



Sustainability is an emerging field with highly educated individuals entering into it from a wide range of backgrounds, which has created demand for specialized training, according to key findings from a survey released by Sustainable Plant.

The sustainability survey, conducted in collaboration with the International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP), received input from more than 700 professionals working in the field.

The survey found the most common educational backgrounds of sustainability professionals don't match the skill sets considered most important to be successful in the field.

While sustainability professionals are well educated, nearly 80 percent said they intend to pursue additional sustainability-related training. That bodes well for educators, consultants and training facilities concentrating on sustainability professional development, according to the study.

Sustainability professionals also have wide-ranging backgrounds, and often have backgrounds in several disciplines. Among respondents, 77 percent come from health and safety, 67 percent from quality control, 66 percent from environmental hazardous materials management, 64 percent from risk management and 62 percent from compliance jobs, according to the survey.

The survey also found 69 percent of respondents have less than 10 years of experience in the sustainability profession.

Those surveyed named communication as the most important skill in the profession. Other skills that ranked towards the top were influencing change and change management, leadership and motivating others, technology and engineering expertise, problem solving and financial analysis.

An annual global study released in February by MIT Sloan Management Review and The Boston Consulting Group found sustainability is paying off for a growing number of companies with 37 percent of surveyed executives reporting a profit from their efforts, a 23 percent rise over last year.

The study, which is based on a survey of 2,600 executives and managers from companies around the world, found nearly half of the companies have changed their business models as a result of sustainability opportunities, a 20 percent jump over last year.