

ELENA OLMEDO TRANSCRIPT

Segment 1 – Personal Background

>> ELENA: My name is Elena Olmedo I was raised in a bilingual home. My parents emigrated from El Salvador, both my mum and my dad, and today I am working at an energy efficiency firm in Berkeley. I was always very passionate about sustainability and I knew I wanted to work in this field, but I didn't know necessarily from what background; whether it would be from business, from law, from policy and so I kind of just started trying different fields for sustainability.

Segment 2 – Education & Qualifications

>> ELENA: So I started taking some [green business classes](#) at San Francisco's Community College. They have three different certification programs: the first one which I took was the **Green & Sustainable Business Certificate of Accomplishment**, and that really focuses on a wide array of different topics, including green marketing, how to green your business, LEED facilities, renewable energy, green IT. The program consists of five different courses.

There are also two other certificate programs. The **Green and Sustainable Small Business Certificate** targets small business owners who want to learn about the economic advantages of greening their business. The third one is a **Green & Sustainable Travel Certificate of Accomplishment** and it teaches you about the different opportunities in ecotourism, which is a huge industry and many companies are doing this kind of work.

I did an internship at a solar start-up company, a very entry level position. I was working in green marketing and I wrote a case study promoting their business. I also interned at the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance and I reviewed environmental review documents to get some experience. On my own free time, I attended conferences at the Commonwealth Club and saw a bunch of different guest speakers to learn more about opportunities in green business. I went to World Affairs Council meetings and SPUR meetings and I read the paper, the Tuesday New York Times Science edition - just anything I could do to find out what was going on in the Bay Area. There is such a unique opportunity to engage in this type of work.

Segment 3 – Deciding on a Career Path

>> **ELENA:** At the beginning when I first started it was totally confusing for me. I had no idea how I wanted to approach it and I felt s lost. I was like OK I've found sustainability, but what do I do now? I mean you can do waste reduction, transportation planning, urban design smart growth. Once you start actually doing the research and doing an internship, or getting a job you find out if you like it or not. You find out if it is for me. Then when you find something you are completely passionate about it. I did so many things to try and learn more about this field and that got me to where I am today.

Segment 4 – What the Job Entails

>> **ELENA:** I work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and I work with local governments at the municipal and community level, and basically what I do is I create a greenhouse gas inventory that accounts for emissions coming from transportation, from buildings, from waste water, from waste and I compile that into a spreadsheet, and then I target where I am going to get the most greenhouse gas emission reduction. The end goal is to create an energy action plan and that is basically a document that is a long-term strategy for cities to reduce green house gas emissions.

Segment 5 – Challenges

>> **ELENA:** There are challenges in this field. There are challenges of creating your own path to move in a certain direction. I think the first challenge that I encountered was trying to narrow down the focus to what I really wanted to do and finding what I was passionate about. The second challenge is that there is no designed or pre-constructed path for this job. People from all backgrounds can get in - you might have a background in economics or an in policy, and you still may be qualified for this position. So that kind of ambiguity make sit a little bit more difficult, but at the same time doing a lot of research and getting involved with different organizations that do this type of work can really help.

Segment 6 – Would You Recommend This Work? For Who?

>> **ELENA:** I love this field. I'm super passionate about this field and I think there is tremendous opportunity for anyone in this field whether you are doing solar panel installation or LEED certification, energy efficiency to policy and planning, this industry is going to grow immensely. I think it is fairly new and it's probably unusual. It's not like a job that you read about in a book. Do you want to be a doctor? Do you want to be a lawyer? People don't really know too much about this position. So I think the type of person would probably be interested in science, be interested in climate change, and most importantly for me is that I care about the environment and I want to do

something to make a difference. So I know that by reducing green house gas emissions at the local level, that is going to have a significant impact for the state.

I think it is really about being outgoing and just trying to network and take advantage of all of the resources available to you. If that means going to your teacher and talking to them about what the opportunities are in the green industry, do that. Any time I saw a student that was also in this field, I would go and talk to them and ask them what they were doing, and if I met someone working in the LEED industry, I might ask them what is LEED certification – anything that I could do to learn, got me to this position. And even when I was unsure of myself, and when I didn't know what I was talking about or wasn't as confident, I still talked to architects, to urban planners and just tried to engage. So I would say be as outgoing as you can. Just jump into the field.

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