

**Land Your Dream  
Green Job**  
Know What Employers  
Are Looking for



ECO CANADA

# Qualities of Employees

When deciding to hire, retain or promote an employee, employers consider three main categories of competencies and attributes:



- **Hard Competencies**



- **Soft Competencies**



- **Personality Attributes**

# Hard Competencies

These are the hard competencies that environmental employers seek:

- University degrees
- Technical/College degrees, certificates and diplomas
- Industry Certifications
- Long term experience (for Senior and Intermediate)
- Strong technical/ scientific skills, depending on the discipline
- An environmental designation
- Bilingualism (Quebec only)

In some cases, these hard competencies are less important to employers than soft competencies and personality attributes

# Soft Competencies

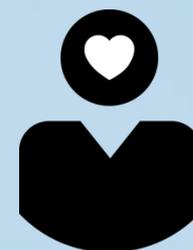
Employers seek the following soft competencies in environmental professionals:

- Good communications skills, including writing
- Critical thinking
- Customer service skills
- Business savvy
- Ability to innovate
- Resourcefulness
- Research/tech savvy
- Leadership skills



# Personality Attributes

- Personality attributes are important qualities that employers look for, both **when hiring a new candidate and in their expectations for an employee** thriving in an environmental career.



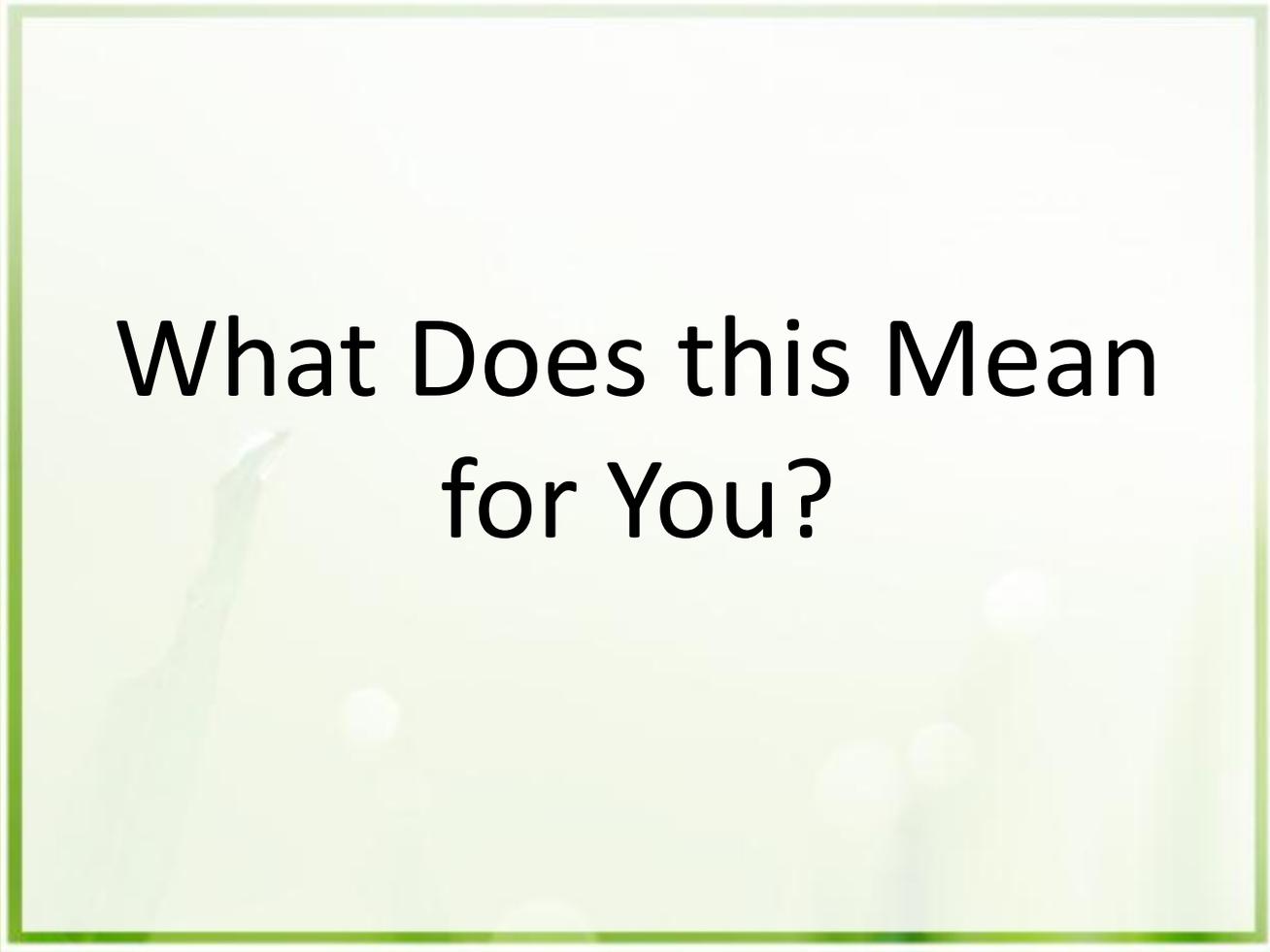
- Since staff in this industry often need to work independently with minimal supervision both in the office and in the field, **employers need self-starters who are responsible and confident, with a “can-do” attitude.**



