

## WORKPLACE MATTERS

# Training workers for green initiatives still a bit of a patchwork

**S**ustainable, green, socially responsible. Seems like everyone's talking about how these concepts affect business. And companies are increasingly labeling themselves green.



**Robin Onaclea**

pal of Good Company, a research and consulting firm in Eugene that has ties to many local green initiatives and training programs.

"Green jobs are hard to track because they are buried inside the sectors or a subset of a job description," Skov said. "Many green jobs are likely to be overlooked under traditional data collection methods. For example, a pump attendant at an alternative fueling station or an electrician who installs solar panels will not likely be distinguished from a traditional gas station attendant or a traditional electrician."

The job title "sustainability coordinator" continues to emerge. This person oversees the green or sustainability initiatives within a company and may add this function to another job. Because this is a relatively new

occupation and skill set, there is no set training program or official certification for this position. Yet, Skov sees a "hunger for this type of certification program." In the meantime, people in this position have a variety of local resources available to help them develop this emerging skill set.

Michael Scott, in addition to his job as specialty cheese merchandiser, serves as the sustainability coordinator for Market of Choice. Scott began his sustainable business training by participating in the Master Recycler Program offered by the Lane County Waste Management Division. The course includes 35 hours of instruction and several field trips to local solid waste and recycling centers.

"The networking opportunities in the Master Recycler course were wonderful," Scott said. "The class really got me headed in the right direction on my sustainability initiatives. I get a weekly e-mail digest from them that keeps me connected to continuing education opportunities and up-to-date on green happenings in town."

For more information about the Master Recycler course, contact Kelly Bell, master recycler coordinator at 682-2059 or at [Kelly.bell@co.lane.or.us](mailto:Kelly.bell@co.lane.or.us).

The Master Recycler course was just the beginning of Scott's training journey. He also found out about the Climate Masters at Work training, a 20-hour course provided through the University of Oregon. Topics range from reducing emissions to transportation planning to managing the company's supply chain and waste stream. The course uses a train-the-trainer model and expects that participants will share their experiences

implementing what they learn and also mentor other businesses. Extensive follow up and support follows the classroom portion.

"The Climate Master course really connected the dots," Scott said. "I made some great connections with presenters like Rexius and Lane Transit District. I learned all about Business Energy Tax Credits for transportation initiatives and energy efficiency upgrades." For more information about the Climate Masters at Work program, contact Sarah Mazze at 346-0786 or [smazze@uoregon.edu](mailto:smazze@uoregon.edu).

Slov said the paths to many green careers are not clear cut. "There are some established programs. But most are puzzle pieces on the table right now, and it's up to the individual to piece them together until more formal certifications and trainings are in place."

So what's the next puzzle piece for Michael Scott? He has signed up for an introductory course offered through The Natural Step, a global organization that promotes a science-based sustainability framework. Companies such as IKEA, Starbucks and Nike have based their sustainability models on this framework. For more information about the Natural Step, go to [www.thenaturalstep.org/usa](http://www.thenaturalstep.org/usa).

Stay tuned for future green job articles that will appear quarterly in this column.

*If you have questions about training your work force, contact Robin Onaclea, business service coordinator at Lane Workforce Partnership, at [robino@laneworkforce.org](mailto:robino@laneworkforce.org) or 682-7224.*