

70 GREEN BUSINESS IDEAS

TO OFFER OUR CHILDREN A FUTURE

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*"Many shall be restored that now are fallen
and many shall fall that now are in honor."* Horace – Ars Poetica

PREFACE:

“We are fundamentally conditioned by two essential characteristics. One is opportunism. And the other is greed.” Paolo Saleri, The 11th Hour Documentary

I spent a long time reflecting on these words. Later in the 11th Hour documentary, speakers go on to explain how we’ve institutionalized greed through the creation of the corporation.

We all buy from corporations, we can identify their logos, the stuff they sell is affordable and we know their products and services are of good quality. So far, that’s all we had to worry about. But there is a problem with this equation: corporations are causing wide spread environmental degradation and global warming to serve our needs and to meet their bottom line.

The State supposed to regulate the corporations is not doing its job because it benefits from the corporation’s revenue stream. So we have two gigantic institutions not only failing to serve humanity but engineering its demise. The root of the problem is their focus: money. If you focus on just one thing in life, you miss out on a lot of other things. Our short-term decisions are causing us to lose sight of the long-term implications.

Very few corporations pay for or fully take into account the environmental cost of their production. If they did, many would be unprofitable. Instead, they chose to use a free subsidy from Nature, borrowing from future generations. Some have called this inter-generational tyranny. However much some of these companies would like us to believe they take the environment seriously there is an extensive body of evidence that shows they don’t. So what do we do about it?

When I set up [Ecochanges](#) I was looking for a way to create ripples. When you throw stones in the water the surface moves to create beautiful shapes. If you throw just one stone, the ripples soon die off. But if you throw many, the surface takes on a life of its own so the effect lasts longer. I wanted to create something that would take on a life of its own and hopefully last longer than ripples. So I created two vehicles for change. One is the consultancy. The other is these seeds.

I’m not pessimistic about mankind. We’re a young species; we’ve made one big mistake by over-relying on fossil fuels. I see people who understand our environmental problems saddened by their magnitude and their lack of power over them. Others prefer to bury their head in the sand because it’s too painful to face up to the problems. Whenever I’ve had a problem I found difficult to surmount, I’ve broken it down into its smaller parts to make it manageable. I hope the same methodology can be applied to global warming.

The amazing thing with human potential is that it only takes one person with enough mental energy to implement change. That’s why we elect a prime minister to manage millions of lives. Is this privilege reserved to a select few? Or is it something that is asleep within each and every one of us waiting to be awoken?

For all its negatives, I am irresistibly attracted to business, I just can’t help it. It’s the only way I’ve found to live free from the constraints of employment. In the several years I’ve been in business I’ve also discovered that it can be very boring. My prime requirement used to be money. Now I look for an intellectual challenge. In many ways, I run my business like a laboratory. I conduct real life experiments and observe the results to gain insight, experience and knowledge. In the process I learn more about myself, human nature and how to get best results. There is no place like business to satiate one’s curiosity, to create works of art and to realize one’s potential. For this reason, I’m convinced business can be part of the solution to our global problems.

I now have to be incredibly careful about what I do and how I do it. I was attracted to running a green business because the sector was growing. I spotted a trend and decided to join it. Whilst conducting my research I came to realize that the magnitude of the problem we faced is far greater and far more dangerous than I had initially realized. With this new awareness, I decided that it was not good enough just to run a business. I had to do what I could to implement change so I created a platform for people to gain knowledge fast: [Ecochanges](#). That's still a work in progress. I found my niche: a sector that is always changing, stimulating and where I can make a difference.

Your needs may be very different from mine. You need to find out what you value most before you get your business to run exactly the way you want it to. It takes time to figure it out. Is it security? Are you looking for financial freedom? Are you looking for something that fulfils you emotionally? Are you looking for a challenge? Do you want to apply your skill set in a new field? Do you want to build something and watch it flourish? What do you want out of your working life?

The beauty of running your own business is that whatever your needs are, the business can meet them because you shape it so you have control over its outcomes. But you don't have to know what you want out of it when you start out. Running your own business is a process of discovery. It's about trial and error; you start blind and you gradually gain back your sight. You need to keep an open mind as your level of involvement progresses so that you can adapt your creation to match your needs. I designed my list of business ideas to match a wide skill set, different time commitments and ambitions.

You may be wary about attaching your heart and soul to an idea that is publicly available. If too many people are doing the same thing, profit margins fall as competition increases. Only the fittest and the strongest survive. Why should you commit your time and hard earned money to a venture others may be developing at the same time as you?

This is a good question. You should probably get in touch with us and ask if we are aware of anyone else developing the same concept. Once the forum is up and running on the Ecochanges site, you will be able to check there. But in the meanwhile, my suggestion to you is that if other people are interested in doing the same thing, you work together to get it up and running.

Everything we do has consequences, even the smallest actions. If we are not mindful of the relationship between cause and effect we risk creating catastrophic outcomes. This is the lesson Nature is trying to teach us and it will make us pay a very high price for our collective ignorance.

When we bring something new to market, we have to carefully consider the potential consequences. This is not an easy exercise nor is it one that can ever be managed perfectly. We must strive to be mindful of the designs we create.

When I thought about the design I wanted for Ecochanges, I decided it would build on the strength of three theories: reflexivity, game theory and yin and yang. Yin and Yang isn't an accepted theory but it is an outgrowth from reflexivity. I can't describe my understanding of it because it would take an entire book and more. But game theory and reflexivity are easy enough to explain.

Game theory basically states that we are better off if we share stuff. It's been proven mathematically in a very elegant way. I apply game theory blindly in my business. I want to find out just how far one can go with it. I've heard of IT students who can't set up new businesses because they face a copyright minefield. I don't think that's the way forwards to encourage progress and creativity.

Reflexivity states that we have a perception bias and because of that, we miss out on grasping reality in full. It's almost a theory of mindfulness. George Soros applied it to gain an edge in financial markets but the theory is far reaching. It is also a theory of the infinitely large and the infinitely small, perfect to create chain reactions. Ripples if you like...

I used theories to build the design of my business but that's just an example. Others create their designs through trial and error which is as valid a way as any to get it right. The importance is that you put some thought into the impact of your business. I would advise that at the very least, a green business should be one that seeks to do what it can to minimize its own environmental impact. One way to do this is to donate 1% of your sales to environmental charities. One charity takes care of that: [1% for the Planet](#).

The green businesses I have listed are not all completely green. I think we need to take into account that the process of making our economy green is not going to happen overnight and that there needs to be a transition period. During this transition period, changing processes and systems to reduce their environmental impact can be considered to be green.

So there you have it, a large and growing range of business ideas that can be adapted to meet your needs. We will be adding new ideas to the website so keep an eye out for them as this book will not be reviewed until 2011.

There's one last point I want to make about change. Our culture conditions us to believe that we cannot create change. It conditions us to believe that we have a place in society and that we need to stay in it. We were nomads and we've become sedentary. In doing this we've lost some of the essence that defines our identity as human beings. There are some very good reasons why as a society we are individualistic, overeat, take antidepressants and suffer in silence. Under these circumstances, it's difficult to see how change can be implemented because we live in a conservative culture. Don't buy this story. The one thing that business can do for you is unleash your creativity and make you whole again. Business will teach you to think for yourself and to take responsibility for yourself and others.

Nature changes all the time, it adapts, it loves diversity. We are Nature, we come from Nature and 80% of our DNA is not human. We share our DNA with plants and animals, we've evolved from them. There has been only one constant in the history of our development: change. And change can happen however slowly or however quickly we want to make it happen. I come back to my point about the awesome potential of mankind.

The wonderful gift conferred upon us by our humanity is that we can shape our environment. Everyone of us, it doesn't matter if they're an aristocrat or a tramp can become an engineer of change. That's what it means to be human. You really need to put your faith in your ability to implement change. It's a gift that's meant to be used. So don't dwell on metaphysical questions. Act.

Wishing you success in your ventures,

Alexander Deidier, founder of Ecochanges

Note: the source of the environmental facts listed in the business ideas is not referenced in this book. All the facts are appropriately referenced and listed in [the facts section of our website](#).

“People often ask me what can I do? You've already made the first choice if you're saying that because the first choice is you know that you have to do something. For the rest it's a matter of looking deep into your heart and soul to understand what your gifts are, what your passions are to do some research and educate yourself, to find the people that you are comfortable with and then get involved.” Kenny Ausubel, the 11th Hour

Unskilled

TURN YOUR CAR INTO A CAR CLUB CAR

Did you know that you can turn your car from a liability into an asset? It's easy enough. In this section, we discuss how households can [earn additional income and increase their property value by on average £4-8,000 by planting vegetables](#), [how they can make on average £3,000 from flogging their old stuff](#) but of all the measures we discuss turning your car into a car club car is one of the easiest and cleverest ways to increase your income: our calculations suggest that once all costs are taken into account, you can earn £2-7000 a year from your car. It must be noted however that a successful car club takes 3-5 years to become established. Add in the savings from owning a car club car and it takes you up to annual savings of £2600 to £8000. **Over a 40 year lifetime usage, that amounts to making £104,000 to £320,000, enough to pay for your home and buy you an electric car relatively quickly.** Considering the lifetime cost of running a car is around £126,000, you've either managed to drive a car all your life for next to nothing or you've booked in a hefty profit on it.

Using a car is a liability. It has been calculated that the all inclusive cost of driving a car is 35p per mile. Acknowledging that the average person drives 9000 miles a year, this puts the annual cost of ownership of a car at £3150 (to find out more about the cost of ownership of a car, [click here](#)).

How do I save money by joining a car club? Joining a car club reduces car use by perhaps two thirds. Chris Goodall calculated that the average cost of driving a car club car for 10,000 miles was around 27p per mile. This suggests you could save 23% on the running cost of a normal car, £720 a year and £29,000 over a lifetime.

If you own your car, you might drive even on occasions when you would walk or not take a trip at all. Car club users on the other hand face a charge for using the car from £2 an hour from Monday to Friday to £3 an hour at week-ends (with a £20-27 cap on it for 24 hour usage). Because of this high marginal cost, they're more frugal with their usage and car clubs report an average drop in car usage of their members by two thirds. If you are able to cut down your usage by two thirds, the savings could be colossal: £2340 a year and £93,600 over a lifetime.

Why isn't everybody using a car club then? Joining a car club is not an idea that appeals to most people. People like the prestige of having their own car and they like the freedom it gives them. We live in an individualistic and highly class conscious society where sharing is not culturally well accepted. Some people won't even take the bus because they're afraid of meeting with 'lower' classes.

Very few people are aware that their car costs them £3150 a year to run. If they had to pay the cost in one go, they might be far more interested in car clubs.

Because the cost of having a car is spread over time, people aren't aware of the full cost. It's like a mortgage: you think you're buying a house but you're also paying interest. Let's look at a standard interest only mortgage: 8% on a £150,000 loan for 25 years. The total cost of the house is equivalent to three times what you paid for it. Do people realize they're buying the equivalent of three houses when they take out that type of mortgage? Repairs don't happen on a regular basis, neither does having to buy a car and even when you buy a car, the

cost is often spread over time with a loan. All of this contributes to people having an incorrect perception about the true cost of their car.

Further, we are all instinctively willing to pay more for the feeling of not having to pay by the minute. This is quite irrational: if you are willing to trust that you can save, make money and reduce your environmental impact by driving a car club car, you should do it.

How do I get clients? Let's say you work in the town centre and your car is parked in the car park all day. Think of all the stay at home mums who need to go out shopping. They could use your car. Or you're at home at the week-end with no plans to go out. How many people do you think will like to go out to a fair, festival or restaurant and need your car? Your car will be listed on a website where people can see it so you won't even need to do much marketing.

You know people: family, neighbours, friends, work colleagues. All of these constitute your network of contacts. Make them aware that you want to join a car club and that you're looking for other people to use your car.

How do I convert my car to a car club car? First let's get some concerns out of the way: you're not going to lose your car in an accident. You'll just need to change your insurance so that you're covered for a number of people using the car, that's included in the cost of converting your car to a car club one. The car should be available when you need it: the more people use a car club, the more will be available. If there's no car available, Wombat Car Club is willing to pay for a taxi for the same cost of you using the car club. To find out more about how to convert your car to a car club, [visit Wombat Car Club](#).

Why is it green? Because according to Chris Goodall, a new car emits on average 5 tonnes of carbon just to be produced, that's equivalent to the emissions from two years of driving. If instead of buying a new car, people share their car, they'll reduce the emissions from having to produce the car. They reduce congestion. People using them will also reduce their usage because of the ticking meter. Overall, Chris Goodall calculated that being a car club member could reduce the average emissions from owning a car from 2.6 tonnes to 0.8 tonnes.

More info: You can find out more about how you can save money driving your car in our [driving section](#), by reading Chris Goodall's excellent How to Live a low carbon life (he should have sub-titled in *and save lots of money in the process*) or by visiting [Wombat's car club page](#).

Note: we make no money from advising people to join a car club, the reason why we are so enthusiastic about it is because it does cut down carbon emissions substantially and it saves people a lot of money.

Unskilled

CAR SHARING

We recommend this idea as a money making scheme in the [driving section](#). It's not really a business idea but it's definitely worthwhile implementing as it works out to be cheaper than using taxis and reduces your fuel costs. The actual average cost of driving, all costs taken into account is 35p per mile. That means that if you can find other people to share car journeys with, you can split the cost or you can try to book a profit on it by charging a minimum fee; it's up to you. So long as you beat taxi prices, you're in business. Implementing this will make/save you money and help to reduce your carbon footprint and other people's footprint.

