

The Green-light at the End of the Tunnel

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The Meaning of “Green”

More than just a slogan, “Going Green” is an eco-friendly revolution that has become incredibly popular and profitable across the globe. As more and more Americans are becoming aware of their “carbon footprints” and sensitive to issues like climate change, we are more prepared than ever to confront the environmental problems of the 21st century. And it’s not just environmentalists who are rallying behind the movement, but business, labor, and elected officials as well. While the recession devastated many of America’s more traditional industries, we are beginning to see a “light at the end of tunnel” in the form of clean technology and its potential to create millions of new jobs: “...many economists, investors, business leaders, and politicians now consider the growth and development of clean technology as the best single opportunity for moving the U.S. out of its current economic malaise.”ⁱ

Clean technology may do more than save our planet; it may very well save our economy as well, because it demands a diverse workforce with all sorts of skills and from various job sectors. That’s right: *you don’t need a Ph D. in technology or the environment to get a “Green Job.”* Like any major industry, the Green industry needs its scientists and engineers, but it also needs administrative professionals, project managers, building analysts, entrepreneurs, bookkeepers, computer specialists, etc., etc.

There’s something for everybody, and with President Obama’s commitment to create 5 million “green jobs” by 2018,ⁱⁱ it stands to reason that if you go green, you’ll *make green*.

Where are the Green Jobs?

The following are samples of green job postings from www.cleandedge.com and other online resources. As you can see, green jobs are available across the career spectrum, so chances are you will be able to find a job in the green industry that is compatible with your own skills and work experience.

1. Administrative Professional

Every employer needs qualified, office-savvy professionals to handle the administrative side of a company, and the Green industry is no exception. Like all companies, up-and-coming clean energy businesses are always going to need skilled administrative assistants to provide support to executives. If you have experience in organizational management, business management, office systems and technology, and/or other areas in administrative work, you may want to consider putting your skills to use in clean technology—an emerging field where jobs are opening up.

2. Green Building Analyst

While the construction industry as a whole has slowed down a bit under the tough economy, the nationwide demand for energy-efficient and sustainable buildings has never been higher. If you are a construction professional or aspiring to get into the field, you may want to consider getting familiar with clean building methods and ideas, because the future of housing is *green*.

As a green building analyst, you would provide owners and developers with a blueprint for efficient and sustainable building, whether for residential houses, corporate offices, or another building project. Among other skills, today's building analyst needs to be comfortable using computer software. The analyst must also have strong critical thinking in order to navigate between construction documents, program guidelines, and simulation software.ⁱⁱⁱ

People skills matter too, though, as green building analysts must be able to collaborate effectively with engineers, architects, building developers, and/or general contractors. When your bottomline is to reduce the energy consumption of a new house or building, you need to be able to convey your recommendations

and priorities to everyone else involved in the process. Other MUST-HAVES: strong analytical skills, technological/computer skills, and a rock-solid commitment to the principles of energy conservation and green building design.^{iv}

3. Environmental Engineer

If the ultimate goal of clean technology is to create a healthier planet Earth, then the environmental engineer plays a critical role in bringing this vision of a better, cleaner tomorrow to fruition. Environmental engineers perform both hands-on and analytical duties, which include remediating polluted sites, advising on treatment and containment, and conducting hazardous waste-management studies.^v

As an environmental engineer, you confront the entire spectrum of environmental issues: acid rain, ozone depletion, water pollution, and air pollution.^{vi} There are two main kinds of environmental engineer, civil and chemical. While the “civil” engineer deals with hydrology, water resources management and treatment, the “chemical” engineer focuses on environmental chemistry, air and water treatment technology, and separation processes.^{vii} Whichever kind of environmental engineer you choose to become, you will be at the frontlines of delivering clean technology to your community and the world at large.

4. Weatherization Technician

According to CNET’s Green Technology blog, weatherizing homes is shaping up to be the next big green industry. Energy-efficient retrofits will also benefit from a lot of government support: the federal stimulus has already set aside \$6 Billion dollars to weatherize low-income homes.^{viii}

One example of a job position within this green industry is “weatherization technician.” As a weatherization technician, you take on a diverse set of responsibilities, ranging from the actual installation of home weatherization materials to diagnostic testing and energy audits.

Being able to use various hand and power tools is essential, as is a certain amount of courage/physical ability: when directed by the “weatherization crew

leader,” a technician may have to work in uncomfortable, confined environment, where he must be able to perform tasks in constricted spaces.^{ix}

5. Energy Efficiency Project Coordinator

If you have professional experience as a project coordinator or manager, then the green business has a job for you, too. Like administrative professionals (described earlier), managers and coordinators have “transferrable skills” that can work for them in a wide variety of job sectors, including, in this case, clean technology.

As an energy efficiency project coordinator, you support program managers, field representatives, and engineering staff in promoting energy efficiency to businesses and other clients.^x Meanwhile, the majority of your responsibilities at an energy conservation firm are similar to those you would have as project coordinator at any other kind of company.

These responsibilities include:^{xi}

- Monitoring program tasks.
- Communicating directly with field staff and small business customers.
- Answering customer and contractor questions via phone and email.
- Ensuring the input of energy savings data.
- Assisting program managers.

6. Photovoltaic Installer

Over the past decade or so, the solar panel has become one of the green revolution’s most popular and valuable innovations. As a Photovoltaic (*“Photo-vol-tey-ik”*), or “PV” installer, you apply solar panels to the roof and walls of new buildings, or retrofit them onto older, existing structures.^{xii} PV installers play a particularly important role with buildings in remote, mountainous regions; since these areas tend to be miles away from the public electricity supply, PV is the ideal process for an “off-the-grid” building to generate electricity.^{xiii}

Some of the typical responsibilities of a PV installer include: planning and coordinating work crew tasks, tracking the progress of installation activities, installing wiring and EMT conduits, connecting a buildings system to the power grid, and many more...^{xiv}

7. Restoration Technician

For a *truly* hands-on green job, consider becoming a restoration technician. While conventional restoration projects deal with repairing houses and other structures, ecological restoration involves rescuing natural landscapes from fire, water, or man-made damage. As a restoration technician on an ecological site, your essential duties range from elbow-grease tasks like mowing, installing plants and seed, and clearing out brush, to more scientific activities like erosion control, herbicide applications, and prescribing burnings.^{xv} As you might imagine, this job requires a considerable degree of manual dexterity and comfort with hand tools and small machinery.^{xvi}

¹ Gauntlett, Dexter, "Talking 'Bout a Revolution: Filling 5 Million Green Jobs" www.cleantech.com/jobs

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- ii Gauntlett, Dexter, "Talking 'Bout a Revolution: Filling 5 Million Green Jobs" www.cleandedge.com/jobs
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