adhered to by their registered practitioners can also be studied and similar charter can be introduced for both the categories. The complaints against the particular energy auditor may be heard by Appellate Tribunal for energy conservation to be set up under the EC Act.

#### **3.4 Ensuring Transparency**

All the Accredited Energy Auditors and Certified Energy Auditors shall be required to submit a copy of their energy audit report to BEE. Other consultants shall be allowed to refer these reports. This ensures that the report is original and also helps the client to get more views on the savings /

technical aspects. The further benefit will be for the suppliers of energy saving devices who after reading the recommendations will be able to give better proposals.

### **3.5 Submission of Satisfaction Letter from clients**

All the Accredited Energy Auditors and Certified Energy Auditors shall be required to submit a satisfaction letter from their clients. These satisfaction letters shall be cross checked to ensure their genuineness. This measure alone will ensure good quality work by the energy auditors.

### **3.6 Presentation of the studies**

All the Accredited Energy Auditors and Certified Energy Auditors shall be required to give a presentation of the work carried out by them in front of a committee formed by BEE. This exercise may be done once in a year before the renewal of license is due.

I think the above steps will certainly go a long way to ensure that the energy auditor does a quality work since any relaxation on his part will not be in his own interest.