It must be noted that the people who set up schemes to facilitate car sharing never had in mind to turn it into a money making opportunity. If you want to car share and not charge, that's even better because you'll incentivize more people to share with you. However, in our view, if people lack an incentive to share, they probably won't share which is why we think it's a good idea to attract more people to car sharing to suggest that they can charge for the service they offer.

Less than 1% of car owners share their car meaning that in most cars, there are spare seats that aren't being used and that there are more cars on the road than there should be. Finding people to share with shouldn't be too difficult: you'll need to register on a website like this one: [colchestertogether](#) or [liftshare](#) and remember to visit and leave journey details every time you use the car or look for anyone else doing the same journey. It's important to be oil aware.

Oil is running out (less than 41 years left of it), every day we burn an amount of oil the Planet required 10,000 days to produce. Every gallon of oil used required 90 tonnes of biological production. If we burn most of our remaining coal, oil and gas reserves over the next few hundred years, we will increase carbon dioxide by a factor of ten which would cause temperatures to rise to up to 245 degrees celcius, the same as Venus, Earth will become a dead Planet. Each car is responsible for a great deal of carbon emissions with the average car generating about 2.6 tonnes of emissions in the UK. There are 30 million cars in circulation. Each person not using a car and sharing it instead is polluting less and saving a precious resource. Don't delay, get involved now: it'll reduce pollution, congestion and save/make you money.

Unskilled

CAR BOOT SALES PERSON

Car boot sales are great because everyone has some junk sitting in their garage they don't use. You could easily get a few clients together and sell their stuff for a 50% commission on the proceeds. For someone who doesn't want something anymore, any price is good. A day at a car boot sale will net anything from £100-300 a day. People will buy the most surprising items: clothes, toys, old game consoles. Go to a car boot sale before starting and ask people what items they've sold most. Then go round your neighborhood asking for similar items. Doing this is green because it's important to have a second hand economy. If something you have is sitting at home not being used, the energy it took to make it is wasted. There is embedded energy in everything we buy; rather than chucking things away or letting them gather dust in the attic, it's important to find them a second lease of life. You could actually market yourself as a green seller!

The Centre for Economic and Business Research estimates that the average house could make £3,000 by selling off old possessions lurking in the loft. ([BBC Bloom](#)). Based on this fact alone, there is the potential for every household that can be bothered to go through their stuff to turn what they don't want into cash. However, we still think most people are too lazy to do that. A business that uses a direct marketer to find customers and motivate them to get their stuff together could do very well out of it. (look at our [Ebay seller](#) idea)

Unskilled

DOMESTIC RENEWABLE ENERGY INSTALLER

You needn't be skilled to become an installer, just take a course and you can start running your own business right away. Visit <http://epogee.co.uk> for further details.

Catering

ORGANIC VEGAN TAKE AWAY

With food accounting for 2.1 tonnes of each individual's carbon footprint, going vegan is going to be an integral part of people's strategies to switch to a low carbon and healthier diet.

There is no vegan take-away, vegan supermarket or vegan caterer in Colchester. If you do all three, you could earn a very good living. M&S make some very good take away food but their packaging doesn't stipulate whether the vegetables are organic or not. Most restaurants in the area fail to even have a vegetarian section on their menu. Subway offers a cheap vegetarian take away option but they do not advertise their vegetables

as organic so they're probably not. Looking at the mushrooming growth of Subway restaurants in town, there's certainly a market here for people who want healthy, affordable takeaway food.

In Australia, vegan shops and takeaways are rife but not so in the UK and especially not in Colchester. There are more than 3 million vegetarians in the UK, almost 6% of the population so there's already a market for it. We recommend doing some market study in London as there are probably plenty of vegan restaurants and takeaways to inspire anyone interested in setting up this type of business.

Maybe Warren Buffett and Bill Gates think McDonalds is a great business model but I can't see how they're going to survive in the 21st century with their current offering. I believe there is a very major opportunity for anyone who finds a way to deliver cheap take-away vegan organic food copying McDonalds business model to create a worldwide chain with mass appeal. The future is very bleak for beef sellers and very bright for organic vegetable sellers. Read more on this in the book Green Business: you can start to make money and make a difference by Glen Croston.

Catering/real estate

THE BAKED POTATO

My wife and I were enjoying a fair trade coffee in one of the many ethical cafes in Edinburgh (they served ethically sourced lamb; I haven't quite got to grips with how lamb can have a low CO2 footprint). On our vegan and vegetarian restaurants touring list, was a place called the Baked Potato, it had been highly praised in the reviews I'd read. We asked the waitress where it was. The Chef popped out with a beaming smile on his face: "The Baked Potato, it's my favorite restaurant!" The waitress also had a beaming smile on her face: both were Australians: "I love it too, last time I went there was a queue that stretched way out onto the street". Well that was a good start...

The guide said it was on Cockburn Street (I pronounced it "cokburn")... chuckles... It's pronounced "Cowburn"... The Scottish have a distinctly poor sense of humor I thought. We got the directions and were on our way.

The Baked Potato is a small take-away restaurant. You wouldn't notice it if you passed it by. It has very few seats so people are forced to take their food outside. It serves about 10 selections of generously sized vegetarian and vegan toppings on its baked potatoes. You can get 1, 2 or 3 toppings and potato sizes vary. The toppings are freshly made on site and that's what gives this take-away its unique selling point. With a variety of salads, Mexican salsa, avocado salsa, beans, curry, lentils Dahl, the toppings are numerous and delicious. I think that the underlying philosophy of this restaurant is that you can serve the public by offering them a cheap and healthy alternative to fast food causing a lot of environmental damage. I don't think this is a business aimed at maximizing profit, prices for what you get are simply too low. It's aimed at maximizing environmental benefit and staying in business long enough to continue serving people. In this way, it's probably a halfway house between an NGO and a business.

Prices start from £3 and move up to £7 and depend chiefly on the number of toppings you decide to have. Portion sizes are very generous, a key reason why people love it so much. One of these and you're full for the day. They offer a 10% discount if you have a membership to a wildlife or forest protection charity.

I was in the Park savoring my baked potato when I had an epiphany. I've been looking for a way to displace the strangleholds that the McDonald's, Burger Kings and Kentucky Fried chickens of this world have on our food diet for years. 30% of cancers in the west are linked to dietary factors probably due to the fact that as a nation, we consume double the recommended protein intake. The meat and dairy industry produces more climate changing emissions than all the planes, cars and lorries on the Planet. Although The Baked Potato does serve cheese toppings, the menu is split 50/50 between vegan and vegetarian alternatives.

As I was tucking into my Baked Potato I realized that what I was eating was what I'd been looking for: the

future of fast food. The food is fresh, it's delicious, there's the potential to serve hundreds of portions a day and most importantly: it's affordable. Brits love their baked potatoes and the Baked Potato makes them fit to serve a King.

Baked potatoes are like take-away chips, they can be eaten on the go, they're easy to cook, affordable and delicious. You can get your daily intake of proteins from toppings such as the Lentils Dahl or the Beans. All these advantages make it the ideal fast food outlet of the future.

The business could be potentially improved by offering an organic menu, 20% cheese choice instead of 50% and more seating. I suspect asking the customer if they want a charcoal tablet with every order wouldn't hurt. According to BBC Bloom, vegetarians produce a pint of wind a day versus 3 shot glasses for non vegetarians.

The business opportunity is primarily in franchising the business model. I would expect you'll need around £100,000 and a loan to open up an outlet. Alternatively, you could try buying franchising rights from the owner and pitching it to venture capitalists. Lucky you if you've got more than £300k to invest in this. I have said the profit margins are low but I want to stress one point: you don't need high profit margins to make a lot of money. Few people know for instance that Mc Donald's is not in the fast food business. It is in the real estate business. It owns all its outlets and rents them out to franchisees. The business generates enough revenue to pay the rent. This makes McDonalds one of the world's biggest owners of prime real estate and this is precisely the business The Baked Potato would have to be involved in to meet its full potential.

The financial potential of this take-away is no short of staggering. It could be marketed worldwide so it could generate billions in revenue and has plc potential.

More info: [Source 1](#), [Source 2](#), [Source 3](#), [Source 4](#), [Source 5](#)

Catering

ITALIAN PIZZA TAKE AWAY FRANCHISE

Everyone loves Italian pizza. But in the UK, you'll be lucky if you get your hands on one. Pizza Express is the only restaurant producing something close to the taste of Italian pizza. For the rest we have Dominoes and Pizza Hut who produce disgusting, expensive, unhealthy crap. This is American pizza, it has nothing to do with what pizza really tastes like. The only reason why we put up with this disgusting food is because for some time everything coming out of America was revered. But with the war in Iraq, the American's reluctance to do anything about the environment and the spread of global warming through the virus of America's lack of culture, let's put it this way: America's image is somewhat jaded. Why should we support and put up with their franchises of disgusting food by spending our hard earned cash in them?

The only place I'm aware of that produces decent Italian takeaway pizza is a small takeaway just before the entrance to Portobello market in London. You can't miss it: it has a yellow mini smack in the middle of the shop display window. Even that doesn't taste exactly like Italian pizza. So here's a fun idea for you: got enough cash to open a take-away? Then take a crash course in Italian and go and work in a pizza outlet in Italy for 6 months offering to work for next to nothing. You'll have a fantastic sabbatical and learn a valuable trade. The Italians are passionate about their food: pizza takeaways are everywhere and they all have different specialties.

Do us a favor though: don't put meat feast on the menu and avoid cheese. I know that somewhat defeats the purpose of pizza but the Italians are excellent at producing vegan pizza. Wait until you taste the tomato only topping or the artichoke topping. They're delicious and there's plenty of room for innovation. The reality is that cheese is just as bad as meat in terms of its impact on the climate, so open up a 21st century franchise: a vegan pizza takeaway and earn a fortune franchising it.

Farmer

URBAN FARMER

I love this business idea: it's part of the solution to our farming and food security problem. Only 60% of the food we eat in the UK is produced here. For the rest, we rely on imports. There is a high environmental cost to these imports: they oftentimes come from the third world where non renewable fossil underground water supplies are used to meet our needs.

Due to decades of intensive farming practice, soils worldwide have degraded. The use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer destroys ecosystems and since there's no insects to treat and purify the soil anymore on intensive farms, the soil quality degrades and erodes away.

The statistics on this topic are simply mind boggling and it is staggering that the issue is not being reported more widely in the press (check [our environmental facts section](#) to verify our sources).

We are losing five thousand times more soil than is being made. The current rates of erosion from a few millimeters to a few centimeters a year are from 100 to a thousand times greater than the natural rhythm of formation of soils (approximately 0,1mm a year). Well over 30% of the soils on the Planet have been put into the category of serious degradation. Whilst 4.6 million hectares of tropical rainforest are destroyed to make way for agriculture; a further 10 million hectares of existing farmland are lost to salination and erosion.

The UK is largely a big urban island. We need to come up with solutions that reflect our demographic reality. Where do we have land available that could be turned to productive usage? Answer: right in our own backyards.

The current urban fashion is to turn backyards into play areas for children, post modern gardens or place slabs for barbeques and summer afternoons sat outside. This is essentially wasted land that has no productive value. The average UK family loses by my estimates £775 worth of value each year by not turning their backyards to productive farming use. This is a calculation based on the average cost of a weekly organic box delivery worth £15. It assumes that to produce a weekly box of vegetables, the amount of land needed is equivalent to the average backyard size and that the value of the vegetables is similar to that of organic produce.

Could growing vegetables in a property's backyard increase its value? Let's try to look at average rental yields versus property prices to get a rough idea. Currently the average annual rental yield of a UK property is around £8000 and its value sits at £224,000. The average home is thus valued at 28 times its rental yield. This still looks overpriced to me compared to equity prices. I would say a fair valuation would be 15-20 times, with 10 constituting bargain basement prices.

At how much could we value the yield from food production? The chief appeal of rental yield is that it's no hassle: landlords just need to find tenants and they pay the rent, no time is wasted in the process. Growing vegetables requires time. I recall reading somewhere that two hours a week should be budgeted for it or 103 hours a year. If we cost this at £6 an hour, it would cost £620 just to grow the vegetables. On that basis, the multiplier should reflect the cost of the time involved. If we were to use a multiplier of 28 to reflect the gross profit minus labor cost, we get a value around £4300.

I would thus suggest using a multiplier of 5.5-10 times the gross yield to calculate the value of a property with a vegetable plot (chiefly dependent on backyard space and plot's yield). Our valuation suggests that properties with vegetable plots are worth from £4300 to £7500 more than their counterparts with no vegetable gardens. This is the business's unique selling point. If you can offer home owners and landlords an easy way to increase their home's valuation, they could make their land available to you for free and you could take advantage of the potential £775 annual income.

Is there additional mileage to increase a property's value further?

Absolutely by turning your business into a social enterprise, we believe the property's value can be increased by up to £22,000, if we base ourselves on the current overvalued multiplier of property prices divided by rental yield. The key assumption we've made so far is that there was a cost of labor. Is it possible to eliminate that cost?

Let's look at the labor involved: you spend time in a garden, learning how to plant vegetables, how to grow them: these are valuable skills! There are University courses teaching this stuff: people are even prepared to pay to acquire the skills!

What's more working in a garden is a therapeutic activity. After a tumultuous and eventful life, Voltaire retired from society to cultivate his garden; it was there that he was happiest. He was famous for writing in *Candide*: "we must cultivate our garden". Some read too much into this arguing that we should leave aside metaphysical problems and focus on the things we can change; that we should focus on improving the world. It's simpler than that: growing vegetables brings us back to our roots: we come from Nature and we are Nature. The most fundamental illusion of our society is that we are separate from it when in fact we are it.

