



Interview with Carol McClelland
Author of *Green Careers For Dummies*
Hosted by Wendy Enelow

W: Hello. I'm Wendy Enelow, executive director of the Career Thought Leaders Consortium, a think tank of career industry leaders, and president of the Résumé Writing Academy, the world's premier résumé training organization.

I'm here today talking with Green Career expert, Dr. Carol McClelland, about her new book, "Green Careers for Dummies", just hot off the press. Carol is the founder and executive director of Green Career Central, an online resource center. She has been helping people find fulfilling careers for nearly 20 years and since 2007 has dedicated herself to making sense of the emerging green economy and explaining it to mid-career professionals, students, new grads, and career development professionals like myself. Carol, welcome. It's so great to have you with us.

C: Thanks, Wendy. I'm delighted to be here.

W: Let me start with my first question, which is pretty basic. Tell me, what separates green careers from others careers? What makes them "green"?

C: Green careers are those with a positive impact on the environment. A person could have a green career because the job itself is doing something green for the environment, or it could be because they work for a company or an industry that's making a positive impact for the environment. The bottom line is that that person, through their job function, their company, or their industry, is focusing on green goals that have a positive impact on the planet.

W: Could you give me a few examples just to make it a little clearer?

C: Absolutely. I think understanding these green goals is the key to helping people unlock what the green careers are all about. This is just a sampling, but green goals include decreasing carbon dioxide emissions, decreasing particulate pollution, increasing energy efficiency, decreasing waste, conserving water, increasing biodiversity, and we're seeing more and more about adapting to existing climate change. So when companies and industries commit to these green goals, existing positions evolve to handle these goals, but also new positions are created. That's what's really exciting to me, all the new opportunities. I always invite career seekers to think about what green goal they want to work toward in their career.

W: Can you give me an example of a green job? What might be a job title that someone would have?

- C: There are thousands of job titles, but somebody might work in renewable energy – that’s the one we always hear about – so it could be solar sales or solar installer. It could also be an environmental scientist or a hydrologist who’s working in water. The list is actually endless, so it’s very hard to isolate specific titles because that always leaves a whole bunch of titles out. I’ve researched 50 different industries, so within each industry there may be 10-20-40-100 job titles. It’s a very broad landscape of opportunities.
- W: So there are thousands of opportunities – tens of thousands. Are they all technical and scientific in nature?
- C: No. That’s probably the biggest misconception that people have. The media is focusing on the scientific and technical jobs because a lot of the innovation and start-ups are focusing on that right now and they’re trying to figure out what new technology they can bring to the forefront to help with climate change. But we also need people in management and operations who can run companies in a sustainable way. We need people who have a background in policy, regulation, compliance, and enforcement to make sure that we have good, solid green policies behind this new economy. People with communications, marketing, sales, education, or advocacy skills are needed to create a demand for greener actions. Then, of course, we also need people with trade and service skills to implement a lot of the changes that are going to be happening in manufacturing, infrastructure, and things like that.
- W: You mentioned the “new economy.” What do you mean by that?
- C: A lot of people are focusing on the environmental side, and that’s part of the new economy. However, companies are also focusing on other goals, such as being more socially responsible – paying attention to the impact that companies have on the people – either the people they employ or the people in their community, or even the people behind the supply chain who provide materials for the company. Companies are also looking to become more sustainable, looking at the long-term impact of their practices. How is their business going to impact people seven generations out? We haven’t really had that in a business sense in a long, long time, and we’ve been taking more than the earth can provide us. So we need to rethink how we do some things. Then there is a big sector focused on cleaner technology. That’s using clean, renewable energy sources, conserving natural resources, and minimizing costs. When I talk about the “new economy”, I’m talking about all of those, rather than just green. It’s true that not all companies are on board with this yet, but you’d be surprised how many industries – mainstream companies – that have never paid attention to these issues before beginning to see that they need to incorporate this into the way they do business.
- W: With that said, how would you describe the current state of the new economy?
- C: I see that we’re in the earliest stages of an entirely new economic age. Thomas Friedman, the New York Times columnist and best selling author of *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, calls it the “Energy-Climate era.” I don’t see this as a bubble or a trend or a fad, although I’m asked that question all the time. I believe we are shifting how we do everything that we do – how we live, how we work, how we play. We can’t predict exactly what it’s going to look like in the “end”. We don’t know how long it’s going to take to even evolve. I like to compare it to the Industrial Revolution actually, which seems like a long time ago, but the Industrial Revolution happened over 150 years. We’re in the first year or two of this new transformation in our economy, so we’ve got some way to go. It probably won’t take 150 years – we don’t really have that much time – but I do see it evolving over the next couple of

decades. Each new technology that comes about is going to trigger new technologies beyond that and even new industries. So we're in a long-term transformation, and there are some exciting clues that large companies, venture capitalists, the government, and global interests are all focusing on this transformation at the same time.

