



## Sustainability

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# Finding Purpose in your Career

## UNH Alumnus Made the Switch to Sustainability Focused Work

SATURDAY, MARCH 04, 2023

*Anna Madden '24 | English:Text, Business*

*Writing and Digital Studies*

“When was the last time you asked yourself and honestly answered this question: are you happy doing what you’re doing?”

These were the words that Josh Austin '05 (International Economics) asked himself one day as he examined his professional future. At a point in his life where he’d established a ‘perfectly good career’, the thought of changing paths seemed irrelevant and uncomfortable. Yet, despite this idea, Josh couldn’t suppress the sense that he wanted a greater purpose to his work.

During his undergraduate years at UNH, Josh had found himself

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interested in sustainability and drawn toward brands that reflected his values. He was inspired by their way of conducting business, particularly after hearing the then-CEO of Timberland speak about corporate social responsibility at one of his business classes. However, while sustainability was a large interest of his, he never considered how he could make it his career. Fast forward several years, and Josh found himself in similar roles at different companies, feeling productive but unsatisfied.

“As the years went on, I saw companies’ focus on sustainability and the positive impact that focus had on stakeholders. I found myself wishing and wanting to do more in that sector.”

It was at this point that he began to consider pursuing a different career that would switch his professional focus. Josh reached out to his then-company and asked about working in the sustainability department. However, the option wasn’t available at the time, so he started to look elsewhere for opportunities in the sustainability field.

“I knew pursuing a sustainability role might take time, but I felt that I had to make a change and take some action to make it happen. If I had just continued where I was, I would have kept progressing through the organization, but it would not have been fulfilling.”

That’s when Josh came upon High Liner Foods, a small company with a large focus on sustainability. Originally entering as a Marketing Manager, he enrolled in a sustainability certificate course through Harvard to build up relevant skills that he wasn’t necessarily getting in a marketing role. Within a year and a half, Josh was able to collaborate with company leaders to develop his current position as the Senior Manager of Sustainability. It was the most rewarding professional change in his life.

These days, his work looks a bit different. Establishing a greenhouse gas emission plan, creating waste management goals, and identifying a pathway to aligning more closely with the Global Reporting Initiative has replaced creating marketing decks and discussing forecasts. Although challenging at times, the work leads him to encourage others to consider a career in sustainability.

“People are ending up in sustainability from many different paths and in many different ways,” Josh says. “You can learn from the ground level, but still apply the skills you gained from other job roles, such as marketing or business.”

He also adds that there are other ways to have an impact on sustainability, even if certain job roles are not designated for it: “If someone is graduating and goes into marketing, there are plenty of ways for them to be involved in sustainability, from the products they innovate to the consumer messaging they create.” The important aspect is determining where they want to use their skills.

For those still deciding what this might look like for them? “Take yourself to breakfast and ask yourself how you’re doing” – then invest in yourself and pursue your passion.



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