When you're working on a garden, you're in touch with Nature, wildlife and you're outdoors. This puts you in touch with your deeper self, your historical roots if you like. Are there people out there who would like to do that as a hobby? Absolutely! The only service you need to offer is the know how on how to plant and grow, which crops to grow, how to maximize the yield, how to get rid of pests organically, there's an endless list of training points that could make it delightful for people to get involved. It's a far more constructive activity than watching TV.

Your potential volunteers would be people living in apartments, the long-term unemployed and tenants. You could negotiate with councils to ask unemployed people at the job centre if they want to volunteer. The only way that people could be sold on a potential £22k increase in the value of their property is if you were able to secure some kind of a long-term commitment of at least 3-5 years that they could get free labor working their vegetable patch. That's not going to be an easy one to achieve but it can be done. I'll leave the thinking on how this can be done to you.

The idea is already up and running successfully in San Francisco. [My Farm](#) is a decentralized urban farm that grows vegetables in backyard gardens throughout the city. By increasing local food production they are creating a secure and sustainable food system. They also use organic practices that create the best tasting and most nutritious vegetables.

Farmer

ORGANIC FARMER

Organic farming is important for several reasons:

- 1) There's no pesticides or insecticides used in the growing and these generate a huge amount of greenhouse gases
- 2) The soil is left to rest so it is not over exploited making the land sustainable
- 3) They favour ecosystems
- 4) The food is far healthier than industrially produced stuff

Agriculture has a bad image in terms of earnings potential. It is true that farmers dealing with supermarkets may sometimes only earn £10,000 a year. However, organic farmers don't have to go through supermarkets; they can go directly to the consumer so long as they obtain the soil association certified box scheme. This is a very rigorous certification and the land has to match their criteria.

Only 6% of the UK population is vegetarian. Imagine the demand for vegetables if this percentage increases to 30 or 40%. The carbon emissions from the meat food chain represent 20% of global food emissions. One of the areas of the economy most likely to be hit by dissuasive taxes in the future is the cattle industry.

In 2007, the global food bill rose 57%, the price of rice soared 75% and wheat prices more than doubled. There will be more of that in the future as draughts hit vast areas of the world. This undoubtedly, will make meat more expensive and dissuasive to purchase. So long term, organic farms could increase in value and so could their produce.

Shopkeeper

ORGANIC, FAIRTRADE STORE

There have been a fair few attempts at getting this type of shop up and running in Colchester but they don't appear to have proved very successful. I'm not a big fan of shop structures because you're relying on the client coming to you instead of going to the client. You can afford to do that when you're Tesco but not when you're a small retailer, especially of foodstuffs. A great business idea for someone starting out small would be to open a shop from a spare room at home and to offer a delivery only service. Once you have 100-200 regular clients, you could open a shop to raise the business's profile but I doubt that this would prove as successful as continuing with a direct marketing model, your money would probably be far better invested employing and thoroughly training a direct marketer to work on your behalf. The advantage of this business model is that it could work with very little working capital to start off with. All you'd need is a products magazine to go through with each client, find out what they like and deliver it every week. You could sell the fact that you're small and that you have tiny overheads and that the cost savings get passed on to the customer. Once you have a few clients, you could start a website to make ordering and changing orders easier and step up your investment in the venture as income gradually comes in. To begin with your product sourcing enquiries, you can visit:

<http://www.essential-trading.coop/>

Writing/cooking

10 MINUTE VEGAN COOKBOOK

There's plenty of vegan cookbooks out there but there isn't one that gives you quick and easy to make recipes, and especially, there isn't one with this title. It is absolutely essential for the cause of ecology that people become vegan and that they are able to do this with minimum hassle. If you can show people with a hectic lifestyle a hassle free way to make food quickly and painlessly, you're making it possible for people to go vegan. So if you're a decent cook and you know how to write, go for it!

Advertiser

GREEN WEBSITE ADVERTISING AGENCY

There are plenty of green websites out there but the founders don't have the skill or the time to find advertisers. This website is an example in point. We don't advertise because it's difficult to find ethical advertisers and time consuming. You could offer a service where you source ethical advertisers and you find appropriate websites for them to advertise on. You could then take a cut out of the advertising revenue. A lot of green websites have given up on the idea of advertising because it's quite simply incompatible with their values but it doesn't have to be this way. If these website are encouraging the right type of consumerism and generating some revenue for themselves, this is a solution that would make everyone happy! You can start your search for websites on this website as we have a wealth of links to third party websites.

Entrepreneur

NO FASHION SHOP

Our world is one of saddening futility. We call ourselves developed yet we turn a blind eye on the fact that 33.5% of the electricity we use comes from coal, dirty to mine, dirty to burn, generating toxic waste, polluting the air and creating global warming. Worst still, we call "the clean alternative" nuclear, a form of energy generating waste lethal for 200,000 years (the same length of time homo sapiens has been on the Planet), a form of energy that has already cost us £83 billion in waste management and rising (imagine the cost over 200,000 years).

Whilst the source of our energy is scandalous, the source of our clothing is another one of these large scale debacles nobody knows much about and nobody cares much about. Not on the label of the clothing we purchase at seasonal sales is the fact that a cotton T-shirt requires 4100 litres of water to produce or that a pair of jeans requires 11,000 litres of water to produce ([Source](#)). 5000 people a day die because of dirty drinking water and one billion people have no access to safe drinking water. The cotton industry attracts 25% of worldwide pesticide sales yet only occupies 2% of arable land. It is the use of pesticide and fertilizer that causes soil erosion resulting in the loss of 10 million hectares of arable land each year. 25 million people a year die due to pesticide use in industrial agriculture. Whilst we're competing with one another to look good in new clothes, the third world is starving as a direct result of our consumption choices. I don't know about you but I find this truth unbearable.

What can we do to stop this horror? Rebellious against the fashion industry is a good start. The purpose of the NoFashion shop would be to sell year round clothing independent of fashion trends. The company would market the same cuts and the same colors year round. The only stock that would change would be the summer and winter collections which would be put in a depot until the next season. The emphasis would be on plain vanilla cuts in the same spirit as Fruit of the Loom. There would be no summer or winter sales and no clothes sold at discounted prices to make space for the new stock. The NoFashion Shop would concentrate on selling sustainable clothing either infinitely recyclable or causing no damage to the soil. In addition, the company would focus on designing clothing requiring minimal amount of energy input and maintenance and minimal amount of shipping. This is something Marks and Spencers is doing with its clothes collection focusing on producing clothing washable at 30 degrees or less. Another point of differentiation for the NoFashion Shop would be to print the full ecological footprint of each one of the clothing items it sells on the label. One company to imitate in the ethical clothing market is Patagonia. Patagonia sells organic cotton clothes and Nylon and Polyester clothing and collects used clothing for recycling. Chouinard, the owner and founder, says that Nylon and Polyester is more sustainable and environmentally friendly than hemp because if the clothes made out of these raw materials are collected and reused, they can be reused indefinitely and recycling them only uses a fraction of the raw materials and energy needed to make them from scratch. This makes Nylon and Polyester clothing a cradle to cradle product. Used clothing is sent to a recycling centre in Japan and reused in the manufacture of new clothes. That would be the final service performed by the NoFashion shop: collecting all used clothing and reusing it in the manufacture of new product lines. We suggest as a logo a hand giving out the finger. The sign was used for one of the most interesting covers of the Economist when it printed on its cover a Cactus giving out the finger for the Cancun World Trade Talks six years ago. Hopefully consumers will understand the message is not addressed to them but to the fashion industry!

Entrepreneur

RECYCLED SHOE MAKER

Of all the business models we discuss here, this one is one of the more difficult ones. The inspiration for it comes from a previous business that operated under the name [Deja Shoe](#) ran by Julie Lewis, a fanatic recycler. We have a massive problem with waste in this country and a huge part of the problem is that the waste is not recycled and when it is recycled it is most often burned releasing toxic dioxins. The issue of how to reuse this waste is the main problem because what we are being sold as recycling is not truly recycling but incineration. This idea could get funding in the UK, it could benefit from a lot of free advertising, the climate for it is right and it could attract venture capital. Councils are now going to incur massive fines for taking non

biodegradable waste to landfill under new European Union legislation and there's going to be a hell of a lot of scrambling in our country to find something to do with our trash. In their usual wisdom, most local councils are opting to tie themselves in to 25 year agreements to incinerate the waste. The trick is to find, source and collect recyclable materials out of which the shoes could be made and that is the main hurdle that Deja Shoe managed to overcome. It can be done but I think it needs a big network of voluntaries to collect recyclable waste. The only reason the company went bust is because one of the venture capitalists failed to renew funding. Tragically the company only lasted four years. This is an idea that could be taken into the Dragon Den and attract their capital. I think it would also be more effective if the idea benefited from Julie Lewis's expertise and involvement in the project.

Entrepreneur

ELECTRIC CAR DEALERSHIP

New cars are an utter waste of money. The minute a car is driven out of the dealership, its value has fallen by 20%. The only appeal of purchasing new is that it's easier to get finance. With such poor key selling factors, it's amazing that car dealerships are able to make any money at all. The reason why new cars are such poor value is that a thriving second hand car market exists.

Let's look at electric cars now: do you know anybody who owns one? If you do, it's likely that person is one out of 10 or 100,000. Why do so few people own electric cars? You can't charge them anywhere and their batteries don't have enough autonomy time. There is not one petrol station that stocks electric car batteries. If there were, people would be rushing to the dealerships to buy new cars because they know that the maintenance cost would be far lower since they wouldn't have to pay road tax and the vehicle's electric consumption would cost far less than fuel consumption. The average car lasts about 14 years and costs about £1000 a year in fuel. People are still rushing to replace their petrol cars with diesels, imagine the effect with electric cars: an electric car will require on average 2700Kwh a year to drive 14000km ([Source](#)); even at 15p per Kwh (a rough estimate of the current cost of sourcing the electricity from 100% renewable power), the running cost is more than 50% cheaper than that of fuel. In other words, if an electric car can be sold around the same price as a petrol car, it pays for itself over its lifetime only taking the fuel savings into account. Other benefits include road tax and maintenance savings.

One concern worthwhile noting is that our nuclear reactors are reaching the end of their lives and that electricity generation currently just about matches demand. If we add in demand for electric cars we're going to have to scramble to meet new energy demand. That's why we think it's so important to support electricity that actually adds to the country's renewables capacity. If we don't do that, we can almost certainly expect the State will try to sell us on installing more nuclear reactors and coal power plants. [Ecotricity](#) is the only company we've found that builds new wind power capacity regardless of the State's renewables targets.

Still, nothing can be done until petrol stations are equipped with batteries. But this problem is about to be solved. I've been told that all of Tesco's trucks are now electrical and each Tesco has a plug-in point for its trucks. Electric battery and car manufacturers in the UK have formed a group to run those cables to the petrol stations so that they can supply them with battery changing points where the batteries are leased to each car owner. Once the fuel stations are all equipped, there is going to be a gigantic rush for people to purchase electrical vehicles and demand is going to exceed supply for several years. That's why if you want to open an electric car dealership, you should have everything ready to go so that the minute that Tesco's equipped, you're ready to open. Only problem: it's going to be difficult to source a mass produced electric car but hybrids will do the job to start off with and from what I've heard in Dragon's Den, we're only 2-3 years away from major manufacturers releasing electrical models with decent battery autonomy.

More info: [Nice car company](#)

Entrepreneur

NO FRILLS FERRY ROUTE TO SPAIN

The demise of Ryanair and Easyjet is inevitable. It's already on the cards. The question is what will they be replaced by? It can't be eternally cheap to fly. Ryanair's business is reliant on a free subsidy from Nature to the tune of £350 million (this is assuming the average greenhouse gas footprint of each passenger is one tonne). The worldwide market for voluntary carbon offsets accounts for 0.05% of the aviation industry's footprint so it is unlikely that people flying Ryanair are responsible enough to pay for the extra environmental cost of their flights.

The airline industry accounts for 13.8% of the UK's emissions and if it continues to grow at the same pace, it will account for 30% of the country's emissions by 2030 thereby cancelling the population's efforts to reduce their carbon footprint. Aviation with its gigantic carbon footprint only accounts for 0.78% of total business turnover in the UK (£20 billion). Further, if the entire sector were to collapse, it would be barely noticeable in terms of employment since we have a £17 billion tourism deficit that could be dramatically reduced by incentivizing people to holiday in the UK.

Carbon emission offsets are going to get more and more expensive as demand for them creeps up and in order to meet its carbon target commitments the government is going to be forced to tax airlines. Our prime minister has already announced his intention to do that but let us not forget that politician's intentions/promises and their actions are two areas that rarely concur.

Taxing the airline industry is the easiest way to stop incentivizing people boarding cheap flights. The carbon footprint of flying accounts for 25% of the footprint of the average Brit who flies (50% of the British population does not fly). It's easy for people to seek their sunshine fix by going to France on the train but not necessarily to Spain, as the journey is longer on land. The only reason people fly is because it's cheap and quick.

Travelling by sea to Spain is far slower but it is more convenient than going by train. You sleep on the boat and get to your destination in the morning without having to change. I think the route that has the most potential would be a route to the South of Spain where the British public already owns a sizeable portion of real estate. These routes may already exist but travelling by boat is one area where we might be able to take something from Easyjet and Ryanair's business model. They've been able to expand by offering people a cheap route to European destinations and marketing it aggressively. To make the routes cheap, they fly at unsociable hours and from cheap airports. Maybe a similar business model can be applied to the ferry industry.

