

Organizations worldwide need help managing and measuring their envi

green



ronmental impact—and project professionals are first in line to benefit.

growth

BY MATT ALDERTON



for the most

enterprising project managers looking to advance their careers, there's a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel—and that light is green.

"There is a growing demand for project managers in nations that are becoming more concerned about the environment, such as Brazil," says Marconi Fábio Vieira, PMP, CEO of InfoChoice, an IT project management consultancy in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Mr. Vieira's principal client is energy giant Petrobras, and he has seen firsthand the need for project managers well-versed in sustainability. "When you build a new process plant in oil and gas projects, there is a complex environmental-license process that must be planned and monitored," he says. "Project managers and project management best practices add value to those projects at virtually every stage of the sustainability supply chain—from planning and implementing environmental initiatives to tracking and reporting their results."

More and more organizations are taking notice.

WANTED: PROJECT MANAGERS

The global market for environmental products and services is projected to double by 2020, up to US\$2.74 billion per year, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. The result will be millions of green

jobs in areas as diverse as agriculture, energy, transportation, IT, construction and manufacturing.

Many of those opportunities will require the expertise of a project manager, according to Dan Smolen, author of *Tailoring the Green Suit: Empowering Yourself for an Executive Career in the New Green Economy* [AuthorHouse, 2011]. He's also the Stafford, Virginia, USA-based founder and managing partner of The Green Suits LLC, a career development network for green executives. "Often, project managers are problem-solvers," he says. "They're brought in to solve some problem the company is having or to move the needle in a positive direction for the organization. In that respect, project managers are in a really good position to help further companies' objectives through heightened sustainability."

Where project managers can shine most is in the area of key performance indicators, says P.J. Simmons, chairman of the Corporate Eco Forum, a New York, New York, USA-based consortium of executives who demonstrate a commitment to sustainability as a business strategy issue. With sustainability, there are four main areas of benefit:

- Cost savings
- Reducing risk
- Driving revenue growth
- Building brands

"To realize those benefits, companies need people who can help them figure out where their impacts are, where their opportunities lie, and what projects they should pursue based on cost, risk and potential return on investment," says Mr. Simmons, who is also coauthor of *The Green to Gold Business Playbook: How to Implement Sustainability Practices for Bottom-Line Results in Every Business Function* [John Wiley & Sons, 2011].

Because some executives are still skeptical of the ROI of sustainability, the secret to getting the go-ahead is

presenting a strategic business case, with tangible bottom line benefits. “As noble as it is, it’s not about saving birds and trees and animals,” Mr. Smolen says. “It’s about money.”

It also pays to look at existing projects from a green perspective.

“I strongly urge project managers to market themselves by highlighting how they can manage projects to be more efficient,” says Mohamed Khalifa Hassan, CAPM, PMI-RMP, PMI-SP, PMP, PgMP, business consultant at Lifelong, an enterprise project management consultancy in Kuwait City, Kuwait.

GREEN TRAINING

To be seen as a green expert, it’s important to invest in some formal education and training.

“Project managers interested in pursuing a green career path should gain more technical and management knowledge in their industry and learn how to integrate sustainability into their projects, programs and portfolio,” Mr. Khalifa Hassan says.

In terms of green projects, “most favored are project managers with backgrounds in engineering,” says Chicago, Illinois, USA-based Brenda L. Hernández, PMP. She is currently doing consulting work for Techne Labs on a project to set up a sustainable multimedia computer lab at the Jakmel Ekspresyon Arts Center in Haiti. “If the project manager has the opportunity to take an environmental management systems course, become LEED certified or pursue a green MBA, that would be nice to have.”

Project managers also need to up their reporting skills and understand what metrics are important for sustainability projects. “Reporting is reporting, no matter the field, and good project managers have that skill already,” Ms. Hernández says.

On a green project to redesign the packaging of a product, for example, the project manager has to take



> TIP

Project management practitioners who want to pursue a green career path should focus on these three areas of development, according to **Mohamed Khalifa Hassan, CAPM, PMI-RMP, PMI-SP, PMP, PgMP**, Lifelong, Kuwait City, Kuwait:

- **Justify sustainability** with value proposition, value engineering and alternative analysis.
- **Apply it** with technology.
- **Sell it** with research, networking and presentation skills.

into account if new environmentally friendly materials have an additional cost, as well as the availability of qualified vendors and customer satisfaction in terms of user acceptance of the new packaging.

