

Get a Green Collar

Green businesses have been growing at a rate of about 5% annually during the last three years creating a plethora of new "green collar" job. These new careers produced by the greening of industry are not your everyday forestry professions. Many of them are environmental twists on old professions, like law, others are engineering careers tied to research in renewable technologies like wind energy and ethanol production.

Two particularly hot areas are global carbon credit trading, which doubled to a billion from 2005 to 2006, and construction and services associated with "green buildings" that meet industry standards. Today, the green building industry is worth billion; 10 years ago, it was unquantifiable.

According to Kevin Doyle, president of Green Economy, a Boston-based firm that promotes an environmentally healthy workforce, the green industry in the United States in 2005 was employing about 1.6 million people in an estimated 118,000 jobs. This information was adapted from the Environmental Business Journal, he says, and does not include the organic industry. For instance:

- Emissions brokers: In a market economy, credits to emit greenhouse gases can be traded on an exchange, and brokers facilitate the deal. If the U.S. ever moves to a mandatory trading system, expect this field to boom.
- Bio-mimicry engineers: This new branch of science uses Mother Nature as a model for solving engineering problems.
- Sustainability coordinators: Corporations from AstraZeneca (nyse: AZN) to Wal-Mart (nyse: WMT) are now employing managers to oversee the economic and environmental components of company efforts.
- Green architects: With an increasing focus on energy-efficient buildings, a growing number of architects and developers are getting certified to become specialists in green design.

Corporations assume that at some point in the future, governments will put a price on waste, says Doyle. So it's better to invest now in clean technologies than to lose money if new regulations come into play. "People want to get ahead of the game," he says.

Universities - particularly business schools - also see opportunity. Schools such as Stanford, the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina and the University of Michigan offer joint M.B.A./environmental science masters degrees. Derrick Bolton, director of admissions at Stanford's Graduate School of Business, says many students are taking positions with corporations that have a commitment to the environment.

"They're what I call the 'and' generation," he says. "They don't want to make money or support the environment. They want to do both."

There's a proven market, government backing and corporate buy-in. Expect green business to grow even more over the next decade, and a new generation of green careers to blossom with it.

Sourced: by Brian Wingfield from Forbes.Com