You don't need to own a ferry to start up. You can charter part of a ferry. All you need to do is conduct some market study on the ports that are most accessible to large segments of the population. You'll also need to conduct some market studies to establish if there's any predominant trend as to which regions of England are most likely to have expats living or owning a second property in Spain. It is crucial to begin with identifying a port close to a large population centre that has a tendency to travel to Spain often (hint-London & South of England). It is also crucial that your prices are not more expensive than or cheaper than that of airlines (include the cost of travelling to the port). If you get your prices right, you can market your service as a pleasant and environmentally-friendly alternative to flying. The business model is all about marketing.

Finding ways to get cheap deals on marketing might be another competitive advantage: with the help of some good PR, you should be able to get a lot of free exposure, the press is hungry for stories on environmentally-friendly alternatives to our carbon intensive lifestyle and there are plenty of concepts and statistics to use here to educate the general public.

Financing shouldn't be too difficult to put in place either. Get in touch with ethical fund managers, VCs or rich environmental advocates. Their main risk is on your initial campaign and if you can get that done cheap enough, you can wave the carrot that they'll be first to benefit from a potentially lucrative and high growth business.

[Conduct some more research on prices and competition here.](#)

ENERGY EFFICIENT SHUTTERS MARKETER

One of the things successful professional businessmen do is to constantly look out for new successful business models: they go to franchise and trade shows in the hope of spotting something unique that they can copy or sell. There's a lot of mileage for this type of work to take place in the green sector. Innovation is taking place worldwide and it's difficult to be aware of all the opportunities. Sometimes, a brilliant business idea will only be developed in one country because the owners have no idea of how to market it internationally. All you have to do is approach a company to request a license from them, open a small manufacturing outlet or use an existing one and go out and sell the product. You'll need to pay a license fee to the company with the patents (preferably on each sale and not upfront).

Isoferm is a French business offering a unique opportunity (but they don't know it). Their product is a shutter that is made out of a thin, very light, armed composite material which they call P.U.R. (Thermo Resistant Polyurethane). The shutter has a lifetime guarantee, does not require any maintenance, can be made to look like wood, protects the property from robbery because the material is so dense that it can withstand intense aggression and most importantly, the material's high density makes it an excellent insulator of heat, cold and noise. With summers in the UK becoming ever hotter, people are going to want to equip themselves with air conditioning units. Typical standalone air conditioning units consume 1400 watts an hour, roughly 14p an hour. That means the running cost over 3 months at 4 hours a day usage is roughly £50 and the carbon footprint is close to a tonne. Typically, a room with closed shutters in summer can reduce the room temperature by 7 degrees. With this material however, the resistance to heat is likely to be higher. If it is combined with a high degree of wall insulation, customers will find that they get free cooling combined with a high degree of increased security on their property.

The best thing about this business idea is that the uptake for shutters in the UK is virtually non-existent so there is potentially the same market there as there was for double glazing in the 80s. It's worth millions. If you want to find out more about Isoferm, their website is: www.isoferm.com

We contacted Isoferm to see if they were looking to expand internationally and their response was: we've got more orders than we can deal with in France so that's not an option at the moment. This is great news because the product may not be patented internationally, you'll have to check that.

WHOLESALE ECO CLEANING AND PAINT PRODUCTS SUPPLIER

There is huge potential in the cleaning and painting trade to switch the market from using vast amounts of chemicals to using natural products. Change is already occurring but this is probably a long-term trend. Both the cleaning and painting professions are at high risks of contracting cancer due to the volatile organic compounds the workers absorb in their daily working activity. In addition, office workers are also exposed to these chemicals. Convincing cleaning and painting companies to adopt natural cleaning and painting products may be relatively easy so long as the cost of these products is in line or just slightly more expensive than the cost of chemical alternatives. After all, employers have a duty of care towards their employee to insure that they work in a safe and healthy environment and the intensive use of chemicals is not exactly in line with their duty of care.

It may prove difficult to offer competitively priced products since companies like Ecocover who have been operating in this market for decades still have high retailing costs. But Ecocover is a 100% ethical company, sourcing all its power from renewables and growing its own products. It may be the case that its business model is unduly expensive. There is no low-cost wholesale version of Ecocover and there is room for a company in that niche market. The trick is to find a way to engineer cleaning products with low-cost components that still make the overall product effective. For natural paints, the alternatives and potential are

more limited. Painter's clients are more likely to pay more for the service if it is explained to them that paints can release carcinogenic volatile organic compounds up to 7 years after application (Source: [Go Make a Difference 2](#)). Both painters and cleaners would not need to switch their business models over to 100% green but they could offer their clients the alternative. If properly trained to pitch the products, it is likely clients would take them up on the offer. This business has a lot of mileage in that each new account offers a ready source of passive income with the potential as new accounts are added to build up the business's turnover to a large number.

Entrepreneur

GREEN TABLOID MAGAZINE/NEWSPAPER

I don't particularly like this business idea but it's a fact that the transition from the average western life to one that is environmentally sound is not to be found in sounder technology, government or enterprise but in the minds of each and every individual in the developed world. We need to change the way we think about our lives.

Everyone loves reading the latest scandals in tabloids. The environmental sector is rife with scandals yet none of them comment on it. The official tabloid position is that it's best not to bother with global warming except if it's for headlines along the lines of: "FATIES CAUSE GLOBAL WARMING" (A recent front page in the Sun). Any newspaper has a high environmental cost to produce so why bother to start one off? Because there needs to be a counterbalance to the nonsense published in the standard tabloid/celebrity press. There is a vast potential in terms of environmental impacts for blame and so long as the blame does not alienate the readers, it could actually be quite constructive. Governments need to be criticized in order to take action and so do companies. Why should environmentalism be the privilege of the middle class? The damage done to the environment is bad enough to find front page scandals on a daily basis. A tabloid newspaper does not have to be too picky about its ethical policy.

For instance, for the past 20 years, the Ecologist has had a readership of 20,000 publishing cutting edge investigations. But what good is the Ecologist if nobody reads it? It's too much of a headache for most people to bother. A magazine like the Ecologist has to be tight on who advertises in it otherwise it's not credible. But a tabloid is not ethically bound so it can take money from companies that are green washing. Most companies are eager to establish their green credentials but most of these credentials are dubious. The potential for a green tabloid is to take into the mainstream some big issues and get some indignation going. If it has to green wash in the process so be it. The end justifies the means... When green scandals start selling, the tabloids will follow suit and then the paper's purpose will be achieved. The focus of the tabloid press is narrowed on trivial issues. It's like the entire purpose of the tabloid press is to take our mind away from issues that matter and center it on issues that don't. Their front page titles seem to validate what Chomsky said: "The idea is to shape the population into mindless consumers of goods they do not want. You have to create wants, you have to impose a philosophy of futility, you have to focus them on the insignificant things of life, like fashionable consumption. I'm just quoting business literature here. The ideal is to have individuals who are totally dissociated from one another, whose conception of themselves is just how many created wants can I satisfy."

Recycler

OIL WASTE COLLECTOR

Waste oil from nearly 3 million car oil changes in Britain is not collected. If collected properly, this could meet the annual energy needs of 1.5 million people. (Scottish Oil Care Campaign)

Needless to say, there is probably a lot of money to be made in that business. The main problem is finding the millions of motorists who aren't recycling their waste oil. There are about 30 million cars in the UK, so that's about 10% of the car ownership population.

The challenge is in setting up a viable business plan to market oil collection to drivers, set up appropriate oil collection points or an adequate system to collect the oil.

More info: [Source 1](#), [Source 2](#), [Source 3](#)

Recycler

CONCRETE RECYCLING COMPANY

A huge amount of concrete, bricks and slabs are wasted by being sent to landfill. I've never heard of a concrete recycling company. I think I read somewhere that waste from the construction industry is one of the biggest single components of waste we send to landfill. There's got to be a way to do something about it. The way forwards, I think is to crush it and turn it back into cement or stones that can be reassembled to build bricks or blocks of concrete.

There's no doubt that doing this is going to be much less carbon intensive than producing cement. Cement companies like Cemex are in big trouble due to the recession and that means that by improving their processes through recycling, you may be able to compete with them even if you're small. Cement production accounts for a staggering 7% of greenhouse gases. I think that just when the foundations are laid for a patio, the carbon emissions generated from its setting is one tonne. If you were to use small recycled stones mixed in with the concrete, it should generate less emissions.

Whether it's environmentally friendly or not is dubious: it's less bad and considering how bad the environmental conditions are right now, anything that's less bad is a step in the right direction.

Collecting concrete and bricks isn't difficult. All you need to do is set up a bunch of agreements with skip hire companies to collect the stuff that's thrown away by the people they rent out the skips to. You can also work jointly with builders, developers and councils. It makes a lot of sense to do that since they could also become your customers. In that respect, the profit potential if you got the systems right could be phenomenal. You'll need a designer consultant to look at how everything you collect can be recycled.

The biggest problem you face is how do you crush the blocks of concrete? If you can find solutions to this problem, it could make you a millionaire if the solutions don't already exist. If it does exist it's probably not environmentally friendly so reengineering it to make it environmentally friendly is what you'd need to do. Can it be designed so that it doesn't use any energy? Or can it be designed so that the energy it uses comes from renewables?

Recycler

NYLON 6 AND POLYESTER RECYCLING FACTORY

Environmentalists trumpet the merits of organic cotton, hemp-made fabric etc... But are they cheap to make and comfortable enough to wear? Evidently not, otherwise all the chains would stop selling normal cotton clothing and start selling environmentally sound clothing.

Cotton production is an environmental nightmare because the crops receive dozens of applications of pesticides each year. If you're looking for a reason why well over 30% of the world's soils have been put in the category of serious degradation, look no further than cotton production. A great example of our collective stupidity is Australia where water is scarce. Apparently, cotton, a water intensive crop, is grown in New South Wales causing water shortage problems for populations further downstream. Australia is now paying their farmers up to AU\$100,000 to abandon their farms. Their short-sightedness and poor management of local resources has caused the advance of the desert. I have no empathy for stupidity: they deserve their one in a thousand year drought.

Patagonia is the leading producer of sustainable clothing in the world and some years ago they partnered with

a Japanese mill that spent \$100 million in a recycling plant where they recycle polyester. Polyester is a plastic that can be obtained from recycling soda pop bottles and that is used extensively in cheap clothing. This is a cradle to cradle idea so if you're an environmentalist trying to figure out why I'm advocating we put petrol in our clothing the answer's simple: you can reuse it endlessly so it uses less energy, water and raw materials than anything else you can produce. The least environmentally damaging way to make clothing right now is probably to make them out of hemp. But in the future, it could well be Nylon 6 and Polyester. Making clothes out of recycled polyester only uses 5% of the material and only takes 20% of the energy to make a new product from the old product than if the product was made from scratch.

OK, so where are you going to find \$100 million? Don't worry about that. Find outlets that want to offer their customers the facility to recycle their clothing once they don't wear them anymore and you're in business. You need to link up with a fund that has lots of cash and you offer them to run the business for them. Your job is going to be to insure the logistics of the transportation of the clothing and to try to find a recycling factory in China.

It doesn't matter if the factory location is in China or here. Container ships transporting clothing to the UK have to go back to China. What are we exporting to China? Nothing. So they go back empty. Thus it makes no difference to the overall carbon footprint if the stuff is produced here or there. You can play the container ship companies against one another to get cheap rates since for them anything they can ship back on an empty ship is pure profit. Whilst you're at it, make some more money from making it a condition of the deal to insist that the shipping company buy a sail from [Skysails](#).

Manufacturer

ORGANIC FERTILIZER PRODUCER

THE PROBLEM: Fertilizers are chemical compounds applied to promote plant and fruit growth. There are two major problems with non organic fertilizers and particularly, nitrogen fertilizers:

- 1) They create Ocean dead zones by stripping the Oceans of oxygen through the growth of algae.
- 2) They generate nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas with 310 times the greenhouse effect of CO2.

Governments aren't concerned about Ocean dead zones, they're concerned about CO2. In the UK, nitrous oxide emissions account for 21% of the carbon footprint of our food and generate the greenhouse gas equivalent of 3 coal powered plant chimneys. Fertilizer manufacture accounts for another 7% taking the total emissions from nitrogen fertilizer use to 28.5% of the carbon footprint of our food. There is no greater source of greenhouse gas emissions in the entire food chain.

Now you may understand why some people think it makes a lot of sense to eat organically grown produce. For a full discussion to familiarize yourself with fertilizers, [visit wiki](#).

THE MARKET:

A lot of money is to be made in this market: one company in China makes 119 different kinds. The Motley Fool were recently bragging about them: "Small Chinese fertilizer company, **China Green Agriculture**, stock returned 200% from October 08 to June 09. (AMEX: [CGA](#)) The company's organic fertilizers were coming into favor as the government encouraged farmers to increase food production without a destructive environmental impact. Further, government efforts to aid rural farmers were giving those farmers -- China Green's customers -- increased purchasing power." ([More info here](#))

Human excrement is a good example of organic fertilizer as it has been used for millennia. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that 50% of our excrement in Europe is already being recycled to nourish us as it has been since the beginning of times. But what of the other 50%? According to Wiki: "The main objection to using human excrement as a fertilizer is that a large amount of chemicals and hormone disrupters are being flushed down the toilet and our sewage system was never designed to accommodate them. Since they can't be used for anything, they end up in the sea where they create disruptions to ecosystems causing some fish species to

reproduce predominantly as females. Another issue is heavy metals which somehow end up in the sewage.” There you have it: 50% of our solid waste ends up where it was never supposed to causing havoc with our food security because of the technological advancement in the chemicals industry and our lack of knowledge of hormone disrupters in the products we buy.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

Compost is a great organic fertilizer. In the BBC documentary the Future of Food, A ground breaking new service in Bedfordshire is using waste food to create more food. Residents are asked to keep their food waste separate from their general rubbish. The waste is then taken to a [Biogen anaerobic digester](#). There it gets shredded, liquefied and goes through a process of fermentation and pasteurization which produces excess energy that goes back into the national grid and ends up as fertilizer for the farm. Waste food helps to produce more food. The collection process was also shown to have the advantage of making people aware of their food waste.

