Employability Guide

Tips to Help You Launch Your Environmental Career
At ECO Canada, environmental careers are our business. We know that starting your career can be tricky, so we’ve put together some building blocks for the skills you’ll need.

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LEADERSHIP
10 Tips to Help You Stand Out and Advance in Your Organization

No matter what level you are at – entry, intermediate or senior – you can stand out in your role and demonstrate leadership skills to help you grow and advance. Here are ten proven tips that any employee should consider to become a leader.

1. Start preparing before you enter the workforce
   Improve confidence and skills to take on team-related situations that will be applicable at work. Check out charitable organizations or professional associations where you can volunteer. These groups have openings to lead at the board, committee, special project or event levels.

2. Continuous learning and knowledge creates expertise and innovation
   Having the knowledge to back-up practical experience allows you to initiate ideas. You can’t go wrong reading books or taking professional development courses to increase technical expertise and hone specializations. Employees that innovate and lead new projects will be considered for advancement. Subscribe to online resources and seek out professional groups.

3. Connect with people on a personal level
   Get to know your peers better and let them get to know you. People are loyal to those they like, respect, admire or can relate to; they connect with each other on a personal level, not a business level. Having a least a few characteristics or qualities in common improves collaboration and the ability to succeed.

4. Get comfortable in dynamic environments
   In an ever-changing and competitive business landscape, strong organizations value self-efficacy, high achievement, autonomy, and the ability to take decisive actions in the face of uncertainty. You should have the ability to ‘shift on the fly’ and act quickly in response to change.

5. Take time to assess the culture of the organization
   To create a harmonious environment and set yourself up for stronger performance evaluations, align your work behavior to what your supervisor is looking for. How does he like to receive status updates and reports? Is she more formal or causal in terms of workflow collaboration? One of the simplest things you can do is adapt your role to your supervisor’s expectations.

Even if your ultimate goal is to climb the ladder and advance, make sure you excel at the job you were hired to do. This will be the foundation for career success.
Find a mentor
Look for a senior colleague who is viewed as an effective leader within the organization. Approach this person at an appropriate time and ask for opportunities to shadow them or contribute to a project they lead. This will provide great insight and the advantage of observing firsthand how they have become successful.

Be proactive about areas where you can provide a solution
Contributing to your team with a solution-based mindset is a valuable skill. Look at a problem and challenge the norm in a positive way; this quality is a way to produce and impact results. For example, you may be savvy with online systems and could offer efficiency suggestions to technical projects.

Offer your help
A helpful attitude can help you gain more cross-team exposure and generate more visibility with key influencers. Be eager about contributing to ‘stretch’ projects or committees that impact business objectives, team culture or customer experience.

Respect deadlines and pay attention to quality
You may find that you’re expected to deliver multiple assignments at once. Learn how to prioritize and find a way to get the work done. It’s also important to deliver quality even if your assignments are not very appealing. If you can’t do the basics well, no one will trust you with more challenging tasks.

Be transparent and lead with integrity
An effective and well respected leader is open, honest and real. Be confident, not arrogant. Confident leaders lead through values, vision, and vulnerability. Arrogant leaders lead through fear, blame, and ego.
COMMUNICATING & PRESENTING
5 Key Communication Techniques for the Workplace

Communicating may seem as easy as breathing, but in the business world it’s crucial to get it right. We’re often bombarded with information; it’s important to communicate clearly and professionally to cut through the noise.

1 Know your audience
Ask yourself key questions before you begin:
• Who will be reading or listening to me?
• What do they want to know?
• What do they already know?
• Consider any gaps in knowledge that only you can close

2 Create an outline
Even something as routine as a meeting with your supervisor or co-workers is a chance to show you’re a great communicator. Start by planning what you need to say and creating a logical order for the information you’re communicating.

3 The purpose and your main points are clear
Once you’ve determined who your audience is, and what they know, you’ll have a better understanding of the information you need to communicate. Think about the main purpose - is it to answer a question or to educate the reader?

