

# Employment Practices Forum

Finding and using good employment practices is an ongoing problem in our industry. To help you deal with this more effectively, we asked members of our Advisory Board to tell us about some of the policies they have adopted over the years to help them find and hire the right person for the right job. Following are their answers.



**Chuck Brasington**  
Head professional  
Gainesville Golf &  
Country Club  
Gainesville, Fla.

*"During the interview I explain that working as a golf professional is not as glamorous a job as one might assume. While working as an assistant the hours are usually long, and the pay is low.*

*"I suppose that the type of people I want working for me are really no different than the type others would also like. I do feel that country club employees need to be service-oriented people. We have found that going out of our way to do little extra favors for members usually makes a big impression on them.*

*"I have found that it usually takes at least a year for an assistant to know whether he wants to stay in the golf business."*



**David C. Harmon**  
Superintendent  
Golden Horseshoe Golf  
Course  
Williamsburg, Va.

*"I feel the most important one thing in hiring the right person for your golf course is to find that person who really wants to work on a golf course and is just not taking the job as a last resort. Only those persons who actually enjoy and prefer golf course work are going to produce the quality of work you demand. The new employee must have the same pride in the golf course as you yourself have. Take the time to find these people. Don't hire the first person who walks through the door in the spring. Try to find the right person for the job and then take the time to train him for that job. Without the proper training, you are only creating a serious problem for yourself and your veteran crew.*

*"I feel if you show a sincere interest in the new employee, he will show an interest in his job on the course. Please don't just hand him a lawn mower and drop him off in the middle of a 160-acre golf course. That may be the last time you see him or your lawnmower."*



**James L. Nolletti**  
Club manager  
Winged Foot Golf Club  
Mamaroneck, N.Y.

*"I have always strived to seek out the best possible people for the position I have available. Prior to advertising, I would re-examine the position which has become available to study the areas where we might improve it to make it more attractive to the right person. Checking the various benefits offered for a comparative position in the field by consultation with other managers enables us to present to a prospective employee the best possible situation for him, provided the club is able to meet the competition.*

*"Word of mouth advertising has proven to be a most effective method of finding the right person for the job. Let it be known in the field through other managers, purveyors, other employees, etc. that a position is available and advertise some of the benefits associated with it. You will always find that there are good employees unhappily working in other organizations who may be ideal for your own situation.*

*"In checking with former employers or supervisors, the most important points to consider are longevity on the job, honesty, and integrity. All of the other normal qualifications expected of any good employee in any industry will also apply to the club situation. Club members acquainted with a prospective employee can be of invaluable assistance in determining whether that individual will be right for your own organization. Today it is most important to seek out people with an attitude of interest and caring who show pride in themselves, their job and their organization."*



**W.R. "Red" Steger**  
Club manager  
River Oaks Country  
Club  
Houston, Tex.

Presently we use three ways to find management people — listed here in order of preference:

1. Offering bonuses to other of our management people to refer management people whom they know and think would fit the position that is open.

2. Executive recruiting service to search out the type of manager we want. This requires a fee to be paid (up to one-third of the annual salary).

3. Advertising in local papers and on occasion in two or three large city papers statewide. We have learned that the ads need to run for a 2- to 4-week period. The person you are looking for may not be looking for a position the day you start. It may be days or weeks later.

"Checking references plus a check with others that may know the person, then the interview by myself and two others in management with each grading the person on a scale from 1 to 10 on the ten points we feel are most important for the position open. From this we make our decisions."



**Frank E. Morey**  
Head professional  
Wilshire Country Club  
Los Angeles, Calif.

"First assistant professional — I train the man by bringing him up through my organization. Starting him as a shop man (this entails sales, shop displays, shop cleanliness, special orders (not buying), bookkeeping, junior golf team, junior lessons, club repair). I have always had college educated people that I have found through golf, mostly their fathers have been involved in the PGA or amateur golf. My first assistant gets his big break when I find a head professional job for the man ahead of him. I do go through the Southern California PGA Employment Committee, checking their resume files also.

"Shop manager — first assistant — Is now qualified after his training and is in complete command of my staff. He teaches, runs tournaments, and represents me when I am not at the club. I must have a woman on my staff to take care of my women members' problems and desires. I have qualified, outstanding help in this area. I have been fortunate enough to have a fine facility and the working conditions surrounding my staff make it more enjoyable for them. I am centrally located and have found good women employees through salesmen of softgoods lines. The California Clothing Mart is a good place to find qualified saleswomen. Basically, I also try to get people who are PGA members or members in the section's apprentice program."