A small scale start-up opportunity for collecting organic fertilizer is to equip apartment blocks and homes with no gardens with composting bins. The standard composting bins that are subsidized by the Council can be installed on concrete so long as a soil base is deposited under them and the bin receives an adequate amount of sunlight (the heat generated facilitates decomposition).

The business proposal is as follows: offer home owners to buy a compost unit from you and provide soil. These units are retailing through council schemes at around £20 (which includes a separate container to collect waste inside). The major selling point is that food waste is the most expensive cost centre in a household: we throw away one third of our waste, costing the average household £420 a year. If we stopped throwing all this food away, it would be equivalent to taking one in five cars off the road. By composting, people become more aware of their food waste and start finding ways to be more frugal with it which will help them save money. That should be reason enough for them to spend their £20.

It takes at least 6 months to a year to create compost so you would only need to pick up once or twice every year. You collect the compost, package it and sell it to gardeners or ideally to farmers.

An alternative way to do it is to collect the food waste every two weeks and take it to a facility you've set up specifically for composting or generating energy. Have a look at the links in our [composting section](#) to find out more about food digesters.

Is this a viable business proposal? I don't know but it certainly is a good part-time way to make a difference to the environment and try to make a bit of money from it and you could probably get some European and UK funding for it. One other big area of food waste where you might find the scale you need to make money is the restaurant industry. From my experience in working in kitchens, a busy restaurant creates food waste equivalent to 3-5 times a household's weekly waste each night.

More information: [Source 1](#), [Source 2](#), [Source 3](#), [Source 4](#)

Consultant

ENERGY EFFICIENCY CONSULTANT

This is a new area where there's plenty of money to be made. I recently heard of an energy efficiency enthusiast who had his house assessed by an official energy efficiency consultant who charged him £360 for the delivery of the Energy Performance Certificate. With the State requiring a Home Information Pack for the sale of every house, the market for delivery of the certificates should be quite good. Unfortunately, there are a lot more domestic energy assessors than there needs to be so most of them aren't able to make a living from it but the market is still maturing.

Consultant

CRADLE TO CRADLE CONSULTANT

The work of a cradle to cradle consultant would be purely tailored. You would work as a substitute environmental consultant in small to medium sized businesses looking at their suppliers and production processes and advising on how to engrain sustainability in the business. The goals of sustainable practices are essentially idealistic but if you can develop a back catalogue of businesses where you've been able to cut costs and develop desirable outcomes such as products that are fully recyclable/ biodegradable, cut down on energy use, purify the water used in production etc... you are effectively turning a dream into reality. This is something that is highly desirable for businesses because it sells massively: imagine a business marketing to consumers a product that has no environmental damage, is fully made out of recyclable components or components that can be used indefinitely. Do you see any adverts like that on TV? No, so the company becomes the industry leader in the consumer's mind and is immediately differentiated from its competitors. What would happen if a business mastered that and was able to retail at the same price as its competition? Imagine the adverts if they showed the type of components the rest of the industry used including known carcinogens etc... People would flock to the company that cares about the consumer's health.

To learn the trade, you'll need to read Natural Capitalism, Cradle to Cradle, all the work of these authors online and any other key thinkers in sustainability. You'll need a very creative mind, coming out of a creative profession preferably and you will need to research all the companies providing sustainable products which could be bolted on to your customer's product supplies.

Consultant

DESIGN FLAW CONSULTANT

The name is misleading, in effect what you would be looking for as a design flaw consultant is to identify all the areas of the product's life cycle that could benefit from energy savings, reduction or elimination of raw material use etc... Using a formula from p80 of Natural Capitalism, you would carefully examine: "product effectiveness and longevity, minimize the material design and manufacturing, scrap recover, reuse, remanufacture, recycle, look at material savings through better quality, greater product effectiveness and smarter design." You don't even need to sell it. Everything is so poorly engineered these days that you can probably find savings in multiple areas of the product's manufacturing and disposal process. In that case, the best way to bill for your services is to invoice an income: your pitch will be "if I can save you X amount on your production process, I want you to pay me 30% of the saving on X in perpetuity. It's not going to cost you anything, you'll save 70% of whatever savings I identify for you so whichever way you look at it, you're better off."

Unbeknownst to the owner, you've just acquired a substantial amount of equity in their company because the potential savings that can be accomplished by looking into all the areas you'll look at are huge. To the extent that Lovins and Hawken come to the conclusion that taken together, all these improvements : "would reduce the total flow of materials needed to sustain a given stock of material artifacts or flow of services by a factor much nearer to one hundred, or even more, than to ten. This is in large part because smarter design can often wring service from a given artifact, so all these savings won't just add; they'll multiply. This will accelerate the restoration and abundance of natural capital."

Every large corporation neglects its design. Your customer list could well include some of the biggest blue chip company names in the world. Imagine owning a portion of the world's largest companies. Worth putting a huge amount of your mental energy on the case isn't it? To find out more about this fascinating field, we recommend reading Cradle to cradle and natural capitalism then move on to all the books you can get your hands on related to design on Amazon.

Consultant

CARBON FOOTPRINT QUANTITATIVE CONSULTANT

Tesco has set itself a goal of displaying the carbon footprint of every good it sells by 2010. You can imagine what kind of a storm that must have produced with the suppliers. Calculating a product's carbon footprint when it comes from so many different sources worldwide is an absolute nightmare. That's where the use of a carbon footprint quantitative consultancy becomes very handy.

Someone needs to get in touch with companies, visit them and calculate the carbon footprint of the materials they supply. Some might think companies will be opposed to that but the corporate sector for the past 2 years has drastically changed. It is far in advance of the government because it is sensing a regulatory change, observing the depletion of natural resources and adapting its business model. You will be surprised by the level of openness and cooperation corporations will be willing to put in such a project.

Most executives have their hands tied by the shareholders and the competition, that's not to say that they're not prepared to do something meaningful to reduce or disclose their organization's environmental impact. Where would the funding come from for something like that? Well every corporation is going to incur costs in calculating their carbon footprint and there's not enough experts around to do it so they're going to botch up the job and then there's going to be scandals about them lying about their environmental impacts and it will affect the corporation's image which is not a desirable outcome for them. Can an accountant do the job better than a consultancy that is dedicated specifically to that purpose? I think not.

So how much should you charge for your services? An hourly rate of £50 I would suggest plus expenses, this surely would make you cheaper than most professional accountancy firms. If you managed to pull it off at 12 hours a day and 50 weeks a year, you'll earn yourself £150,000 a year.

Consultant

CONSULTANT IN RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

This is a corny idea for which business is not ready yet. It's more of a second generation green business idea but I do think there is definitely a market for it right now but it's small.

The advent of documentaries on the BBC along the lines of the future of food means that a fundamental shift is occurring in the consumer market place. The public is now being educated by a major institution on how to make discerning purchases. Mainstream is taking on the environmental agenda and more and more people are going to start paying attention to the impact of what they buy and where. Tell-tell signs that this is already occurring is the growth of the fair-trade segment and the organic market. This trend is just picking up and it has a long way to go still which gives you plenty of time to establish yourself.

Global warming is modifying our relationship to consumption and it has to. We can't keep on depleting the planet's resources and cause major imbalances in ecosystems without demolishing ourselves. A more constructive approach is needed and the only path forwards is that promoted in the book Natural Capitalism. But beyond that, there's just no ceiling to how far business can take its responsibility. I see a future where business no longer competes just on price but also compete on their environmental impact or their ability to regenerate the environment.

The argument of business that it is there to increase shareholder value is half-baked. Shareholders should be very concerned about the potential depreciation of their hard earned savings in a globally warmed world. Currencies are going to take a battering and we'll have hyper-inflation. Both corporate assets and purchasing power will be affected as they could become uninsurable. If anything, global warming may cause the death of the insurance industry. The risks of losing assets and being hit by 'Black Swanns' on a regular basis will be considerably increased. The inevitable conclusion is that a short-term focus on quarterly earnings no longer does the job. Any shareholder should have as part of a well rounded portfolio a portion of their assets in corporations taking their environmental responsibility deadly seriously. Doing this will get corporations competing with one another to attract the green currency.

Any environmentalist arguing that the stock market is the source of all evil should reconsider. It may have been because of its short-term focus but it can turn itself around. In Wes Jackson words: 'all our problems are a reflection of an inner condition: like inside, like outside'. When we change our actions, the stock market will change to reflect that. And the change has begun: the rise of the ethical fund market attracting several billion pounds of savings is the first indication. The fact that the market for these funds to invest in and get decent returns is not large enough is a headache for fund managers but at least things are moving in the right direction.

Today we see major companies such as Subway promoting their green credentials. Unfortunately for Subway, to the discerning customer, theirs only looks like a half hearted attempt at improving their image. All the changes they advertise are changes that benefit their bottom line as well as the environment. It seems borderline hypocritical to advertise this type of change. By advertising these changes, Subway is possibly eroding a precious resource: the public's trust. The Great British public is already cynical enough, corporations adding another layer doesn't help. Business, sooner or later is going to have to address environmental issues by spending money. If they do not adjust to the marketplace, they risk a gigantic consumer boycott along the lines of the one that occurred with the younger generation in America in the seventies. Forward looking businesses mustn't just follow trends, they must anticipate them to stay ahead of the competition.

If Subway offered me to carbon offset my Sub for a few more pennies, I would do it on the spot. If Subway instead of displaying just the nutritional value of their sandwiches also displayed their carbon footprint, water footprint and some information about where the meat comes from, I would be more willing to buy from them. If they advertised their vegetarian alternatives with a bit of education on the issues with eating meat, I would approve. The cost of doing that would be minimal but it's not yet engrained in corporate culture. And this is where the consultant in responsible consumption has a role to play.

Another example is my favourite toilet roll brand: I buy Sainsburys Revive. They call it that because it is made from 100% recycled consumer waste. Yet the label does not display the energy it took to make the toilet rolls, nor the amount of water or the carbon footprint. I want to have that information. I'm also willing to pay for my toilet roll to plant more trees than it took to make. But Sainsbury's isn't marketing properly to me: they're offering me an alternative that's just not good enough.

A consultant in responsible consumption would help business to focus on transparent disclosure of the environmental impact of their "green" products. Green consumers want the full story. Even if the information is negative, it puts the manufacturer in a position where they can't just think about their bottom line, they have to think about how to reduce their environmental impact or offset it. The role of the consultant in responsible consumption is to fulfill consumer's need to minimize their environmental impact. This is not at all an issue that is being addressed adequately by business at the moment and it is going to take decades for that adjustment to occur properly. There's a market for your services at every major corporation and manufacturer and the market will expand once they get their heads out of their backside.

Consultant

GREEN TRANSITIONS CONSULTANT

One group of people for whom it will be particularly difficult to adopt a green lifestyle is the wealthy. I'll just assume that they're self-made rather than inherited wealth. There's a very large middle class in the UK that works long punishing hours so that they can have a good income. If you go to them and tell them all they've been working for is damaging the Earth and they have to stop, they'll turn their back on you. Yet it is necessary for these people, just as it is for the rest of us to cut down our carbon emissions by 90%. Undoubtedly, it will be far harder for them than it will be for anyone else to switch to a greener lifestyle. There may not even be a market for them yet.

But there will be... And if you decide to take this up, you're going to have to be very good at what you do

because you'll be dealing with a very demanding customer base. You should offer a mix of theory and practice. The theory should emphasize different ways to experience wealth other than materialism and there's a lot of really exciting stuff in that field to do. You should look into intellectual, emotional and social wealth therapy. [One consultancy is already doing something similar](#), they might be a good place to look for inspiration. Somehow, you need to help this particular class to get more in touch with their hearts and souls. They need to undergo a "desocialisation" training. All their lives they've been conditioned to attach value to things; that link needs to be broken. The training must be highly tailored as well. Another source of inspiration is the film *The Game* with Michael Douglas. People have hidden inhibitions, fears, pains, self-doubts...

Our psychological make up enables us to spend our entire lives lying to ourselves to avoid dealing with our issues of fear and insecurity. Yet, overcoming these issues is a process that can make individuals more fulfilled, happier and more able to contribute to society. So in a way, there's an element of psychological therapy that needs to go into this. The interesting idea that was put forwards in the *Game* was that sometimes the best way to do that is by getting people to have a life changing experience rather than lecturing them.

The upper class is a problem that can become a solution. In a way they are victims of the economic propaganda of the 20th century that is carrying its scars into the 21st century. They are a problem because oftentimes their wealth has been acquired at the detriment of the environment through lack of mindfulness and also because the more money one has, the more one is able to spend. Since every £1.20 we spend generates on average 1 kilo of carbon, prodigal consumption must be tackled where it's most likely to exist: with the rich and super rich. These are highly driven, often highly educated people. The problem is that they are often blinded by greed and accustomed to an unsustainable lifestyle. They have the potential to become powerful vehicles of change. Imagine the results if they were to apply their focus and drive to the environment. They can be turned into environmental and social entrepreneurs. Money governs the world but it can change it too. If their wealth is used to achieve greater social good, they can make some very powerful changes and they don't have to turn their lives around for that, they can do it within their organizations or their businesses. Even if they did something as simple as giving 1% of their income to the Planet, that would achieve significant social change. They're able to purchase electric cars, solar thermal and stimulate the green market. They're able to purchase land and protect it. There's just no limit to their potential. They could create a rebirth of capitalism; they could be the engineers of the future, the building blocks of Natural Capitalism.

