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**TITLE**

Getting started

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MBA Careers in Sustainability*

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## Getting started: MBA careers in sustainability

Everywhere you look these days, the words “sustainability,” “green,” and “corporate social responsibility” are flooding the business press. Companies in every industry are rushing to add climate change strategies, corporate citizenship reports, and green products. Entirely new disciplines in fields like sustainability consulting, carbon trading, and socially responsible investing are emerging. Wal-Mart, Toyota, GE, and other corporations are revolutionizing their industries by making sustainability not only a part of their own corporate strategy, but also a requirement for their supply chain partners.

In January 2007, *BusinessWeek*'s cover read, “Imagine a world in which socially responsible and eco-friendly practices actually boost a company's bottom line. It's closer than you think.” By 2008, nearly 80% of the largest 250 companies worldwide were issuing corporate responsibility reports, up from about 50% in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Dell, PepsiCo, Google, and other corporations had pledged to become carbon neutral. NBC Universal held an entire week of television programming with “green” themes. Brands like Starbucks, Gap, and Apple began appealing to conscientious young consumers with their Product(REL)<sup>TM</sup> campaign, devoting a portion of profits to development organizations in Africa. And manufacturers in every industry unveiled an impressive slate of new eco-friendly products ranging from energy-efficient televisions to biodegradable hotel room keys.

Sustainability holds the promise of an exciting new approach to business — one in which business goals are aligned with social and environmental goals, in which it *is* possible to “do well by doing good.” And, while sustainability certainly will not cure all the world's ills, it is clear that a new era of business responsibility and green innovation is upon us. Multinational corporations

## Conscientious MBAs

You are not alone. A recent study by David Montgomery of Stanford University and Catherine Ramus of UC Santa Barbara found that over 97% of MBAs surveyed would be willing to sacrifice salary to work for a company that was committed to social and environmental responsibility and ethics.

The researchers surveyed 759 MBAs at 11 top business schools, and found that, on average, the graduating MBAs said they would sacrifice 14% of their expected salary to work for a responsible company.<sup>2</sup>

are recognizing that we live in an increasingly resource-constrained world, and that more accountability for corporate social and environmental impacts will accrue to them. More importantly, forward-thinking executives understand that sustainability can present new opportunities for competitive advantage — whether that is by reducing costs, minimizing risk, appealing to increasingly conscientious customers, or reaching new markets entirely.

With the growth of this field comes a host of interesting new career opportunities for MBAs. As companies are grappling with challenges like how to develop social return on investment (SROI) metrics or understand the potential impact of corporate carbon footprints on stock prices, there are new opportunities for the next generation of managers — managers who are not only trained in traditional MBA fundamentals but also grounded in an understanding of the multifaceted social and environmental challenges facing 21st-century global business leaders. Entirely new career paths are opening up to MBAs interested in sustainability: sustainable venture capital, green marketing, corporate social responsibility management, carbon credit trading, and sustainability consulting, to name a few.

Perhaps even more than corporate executives, MBA students understand this trend. The next generation of managers can see that the future of business will require a new set of skills and responsibilities. Between 2003 and 2008, membership in Net Impact — the global organization for MBAs and business professionals interested in sustainability — increased more than four-

fold. By March 2009, over 130 business schools had a Net Impact chapter. Around the world, MBA students realize that a different model will be required for businesses in the coming decades.

That's where you come in. You understand this. You want a career where you can use your business skills to affect society and the environment in a positive way. You understand that the social, environmental, and governance challenges facing business are only going to become more complex, rather than less. You know intuitively that there is not only a moral imperative but also a compelling business case for companies to manage their social and environmental impacts. You see sustainability as the way forward for business, and a path to strategic career opportunities for you.

But what exactly does that mean for your career? And how are you going to land your dream job? *Profession and Purpose* is a practical guide to help MBA students and alumni pursue sustainability-related careers. This guide compiles in one place tips and resources for MBA-level careers in a wide range of fields — corporate social responsibility, corporate environmental management, cleantech venture capital, green building, sustainability consulting, and others — and discusses specific job search strategies for each. It includes information about the types of roles and responsibilities candidates can expect in each of these fields, as well as example job titles, useful websites, recommended reading, and advice from recent MBA graduates about their job searches.

Sustainability careers span a wide range of social and environmental career options — from “green” product marketing to social entrepreneurship to climate change consulting. MBA students have to consider both the type of functional role they are interested in, and the size and type of organization. The guide will help you navigate the maze of sustainability-related MBA career options, and point you on a path to success.

Sustainability is a constantly evolving field and, as such, it is impossible to cover all the potential career options available to

you. However, this guide is intended to be the most complete compilation of resources you can find on MBA careers in sustainability. In the following pages, you'll find not only specific job-hunting advice, but also inspiration. As the stories of MBAs profiled in this guide attest, there *are* careers for MBAs in sustainability. And there are exciting opportunities to integrate sustainability into your career, whether you are working for a big corporation or a startup company, an investment bank, or a social entrepreneur.

You really can change the world through your career. Start today.



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