Once you’ve determined purpose the next step is to create points that are clear and concise. This is the time when you can practice what you will say or write. It’s easy to get sidetracked; try and stick to your main points.

4 Be prepared to ask and answer questions
When you’re communicating information you should always be prepared to answer questions about it. Perhaps you’re considered the subject matter expert at your company; even if you’re not, if you’re communicating information you’ll have knowledge of the basic facts and principles. A best practice is to think ahead and draft a list of potential questions, and how you’ll answer them, in a similar way you would prepare for an interview.

When you’re engaged in a discussion it’s always a good idea to ask questions. This can help you clarify information and set expectations. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and double check. It will save you and your colleagues from frustration down the line.

5 Be open and receptive
Communication isn’t a one-way street. To become an effective communicator you need to practice being a great listener too. The key to successful communication is being open to what others have to say. Listen closely to what’s being said and try not to think of your response while the person is still speaking. Validating the person’s experience really helps open up lines of communication. When you make an effort to understand and respect each other’s opinions, then you can work together much more effectively.
Keep it consistent
Many companies create presentation templates to keep their corporate branding consistent. Check with your company if there is a standardized template already available - this makes creating your presentation quicker and easier for you. If your company doesn’t have a template then get creative! It’s best to stick to your company’s colour scheme (look at their logo and letterhead for examples). If your company colours are red and blue, then stick with those for your presentation theme (using purple and yellow wouldn’t represent your company’s brand).

What to include:
• Include clear and relevant content
• Create an easy to follow structure
• Clear and logical transitions are a must
• Keep text minimal but large enough to read (use bullet points)
• Incorporate visuals: screenshots, charts, photos and other visuals can help to illustrate key points
• Simplify graphs and charts so they’re readable
• Add links to tools or resources your audience might find useful
• Include takeaways that will resonate with your audience

Make notes
Use speaker notes to help you stay on track. Use built-in features on programs such as Powerpoint to add notes, or have cue cards on hand to help you stay focused. Keep your notes simple and easy to read so that you can find the content you need quickly and keep your presentation flowing.

Avoid jargon when possible
If you have a mixed audience it’s best to minimize any jargon to ensure the presentation is easy for everyone to understand. If terms and methods aren’t familiar to the audience then take a few seconds to explain them. Depending on your audience, you may need to include specific technical terms. In fact, if you’re giving a technical presentation then you’ll need to “talk the talk”, just be considerate of your listeners and their understanding of the topic.

Proof your content
Even if you have no editor in your department, find someone who would be willing to read your content and proof it for basic grammar and spelling. If you are presenting technical content, it’s best practice to have it vetted by a supervisor or senior staff member. Double check any charts and graphs to make sure the figures are correct. Don’t forget to check any links you’ve included.

Practice!
Do a trial run of your presentation. Check slides, transitions, and read your notes aloud.
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Top 10 Project Must-Do’s

If you’re tasked with managing projects these 10 areas of management are keys to creating success.

1. Integration Management
A collection of processes required to ensure that the various stages of the project are properly performed.

2. Scope Management
The act of defining what work is required and then making sure that all work, and only that work, is done accurately.

3. Time Management
The practice of planning the amount of time spent on specific activities, and how different aspects of the project can cause inefficiencies if not considered.

4. Cost Management
The management of collecting, analyzing, evaluating and reporting on cost information for the project – including the development and monitoring of budgets, estimates and forecasts.

5. Risk Management
The identification, evaluation and prioritization of any known risks to a project.

6. Stakeholder Management
The action of involving any individual, group or organization that can affect, be affected or needs to be informed throughout the project.

7. Communications Management
Development of a plan to properly communicate the different aspects of the project to the appropriate individuals and channels.

8. Quality Management
A process for ensuring all the necessary steps in the project are delivered effectively and efficiently to accomplish the promised project objectives and outcomes.

Management of the different team players within the breadth of the project.

