

That's what one of my college instructors told me. I would like to explore this topic and provide information about what I did during my job search, although I did not lose a position as a superintendent. Everyone who enters this field is advised at some point that the decision to change superintendents can be as frequent and arbitrary as your decision to change toothpaste.

One morning, while I was in a weekly meeting with my supervisor, I was shown the reroutings section in our magazine. A number of lines had been highlighted. These lines were associated with area clubs who had recently changed superintendents. The question was posed to me,"

Can you tell me why these clubs fired their superintendents, then hired the guys who were working down the street? If this person wasn't good enough for this club, why is he good enough for that club?" I had no coherent answer for this question and still do not.

I believe communication is always the least common denominator in any human relationship that breaks down. Whether it is a marriage or an employment relationship, communication is the key. I personally take it upon myself to communicate my successes and challenges to my superiors. This statement may seem obvious to many, but to some I have known, I believe it is good advice.

As far as communication goes, I use a variety of tactics. With my subordinates, I conduct weekly meetings. They can come to me anytime, but I use this time to assure that they have the opportunity to communicate with me. I keep separate pages set aside in my Daytimer to list topics for discussion for each person I report to and each person who reports to me. If I find myself in an impromptu meeting with any of these people I can cover each item of concern without relying on memory.

Communication is not always good enough. I heard an interesting comment while attending

an excellent seminar conducted by Craig Schreiner, AGCA. A question was posed to Schriener that involved an impossible turf management situation and management's unwillingness to acknowledge or address the problem. His response involved something I believe he referred to as the Popeye Syndrome. "I can stand what I can stand 'til I can't stand no more!" It takes a lot to get a successful superintendent to this point. I believe most superintendents think they can grow grass in the closets of the clubhouse if they work hard enough, and many superintendents lose their positions while trying to make an impossible situation work.

So what do you do if you are fired? If your termination was not the result of any misconduct, you will likely qualify for a variety of state benefits. I took full advantage of a program that gave me access to the resources of the Private Industry Council of the Palm Beaches (the PIC). This program was an invaluable benefit to me. In addition to moral support they provided many other advantages. And keep in mind that these benefits are free to the beneficiary as long as they are related to your job search. They provided an office at my disposal where I could receive messages and facsimiles. I could send facsimiles and utilize the long distance phone service. I had access to computers with WordPerfect software. There were secretaries who would type resumes and letters. They offered counseling in resume preparation, job search techniques and interviewing. They would do mock interviews and record these on video tape so they could critique them with you later. Companies would come there to interview and conduct seminars. This was a place frequented by winners who were currently disconnected from a career. I intend to write another article featuring this program because I believe in what they are doing, and I am sure they are saving the taxpayers much more than they require in funds.

I was in a sales position when I was released. It was unfortunate but I was told it would happen to me eventually. It was the first time I had been unemployed since I was 15 years old. A top

Each one of you will be fired at some point in your career

Off The WAHL



Scott Wahlin, CGCS

superintendent and man I respect very much called and asked for a meeting with me when he heard I was unemployed. This man had been released from a very well-known, prestigious club for no reason related to his performance and had landed another top job. He told me to use this as an opportunity to evaluate my life and goals and spend some time with my family. He said that he did not do this when he had the chance but wished he had. I couldn't do that then and probably wouldn't if this happened to me in the future.

I worked a normal work day at least five days a week. I was either at the PIC, in an interview or calling on superintendents from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. I set many appointments to tour courses with superintendents on weekend mornings. I love my family, but I find it impossible to relax enough to enjoy them unless I am providing for them. I did take at least one day a week to devote to them, but that was my normal work pattern anyway. I could justify that in my mind. As far as evaluating my goals was concerned, that took me about two second. How long does it take to say, "Get a position I enjoy and bring home paychecks!" Long-range growth goals had to be put on the back burner in my case. I have four children who like to eat meat! This

superintendent's advice must be good because I heard it many times from people who specialize in reconnecting displaced workers.

I also became familiar with a man who taught me much more than he realizes. I intend to contact him to write an additional article on this topic. He convinced me that I could land an excellent job outside the golf industry for the money I needed without having to relocate. He is incredibly successful at getting motivated people back to work in jobs they enjoy, so the state hired him to work with people who had gotten certified at the PIC. We went through my previous experiences, and he pointed out how these skills could be related to other businesses. He said the top four hiring criteria do not involve education or references. They include: (1) Do they like you personally? (2) Do they trust you? (3) Are they confident you will produce? and (4) Do you seem like someone who is a pleasure to work with? In the short time that I was involved with his weekly seminars, I saw a number of people land positions utilizing their skills in completely different fields without having to relocate.

In my opinion, there is nothing like being a golf course superintendent. There is much stress associated with this position, though. I believe this is

evidenced by an informal survey I did of superintendents while I was in sales. I asked them if they would recommend this career to their children. I am sorry to say that many said they would not.

If you intend to remain a practicing superintendent and you are out of work, the likelihood is that you will have to relocate. There are only so many courses, and they cannot come to you. A parent does not relish the thought of going to his family and saying, "Guess what? We're going to move again! Now go tell your friends goodbye."

The golf course superintendent's responsibilities are so diverse that a person who succeeds in this position for a period of time can do just about anything in business. It is unfortunate, but we do tend to lose our positions without any reason associated with it. If this happens to you it is important to realize how many others have experienced the same thing and that you, too, will land on your feet. I learned much while I was unemployed. I know firsthand how horrifying this can be. If there is anyone who is disconnected or very unhappy in their present position would like to talk, please contact me. I am not an expert, but I believe I can help.

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