# Personality Attributes

The most important personality attributes that environmental employers look for are:

- “Can Do” Attitude
- Goal-Oriented
- Self-Confident
- Independent Worker
- Committed
- Autonomous
- Personable
- Self-Disciplined
- Curious
- Demonstrates good judgement
- Team player
- Keen and enthusiastic
- Presentable
- Flexible
- Hard working
- Works Well under Stress
- Good “Fit” with the Team
- Exhibits Integrity

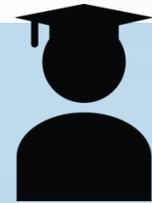


**What Does this Mean  
for You?**

# Advice for Educators

## Encourage students to develop the attributes that employers seek

- The education system is **not sufficiently providing students with the skills that employers are seeking**, and therefore many graduates are not considered to be “complete” candidates



- The post-secondary school system is advised to teach students the skills employers find the most lacking: **communication and critical thinking**



- In order to build technical competencies, universities should provide more opportunities for **fieldwork and internships**
- Technical schools should pay more attention to **writing and theoretical thinking**

# Advice for Environmental Professionals

## How to get a job, keep a job and thrive in an environmental career

- Develop the strengths and characteristics that employers want: **Strong communication skills, critical thinking and resourcefulness**. The ability to be an enthusiastic, “can-do” person that is diligent and personable.

- **Emphasize these strengths** in interviews—be ready with **success stories** that demonstrate your use of these strengths.



- **Be proactive in determining what training and career development activities you should pursue**. HR managers admit that they don't have in-depth knowledge of specialized areas and will be responsive to the training options (including general business training) suggested by employees.

# Advice for Educators

Provide a balanced perspective—few students will become environmental activists

- Environmental employers sometimes criticize post-secondary educators for erring on the side of the “environmentalist” position—that is teaching students to be avid environmentalists rather than **teaching them to take a balanced and objective perspective.**
- Negative connotations are often associated with the term “environmentalist.” Those working in the environmental field tend to **see themselves and their employees as “scientists” or “sustainability experts,”** rather than “environmentalists.”





**Environmentalism  
within the  
Environmental Sector**

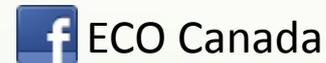
# Advice for Environmental Professionals

- It is important to **understand an organization's commitment to the environment within the context of other considerations**. Just because the organization is involved in an environmental business does not mean that they are looking for employees that are passionate about the environment to the exclusion of having a balanced perspective.
- Most successful environmental employees are those that are **reasonable, objective and rational**, rather than overly passionate about the environment. They are **interested in the science behind their work, about innovation, or about servicing their clients**. Successful professionals seek employment with an organization whose values align with their own.
- Passion for the environment can be a long-term career motivator. Many seasoned environmental professionals told us that **making a difference for the environment** has made the challenge of their careers worthwhile.

Discover more ways to find the right  
environmental career for you.

Email us today at  
[hrrservices@eco.ca](mailto:hrrservices@eco.ca)

[www.eco.ca](http://www.eco.ca)



---

**Canada**

This project was funded by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those held by the Government of Canada.

Copyright © 2012 ECO Canada

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication, whether it is reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or means (including electronic, mechanical, photographic, photocopying or recording), without the prior written permission of ECO Canada is an infringement of copyright law.