

## 2.2: Training and Development

New employees must be oriented to the company's stance on sustainability issues and what the expectations are for the employee to further sustainability efforts. The company, however, will continue to conduct **sustainability training** for all employees at all levels, including management. Sustainability curricula have been developed by the nonprofit organization Northwest Earth Institute and are appropriate for workplace training.

Companies have historically provided ethics, diversity, and leadership training, but sustainability education and training must reorient the way employees view their jobs and the business. Employees should ultimately be trained to rethink every aspect of the job and workplace in terms of sustainability: relationships between systems; long-term survival and quality of life for social, economic, and environmental systems; reduced waste, pollution, and toxicity; increased efficiencies; increased harmony of the person and business with other social, economic, and environmental systems; and innovative ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Increasing employee awareness fosters creative solutions to business problems through a sustainability lens.

In addition to general training to help employees understand sustainability concepts, employees can be taught sustainability-related skills specific to the job function. This might include triple bottom line accounting, carbon accounting, social accounting, carbon finance, life cycle analysis, life cycle costing, benchmarking, and other sustainability-related skills relevant to job duties (each of which we discuss within the relevant chapters).

Sustainable organizations can create green training facilities and conduct green meetings. In particular, meeting rooms should be energy efficient by using energy efficient lighting, motion detectors for lighting, and ENERGY STAR computers and equipment. Companies can seek to minimize the number of handouts or papers, use only recycled paper, and reduce and recycle waste. If food is served, the organization should use vendors that supply organic food grown or raised locally. If your company will conduct meetings at hotels or other companies' facilities, make sure the supplier provides green meeting facilities and services. When hiring others to provide training, incorporate sustainability requirements as part of the standard request for proposals.

Training can be conducted either on the job or off the job. Businesses focusing on sustainability are increasingly conducting more on-the-job training and engaging in travel reduction programs. Virtual conferences are growing in popularity due to their reduced economic and environmental impact. In addition, video conferencing is growing in popularity for the same reasons. For example, Vodafone, a telecommunications company, uses video conferencing in order to reduce company-wide travel. It is estimated that the use of video conferences eliminates 13,500 flights per year and 5,500 tons of carbon emissions for the company. Creamer Media (n.d.). Within one year, the dollars saved under this initiative provided a return on the investment. Creamer Media (n.d.). Products, such as GoToMeeting.com, Retrieved January 30, 2009, from <https://www2.gotomeeting.com> are available to facilitate Web conferencing and virtual meetings.

E-learning, virtual classrooms, and computer- or Web-based learning environments have many advantages. These options allow trainees to perform at their own pace, they offer multimedia capabilities, they save costs, and they can standardize learning across locations. These forms of training are an efficient way to deliver learning content, and the organization can track employee training performance through scores and completions. Again, these forms of training will reduce travel and associated economic and environmental costs.

Companies are increasingly using Webinars, or seminars on the Web, for training. Due to the popularity of Webinars offered by third-party trainers, there are often many from which to choose (both free and paid). In a live Webinar, there are typically a small number of participants, which allows for more interaction and involvement. In many cases, live Webinars are archived on the Internet for later viewing. Companies can also use GoToWebinar.com Retrieved March 23, 2009, from <http://www.gotowebinar.com> to host their own Webinar.

Particularly effective training tools are simulations, or situations that replicate job demands. Several industries, such as airline, health care, emergency services, and law enforcement, have frequently utilized simulations. This has resulted in cost savings associated with equipment and travel and a reduction in accident rates. Svoboda and Whalen (2005). Sustainable organizations that engage in off-the-job training should contract specifically with those that can make claims to being green service providers.

In addition to company-sponsored training and development opportunities, sustainable businesses recognize the need to allow employees to develop to their fullest potential and to flourish in their own personal development. This requires respecting the employee's need for personal growth, development, and fulfillment and allowing reasonable opportunity to pursue those needs. Some companies accept spirituality in the workplace; others allow ample time for community service and involvement (whether

paid or unpaid by the company). Other companies may encourage employees to use their job-related skills for professional service through a variety of nonprofit organizations (see [Note 3.3 "Use Your Business Skills to Make a Difference"](#)).

## Use Your Business Skills to Make a Difference

There are a number of nonprofit organizations that seek out business persons to donate their valuable professional skills:

- Business Council for Peace
- CEOs Without Borders
- Diplomats Without Borders
- Financial Services Volunteer Corp
- Geekcorps
- International Executive Service Corps
- MBA-Nonprofit Connection
- MBAs Without Borders
- Net Impact
- New Ventures
- Taproot Foundation
- TeamMBA
- TechnoServ
- Wall Street Without Walls

Lastly, beyond training employees for a specific company's needs, there exists a worldwide shortage of potential employees with the proper skills to further the development of a green economy and the ability to do business in a carbon-constrained world. LaMonica (2008); Murray (2008). Several surveys reveal that a shortage of trained workers, from technical to professional, is the primary roadblock to the development of a green economy. Job training programs, colleges, and universities are beginning to recognize this deficit and create training and education programs to help develop a green workforce. In addition, professional organizations, such as the **International Sustainability Professionals Society**, are beginning to emerge.

**Green-collar jobs** refer to the modification of blue-collar jobs by incorporating new environmentally related knowledge, skills, and abilities into positions that will aid in the transition to a green economy. The demand for green-collar, technical, and professional workers is expected to continue experiencing rapid growth and increasing demand. Jones (2008); O'Carroll (2008). As proof, the renewable energy industry grew more than 3 times as fast as the U.S. economy in 2007 and renewable energy and energy efficiency are expected to generate millions of jobs for both professional and technical workers. Bezdek (2009). Extensive information on green-collar jobs can be obtained from the nonprofit organizations Green For All and Apollo Alliance.

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