W: Just to clarify, is the new economy just a green economy? There really is more to it than that, isn't there?

C: Yes, there is. In fact, what's really exciting to me is that the same actions that will help the environment are also the same actions that will help us deal with key issues that we're facing as a country, but also globally. National security will improve when we can decrease our dependence on foreign oil. Our ability to continue living in the world we live in that needs power for our computers and fuel for our cars requires us to come up with new solutions, because there are some who say that we have peaked in terms of oil supply, and that oil is becoming harder and harder to obtain and it's going to become more and more expensive. Even if we weren't paying attention to the environment at all and we didn't include green in this equation, we would still need to look for alternative ways to fuel our lives. Of course, we all know the economy is in desperate need of some new energy. With this new economy, there are definitely economic savings for companies that become more energy efficient, and with all of these changes there is definitely a boost moving toward new sources of jobs and new industries. It's a very exciting time.

W: So take a moment and explain why the efforts to help the environment are so critically important, specifically.

C: The scientists tells us that we have reached a point where we're getting close to 390 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. For most of us, that number means nothing, but what the scientists are saying is that we need to keep that number to 350 in order to retain our quality of life – and we're at 390. We're already seeing changes in the climate based on less than a degree increase. Ice is melting at tremendous rates in the colder areas of our world, but droughts are taking over in the hottest areas of our world. Thomas Friedman calls it "global weirding", not "global warming." Weird things are happening, and it's impacting us. Past ice ages have actually been triggered with less than 7 degrees of temperature change, so this is significant even if we go up 1 degree, which we are very close to doing. This isn't about saving the polar bear or saving the wildlife, which is important if you value that. This is about ensuring that future generations can live and enjoy our world. If things become very convoluted in our climate, we're going to stop being able to rely on the basic natural services that we live with, such as clean water, timber, and food. It's important to remember that this doesn't mean that we have to go to a minimalist style of living. We just need to get smarter and more inventive in how we handle our lives.

W: That's all so interesting. Let me ask you another question. What's the long-term picture for the green economy or the clean economy or the sustainable economy?

C: We're just beginning to see the transformations that have a potential to happen. Right now, there's a lot of focus on clean energy and transportation, but we can expect to see a significant change in how we build things, how we travel, how we eat, how we generate/distribute/store/manage power, how we manufacture products, how we create materials... You get the picture. It's changing, really, everything about our lives. This is exciting to many people, because we don't know exactly how it's going to turn out. It's like if you lived during the 1950s you couldn't

even imagine the computer technology that we have available to us now. We're on the forefront of another shift that's just as significant – some people are saying more significant – than even the invention of the Internet. The part that's unsettling to some people is that the road is not likely to be flat and straight. There are going to be some twists and turns. We're already starting to see consolidations in the solar industry as smaller companies are bought out. Old, outmoded industries are going to start fading while new industries grow, and that's going to be unsettling for people. There will also be technology shifts as one generation of technology takes over for the next. So there are two choices, really, that I see for all of us. We can either sit back and watch to see if it's really going to happen, or we can claim a front-row seat and be part of the action to make it happen – and that's what I'm so excited about for people who are engaged and intrigued by green careers. There are some exciting opportunities coming up.

