

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Judith Ruppert

My name is Judith Ruppert and I am an environmental consultant at 360 Environmental, a Western Australian environmental management consultancy. We provide a wide range of environmental services, including carbon and energy management, impact, site and contamination assessments, flora and fauna surveys, compliance reporting, and environmental monitoring and training. After a Bachelor of Business at Goethe University in Frankfurt Germany, I did a Master of Environmental Policy and Management at Lincoln University in New Zealand.



Courtesy of
Judith Ruppert

My responsibilities. I am responsible for undertaking environmental impact assessments (EIA), developing and implementing environmental management plans, conducting audits and managing and reducing our clients' carbon footprint. I also ensure our clients comply with relevant environmental legislation and help them prepare compliance documents for submission to the Environmental Protection Agency. I also develop, organize and present environmental training workshops to enhance environmental awareness throughout a company. Apart from the typical office work, I also go out into the field and do fauna surveys to assess the impact of projects on conservation significant species.

A typical day at work. For an EIA, for example, I do background research about the site I am assessing, which includes finding out about the, for example, biological, hydrological, geological, and social/cultural situation onsite. I then do a risk assessment, analysing the probability and potential consequences of the project. After that, I would give recommendations on how to mitigate potential adverse effects. For more business related topics, I would do research on different ways of improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon or water footprints. I'd then put together a management plan and a presentation and liaise with the client on how to best convey the message to employees. There are of course also more mundane tasks to do such as doing data entry, reviewing energy or carbon data and making sure everything is on track and compliant. When I'm out in the field, I would walk through environmentally sensitive areas, counting animal scat or finding tracks and nests to be able to assess the likely occurrence of a species.

Juggling bottom lines. Our business is based on the triple bottom line, in fact our slogan is people, planet, profit. Every day we have to juggle the economic interests of our clients with the environmental and social impacts of a big infrastructure, mining or oil and gas projects. Especially in Australia where the resource sector is a major part of the economy, environmental and social impacts are often significant. Also, given the fact that many projects in Western Australia affect indigenous communities, which represents a whole different level of social impacts than the usual neighbouring properties issue. As environmental practitioners, we have the responsibility to protect the environment as good as possible while not stifling the national resource industry, which in some situations is a big challenge. Barrow Island for example is a class A Nature Reserve off the coast of northern Western Australia, which now has LNG and oil being extracted from it – probably one of the most controversial projects in Australia, which requires a balance act between economic and environmental interests.

Here's an example. When working with clients on increasing their energy efficiency and reducing their carbon footprint, decisions are based on environmental and moreover financial factors. With



one client, who had numerous car yards around Australia and also owned a refrigerated truck/logistics company, I had to work viable energy efficiency opportunities. In this specific case, we had seven different opportunities identified: from staging compressor loads so the big compressor was only used during peak hours, to upgrading to more energy efficient equipment, to changing their entire lighting system. I first calculated their energy cost savings over the life of the project and then subtracted the sum of the initial investment cost, the ongoing maintenance cost over the life of the project, the cost of assessment and other compliance costs. I then divided that number by the number of project years, which enabled me to compare the seven net annual savings.

The initial investment cost included e.g. the cost of buying a new compressor or more fuel-efficient trucks while maintenance cost covered all cost arising when e.g. servicing the new equipment etc. Costs of assessment typically include consultant fees, energy consumption metering cost or time spent by staff members to collect data or communicate outcomes. Compliance costs cover all fees occurring through hiring consultants to write compliance reports or internal staff time when liaising with the external consultant.

Although this approach does not take into account the depreciation over time, it yet gave us an indication of which project was the most financially viable. For companies who have to report under the Australian Clean Energy Mechanism (Carbon Tax), factoring in carbon liabilities with \$23 per ton CO₂ would be an addition to the above-mentioned calculation. However, for this approach, energy consumption has to be converted into CO₂ emissions before financial burdens can be calculated.