**Bobby D. McGee**  
Superintendent  
Atlanta Athletic Club  
Duluth, Ga.

"Let's face it, wages in the golf course maintenance industry are not very attractive to a person looking for a job with good benefits and long-range security. When hiring someone, I make this known to the person during the interview — not to scare him off, but to avoid the 'here today, gone tomorrow' laborer. I try to always hire the person with an interest in turf management, and I have had success hiring people with their main interest directed to the game itself.

"The better wages go to those people who show interest, desire, dedication and a willingness to sacrifice other interests in order to get the job done. These people make up the nucleus of the maintenance crew and are hired as year-round personnel. From here, we attempt to complete our work force with turfgrass students, other students such as members of golf teams at their respective schools, and sometimes the sons of our regular employees.

"As a means of selecting the right employee, I usually rely on the trial and error method. I will hire the person with an understanding that after a certain period of time, usually from one to three months, depending on the employee, we will talk things over to be sure he likes the program and we approve of the job he is doing. If either party disapproves, he goes. This method is also useful in obtaining information about the total program.

"When a person leaves because of his reasons, I always want to know why. Some of the answers can be helpful in the running of a successful organization."

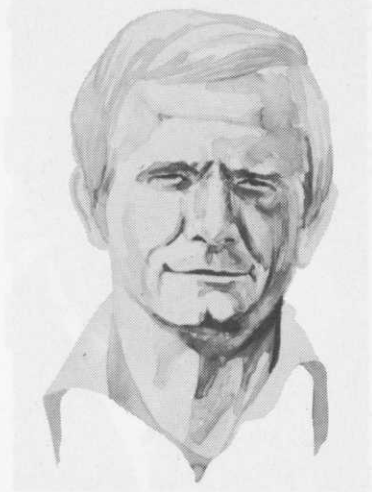


**James H. Brewer**  
General manager  
The Los Angeles  
Country Club  
Los Angeles, Calif.

"The matter of seeking employees and finding the right person depends on several factors such as the following: 1. To express our continuing practice of nondiscrimination in employment, and to support the intent, as well as the written word. Specifically: a) Employment opportunities are and shall be open to all qualified applicants solely on the basis of their experience, aptitudes, and abilities. b) advancement will be based entirely on the individual's achievement, performance, ability, attitude, and potential for promotion.

2. Upon determining the qualifications needed by the prospective employee, you may use some of the following sources: a) Source within your own club; b) current employees; c) advertising; d) employment agency; e) State Labor Resources Board; f) your fellow managers.

"Once applicants have been received and interviews held, it depends upon the manager's ability to select the proper person. There are times when someone in addition to the manager interviews applicants."



**Duff Lawrence**  
Head professional  
Canterbury Golf Club  
Cleveland, Ohio

"My basic philosophy in hiring an assistant golf professional is that I would not want anyone that I didn't feel had the capability of eventually becoming a head golf professional at some time in the future. When the necessity arises to hire someone for a specific position, I contact our Northern Ohio PGA section for information as to the availability of men. Also, another very good source is to notify selected golf professionals in the area that a certain position is open. It is amazing how this information travels by word-of-mouth.

"Once you have ample resumes it is relatively easy to screen them as to basic qualifications that you deem imperative to your specific situation. Normally one or two men will fit the requirements the best, and they are called in for a personal interview. I would consider this the most crucial point. The manner in which they conduct themselves is a good indicator as to their ability in a club atmosphere. Such things as what the prospective employee wears and his general appearance carry a lot of weight in a determination. Also, his ability to express himself, general personality, and demeanor.

"It is very important that some effort be made to establish his past employment record or contacts to personal references. Basic qualifications are not that important at this time as the candidate has already been screened for this prior to the interview.

"Once your man has been chosen it is very important that both you and he are clear as to

basic responsibilities that the employment will entail.

"Lastly, too many employers overlook the importance of hiring the proper individual. This decision can make or break a job and can reflect directly on you in specific incidents. Also, your job will become that much easier and more rewarding if you have utmost confidence in the team that backs you up."