Getting the right outcomes out of the training is going to be difficult but if done well, yours could be one of the most exciting, life changing and world changing businesses on the Planet. You'll need to study philosophy, psychology, ecology, meditation, applied social science and social enterprise, economics, personal finance etc... You should also build into your service a consultancy advising on how to turn around the environmental impact of their business interests. You could create remote training courses, include retreats, create a masters course, games, the potential is mind boggling.

Consultant

GREEN BUSINESS STRATEGY CONSULTANT

You would advise small to medium sized businesses on how to implement a green strategy, how to comply with environmental regulation, how to reduce their energy consumption, how to green up their energy consumption, how to minimize the environmental impact of their products and services and how to implement environmental PR campaigns. Most SMEs can't afford to employ a full-time consultant to minimize their environmental impact and lack the time and knowledge to green up their business. You could charge £2-4,000 per contract and more if your consultation lasts longer than a month. No qualification is needed but an accounting background or good numeracy skills would be an advantage. You would mainly acquire your knowledge from reading all the available books on greening up a business and from familiarizing yourself with all the companies in the UK providing green services. You could also learn from reading corporate environmental reports of companies making real efforts to clean up their business's impact. Your knowledge would improve gradually by solving company-specific problems.

Consultant

CARCINOGENS CONSULTANT

As the green market ripens, people are going to come to terms with the fact that the bulk of the items in their homes can be toxic to their health. What can they do about it? Learn everything about them? Most people are lazy or don't have time to do that. Instead, for a small fee, you could visit, assess everything from their furniture, fridge content and cleaning products and explain to them the environmental and health impact of each and recommend substitutes.

Consultant

ENVIRONMENTAL PR CONSULTANT

You will have noticed that we have mentioned PR in a number of our business ideas. The fact of the matter is that PR is a very effective way to get some cheap advertising. That's not to say that we do not have the utmost disregard and despise for the industry. Let's face it: if you work in PR on behalf of big corporations, you're oftentimes a professional liar. Disagree with that statement? Please read "Toxic Sludge is good for you" by Stauber and Rampton and "Trust us we're experts!" by the same authors to understand our point of view. Once you've done that, go to [our reading section](#) to watch the documentary the century of self which contains the full history of the birth of the PR industry and how it has been used to destroy our society.

Now that we've got the rant out of the way, let's look at the potential of an environmental PR company. The green small and medium sized business industry is going to be in our opinion the fastest growing business segment of all times. Environmental social enterprises already constitute the fastest growing segment of social enterprise in the world (view [Wiser Earth](#) and read Blessed Unrest by Paul Hawken). Governments are useless at dealing with the problem and so are individuals so it's going to take companies to find solutions. The business section of this website is just a small illustration of what is to come. We've barely scratched the surface of the awesome potential to create and green up businesses. There's already plenty of small green businesses that could get a lot out of a good PR consulting service. I suggest it should include a review of the business and points to work on including maximizing website revenue and improving websites since they are the virtual image of the company and many small businesses can't afford to open up high street branches.

I am not suggesting in any way that the general public should be manipulated into adopting a green lifestyle. If anything an environmental PR company, for the sake of the ethics of the businesses it deals with should do everything it can to avoid manipulating public opinion. This in itself, could persuade ethical businesses to take up your services as opposed to the unethical competition.

The key service you should offer is writing and presenting a company's services in a favorable light through an unrivalled knowledge of environmental facts and statistics. Combined with an outstanding knowledge of human psychology and particularly why we haven't greened up our lifestyle and why we're still resisting it. The goal should be to replace products that are dangerous for us and our environment with ones that aren't. On that basis, I'm prepared to accept that PR has its role to play in saving us from ourselves.

There is an environmental PR company in the US doing some good work. You can find out more about it in Green Business: you can start to make money and make a difference by Glen Croston.

IT Pro

DURABLE COMPUTER MAKER

Dell started with one guy looking for a cheap way to build a computer. It became a gigantic company. Computers have one big weakness: they are not built to last. A computer is designed to be replaced every five years. Imagine building a brand around the idea of a computer that lasts for 20 years. One Sheffield based

manufacturer, Very PC, designs its desktops to use the same amount of energy as laptops, uses quality components, dusts the computer after three years to avoid overheating and computer failure and guarantees the machine for five years as a result. Office computers now have enough hard drive space and RAM that upgrading them is rather irrelevant since all they tend to be used for is Internet browsing and Office applications. A computer built to last long would have a simple architecture, parts that are easy to remove and replace, a solid processor and hard drive and a shell that can be opened for dusting. The key to the business would be to guarantee the long-term supply of the spare parts. Each computer sold would save three "planned obsolete" computers from being disposed of in Nigeria where they will be dissolved in sulphuric acid by children wearing no protective gear.

IT

COMPUTER REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Computer maintenance and repair is a safe and stable business to be in. I know a guy who works from home and has been in this business ever since he was a teenager for a good 15 years. He keeps his turnover just under £69,000 so that he doesn't have to pay VAT. I don't know what portion of it is income but it's enough for him to live comfortably and pay off his mortgage. Computer repair is a fascinating and challenging business to be in. Since a laptop computer creates 4000 times its weight in waste in the manufacturing process, repairing them cheaply is definitely a very green business to be in. The longevity of a computer is of key importance to minimizing the use of resources and toxic waste. It is estimated that American business dumps at least 5 million gallons of toxic waste into the Ocean including benzene, mercury, heavy metals you name it, they're dumping it. This is happening worldwide and we eat fish that is laced with heavy metals so it comes back to us. The average human body is now contaminated with more than 300 man-made chemicals.

The profession requires brains, interest and perseverance. Learning the trade wouldn't be too difficult: you'd need to read a few computer assembly manuals and get in touch with local computer repairers and ask them to assist in their repairs in your spare time. You could learn the trade part-time over a six months period and then run a part-time business doing it until you have enough clients to work full-time.

Web designer

RENTAL BAY

The largest part of an individual's carbon footprint is their consumption. The average individual spends £4,400 a year on new goods and services that generate an average 3.7 tonnes of CO₂. For every £1.20 we spend on stuff, one kilo of carbon is emitted in the atmosphere. It accounts for 25 to 35% of the average individual's carbon footprint. Wealthy and middle class people tend to have a much larger consumption carbon footprint than the working class simply because they can afford to buy more. The biggest carbon footprints are the ones from technological products. They also have the biggest toxic waste footprint.

The idea of Rental Bay is that we all have a number of goods at home that we rarely use. For instance, you may have a ladder, a bicycle, a digital camera, a tool box, paint brushes, a Karcher pressure washer, a spare laptop, spare mobile, a video recorder, even some pans you're not using etc... All of these goods have a rental value. At Christmas, I needed a video camera so I had to spend £300 on a new one but I only used it once or twice. I could have rented it for a week for £50 and been better off than buying it new. Rental Bay is like a gigantic pay per use library. There's no limit to the stuff you can rent: homes, carpet cleaners, construction equipment...

Ebay did very well because it tapped into an existing market that nobody was covering properly: people have lots of old stuff sitting at home they're not using so why not flog it? The growth of Ebay is however limited to how much hassle is involved in flogging the goods online: you have to check the price online, price it competitively, write some text to describe the product, take a digital picture of it then load all of that online and you don't even know if it will sell or not. Once it's sold, you have to wrap it up, go to the post office, stamp it

and send it. That's just too much hassle for most people and that's why the growth of Ebay is limited.

The worst thing about conspicuous consumption is that you can have a number of households on the same street that have exactly the same goods at home and only use them once or twice a year. It makes absolutely no sense for people to buy stuff they hardly ever use yet that's what corporations want us to do. It makes them more money if there's two people on the same street buying their goods instead of sharing them. The revenge of the consumer would be to say: enough is enough; I'm going to share my stuff. The trouble is very few people are motivated to lend their stuff for free. They need an incentive. That's precisely where Rental Bay can help. You list your goods online once. Someone wants to rent something? They input their postcode and a list of goods available comes up sorted by proximity. The system automatically displays if the good are available or not. You pay a bond online for the value of the good, specify the time you want it for and pay for it. The bond is returned once both parties confirm it has been returned. The only obligation of the person renting the good is to submit a receipt to the person renting it once they've returned it. To avoid people renting out goods above their real rental value, all you need do is introduce a facility for bidders to make rental offers below the demanded rental price. This is a fantastic opportunity for households to make an additional income stream since most have something at home they can rent out.

You only have to list it once, someone comes to pick it up at your home and brings it back, you can earn an infinite amount from owning just one good you rarely use. Try to find a better way to offer the mass market to make money, you won't. That's why this proposal has mass appeal and immense potential.

There's another way that you can make this proposal even more successful. Rental Bay could grow even faster simply by using brokers. Let's say I knock on your door and ask you if you'd like to make money. You look at me suspiciously. I explain that there's a new service out there called rental bay. You can list goods online you have at home that you don't use often and rent them out. I can offer to take a picture of the goods you have, advise you on what you can rent, how much for and list them for you. Sounds good doesn't it? Most people won't want to do it themselves because they're couch potatoes. That's the one greatest achievement of the corporation, they've managed to lobotomize the masses so that it's easy to sell them just about anything. You can count on easily 50% of the Great British public being too lazy, scared of or not knowledgeable enough to list their goods online. They'll need a broker.

You won't even need to pay the broker. If the client agrees a 10% rental fee payable to the broker for every time something gets rented out, the broker could retire off his client's base income within 5 years. All you need to do is insure that brokers are criminal background checked, registered with you and properly qualified to advise people on rental potential. That's all. Your income will come from a small listing fee to be levied every time the good is rented out.

For all these reasons we believe Rental Bay is one of the few ventures we've listed here with multi-billion pound potential.

More info: [Tool lending libraries](#)

[Web Designer](#)

GREEN BUSINESS HUB WEBSITE

The green business community is not at all like the traditional business community. Green businesses understand the urgency to counter climate change and therefore, they are much more prepared to cooperate and share. They're not intellectual property oriented in that they're more interested in sharing their intellectual property than protecting it. The Ecologist magazine has understood that and they often have a section entirely devoted to green business and green business models in their monthly issue. Their interviews with green business entrepreneurs reveal that most of these are actively involved in trying to export their business models in other towns. So passionate are these entrepreneurs that they are prepared to license/franchise their business free.

There is currently no green business model hub. A website dealing with this would do an analysis of each green business in each town in the UK, list them online for a nominal fee then have a section that describes the business model and links up to entrepreneurs willing to share their business model. Such a website would be very useful because it would help to identify green local business opportunities that are not exploited and enable to boost local green business communities. There would be plenty of potential for the hub to sell advertising space and to branch out into listing green businesses. There would also be the potential to link up with a series of companies catering to new businesses and receive fees for referring new would be businesses to these organizations.

The concept could also copy the highly successful Alibaba business model. It would try to link up entrepreneurs worldwide to suppliers to facilitate green trade. Alternatively, if the website is successful, its own business model could be exported worldwide to develop local economies.

You could improve the service by including marketing tips, accounting, tax, HR and start-up advice and a forum. The only website we could find remotely dealing with this concept is the rather disappointing: <http://www.greenlinking.com/>.

Web Designer

MINI WIND POWER TURBINE WEBSITE

The premise of this website would be to advise people as to whether or not their area is suitable to install a mini wind power unit.

B&Q is selling these at the moment but many skeptics argue that it's a total waste of money. If placed in the right area, a mini wind turbine is not a waste of money. But the key issue is finding the right area. I'm not aware of any website that assesses the suitability of a site for the installation of a mini turbine. The earnings could come from subscriptions from major retailers but I doubt that would constitute a good way of generating revenue. Your best bet would be to initially cover those areas most likely to get wind such as coastal areas and sell mini turbines directly through your site. It's a difficult business idea to get off the ground but it's certainly worthwhile investigating and thinking about.

Educator

GREEN GAME BOARD

Right now, there is little or no teaching in schools about green living and the dangers of global warming. It means the next generation doesn't even know how to correct the mistakes of the previous one and is being groomed to take the same destructive path. There is not one popular game board in the marketplace that teaches green living or tries to teach people how to be responsible for their own pollution. I believe there have been a few board games that have tried it but they've failed. It is actually quite a difficult project to undertake.

There is a multi million pound money making opportunity just in the fact that there is not yet a successful green board game. The opportunity is to develop a series of board games such as monopoly that will prove highly popular with the public. Board games could be centred around saving the planet, learning about carbon emissions, finding ways to reduce emissions, switching from a polluting to a green lifestyle etc... The concept is similar to games where the object is to make money because it is directed towards a single goal: cutting emissions which like money, can be quantified and have a pecuniary value. On that basis a large amount of popular board games could be modified to roll out green versions. This includes Cranium, Trivial Pursuit, Risk and Cash Flow. The skill in trying to conceptualise a green board game is to make it simple. The most successful board game will be one that will be able to make simple an issue that is difficult for most to understand. On the other hand, a quiz type of board game would be the easiest route to take but since there is so little cultural knowledge of causes and sources of pollution, the game may not have mass appeal.

Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL MP3s

People buy books to learn about global warming and environmental issues. Do you know anyone buying recordings or anyone selling them? In the age of the Ipod and long working hours, very few people have time to buy and read books anymore. Potentially, the mp3 recording format could have more success than the book.