Use the business-speak wisely! When talking to decision-makers you rarely encounter people with an environmental or CSR background – you more likely talk to business-minded people. In this case it is crucial to use an approach that is using business-speak when trying to convince your client why they should spend a lot of money for something that is not part of their core business. Good indicators to use are figures around return on investment (ROI), cost savings, decreased legal liabilities, enhanced reputation amongst the public, and increase in sales etc. However, it always depends on who you are talking to – don't play the hard business person when talking to very environmentally and socially aware people – motivate them with passion. In contrast to that, don't talk about hugging trees when talking to the CFO of a business. Appealing to people's emotions is great, but backing it up with numbers often helps projects getting realized.

Navigating trade-offs. The main challenge being an environmental consultant is the balance act between the triple bottom line factors: ideally, you want to achieve the best environmental and social outcomes possible, but this is often being stifled by economic and especially financial interests. As the market is very competitive in Western Australia, the project budgets are usually very tight, which often leads to decisions based on 'best information available' and 'the best solution for the resource industry' rather than the best outcomes for the environment and indigenous communities.

Questions

1. What concepts and tools mentioned in this chapter's main text can you spot in Judith's words? Which core concepts and tools are absent? Why?
2. What examples of the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability can you find in Judith's story? What relationships between these three dimensions can you spot?
3. What role do different sectors play in Judith's sustainability management activities? How do different sectors interrelate and mutually influence each other?
4. Could you imagine to be an environmental consultant like Judith or would you prefer to work as an internal sustainability director like Kene (see practitioner profile in Chapter 2)?

PRACTITIONER PROFILE

Mariné Azuara

My name is Mariné and I am an Administration and Public Relations Leader for a power plant in Mexico that is part of the global power company AES. I am an accountant by original training, have an MBA.

My responsibilities. I am responsible for improving the relationship between the company and the community, and also between the company and local authorities. In addition, I am managing the administration and monitoring the operation of the document control area, general services and accounts payable. I am working for results, meeting the objectives and commitments that the company determined. I am also leading internal and external programmes and social responsibility activities. Furthermore, I am responsible for the PR department.

What I do during a day at work. I typically establish and manage activity programmes with the community and regularly visit the community to monitor its needs. I also manage donations from the company to communities and coordinate visits of the community to the plant (schools, mainly universities). I frequently manage local authority permissions, and the document control area (monitoring archives management, managing information from the data system, planes control, etc.).

Another area leading to a myriad of things to do is to manage the general services area and monitoring the implementation of the activity plans for buildings, offices, rooms, among many others. This includes the management of the chauffeur's service, coordinating events (celebrations) of the company, the AES recreational club, vehicles fleet, cell phones, buildings, lawyers and travel. I am even handling petty cash, and contract cleaning, gardening, plumbing and consulting for the entire plant. I also lead in the management of expatriate documentation, analyse costs and capital projects of the plant. I communicate necessary information to staff through my department's communication.

Ethics, responsibility, and sustainability in my job. The three topics not only play an important role in my work, but my position is ruled by these concepts in all the activities that I do. I will explain the reason. In AES we have five values: Safety first, act with integrity, fulfilling commitments, strive for excellence and enjoy the work. Fulfilling these values is a matter of responsibility and ethics, and all the values are present in my duties. Because it is more than customer service, it is being a good neighbour and good companion, with a joint social responsibility, talking internally and externally. Acting ethically is a way of life in AES, not just words, they are facts, which in turn makes us responsible for our actions with the values and code of conduct.

Fulfilling both concepts of 'responsibility and ethics,' I can assure that I can be sustainable, that is what AES requires from me. To meet the standards we are certified with ISO9001, ISO14001 and OHSAS 18001, with best practices in the ISO26000 and SA8000, and fulfilling the requirements of the World Bank. My role is not operational, it is a support area, however it is very important for energy availability, the overall objective of the company.

Stakeholder effectiveness is extremely important for my position to achieve results that satisfy stakeholders' goals. In my role, I manage the relationship with the community, employee, some of the suppliers, and shareholders.



Courtesy of
Mariné Azuara



Questions

1. Mariné's job title indicates that she is a 'leader'. When you first read her title, would you have imagined that her job looks the way she described? In your view, to what degree does the job title and job match?
2. Whom does Mariné lead, whom does she follow? What are her typical practices of leading and following?
3. What might standards like the ones of the World Bank and of the ISO14001 have to do with following?
4. What societal contributions and/or professional conduct aspects can you possibly identify in Mariné's profile?