

BASG Career (and Life!) Sustainability Lessons

When looking to make sustainability a bigger part of your career and life, yes, you'll need to be on top of the usual best practices like getting out there to meet new people (whether that is inside or outside of your organization), volunteering your skills and experience, doing your homework along the way, etc.

But, there are many lessons that seem particularly relevant to sustainability.

It's a big tent: Sustainability has many dimensions, which creates almost endless opportunities, but can also be paralyzing. *You do not need to master it all.* When coming into the tent, it helps to walk around a little bit, but then definitely find your focus.

Skills, then sustainability: Bring your passion, but you cannot stop there. Your skills and experience are what will get you the job. *Invest in your skills* while following your passion for sustainability.

Define sustainability for you: Get clear on the kind of impact you want to have in your career (and life). There likely are many paths for you based on your passions. Connecting your skills and experience, and what new things you want to learn, to those skills will help you focus.

Read: For most of us, it's easy to get passionate about sustainability. It makes so much sense, and examples why we should be passionate about sustainability are everywhere. But, as you explore how it best relates to you and your career and life, go beyond the fray of 140-character commentaries and *click through to read*. Drink in the knowledge that is being shared so openly and put it to work for you.

Bring the whole you: If you're looking to transition into a role, job or career that is more closely connected to what sustainability means to you, everything you've been doing up until this point is an important part of what you will bring to the table. Figure out how to best bring it along.

Outcomes, not titles: You won't find many job titles with the word "sustainability" in them. You WILL find lots of opportunities that contribute to a sustainable way of life.

Decide thoughtfully: Some organizations are good at communicating how their outcomes contribute to sustainability and make that a priority. For some this is not the case. And with some of them, what they're saying is substantive and authentic while with others you'll find that it's mere window dressing. Get curious, dig, and understand before you decide.

Get comfortable with metrics: At the heart of sustainability is measuring what we're currently doing, and how that will impact us going forward. There are many different kinds of metrics in the big tent that is sustainability. Some matter more than others, at different times, and for different stakeholders. You do not need to know everything, but you do need to know the

metrics that impact sustainability how you are defining it for your career. Again, do a quick scan, and then focus. Also, be sure to maintain a healthy dose of skepticism. There is a lot of good stuff, but you'll find window dressing in the numbers as well.

Achievement orientation: It doesn't matter what type of organization you pursue, they will want to know how you can help them achieve their goals. Hopefully achieving those goals will contribute to achieving a sustainable way of life. Just know that their *goals come first*, before the passion. And, if you discover that their goals don't line up with how you think about sustainability, that is important information for you to consider in your search.

Implementers wanted: We have incredible science and technology breakthroughs that need implementation. Some [say](#) we have what we need to become sustainable. Getting your hands dirty will show you mean it and that you can and will actually do it. Implementers are needed in any organization.

Don't just show up, do the work: When you express your passion – whether at work, in your community, with a non-profit -- make sure you *do the work that needs doing*. As said before, as an implementer, you will stand out.

Create your own role: What do you see yourself doing? Next, who needs that role or impact in their organization? Talk to them about how your work can help them achieve their goals. You can do this where you are today if you see a fit for your skills and passions, or outside of your organization. Write it up, connect it to goals and outcomes, and pitch it.

Your career is a journey: This is true for all of us. It helps to set tangible, achievable milestones for bringing sustainability into career and life, same as with any career path. What's different with sustainability is that the subject matter is wide and deep, with so much to be figured out at all levels. So, it's quite natural to feel that your personal end game is elusive and difficult to reach. Just knowing that you're on a journey, and that this in many ways is a process, will make it easier for you to calibrate how you define and recognize your successes along the way.

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