**Joe Black**  
Head professional  
Brookhaven Country  
Club  
Dallas, Tex.

"Over the years, certain things have become obvious to me in my employee needs. First, my members have a wide variety of personalities so I feel I need a variety of personalities in my golf shop. So I try to be conscious of a person's personality and how it will fit in with my other employees.

"I always try to have one person on my staff who is interested in recordkeeping and paperwork. It takes a unique type person to want to handle these areas properly, and there is great importance in handling the day-to-day recordkeeping and paperwork necessary in the golf business today.

"Obviously all of my employees must be able to deal with people pleasantly. We are in the people business and their communications ability is vital.

"Their education background is also very important. In today's business world, a good education is a must. I feel it is very difficult to move an assistant into a head professional position without a good educational background.

"Finally, I also keep in mind that I am no better than my employees. The way they handle

people and the abilities they display are a direct reflection on me, and this is utmost in my mind when I am interviewing for assistants."



**Tom J. Rogers**  
Golf courses  
superintendent  
Park and Recreation  
Department  
Colorado Springs, Col.

"Having to work within a governmental agency, most of the practices I follow are governed by city and/or personnel departmental rules and regulations, much more so than country clubs or private enterprise. It's getting so now, we can get into trouble for asking age, sex, ethnic group, or marital status. These items are not even included on the employment applications we receive from the personnel department. There is even a 10-year plan written for the golf division which proposes how many minorities, i.e. female, black, Spanish-surnamed American, etc., will be permanent employees in the future. Unions are even a possibility.

"One of the advantages of having a personnel department is that I send all applicants to them to fill out their applications and for a preview interview. This really saves me a lot of time. Information accumulated by the personnel department is then forwarded to me with its recommendations. I then set up interviews with at least three applicants and make a decision. If I am not satisfied with what is sent to me, then the entire process is repeated.

"During the interview, I try to get as much information as I can from the applicant. I also describe our business, goals, ob-

jectives, policies, (both the city's and my own), the employee's duties and responsibilities, and the benefits.

"The employee is chosen through a process of evaluating their past employment history, their attitudes, their appearance, and my inner feelings.

"All employees are put on a 6-month probation when hired. An evaluation is made at the end of this period and they are terminated or put on permanently, or the probation period is extended with another evaluation at the end of the given period.

"Presently we have three programs (one federal, one city, and one golf), because the salaries are paid by these agencies to train employees for the future. When their training period is over they either move on to bigger and better things or are hired permanently. These programs have helped tremendously by giving me the help when it is needed and training future employees.

"Being a GCSAA member, being certified, and having a golf course in Colorado has its advantages. Many college graduates wishing to locate in this area send employment inquiries to me and when I have openings and they fit the requirements, I try to hire them. I have always attempted to hire people who are interested in the superintendent's profession, train them, and help them to get their own course. This type of person has done the best job for me, which is understandable, and is the most dependable. I think if your goal is to hire 'someone that will stay on the job' you normally have to pay much more to get that dependability and/or the right employee for the job.

"I use the process of elimination to find the right person for the right job. The younger employees start out by mowing rotary and greens; then move up to rough mowing, mowing tees and aprons; and then to changing cups, tee markers, etc. Wherever they work out the best, they stay. If the person above them can't hack it or moves up — they move up. The older, permanent employees handle the pesticide and fertilizer applications, sprinkling system repairs and timing, fairway mowing, new construction, and some supervisory duties."



**Peter Miller**  
Superintendent  
Firestone Country Club  
Akron, Ohio

"Employees at the Firestone Country Club are hired on the most-qualified basis within guidelines of E.E.O. policies.

"A person submits a written employment application (supplied by Firestone) for part time employment (40 hour/week — less than 6 months tenure) during the period January, to March 15. On March 15th he or she is notified whether they were hired or not.

"Applications for full-time employment are taken at any time.

"The person or persons selected will be invited in for an interview, again strictly adhering to E.E.O. guidelines."



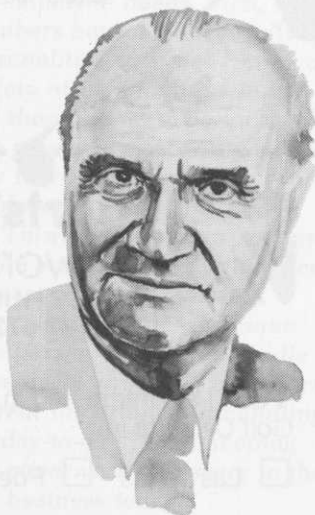
**Bob Williams**  
Superintendent  
Bob O'Link Golf Club  
Highland Park, Ill.

