

Debunking Myths About Careers in the Green Economy

By Carol McClelland, PhD

As we talk with people at networking meetings and our group calls, we hear them make assumptions about the Green Economy that aren't true. They may have been true at one point, but times have changed.

Are you holding yourself back from entering the Green Economy due to any of these assumptions?

I won't make any money.

It all depends on your interests and the choices you make. If you want to work in a non-profit or directly with wildlife and the environment, your income potential may be somewhat limited.

But if living close to the land or on a tight budget isn't your thing, you won't make choices that will put you in those situations. You'll choose to enter an industry that has good income potential and growth potential.

Supply and demand control the level of wages much the same way they control the price of goods. If you have a skill that is in high demand and there are not a lot of people with the same skill, your value will go up. If you are developing your green skills now, you'll be in high demand as this green economy takes off. It's likely you'll have more opportunities to name your price.

Green careers are only for scientists.

It's true that many environmental jobs, renewable energy jobs, manufacturing, building and clean tech jobs require a scientific / technical background.

However, there are many other green careers that are outside the scientific realm. These jobs fall into areas such as advocacy, policy, finance, marketing, sales, education, and green services such as eco-travel, event planning, real estate, and publishing.

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There aren't any green jobs.

In the last year, the number of green jobs in several industries has started taking off. Hiring trends depend a great deal on where the industry / company is in the maturation process. For instance, a company in an R&D phase will hire more researchers than a company that is moving into production and distribution.

There are green jobs and there will be even more as time progresses; the real question is whether there are green jobs that fit your skills and abilities. Given that the green economy is just beginning to unfold, some industries are growing faster than others. A recent article by American Progress outlines the number of green jobs that have been created and will be created in the renewable energies, clean tech, and environmental industries. Venture capital to these areas is skyrocketing. Switching over to new energy sources will create jobs in all areas of the country.

There are other industries that will be affected that aren't mentioned in that report. For instance, green, sustainable building for new construction and energy efficiency retrofitting is poised to develop.

Furthermore, all of these changes will lead to ripple effect changes in other areas such as manufacturing, IT, services, and education.

I'll have to start over in an entry level position.

Under certain circumstances, if you want to make a dramatic career change, you may need to step back to build your experience, knowledge, and credibility.

In most situations, however, you have a number of other options.

- Green your current job – explore ways to add a green component to your current job. Depending on the culture of the company, you may be able to have quite an impact focusing on green issues within your workplace.
- Use your expertise as a way to transition into a sustainable company. In this situation your expertise is the ticket that opens the door to a new company, field, or industry.
- Build your green resume by becoming active in your community, volunteering, interning, or leading a green initiative.
- Go back to school to get a green / sustainable certificate to help give you an edge in getting a green job. [Green Career Central – An Online Resource Center](#) Carol McClelland, PhD, Founder and Executive Director www.greencareercentral.com © 2009

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I need a college diploma.

Not necessarily. Remember that many traditional companies are moving in a green direction. It's possible you can remain in your current organization, in your current job, and participate in the greening of your company.

If you want additional training, don't limit your exploration to a full degree program. Think certificates, online courses, or hands on courses. Even reading a few books in your target green industry will put you ahead of others.

I can't think about this now, I need to wait until I'm ready to make the leap.

Actually, the best time to begin to explore your green options is well before you are ready to make your move. Finding the right green career won't happen overnight. You'll need time to explore your interests, your options, and create a plan for your transition.

By knowing where you want to go, you can begin to take advantage of opportunities to network, learn, and gain experience while you are in your current position. The more actions you can take before you start interviewing, the stronger your position will be.

Finding my green career is going to take too long. There's nothing I can do to speed up the process.

Actually, with a little forethought, you can be very strategic about finding a green career that suits you both personally and

professionally. It all begins with identifying your green focus. With your focus in mind, you can make better use of your networking, training, and reading time. The more you immerse yourself in your target industry, the more opportunities you will see.

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