



Six Ways to Move Your Green Career Forward While Keeping Your Current Job

By Carol McClelland, PhD

Does the current state of the economy have you rethinking your goal to transition into a green career?

It's true that now may not be the best time to quit your current job, but that doesn't mean you have to abandon your green career goal.

In fact, there may be a bit of a silver lining to this unexpected pause in implementing your plans.

Six Ways to Move Your Green Career Forward

While you have a little extra time before you make your move into a green career, use your time wisely to enhance your knowledge and your position for when the economy picks up again.

1. **Read what you can about the green economy in general and your target green industry/profession.** If you have the time, pick up a book. If you don't have much time, focus on reading online sources such as blogs or newsletters. If you find a source of information that is specific to your target green industry/profession, begin reading it on a regular basis.
2. **Build your network of green contacts.** Reach out to your immediate friends. Ask them if they know anyone who is interested in green/sustainable/socially responsible issues. When you discover a new contact, ask for an email introduction and then follow up to connect with the new contact. Ask if they'd like to meet or set up a phone appointment. At this point you aren't asking for a job, your main focus is to learn more about what they do and how they work.

You can also share where you are in your quest for a green career. State your status with as much clarity as you can. Don't burden them with your confusion. It's not their job to resolve your confusion and if you focus too much on your confusion it may leave them with a less than positive impression of you. If you are unclear about your direction, that's fine. Frame it that you are exploring your options within this industry

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and that industry. If you have a specific question you can ask to gain more understanding of one of your target industries, be sure to ask it.

3. **Learn a new skill.** With extra time on your hands, this is a perfect time to take a course. Check the course catalog at your local community college. Explore the offerings of your industry/profession association. Do an online search to discover what online learning opportunities are available to you. Look for specialized training in your field. Investing this time and energy shows future employers that you are willing to commit your own time to furthering your career.
4. **Get involved in your city/region.** One of the most productive things you can do is to find a way to get involved with an organization in your local area. You might explore whether there's a community organization focusing on green issues in your city. (If there's not, consider stepping up and pulling one together!) Or, look at the non-profits in your area to determine whether any of them share your values and goals. Volunteer at first. If you like it, then look for ways you can take on more responsibility. This action gives you several benefits: you gain accomplishments and affiliations you can add to your resume, you meet people in your region who are committed to making a difference, you learn new knowledge and skills that you will use again in your career, and you can test the waters to evaluate how well this topic, work setting, or goal fits your interests and needs.
5. **Get involved in your current company.** If you are working in a company that is open to greening its business practices, you may have a built in opportunity to gain valuable experience and accomplishments you can add to your resume. If you can, choose a project that is aligned with your target interests. Make an effort to participate as much as possible. Take on a leadership role if feasible. I've heard of more than one person who has been able to step into a green position in their company because they became known in the company as someone who was committed to green initiatives. It doesn't hurt that you'll meet others within your company who share your values.
6. **Find a part-time internship, even if it is unpaid.** If you are fairly close to identifying your target green career, you may want to find a way to test drive your idea. One option you might consider is finding an established internship or negotiating to create an internship where you can begin gaining the skills, experience and contacts that will help you in your transition into your ultimate green career. If possible, negotiate an internship where you can keep your full-time employment. Think project work that you can do independently from your own home office. Even a project that lasts for a month is better than no internship at all! You never know how a short-term internship will open up opportunities in the future.

I know it's sometimes hard to imagine how you can possibly fit more activities into your busy life. Do what you can. Be creative in exploring your options. Look for what will work, rather than what won't work. Focus on one thing you can do today to bring you closer to your goal. As your vision becomes clearer and more focused, you will find your passion and excitement will open up more openings and opportunities.

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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