



Creating a great Job Opportunity in Sustainable Development

All of us, at some point in the evolution of our careers, will need to take stock, look inside and outside ourselves – and ultimately take control in creating our next career opportunity. This can appear daunting and often confusing as the world of sustainability is multi-faceted, fast changing and organic.

Amida Recruitment compiled this document for a Careers event for Sponge members in July 2010. Amida is a global recruitment business specialising in sustainable development opportunities from design and engineering to corporate sustainability and the non-profit world.

This document will provide you with the inspiration and a mini pack of tools to create your next career opportunity in sustainable development.

Sustainability

- Unlike any other sector or space.
- Critical for the future of our planet.
- Incredibly complicated and will mean something different to every individual, organisation, country and region.

This means that creating a job opportunity can be frustrating, slow, unclear, demoralising, confusing (and of course the recession has not helped), but equally there is enormous opportunity to create amazing job opportunities for oneself.

Content

- 1) *The psychology* behind creating an opportunity
- 2) *The universe* in which to create an opportunity
- 3) *The process* to create an opportunity

1. The psychology behind creating an opportunity

- Those who know themselves, their skills, their general career direction, have self belief, and know that creating relationships is vital, have a great chance of creating a job opportunity.
- Having said this, it is not easy and not many people will start with this basis. It takes trial, error, mistakes and consequential learning.
- One needs to be brave, move out of comfort zone, develop skills in the process that can be used in next job.
- Be highly PROACTIVE – this is vital.

Analysis of yourself

- What am I good at/what are my skills?
- What do I enjoy?
- What am I driven by/interested in?
- What are my values?
- What is my knowledge base?
- What have I done so far?
- How am I unique, what makes me more marketable than other candidates?
- What do I want to do? General direction.
- Am I qualified to do that now, or do I need to find an interim role to get me to that place that I want to be?

Career Trajectory

Understanding where you have been professionally and where you want to go, both generally and in a particular job, is important to be able to tell a cohesive story. Such a cohesive story should come up in many job related interactions: emails, calls, interviews. Without a clear 'career trajectory' – the job search will be more difficult and more frustrating (more 'spinning your wheels').

Self Belief

- Establishing the above and being true to oneself.
- Establishing ones own key achievements.
- Building up ones 'inner-strength' to know that you can 'add value' to a situation or a person.
- Knowing that this world is about adding value but also CREATING and fostering RELATIONSHIPS.
- Knowing that it is going to be a proactive search with lots of de-routings, non-communication and self-belief knocks, but knowing that it is important to do.
- Knowing that with belief, care, research, self confidence, you will create an great opportunity.
- Also knowing that mistakes will be made and embarrassing situations will happen, but view it as learning!
- Formulating a plan and sticking to it (regardless of whether there is a bad day or a particular opportunity does not materialize).

2. The Universe in which to Create an Opportunity

- In Sustainable Development, in ultimately any organisation, company, group there could be a place that you could create an opportunity for yourself in.
- THINK BIG and think BIG BLANK CANVAS.
- Do not cut off, nor assume anything: any individual you have contact with is a 'ticket' to your next opportunity, any telephone call can lead to new opportunity. Start by gaining information.
- If you do not make the telephone call you do not make the most of the universe in which to create an opportunity.
- Networking is HUGE - if you are not a natural networker, now is the time to start.
- Job searching is to some extent a numbers game – a certain percentage of people will not respond to you, so reach out to enough people such that you will still make progress and network even if you are ignored by many (and you will be ignored by many, it's just the nature of the beast).

3. The process to Create an Opportunity

Reasons why you should adopt a harmonised strategy

- Many companies never advertise their jobs: companies do not always know exactly what they want OR they do not have defined openings, they just want smart people who are driven and can contribute.
- Perhaps the MD has not yet advertised the job and you 'contact' him/her just at the right time.
- Recruiters work for some people, but not for others – there are too many variables to guarantee success using only recruiters.
- Most people apply for online advertisements and that means you are competing with many other people – you need to be creative in your search.
- Sometimes companies see a great person and they create a job for them.
- Many companies first point of call when they need someone is to use their 'own network', i.e. you need to be in their network – so get into their network!
- Applying from a job board – sometimes your application gets missed, through no fault of you or the recruiter (could just be due to the raw numbers of responses).
- Also, a job could just open up right when you reach out – someone resigns/retires/etc.

Ultimately you don't know where the opportunity will come from – your 'perfect opportunity' can come through...

1. Your 'warm' network (events, friends, ex-colleagues, etc).
2. Your 'cold' network (finding people to contact from Linked In, press research).
3. Recruiter.
4. Job Boards.
5. Companies that are advertising their jobs on their websites.
6. Add your own!

MAIN MISTAKE: People looking to create an opportunity MISS OUT many possible above routes.

POSITION YOURSELF and FOLLOW UP

Positioning is critical

- Know how to describe your skills, experience, and objectives in a simple summary (short and sweet).
- Career trajectory – as previously stated, describe where you have been, why you did it, where you want to go and why you want to go there. Think of it in two ways – how you are qualified and thus how you will help the company succeed (this is most important), but also how the company can help you (thus keep you interested in the job and on your toes – companies do not want to hire people that will get bored) .
- Know something about the person/organisation that you are targeting.
- Be brave – email and CALL!

Your expectations of people

- Do not contact someone with the objective of 'getting a job'.
- Contact them with the view to 'having a conversation' (ask for 10 minutes). You can position this around advice, sharing thoughts, asking them to comment on your plan, finding out more about them or their business, or their sector, seeing if they got your resume etc.
- Tell your 'story'.
- No person is going to get an email from you, hook you up with a job or recommend you immediately – try to get a conversation with them to prove yourself/build a relationship that you can follow up with later on.
- Make it clear that you are not dependent on them for finding you a new job- you want to share your plan, share your thoughts, provide your perspective on the long term.
- Ask whether there is anyone else that you can speak to in the company.
- Ask if you can 'reference their name' – POWERFUL!
- Be passionate, clear, 'interesting', as well as thoughtful and brave.
- It is incredible how generous people are with their time when they are asked for help and you do not expect anything.

Your objectives

- Your objective is to gain as much information as possible so that you eventually have a web of knowledge and a web of contacts. You should become an expert on 'your market'

Your approach once a real job has been detected/applied for

- Do your research on them, the role and the company.
- Position with an email.
- Follow up with a call.
- Always ask 'do you have a moment to talk?' – but position yourself first.
- Tricks to get noticed: if you are applying to an open published job , call and say – 'Hi, I'm (name), I (one line on experience) and would like to avoid the awkward 'to whom it may concern' on my cover letter. May I address it to you?'

Tracking your activity

- Track all your contacts and follow up – use Excel.
- Put a plan together for your job search – Month 1 research, Month 2 – contact, Month 3 etc...

Summary

- Remember there is a massive universe out there and that equals massive opportunity.
- Sustainable Development is full of entrepreneurial, value driven, passion people – use that to your advantage by networking.
- Never assume that there is only 1 way to get a job.
- Be brave and contact people – email and CALL!
- Never doubt yourself.
- Know the direction in which you want to go.
- Show passion , interest and commitment.