Recording on personal developments sell like hotcakes in the US. Why shouldn't environmental ones, after all we are biological creatures, we should be interested in making the most of our habitat shouldn't we? You could offer your services to publishing companies or write your own material. With the Ecologist releasing 40 years of publications on their website, it's not going to be too difficult to find information to write about.

Educator

SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Amory and Hunter Lovins created a business school in the US where sustainability is interwoven in every topic taught. Such concepts are not yet quite as well developed in the UK. To make it happen, you need to have been involved long-term in the environmental sector. It takes a huge amount of passion to get something like this off the ground and get it to have a big impact. We are just about to undergo a huge green revolution. Offering a masters or MBA in business sustainability would earn you about £10,000 per applicant. Put together a class of 30 and you've got £300,000 in funding to achieve your goals. It would be a good idea to do it in partnership with a University where there's an existing large supply of highly influential professors working in one way or another in the field.

It would be worthwhile getting in touch with the Rocky Mountain Institute to get some advice on how to set this up.

Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM MAKER

It's not difficult to make environmental films. The state of the environment is so appalling worldwide that it's easy to take your pick at any issue and turn it into a film. People's knowledge of environmental impact and environmental matters is also very limited. For instance, very few people have any idea of the embedded energy in the goods and services they consume every day. They know very little about the environmental impact of the meat they eat. Initially, you could make short films and post them on youtube and then you could send proposals to the BBC. Making films requires a lot of time and a lot of research so make sure you prepare well before launching yourself into it. Style is very important when making documentaries. Most documentary makers don't make money but if you look at Michael Moore for instance, he's raked in millions from the stuff he's made. People like to laugh, especially in the UK. The best delivery you can give for something serious is a heavy dose of humour; that will keep people interested and then you can use a book to convey the rest of your information. Making films is a lot of hard work but making something depressing funny is even harder.

Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE T-SHIRT MAKER

Forrest Gump runs across America mindlessly inspiring a cult following of people who run alongside him. Whilst running, someone stops him to ask for inspiration and he wipes his muddy face in that person's T-shirt leaving a happy face. As we all know, the happy face became a worldwide fashion icon. The average person

receives 3000 advertising messages a day. T-Shirts can be a way of achieving positive propaganda and they may be a good way of validating the feelings of a generation that is sick to death of advertising, marketing and the consumer culture. Corporations all print their brands on every item they produce so that they get some free advertising and it works. One of the best ways to give ecology some free public airing is to get people to wear T-Shirts with powerful messages. Today, Che Guevara is the most recognisable face in the world because of the T-Shirt. The face symbolises rebellion, it's an image youth wants to be associated with.

You should use organic T-Shirts or T-shirts made out 100% from Nylon and polyester and offer a facility to recycle the shirts. Using organic cotton will eat into your profit margins but what's the point in making environmental T-Shirts if they're destroying the Planet? Cotton crops are ecological dead zones where no wildlife survives. In addition, they're responsible for millions of human deaths due to the use of fertilizer.

You will need to find powerful and simple images for maximum appeal and a relatively neutral message. T Shirts are a way of validating identity so bear in mind that negative messages might not sell so well. Try plenty of different designs to find out which ones sell the most then focus on those. Here are some humble suggestions:

I CARE in huge letters on the torso with the picture of a tree, a melting iceberg, or a starving child, or a dying plant // PROTECT THE PLANET, PROTECT LIFE or WARM PLANET = NO LIFE, a planet burning // I AM GLOBAL COOLING with a picture of a wind turbine // BEFORE, AFTER: two pictures of Kilimanjaro one before the glacier melted and one after // NO OXYGEN, NO LIFE, a tree being cut down // PROFIT AT ALL COST, picture of drilling next to an iceberg // CORPORATIONS, AT YOUR SERVICE TO BRING DOWN THE PLANET, oil spillage // THE LOGOS OF ALL THE CORPORATIONS FINED FOR CRIME with message: BUY CORPORATE = SUBSIDIZE CRIME. These are just suggestions. Designing good T-shirts will require a lot of thought and research into good pictures. You'll also need to do a lot of research into environmental issues. This business could be a lot of fun.

Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL POSTER MAKER

There's a number of quotes by leading politicians, activists and experts on the environment that would make for good posters. You've probably seen some Marthin Luther King posters in people's homes growing up, posters with extracts from political discourses. All you need to do is purchase a photo, ask for the rights to reprints what was said and you can sell your poster to all the poster making agencies in the world or make it and market it yourself. The next generation is going to want these posters badly.

Educator

ENVIRONMENTAL MAGNET MAKER

Magnets are useful because you can put them on the fridge so that you don't forget stuff. Examples: Eat old food before you have to throw it away, turn the thermostat down 1 degree and save £40. Even the staunchest environmentalists need reminders otherwise they forget to implement their good resolutions. Making environmental magnets is easy: magnets are cut by laser and you can order the sizes you want then stick a picture and add laminated film over it and you're done. Each magnet can be sold for £2-3 retail and you can make a 50-100% margin on each item. All you need to do is find a few retail outlets that will sell the products online to get you started and once your operation is up and running you can look for larger customers such as large retailers.

Sales/marketing

GREEN LABEL ALLOCATOR

This is potentially a very lucrative business idea. The Good Shopping Guide already implements it but it can be done differently. It's a similar concept to the Michelin stars. You basically find a corporate sponsor to pay you £50-100,000. In IT, sponsors pay to identify new software that could make substantial amounts and then market the company's products or buy the company outright. You want to provide similar benefits.

Put together an independent panel of green consultants and experts. That panel will do two things: first it will assess new green technology and give it a stamp of approval be it a prize or a quality stamp. Secondly, the panel will assess the progress of a company in reducing its carbon footprint allocating 3 quality levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. These ratings will enable the company to market its products as bona fide green and give consumers the assurance that the company they're choosing is not just "green washing". It's a good idea not just financially but ethically as well. Companies obtaining a rating will have a competitive edge that will differentiate them from their competitors. As consumers become greener, their market share will increase and this will give their competitors an incentive to follow suit in attempting to reduce their emissions.

Sales/Direct marketing

EBAY SELLER

Selling unwanted items on Ebay is green because it gives these items a second lease of life and stops people from going out buying new heavily packaged stuff. There was a business that dealt with this in Colchester. They opened up shop and then closed. It's not really a business you can run from a shop, opening a shop would only be useful to raise the business's profile. The key to running a business like this is that you need a direct marketer to go round homes getting people to sell their stuff through your company. A husband/wife partnership would be ideally suited to run this type of business since one of the partners could do the selling whilst the other did the listing. There's a huge market for this as people tend to buy lots of clutter and then are too lazy to sell it so it ends up in boxes in the garage or in a skip. There's plenty of room for various businesses to operate in the same location and it's a low setup cost business model, all you need is lots of business cards and to make sure you are easily found on the internet and on the yellow pages (ask for an ebay seller listing).

Sales/Direct marketing

GREEN ENERGY SALES REP

Good Energy will pay from £20 to £120 for each new client signed up. As far as I'm aware, they don't have a direct marketing sales force so if you were to go door-knocking offering green energy, you'd probably be the only one in the marketplace doing that. The best green electricity supplier out there in our opinion is Ecotricity but they don't pay as well as Good Energy, which one you chose depends on which one you feel most confident selling and how much you need to earn to survive. One thing's for sure, if you sell green energy you will be making one of the most effective contributions possible to reduce people's carbon emissions.

Sales/Direct marketing

ALLOTMENT BROKER

Colchester Council has a 5 year waiting list for people to get access to an allotment. That's how much demand there is for people to grow their own food. Of course demand has fluctuated a lot in the past and the recession has done much to generate the present enthusiasm but this is a trend that is set to last in our view. With all the publicity surrounding global warming, people are going to be ever more conscious of their environmental impact and growing your own vegetables is one of the most pleasant ways to get involved in the environmental movement.

Based on all of this, there's got to be a huge market for people who don't have the time or inclination to look after their garden to let it to want-to be food growers.

People rent out spare car parking, it makes sense to rent out spare garden space. This is an especially attractive option to landlords who's tenants really couldn't care less about the back garden. Most of these back gardens are block paved and valuable space that could be used to grow food is wasted.

You could market a service to landlords to get the most out of their back gardens whilst simultaneously offering a transformation service for which you could charge for a builder to come round. Make sure that whatever slates you replace or concrete you break up is recycled.

Sales/Direct marketing

SYNTHETIC PAPER SELLER

People don't really understand what green means and synthetic paper is a prime example. On the face of it plastic paper is not at all environmentally friendly: it's man made, not natural, it's made from petrol yet it's far greener than paper.

Have you ever read a book the pages of which are made out of plastic? Ever read a newspaper or a magazine made out of plastic? Odds are you haven't. This is THE opportunity. The technology does exist and it is far more environmentally friendly than using paper for one simple reason: synthetic paper is a cradle to cradle product, it can be reused indefinitely, it never needs to go to landfill.

I first got the idea for this business opportunity from the cradle to cradle book. It saved 107 trees by being printed on plastic. The book is 100% recyclable, can be reused indefinitely as the ink can just be washed off . The main problem with paper is that even recycled paper requires wood pulp. Paper cannot be recycled, it can only be down cycled and each piece of paper can only be reused 5-6 times. The use of paper is not a major cause for deforestation: 17% of the 3.3 billion cubic metres of wood consumed worldwide each year is for papermaking and much of the wood used in paper is in the form of wood chips, the rubbish left behind by sawmill operations. The trouble is that paper, even recycled uses a lot of water and when paper eventually ends up in a landfill, as most paper does, it rots releasing methane. Alphaprint, a local printer also notes that "as the demand for paper increases, the pressure for more timber increases. This can lead to the loss of valuable wildlife habitats and ecosystems as managed plantations, usually of fast growing conifers, replace old forests."

An American company in Europe, [Yupo](#), is the world leader in the production of synthetic paper. Since the product is not being used for publishing, we have to deduce that they could do with the help of an astute marketer. Your job would be to approach them, offer a marketing deal and start selling their product first to green publishing companies and then to the rest of the market place. To make it a true cradle to cradle product, the synthetic paper needs to be collected and recycled, you'll need to check what system Yupo uses for that. Eventually, synthetic plastic has to become more appealing to use than paper and that's got to be based on cost. You'll need to check with Yupo how they compare in cost terms to paper before you can convince companies it's in their best interest and our Planet's best interest to print on plastic. More info [here](#) and [here](#).

Sales/Direct marketing

CRUISE LINERS AND COMMERCIAL CARGOS SALE SELLER

This carbon saving product with mass appeal was covered in Focus #188, April 2008 edition. The sail, produced by Skysails enables a ship to cut its emissions by up to 20% and "since the shipping industry is responsible for twice as much CO2 as the aviation industry, that's potentially a huge benefit" (Focus).

The giant sail is controlled by computers and soars up to 300 meters where the winds are strongest. The computer moves the kite in a figure of eight and adjusts the sail's direction.

The business opportunity lies in convincing Skysails that you can operate as an independent contractor selling the product to smaller boat owners and operators. You'll need to train with the company and obtain knowledge of who is already using their products. The most effective way of offering your service would be if you are fluent in several languages to offer the firm the chance of an increased international exposure. For more information, visit: [Skysails](#).

Skilled worker

TRIPLE LAYER INSULATING CURTAINS

Curtains on any given property can reduce heat loss substantially. Insulating curtains would be curtains that have a triple thickness layer. Nobody makes them, if you can tailor them for households, you can sell lots of them and we can find you customers since we advise the general public on how to improve their home's insulation cheaply. They should be quite easy to make, you can get the material second hand cheaply or just get any random bits of cloth and sew it all together in the thread of the curtain.

The business could even be set up as a social enterprise to help grannies make some additional income since as everyone knows, no one knows how to sew better than grandma! To find suitable grannies, get in touch with the Council, warm front, green grocers and local farmers markets.

Driver

ECO DRIVING LESSONS INSTRUCTOR

I don't think that any qualifications are needed to teach people how to drive in an environmentally friendly way and it would be quite easy to teach someone how to do so within 2 hours for which one could charge anything from £25 to £50. It would also be easy to sell because all you'd have to do is advertise some statistics on how much money people can save by driving in an environmentally friendly way. You could advertise on free bill boards, newspapers and on the radio. In addition, you could sell products that improve the efficiency of the engine to make an additional line of income ([Ecotek](#)). A lot of business could be obtained from calling all the companies in the area to offer them to put their employees on an eco driving course so that they could claim to be doing something to reduce their carbon footprint and improve their company's image with their employees and customers. Find out more about eco driving in [our driving section](#).

Bilingual

GREEN TRANSLATOR

If you're a German speaker and quite good at translation, there is potentially a good opportunity for you. The concept of Passivhaus is not well known in the UK because all the books written about it are in German. Making an offer to the book publishers, you could offer to translate and commercialize some of the books and commercialize them in the UK through a green book publisher.

Comedian

STAND-UP ENVIRONMENTAL COMEDIAN

A comedian has nothing to lose, no concerns about reputation, no cumbersome ego. For those reasons, a comedian has the ultimate liberty of saying out loud what others deem too crude to utter. The world is in dire need of comedians who can say the things that need to be said so that they go into the mainstream. Then politicians can repeat those same things without fear of being lambasted by the tabloid press. When people start to laugh about something, they begin to accept it, they are laughing at themselves, at the silliness of others. There are no environmental comedians in the UK. The only joke I've heard on the environment so far

is: no one has done more for the environmental cause than Ryanair. There are thousands of similar jokes along these lines just waiting to be cracked.