- W: What do you think motivates certain people to want to pursue a green career?
- C: What we've seen in our research is that there are a couple of reasons. Some are motivated by a moral issue. They don't think it's morally correct for us to use more resources than our fair share. I don't know if you know this statistic, but I was surprised by it. In the US, we are 5% of the world's population, and yet we use 25% of the world's natural resources. That lifestyle is not sustainable in the long run. Then there are people who are really focused on our world for future generations. They want to make sure their children and their grandchildren and their children's grandchildren have a good life, so it aligns with their personal values. The third group is interested in the financial opportunity and the potential that's coming with these new industries. The best news of it all is that it's definitely possible to be committed to your values and also have a good paying, solid, professional job in the green economy.
- W: If someone was interested in transitioning into the green economy, what do you think the first step would be for him or her?
- C: The very, very first step to finding a green career is to identify a green focus. What area of the green economy aligns with your skills, your interest, your education, your experience, and your talents? That's a little hard to do, and I've spent most of my career helping others identify the niche they're best suited for. In the green economy, this is even more important, and there are very pragmatic reasons for this. As I mentioned earlier, when I was researching my book I found more than 50 industries that are making considerable efforts to move beyond business as usual. That's a lot of different career opportunities! It's no longer possible to research all of the options and then pick one. You would spend your entire life researching options and still probably not get to them all. Furthermore, it's unlikely that you're going to just fall into a green career because, at this stage, it takes a little elbow grease to get into a green career. Opportunities are not just sitting there, waiting. You need to really commit to an idea and take actions to get there. The more you can focus in on the idea that really suits you, the more focused and effective your job search is going to be at all levels, from exploring to writing your résumé to landing the job. Chapters 4-6 of the book are actually dedicated to finding your green niche.
- W: That sounds perfect. Suppose I'm working with a client and he's got his green focus. Now what? What do I recommend to him?
- C: The first thing is to understand that green focus, that industry. To see where a person's skills actually fit into the green economy, you have to understand it. You have to understand what the entire industry is doing and where your skills fit in.

Any kind of research requires two components: an online research component, and then actually talking to people. Chapter 14 of the book goes into this in great detail, giving you lots of strategic/tactical ideas. Clearly, if you're going to be talking to people, you need to build a network. In Chapter 15 of the book, I talk about different ways to build a green network, both online and in person. Sometime along the way there, you're probably going to have to build your education and your experience base – I talk about that in Chapter 16. Finally, you launch your job search, and that includes all the usual ways that you would find a job, but there are some tricks of the trade when you're trying to find a job within the green economy. I know this whole process is a little daunting to people, so I've created a 7-step plan to help people take this step by step rather than trying to do it all at once, because there really is an order to the process. This is a free offer that I have for the listeners of this interview. I'll share more information about that at the end of the call.

- W: That sounds great. You're right. It can be a little daunting, even for someone like myself whose career IS careers. So any guidance you can offer to your colleagues, as well as job seekers, would be great. Let me ask you another question. For people who are currently out of work, what do you recommend that they do?
- C: Finding a green career takes time, because it's all new territory. We don't have all the tools in place yet where you can go and find lists of all the job descriptions, and there aren't lists of green companies to look for. It takes some extra effort just to understand the fields, but then also to find the resources that you need. So if you need a job "yesterday" or "today" or "tomorrow", it's probably not possible to expect to land a green job right away. In addition to that, the green economy may not even be ready to hire you yet. Earlier in the interview I mentioned that the focus right now in many industries and companies is technical and scientific in nature, because they're trying to find the product or the service that they're going to sell, or they're trying to invent it even. So they may not be ready to hire people in marketing or environmental education or sales yet. If you have skills that the green economy is looking for, go for it. But if your skills are further down the path, you may need to get a different job right now, but the key is to find a job that's strategic and will align you with where you ultimately want to go. That's my biggest hope for people who need a job right now. I know it's a tough economic time, but if you even get an idea that you want to be in the green building industry or manufacturing, for example, you can get a job that will be a stepping stone job to your ultimate green career. When you have money coming in, you can go through the seven steps again with more time and more leisure to really hone in on the green career that's for you.
- W: Carol, this has been really interesting and great information. I had no idea. Now, tell me a bit about your book, *Green Careers for Dummies*.
- C: *Green Careers for Dummies* is a great place to start or even if you're deep in your green career search. It's in the usual "dummy" style – direct, detailed, and, of course, with a bit of humor thrown in. The first part of the book begins with an up-to-date, realistic overview of the green economy and green careers. If you've been relying on your mainstream media or even your home town paper to try to figure out what's going on in the green economy, I really recommend you read these first couple chapters. I point out ways that you can tell for yourself how the green economy is doing. It really is happening. We see signs every week. In fact, in the first week of January 2010, venture capitalists put more than \$113 million into green companies, and that was just in a span of four or five days. So things are happening, and we all need to know how to read these signs.

In the second part of the book, you'll find detailed "how-to" information about the steps you'll take to find your green career. The first and most important step for people to focus on is to discover how they are uniquely qualified to address the problems companies are facing as they enter the new economy. There are several chapters to help people explore their interests, skills, talents, and experience to figure out what part of the green economy they are best suited for. You'll also find several chapters full of specific strategies that will produce results in this new, evolving economy that we're in. By knowing what you need to do and in what order, you'll be able to save time, increase your efficiency, and definitely decrease your level of frustration.