10. Procurement Management
The management of different contractors or labourers that may need to be involved to successfully complete the project.

5 Phases of Project Management

- **Initiation**
  Setting up the project’s scope, time and cost.

- **Execution**
  Applying resources and people to perform the tasks. Getting the work done!

- **Planning**
  Defining a schedule, budget and work plan for your project.

- **Monitor & Control**
  Checking that work and results are on time and on track.

- **Delivery & Closing**
 Finishing administration, documenting lessons learned & releasing the team.
Many environmental professionals will engage in project management related activities, even in the early stages of their career. Having the knowledge and training you need will help you be an effective project manager.

Your organization may have additional training available for you. If project management is something you’re interested in, there are certifications and designations available such as Professional Project Manager (PMP).

There are lots of valuable online resources that can help you stay on top of your projects. Some useful project tools include:

For a more in-depth look at each area of Project Management, consider signing up for ECO Canada’s online course

**Project Management Basics (15 hours)**

- 11 topics from the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)
- Environmental examples and scenarios relevant to your career
- Industry best practices, business objectives and regulatory issues unique to environmental professionals

**What is your Earned Value?**

What is Earned Value Management?

Earned Value Management (EVM) is a project management technique for measuring project performance and progress. It has the ability to combine measurements of scope, schedule and cost to provide an indication of how a project is performing.

To get started, you need to have:

1. A project plan that identifies the work to be accomplished
2. A valuation of how much the planned work should cost, called Planned Value (PV)
3. Earning rules (metrics) that quantify the cost of accomplished work, called Earned Value (EV)

Click Next to continue.
BUSINESS WRITING
Great writing is an essential skill in the digital age. Here’s some tips and tricks to help you succeed.

1. **Formal vs informal: think about your audience**
   Use formal tone for an audience or person you don’t know: e.g. “Thank you for the presentation, it was helpful and informative.” Informal is OK if you’re writing to a friend or close colleague e.g. “Thanks for the info! I definitely learned something.”

2. **Be aware of your tone**
   Since writing doesn’t convey tone the same way that speech does, it’s crucial to consider the ‘tone’ of your written communication. Email is often the worse culprit for miscommunication. There are a few ways to keep the tone positive:
   - Try to be clear and stick to the subject matter
   - Use positive words like “should” instead of ‘must’
   - Choose friendly salutations to avoid conveying a negative tone

3. **Keep it short and sweet**
   The purpose of business writing is to communicate effectively. Keeping your sentences, paragraphs and even documents short makes them more readable. People are more likely to read something in a digestible format, just be careful to communicate the right tone (see above).

4. **Passive vs active voice:**
   Depending on what type of document you’re working on you may want to consider using active instead of passive voice. What’s the difference?
   - Passive voice implies something was done to someone or an object. Passive voice is often used in technical and scientific writing as it avoids using personal pronouns, information seems less biased, and it can be used to describe events objectively.
   - Active voice implies doing something to a person or an object. Active voice is preferred for business communication as it can add a personal touch.

5. **Check, check, and check again!**
   Read your work back to yourself, correct any mistakes, and repeat! If you’re writing something on behalf of your company, or as a spokesperson, it’s always best to have a second pair of eyes take a look at your work before sending.

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**5 Things to Avoid**

1. Looking unprofessional: don’t use ‘text’ talk or emojis
2. Spelling mistakes: read through your work - don’t always trust spellcheck
3. Double check the spelling of names to avoid embarrassing mistakes
4. Beware of tone: when writing emails or other business communication it’s hard to tell what you mean
5. Avoid confusing the reader: keep your writing clear and concise

**Writing Resources**

- How to Improve Your Business Writing
- Center for Communication Practices
- Effective Business Writing: Top Principles and Techniques
- 8 Must-Read Books on Business Writing
- Purdue Online Writing Lab
TECHNICAL WRITING
The 3 Stages of Technical Writing
Plan | Write | Revise

1 Plan
Find out which key information and data you need to include.
Use the 4 C’s:
• Create an outline
• Clarify the purpose
• Consider your audience
• Check for existing material

2 Write
Keep your audience in mind. Do they have the same skills as you? Are they familiar with the terminology? ECO’s Technical Writing course offers tools to help you determine knowledge gaps in your audience.

