



Six Things You Must Know to Land a Professional Job in the Green Economy

By Carol McClelland, PhD

Overwhelmed with your quest for a green job? Not sure where to start? You are not alone. Based on the questions we hear on a daily basis, we know it's hard to figure out where to put your energy and attention when you are searching for a green career. Given that you may have made a New Year's goal to land your green career this year, we thought it would be a good opportunity to take a look at the overall process. Although we've written about a number of these topics in the past (and you'll find the links to those previous articles below), we haven't given an overview of the process in a while.

1. Nail Down Your Green Niche

The green economy is evolving and shifting at the moment. The incoming administration will likely make decisions that will shift (and hopefully enhance) the green economy in a number of ways. It's nearly impossible for one person to keep track of all the changes that are taking place. Scanning the entire universe of green careers on an ongoing basis is a good recipe for overwhelm and frustration. Instead the key to success is to identify your green niche so that you can focus your job search, gain traction, and land a position. If you'd like to learn more about the process of finding your niche and how your niche will speed up your job search, read the linked articles.

2. Immerse Yourself in Your Target

Green Industry When you've identified your top few niches, it's time to immerse yourself in one or two industries/professions/fields to learn all you can about them. Before you can identify the job title that will suit you and your skills best, you need to understand the industry/profession/field first.

- What problems is the industry facing?
- What opportunities does the industry have?
- What is the industry missing to be able to solve problems and capitalize on opportunities?
- What unique terminology is used within the industry?
- Who are the key players in the industry?

When you speak with members of your network, ask questions to gain insights about these questions.

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3. Consider Who Will Hire You and Why

Remember that the reason you will get hired has little to do with your skills, experience or network. The reason you will get hired - regardless of your industry, profession, or job title - is that you meet the following four conditions:

1. You are talking to a decision-maker
2. The decision-maker has a problem
3. The decision-maker believes you can solve the problem
4. You cost less than the problem costs

How will having this information change the way you think about your job search?

4. Hone in on YOUR Competitive Advantage

Your competitive advantage is the reason an employer hires you, and not someone else. When you realize that the decision maker who will hire you is looking for answers to his/her problems, you can begin looking at the solutions you are qualified to provide based on your training, education, and experience. How will you help the business?

- Make money?
- Save money?
- Become more efficient?

When you can answer that question with a clear, concise answer, you will be a step ahead of most job seekers who are scanning job boards and hoping for a job.

5. Engage in Your Local Green Community

One of the most important steps to finding local green jobs is to connect with the local green community.

- Remember to keep your passion in mind as you look for opportunities to get involved.
- Volunteer
- Meet in person - Green drinks, EcoTuesday, classes
- Connect with people virtually - Facebook, LinkedIn, NetImpact, JustMeans
- Talk to individuals who can help you understand your target profession/industry/field.

6. State Your Job Search Goals with Clarity, Confidence, and Conviction

From an employer's or colleague's point of view, one of the best indicators of your readiness to be hired is how you talk about your employment goals.

- Are you able to state your employment goals clearly and concisely in one or two sentences?
- Do you state your employment goals with confidence and enthusiasm?
- Does your sense of conviction and passion come through as you talk about your employment goals?

If you are confused about your goals, be strategic about the questions you ask your network.

- If you say something like "I'm interested in green building, what can I do in that field based on my skills?" it will be clear to your network that you have not done your homework.
- If you ramble for 20 minutes about your skills and interests, you will confuse your network.

In the early stages of your quest for information, begin each conversation with a short concise statement about what you know about your future direction. Take the time to create a list of questions you want to ask your contacts that will help you discover your next step. Avoid asking questions that can be answered through a quick search on the internet, which again demonstrates you haven't done your homework. Taking these steps in order will help you build a strong, sustainable foundation for your future green career. Think of it as a journey that will have its ups and downs as you strive to reach your goal destination. The green economy is going to evolve in ways we can't predict in this moment. Join the journey for the long haul. If you need a job now, I recommend you focus on an interim position that taps the skills you've used in previous jobs. If possible, choose an interim job that helps you take one step closer to your green career goal. Then when your target green industry is ready to pop, you'll be ready to act on the opportunity.

Green Career Expert, Carol McClelland, PhD, is the author of *Green Careers For Dummies* and Founder and Executive Director of **Green Career Central**, an online resource center with easy-to-use tools, coaching programs, and training events to help professionals, students, and career counselors make sense of the green economy. Download our current free report to help you navigate the green economy at www.greencareercentral.com

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