The third part of the book is really the heart of the book. It's a catalog of 50 green industry profiles. These seven chapters are a treasure trove of information about a wide variety of industries. Whether you're trying to get the lay of the land of the green economy in general or you're interested in a specific sector of the economy, you'll find the descriptions, trends, and online resources to be a great starting point for your green career exploration.

- W: Wow! I can feel your passion about this topic. How did you get involved in green careers?
- C: I've actually been passionate and have felt very strongly about the environment since I was a small child. Conservation was always part of my family's way of being, whether talking about energy, water, wildlife, or land, it was all part of the mindset that we had in the family. For the last 19 years that I've had my business, I've always had two themes running. One theme related to nature, and the other theme related to helping people find careers. In 2007, I was at a conference with a colleague that was all about book marketing, and there were two messages that kept repeating throughout that conference. One was to focus on one thing, and I've always been torn between my two passions. The second one was don't wait until you're rich and famous to make a difference – find a way to live and work in a way that makes a difference right now. As the conference was coming to a close, I was having this internal battle between "Do I help people find careers that they love?" or "Do I really honor my passion for nature and the environment?" Thank goodness for my colleague, because she asked the critical question: "What if you helped people find green careers?" The minute she said that, I felt a shock of recognition run through my body, and I knew in that instant that that was what I was meant to do. For the next few days, I was in a constant state of brainstorming and, three years later, I'm still implementing the ideas I had in that initial brainstorm. My life has become green in many, many ways, and one of the most passionate things I do is pay attention to the innovations that are going in and helping people see the amazing opportunities that are opening before us.
- W: This has really been interesting. Do you have any final thoughts you'd like to share with us?
- C: I thought long and hard about my biggest message for people, and I really believe that all of the signs are pointing to the fact that this clean, green, sustainable economy is the next economic era. There are many people who are saying that. For one reason, we need to tackle the climate issue AND the energy issue, whether you're focusing on the environmental side of it or not. Both of these issues are at a point now where we need to have some new and innovative ways of looking at them. Now, there's no way to predict how all of this is going to unfold, so I really see this as the Wild Wild West of careers right now. Whether you're an active job seeker or career explorer or curious bystander or you're a career development professional, if you are listening to this interview, you are most likely an earlier

adopter. You are a pioneer in this new era. If you're intrigued by what's happening, I encourage you to commit some time each day, each week, to exploring what's happening out there. I think it's important for people to remember that they don't have to make a move right now, but if they start their exploration as all of these industries are beginning to develop, it's going to put them ahead of the curve. They're going to be in a place ahead of where everybody else is who is waiting to see what's going to happen, who is waiting to see if this is really real. Now is the time to prepare yourself. Invest some time and energy and money even in your future. Familiarize yourself with the green economy, your target industries, and your target profession. If you do this now bit by bit, you will see when the opportunities are there for you and you'll be ready to leap into a new economy career when the time is right for you. It's such an exciting time.

W: Earlier in our conversation, you mentioned the Seven Steps to Your Green Career. Can you tell everyone how to access those?

C: Absolutely. We actually have two offers, and they're both at [GreenCareersforDummies.com](http://www.GreenCareersforDummies.com). The first one is for green career seekers, and this is the "Seven Steps to Your Green Career" audio. This is what I referred to earlier. It's a step-by-step plan to help people find their green career. For those people who prefer to read, we also have a transcript there, as well as a short series of emails, so you can choose the best method for you to get that information. For career counselors and coaches, I've created a small report called "Where to Find What You're Looking for in *Green Careers for Dummies*". That has a short overview of the book with page numbers to take you directly to the key issues that you need to either know for yourself or share with your clients. Both of those offers are available at <http://www.GreenCareersforDummies.com>, as well as a link to purchase an autographed copy of the book.

W: As a career professional myself, sign me up! I'll take them! In closing, Carol, I want to thank you so very much for sharing all of this information. Even though I've been in the industry for a long, long time, I had no idea there was so much action in green careers. I can tell you are THE pioneer in green careers! For those who are listening, if you didn't get the website to visit for these offers, go to <http://www.GreenCareersforDummies.com>. Carol, thank you, and the best of luck.

C: Thanks, Wendy.