Clean Energy Initiatives Could Produce Record Numbers of Environmental Jobs

by Matt Brooks

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More now than in recent history, this election year is bringing a lot of promises, plans and rhetoric together to try and give direction to a country that needs a financial and emotional boost. The United States is coming out of one the worst recessions we have seen (and probably will see in our lifetimes). Unemployment remains high, jobs are being created but not fast enough to equal demand, and the housing market remains near its lowest levels. Each candidate has a plan to create jobs and get the economy moving, and some of those plans could bring big gains to the environmental jobs sector.

In addition to the economic issues, we also hear a lot about reducing our dependence on foreign oil and investing in clean energy and cleaning up the environment. If these plans and promises hold true, there could be a renewed commitment to creating and supporting companies and jobs that create and maintain clean energy sources. It could also open the door for continued research into new technologies and the impacts of those on the environment. All these things could prove to be a major catalyst for people wanting to start careers in the environmental fields.

The difficult thing about skilled positions such as engineers, environmentalist, and higher-level positions is that they can be difficult to fill. In President Obamaâ€™s state of the union address for 2011-2012, he noted that there are more engineering job openings than in recent memory, but fewer skilled workers to fill those roles. The data suggest that it may be time for some people to reinvest in themselves and get the education and training needed to take on a higher level skill position, specifically in engineering and environmental fields.

For many that have been laid off or let go form their jobs and canâ€™t find work in their field, this is a great time to kindle the entrepreneurial spirit or learn new skills. There are increasing opportunities for small businesses to capture little sections of the market, and identifying these niche opportunities is less difficult that you may think. There are lots of ways to identify needs â€“ just look at the job boards across different industries. Instead of a company hiring a person to fill a role, is the job something that can be outsourced to a firm for less? Outsourcing to a new company reduces overhead cost of insurance, payroll taxes, etc for companies, and you may find small windows of opportunities. If starting your own business isnâ€™t something that will work for you, you can also identify the skills needed within an industyr, and go after the education or training needed to fill those roles.

The big winners in growing industries tend to be the early adopters â€“ not just leading edge companies, but skilled people willing to get the training they need to get on the leading edge. It is a great time to â€œreinventâ€• yourself and acquire new skills. The growth potential in some industries is very promising over the next 5-10 years, so find something to get passionate about, and get moving. You may just land in a new career.

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