Writing Technical Reports
Below are specific sections you may need to include for formal, technical reporting:

• Executive summary or abstract
• Table of contents
• Introduction
• Background or historical info
• Results and findings
• Figures and/or tables
• Recommendations
• Methods used
• Conclusion
• Glossary of terms
• References you cited

3 Revise
• Read through your work: proofread and check for errors
• Send it for review: ask your supervisor or someone senior to approve
• Respond to comments: use tracking tools when possible
• Check formatting and make any changes

Your company may have a specific way of writing reports. Check for any templates before you begin.
Technical Report Title

INTRODUCTION
A brief description of what your company did, why it was asked to do it and who they are completing the report for. E.g. ABC Consultants completed air quality sampling between May and July 2016 at the XYZ Factory. Sampling was conducted on behalf of the City of Townsville. This report contains ABC’s findings and methodology.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
A short overview of your findings and conclusions for readers that don’t have time to read the whole technical report. E.g. ABC Consultants conducted four rounds of sampling and determined that air quality levels were within normal range. Therefore, we recommended an annual sampling program. State your findings in summary form

BACKGROUND / HISTORICAL DATA
Here’s your chance to list any previous issues, or reference findings from reports done by other companies.

RESULTS
This is the main body of your report. Include sub-headers for different sections. Use sub-headers to organize sections

1 Results sub-header
Our company compared results from two different sites and here is what we found:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SITE 1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION
List any previous issues, or if other companies have reported on this topic you can reference their findings. Label figures and tables in order

GLOSSARY
Define any terminology used in the report

ABC Consultants: Amazing Business Communication Consultants

REFERENCES
CERTIFICATION & MENTORSHIP
What is an EP Certification?

ECO Canada offers the following certifications:

- Environmental Professional (EP)
- Environmental Professional in-training (EPt)

Environmental Professional (EP) Certification helps elevate expertise, provides a professional standard for new practitioners to aspire to and ethical standards for every practitioner to adhere to. It also helps employers gauge the skills and knowledge of candidates.

EP® Certification is based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Environmental Employment including 14 diverse areas related to Environmental Protection, Resource Management, and Environmental Sustainability. Each specialization has a unique set of standards for proficiency, creating the foundation for certification.

As Canada’s only national environmental designation, EP® provides formal recognition of environmental expertise and professional integrity.

3000+ professionals have taken the Environmental Professional (EP) and Environmental Professional in-training (EPt) certifications.

EPS & EPts get access to great resources:

- Free Job Seeker Playbook
- Free access to networking events
- Free webinars
- 25% off courses and training
- Other member perks (discounts at retail vendors)

Take the quiz to find out if you can be an EP

Visit us at eco.ca/certification
Mentoring: What Does ECO Offer?

ECO is launching a brand new mentoring program for Environmental Professionals in-training

EPts will have access to:
• A virtual mentoring conference held every 3 months
• A place to learn directly from industry professionals
• A chance to learn valuable business practices and life skills, as well as industry best practices
• A way to connect with other EPts
• Inside access to industry research and trends
• A place to ask questions
• 4 webinars throughout the year designed just for EPts

Topics covered:
• Skill-building: Sessions to develop specific knowledge areas
• Situations: Mentors sharing advice on topics like performance reviews and workplace conflict
• Stories: Q&A sessions and real-world experiences
• Shifts: Issues such as changing career focus or going back to school

Access to Mentoring

Become an EPt for access to mentorship, training, industry insights and more.

Contact us at info@eco.ca for more information.
Continue Your Journey

You’re one step closer to growing your environmental career
Let us help you continue on your way.
Visit us for tools, training, jobs and more career resources.

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