Builder

GREEN STANDARDS BUILDER/ DEVELOPER/ ARCHITECT

Homes typically produce 2.3 tonnes of carbon per individual. With trends moving strongly in the direction of reducing carbon emissions, green builders are going to be highly in demand both now and even more so in the future. Very few builders can claim to have real green building credentials and very few are able to take on the training necessary to reach the appropriate standards. Learning to become a green builder and getting all the information you need for that couldn't be easier thanks to this website: <http://www.greenspec.co.uk/index.html>.

In particular this website has details of the [PassivHaus](#), praised in Monbiot's book Heat ([more info here](#), [and here](#)). The Passivhaus costs only 7% more to build than a normal one, has no radiators and next to no heating. It uses approximately 8% of the gas consumption of the average UK household. The incremental cost is said to be £5000 (mainly from triple glazing) and can be recouped in less than 10 years. Heat is generated by sunlight coming through the windows, the building and the people inside of it. The Passivhaus model has existed since the 80s and there's very few of them in the World (only 6000).

They are exciting because there's so few of them and they are so incredibly energy efficient. The cost of running such a house is next to nothing which makes it very appealing to buyers and could make it even more appealing if ever the government in the next 10 years was forced to cap individual's carbon emissions. In fact, a small developer specializing in building such houses could rapidly compete with the likes of Barratt and Wimpey if they were able to train builders to the required standards because the major developers don't seem to get the market for green building but all of this could change rapidly. There's a strong competitive advantage to be had for any builder pre-empting the future green building trend. For further research, we recommend 2 energy saving trust publications: [air tightness](#) in new builds and [best practice in construction](#).

Builder

EXTERNAL WALL INSULATOR

Insulating external solid walls is a project for which you definitely need a builder. Few builders have experience in fitting external insulation. It's expensive to install and time consuming so a builder could make a reasonably good margin out of it. It should also work for properties with existing cavity wall insulation to make them airtight. This, in conjunction with triple glazed windows, draught proofing, floor and loft insulation might even turn the property into a [Retrofitted Passivhaus](#). Explain the Passivhaus concept to people, they'll love it. [Click here](#) or [here](#) for more info on external wall insulation.

Handy Man

DRAUGHT PROOFER

A search on yell.co.uk will quickly reveal an astonishing fact: there is not a single professional draught proofer in Colchester. The average UK energy bill in 2008 was £1300. Draught proofing can cut that bill 15%, saving a customer up to £195 a year and almost £2k over 10 years, according to the energy saving trust. Elsewhere, they also say that the typical savings are £30 a year, it depends on the property.

Thanks to lax building regulation (find out more about this in Heat by Monbiot), every home in the UK is an insulation nightmare, short of stripping it down and putting it back together, little can be done to insulate it better. The Government has introduced regulation to remedy the problem but not provided adequate training

facilities. Builders feel as if the Government is moving the goal posts all the time and so they stick to their usual method. As a result things aren't changing.

It's easy to put excess carbon into the atmosphere but difficult to take it out. Most people don't realize that they can save a lot by draught proofing and all you need to do as a draught proofer is show people the cost savings and pick the right locations where your service is going to be the most relevant. Draught proofing is easy and cheap: it costs £50-100 to do it and you can charge £100-150 to do the installation, more if the home requires more serious work. Make sure however you read a lot on it prior to jumping into it, the last thing you want is to leave half of a home you've just done vulnerable to draughts.

Builder/ Architect

TYRE CONSTRUCTOR

The construction industry uses three billion tonnes of material each year. The cement industry is responsible for 7% of worldwide emissions. Domestic housing in the UK is responsible for 27% of the country's emissions. The UK throws away 48 million car tyres each year ([Source](#)).

Ever noticed the piles of tyres at local garages or seen the pictures of tyre landfill sites? The secret of doing well in business is to find cheap raw materials and turn them into something valuable. That's a rule Alan Sugar seems to apply to every part of his business. Tyres are essentially free. No one wants them and no one seems to find any use for them. The only application that has been found for them of late is to use them instead of gravel on golf courses.

Tyres have three properties that make them an ideal construction material: they can be piled up, they're bulky, non porous and should have good insulating properties.

You just need to find a way to make them stick together. I think the best way to get them to pile up adequately might be to pierce a hole through the middle, run a metal rod through, bolt each tyre together on both sides and the whole thing should hold together. One issue is that tyres are very bulky if you use them whole. This would reduce the building's available space and its value. However, if they're cut through the middle in half moon shapes, you've doubled your amount of construction material and solved your space problem.

Another issue is design. A tyre-like building structure will not have uniform surfaces rather a bubbly look. This would make a building look odd and tenants or buyers may be dissuaded by a design that is a little too unconventional for their taste. The solution would be to use the tyre as the central structure and put a layer of plaster, metal, plastic, glass or fiberglass sheeting on the outside and inside (the least energy intensive the material, the better, the more durable the material, the better).

It's quite likely the builder would have a competitive advantage over other builders because his materials would cost next to nothing. I don't know if the building could withstand the weight of multiple storeys, you'd need to consult a structural engineer for that. It should be ideal for bungalows, offices or manufacturing facilities.

Believe it or not, but tyres have already been used in a landmark project: the Brighton Earthship. Find out more about it [here](#). Various plans are apparently under way to build homes out of tyres.

DIY

ELECTRONICS REPAIRER/ ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRER

I know what you're thinking: there's no market for that. It is precisely because that's what you're thinking that an opportunity exists. No one repairs anymore, everyone throws away. Our society's culture is about to undergo a major change. When that change is in full throttle, repairer's going to become a fashionable job. You should market at every outlet that sells the products you repair, making sure your leaflets are always there.

Further, you should advertise in the paper and everywhere you can for free collection of broken stuff. You fix it and you resell it.

DIY

INSULATION/ GREEN PAINTER

There are additives that can now be mixed with paint to increase its insulation value. These additives can reduce heating expenses by up to 10% on solid wall properties. There are a lot more things a painter can do to be greener and get green credential awards: visit [the green painters association](#) for more information. Thermilate is a paint insulation additive for internal walls.

Engineering or DIY

COURSES AND WORKSHOPS IN BUILDING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVICES

Running courses on this would be a lot of fun. If people enjoy it, you'll get a lot of referral business. If you're good at engineering stuff then there's an easy way to make money: teach people how to build their own solar panels and how to build wind turbines. You can run courses to do that by advertising in the local paper or by dropping leaflets. The cost savings of installing these types of installations yourself is huge but it is a lot of hassle if you don't have a clue on how to do it. Just for solar thermal which can cost £3500, the savings can be from £1000-2000. A student in a UK Uni managed to create a wind generating device with raw materials costing him £20. The same can be done with solar installations. It can be quite complicated to set this all up if you're trying to do it from scratch so someone offering a course on how to do that can offer a valuable saving and add value because even once the cost of the course has been accounted for, the customer would still save a lot more than if he tried getting someone else to do the installation for him. You could derive handsome profits from this charging £50-100 per person and by doing a one day presentation for 10 people.

Mechanical Engineering or DIY

COURSES AND WORKSHOPS IN BUILDING/RETROFITTING ELECTRIC CARS // ELECTRIC CAR CONVERSION SERVICE

I wasn't sure about recommending that one but then I remembered a lady I had seen on TV who said that it was actually very cheap and easy to build electric cars. Her and her husband had a passion for ecology and built their electric car fleet. She was very angry at car builders for not making more of an effort. She was building from scratch. I've read here and there that it was possible to retrofit a car to electrical but that it was quite expensive. Further research showed the expense depends chiefly on the type of batteries you use. There are very few books on self conversions; the only one that looked decent enough we could find on Amazon was: [Build your own electric vehicle by Bob Brant](#). Aqua Luna also has a pretty good guide on the subject, check it [here](#). I think the main potential of an idea like this would be to retail all the components one needs to create their own electrical vehicle.

Property developer

GREEN HOUSING DEVELOPER

People want to buy sustainable homes. Many smaller property developers are opting to build sustainable homes because the premium they attract is far more than the extra cost of development. 10-20 years from now there will only be green housing developers but in between, the building trade is going to strongly resist the transition. This means that even though regulations are in place to build to green standards, they won't be followed. This gives the green housing developer a good short-term competitive advantage. To learn how to

design a sustainable home, read *Simply Sustainable homes* by Tim Pullen. Most of the information you'll need is available on this website or on links listed on this site.

Scientific/Chemicals

CARBON ABSORPTION DEVICES

If you understand chemistry and you have access to a lab then you can start work on a way to suck out carbon from the air back into some type of container. The current cheapest solutions to do that are very hazardous. There's an interesting article on this topic in the 28th February 09 issue of *New Scientist*. Whether it be through nano research or by developing a mechanical means of absorption: carbon sucking is where the future of the planet lies.

I don't know the ins and outs of where carbon dioxide goes once its' emitted but I take it that if you placed some carbon absorption devices at the top of mountains, they could potentially absorb it, the question is where could it be stocked? I believe some research has been done into that and it has been found some types of stones can absorb it as well as organic substances and I've read of a space under the Ocean off the East coast of the US where there is potentially enough space to stock all of it. It would be an even more promising invention if carbon could be absorbed at lower latitudes. The end of our civilization will be due to the fact that we have not found a way to contain the carbon we generated whilst we were switching from a polluting to a clean economy. The key to absorbing carbon successfully is to find a way that takes it out of the atmosphere and stocks it somewhere where it can be stored indefinitely. A device that does that cheaply hasn't been invented yet. What's more talk of putting aerosols into the atmosphere or iron in the sea has a problem: once you've put it there, what happens if it has side effects? What about the stuff you put in the atmosphere, how do you go and take it back if it also has side effects? The best solution is one that hasn't been developed yet of not dropping stuff off where it can't be picked up and contending with sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere like trees do. But as humans, we've got to find a more efficient and faster way to do it than trees do, the very survival of our species depends on it. [Click here for more information on geoengineering.](#)

Combined Scientific/ Social Science/ Engineering/ Design/ Chemicals Background

REPLICATE THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

"We have scarce Nature. We need to be using it 4, 10, 100 times more productively." Amory Lovins

Natural Capitalism is the way forward. The [Rocky Mountain Institute](#) needs to be replicated. It is a think tank that attempts to look at markets and how they can be improved through better environmental management and that is a pretty poor summary of what they do. It's all about frugality. If you were to set this up, you'd be running a consultancy, looking for inefficiencies, working with small and large businesses and getting them to change what they do so that the competition follows. It's a bottom up approach that works. To find out more, [watch the Amory Lovins video](#) and read the *Natural Capitalism* book. The inefficiency of business in mitigating environmental impact is THE opportunity. Long-term, this type of business can become a giant along the lines of the Big accounting firms but it requires such a great deal of innovation that you need a huge mind to deal with the challenges. You'll need to be a very good generalist and you'll need to work with others like you.

Inventor

COMBINED TIDAL AND WAVE TURBINES

The best place to obtain wind energy in the UK is offshore where winds offer higher load factors and more energy can be generated. The problem is that these offshore installations are very expensive. I've also been led to believe that the reason for the backlog in planning permissions for wind turbines is that they impede the signals from radars.

What is the point in putting wind turbines in the middle of the Ocean to use the energy above the surface when you could also use the energy on the surface and under the surface. I believe that there is a potential when installing offshore wind farms to take advantage of the surface waves and under water currents to produce additional power. If this potential is fully realized, this could make investment in offshore wind turbines far more attractive than it is now. I can imagine that this type of idea could easily get funding if someone was able to draw up a prototype. I am not aware that this potential is being explored at present.

Inventor

THE REUSABLE ENVELOPE

Most people don't realize that envelopes are not recyclable because of the glue covering the flap and the envelope's edges. Most windowed envelopes are made out of plastic making the whole thing non recyclable. This makes the envelopes a cradle to grave product. If you want to recycle it, you have to tear the sides, the flap, and the window; too much hassle for most people and still a lot of waste.

The Reusable envelope would be a product that can be reused indefinitely. Using the same concept as synthetic paper, it should be made out of a layer of robust plastic. The problem is the seal. The seal would either need to be detachable so that it could be replaced on the next use or it would need to be reusable. In addition, the envelope would require a seal that cannot be broken without visible damage as in the case of a standard envelope. The product would be especially attractive to companies that use return envelopes as they could reuse them indefinitely. How can a reusable seal be designed that preserves the envelope's confidential content? Whoever can patent the answer to that question could easily become a millionaire.

Inventor

UNIQUE CHEMICAL TRACES

The current economic system is a cradle to grave system. Once a product reaches the end of its life, it is thrown away. This process wastes energy and resources. How can an incentive be created so that products are reused rather than thrown away? If a product could be sold again at the end of its life, that could pay for the additional cost incurred in using products that may be more expensive. For companies to have an incentive to spend money on raw materials or better design, the product needs to still have value at the end of its life cycle. So long as the product can be used by another industry, an incentive exists to sell it and make the product more durable from the outset. But how can you sell a product at the point of disposal if no one's there to pick it up? The answer's simple, get it sent to a recycling centre and identified as your product. For this, each product component needs to be labelled with a unique chemical trace specific to the factory and company that created it. Some system needs to be implemented to organize this. Some progress has already been made in the area but there's still plenty more potential. Anyone who can find a unique cheap system for component labelling could make a fortune.

Funding: Have a green business revolutionary idea but no money? Get in touch with Akosha. Akosha has \$30 million in revenue and invests in people helping others. It's like a venture capitalist of social work.

www.ashoka.org

More business ideas: If none of these ideas suit you, there's 75 more green business ideas you can find in the book: Green Business: you can start to make money and make a difference by Glen Croston.

Copyright: We have no problem with people implementing these business ideas, that's what they're here for. However the list is not to be used for commercial purposes by any third party. We reserve the right to sue anyone infringing our copyright.