Other important metrics affect stakeholders. Smaller packaging results in less space needed for delivering the product, which translates into less frequent trips and lower carbon emissions. Keeping track of a carbon footprint might not fall under a particular project manager’s responsibilities, but those numbers should be reported to



future growth

I believe key drivers of future growth in sustainability will be the supply chains that must reveal information regarding production practices, intelligent software applications that improve decision-making processes in sustainable business practices, and pressure for increased transparency of government actions and policies.

It is time to connect the dots: Only those who can handle this transformation well will thrive and grab a bigger market share in clean technology and deliver on both return on investment and return on equity, leverage global finance to fund investment in green economy, and effectively deal with externalities and supply chains.

—from “Rebalancing the Economics of Greening,” a blog post by Joseph Nyangon, PMP

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both the public and internal stakeholders, Ms. Hernández says.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Training and education certainly look good on a résumé, but none of that will matter unless project professionals find ways to put that into practice. And with more experience will come more opportunity.

“Organizations are now approaching sustainability in a much more strategic way,” Mr. Simmons says. “They’re looking for people who have credibility and who have actually delivered on profit and loss objectives. Familiarity with green issues is important, but in many cases it can be learned on the job.”

Green project management takes a special set of skills.

“Green projects will always need subject matter experts with deep technical expertise,” he continues. “But in many cases, the most important thing for a project manager of green projects is an open mind and the ability to apply sustainability principles to problem-solving and execution. And critically important is a style and personality that can effectively rally the cross-functional teams often required by green projects.”

How can project managers break into the green field? Start by taking on additional responsibilities within your current role. “Green projects have become more common, but corporations are pursuing sustainability initiatives with internal ‘green teams’ on pilot projects,” Ms. Hernández says.

These project teams are usually cross-functional and involve various departments. They evaluate the organization’s current processes to identify areas for cost savings, waste reduction and innovation.

Ask to join—or even start—such a green team at your organization.

“Usually, people who don’t have green experience become sustainability experts by proxy and by practice,”

> TIP

Become a subject matter expert in alter-

native energy, operational efficiency and waste management, with an emphasis on LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) benchmarks and ISO 14000 environmental management standards, suggests **Marconi Fábio Vieira**, PMP, InfoChoice, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Mr. Smolen says. “It may start with recognizing that your company isn’t addressing its carbon footprint or that it’s very resource-heavy, then putting together a brief business plan to tackle the problem, going to management and volunteering to address the problem by coming up with solutions the company can act on. All of a sudden you’ve got sustainability-related project management experience. It’s fabulous. And within a year or two, that could easily become a recognized green job.”

Project professionals can also turn to others for information and lessons learned about incorporating sustainability into their role. “There are lots of resources on the web where people are talking about their experiences, including what they did and how they did it,” Mr. Smolen says. “You can go on LinkedIn, for instance, and find a ton of groups talking about sustainability. As a project manager, you can join and learn from the dialogue.”

That’s the approach taken by L^oic Thiebaut, a project management intern in the marine business unit at Converteam, an electrical engineering company in Belfort, France. “I recommend joining PMI’s Global Sustainability Community of Practice to get access to discussions, webinars from experts, etc.,” says Mr. Thiebaut, a master of science in international business development student at L’Ecole Supérieure des Technolo-

gies et des Affaires (ESTA). “I subscribed to this community because I had taken a few courses on sustainable development and I wanted to learn more about how to conciliate project management and sustainable development.”

If you’re currently looking for a job, sustainability doesn’t have to be the primary requirement. “Focus on finding an opportunity in a regular functional area—operations, human resources, IT, marketing, finance, etc.—and in a company that already has sustainability programs in place,” Ms. Hernández says. “Once you are inside, there is a greater exposure to green projects by participating in green project teams and, as the company matures, there will be further opportunities for internal employees.”

After you build your knowledge base and experience—so that your résumé includes ROI line items that describe your projects’ energy savings, cost reductions and more—you can look for more focused opportunities within the sustainability silo. Although they’re especially ripe in IT, energy and construction, opportunities abound in virtually every sector.

“For project managers, a green career path is not an option anymore—it’s a requirement,” Mr. Khalifa Hassan concludes. “Billions of dollars are being invested in this sector, and this investment is bound to serve as a catalyst for growth.” ^{PM}