



LANNICK
GROUP of COMPANIES

November 2009

Keep your finance job, save the world!

Socially responsible business jobs for accountants

By Mark Swartz, MBA, M.Ed.

CareerActivist.com

Author, Speaker and Sustainable Career Specialist



Where are some of the best jobs for finance professionals despite this turbulent market? In companies that are serious about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), ethics and Green initiatives.

The more committed a business is to the realm of "sustainability," the likelier it is to value the integrity and risk management disciplines of a designated Accountant.

Sustainability has just begun to hit the mainstream in Canadian business. Essentially it is an umbrella term that covers a number of areas where companies try to better society (CSR) or the environment (Green), either to improve their brand reputation, meet legislative requirements, increase profitability, or attract quality staff who are socially conscious.

New concepts and terminology

While accounting professionals are accustomed to bottom lines, sustainability looks at the triple bottom line: people, planet, profit. This concept is also known as TBL or 3BL. The gist is that there is more to financial results than is found in a standard balance sheet or profit/loss statement. Phrases such as natural capital or social return on investment (SROI) are beginning to filter their way into the offices of finance executives.

This emerging lexicon also includes EcoBudget, lifecycle assessment (cradle to cradle analysis of costs and revenues), and stakeholders as opposed to merely shareholders. A common theme is the focus on external variables beyond traditional measures of wealth and profitability. Aspects such as fair trade and ethical procurement enter into the equation. Diversity and equity, transparent governance, organic and local production....all of these are part of sustainability's lingo.

Finding a socially responsible business employer

How to find an employer that holds both profits and social responsibility in high regard, where your services might well be in demand? In the green collar department, consider companies involved in renewable energy (think windmills, solar, biogas, geothermal), engineering or law firms with environmental practices, and industries such as waste processing, recycling, organic farming, resource conservation. A good starting point is Macleans magazine's list of **Canada's Greenest Employers**.

As for employers known for Corporate Social Responsibility, it makes sense to view the "**Best 50 Corporate Citizens**" lists for 2008 or 2009, prepared by **Corporate Knights** (the Canadian magazine for responsible business). Also the **Canadian Business for Social Responsibility** (CBSR) membership roster. To that you can add member businesses of the **Canadian Centre for Ethics and Corporate**

Policy, and the top performers on the **Jantzi/Macleans 50 Most Socially Responsible Corporations**. The social investing industry is an additional industry to watch.

Your recruiter is another great resource when it comes to better understanding an employer's commitment to social responsibility.

Here is a tip from Adine Mees, President and CEO of CBSR: "Seek out industries where there are already obvious aspects of CSR that directly impact profitability and the capacity to function within communities, such as mining or oil and gas." Your goal is to be at the intersection where significant stakeholder concerns and corporate strategy meet head on." As well, search for employer websites where they boast of their sustainability efforts. And keep an eye out for companies that issue a CSR or Sustainability Report in addition to the standard Annual Report.

Earning while returning

Employers who are frivolous about the environment and CSR may well cut back in these important areas during a downturn. However those who have seen that the benefits of deeper corporate citizenship outweigh the investment are likely to continue their core commitment to sustainability, though they may need to defer major projects until conditions improve. It's certainly worth investigating the latter type of employer and their employment opportunities. After all, why not better the world while earning private sector accountant salaries?

Toronto 416.340.1500 | Mississauga 905.848.6600 | North York 416.646.5300 | Ottawa 613.566.7048

www.lannick.com