"The employment of greensmen in the north central region of the United States necessitates the use of seasonal employees for

approximately 80 percent of the staff.

"My experience favors the use of Mexican agricultural workers. I use, more or less, a "family unit" consisting of a father, son, brothers, and cousins with one predominant figure as leader of the group. Annually we use 6 to 8 men, who come to the Chicago area by April 1 and desire to return to Mexico by November 1. This 7-month period of employment adequately covers our full playing and growing season — which coordinates extremely well for all concerned.

"Additionally, I have had exceptionally good experience using university-trained turfgrass students for much of our more technical work — including chemical applications, fertilization, cup changing, etc. The trainees need the practical experience, and they also bring considerable enthusiasm to the job. After about 4 years of on-the-job training, in addition to their schooling in turfgrass management, they are then well prepared to become an assistant superintendent and eventually move on to a golf course of their own. Over the past 30 years I have assisted in the training of 63 young men in this manner. The clubs, the superintendent, and the trainee all profit from this procedure."



**Paul N. Keck**  
Club manager  
Greenville Country Club  
Wilmington, Del.

"The employment act must be a mutually agreed upon decision with a complete outline of the job position being given by management and full comprehension by the prospective employee.

"Most times a ready reserve of professional people from within the house is not

available. Therefore, employment ads in newspapers or word-of-mouth inquiries are necessary. The ad should be brief and detail specifics, i.e. split-shift hours, experience required, and tips.

"All facets of the job should be discussed during the interview process in order for an open line of communication to be established. Management must first have a thorough understanding of what the position entails, the specific duties and responsibilities, and then attempt to match the job to the person.

"Regardless of whether the employee has any previous experience, a training period is a necessity and is the first step to a strong management and employee relationship. Good management should realize that his establishment operates efficiently only with a well-trained and dependable staff. To get to this point, you need:

1. A person who possesses the knowledge, ability, and enthusiasm to train the personnel.
2. A program allowing sufficient time to explain all details to each new employee and to make perfectly clear what the job requires.
3. An open line of communication allowing both the employer and employee the ability to evaluate both current performance and the future as well. Future progress should be presented in a succinct and attractive manner.

4. Honesty throughout all employment practices is important. Example: that the promised, pleasant/safe working conditions do exist and that the weekly work hours are fairly presented and adhered to. It is important that the new employee understands that in the hospitality field, the minimum hours are usually 44 to 50 hours per week, including weekends and most holidays.

5. Management must have a high personal regard for its staff and not look upon them simply as mechanized people. He or she must be incorporated into the working team and made to feel: first of all, needed, and secondly, that whatever their duties are, it is of value to the overall success of the establishment. Both factors contribute to employee enthusiasm which must be present from the very beginning. Checking on the list of factors comprising employee satisfaction, money has a poor ranking, while self respect and

self esteem place high at the top of the list.

6. A program of indoctrinating each employee into how his or her particular job fits into the overall operation through visits to the various departments and by having them actively participate in all or certainly most of the functions in the regular day-to-day routine. Illustrating to the employee where the position fits in the organizational chart would be a further positive reinforcement.

"From the busboy to the headwaiter to the chef through the maintenance and the administrative personnel, everyone must be made to feel important. People make up any organization and only through the careful selection of the right people for the right job and a continuous process of training and employee motivation can any establishment be successful."



**Bob Foppe**  
Head professional  
Kenwood Country Club  
Cincinnati, Ohio

"Personality is of prime importance. I have a policy and procedure sheet that my assistants must follow. Before hiring an assistant, I will generally use him in another capacity: general sales, starter, caddy master, or club cleaner. During this period of employment I watch for the following: promptness, courtesy, self motivation, personality — extrovert or introvert. There is very little need to worry about playing ability since the PGA now has the playability test as a mandatory factor before attending school.

"If I cannot follow the above practice in hiring due to the loss of an assistant to a head professional position, I hire an assistant that I have had an opportunity to observe for several years who possesses these qualities."