



Hiring and retaining staff is one of the biggest challenges facing golf course superintendents today.

LABOR: BY THE NUMBERS

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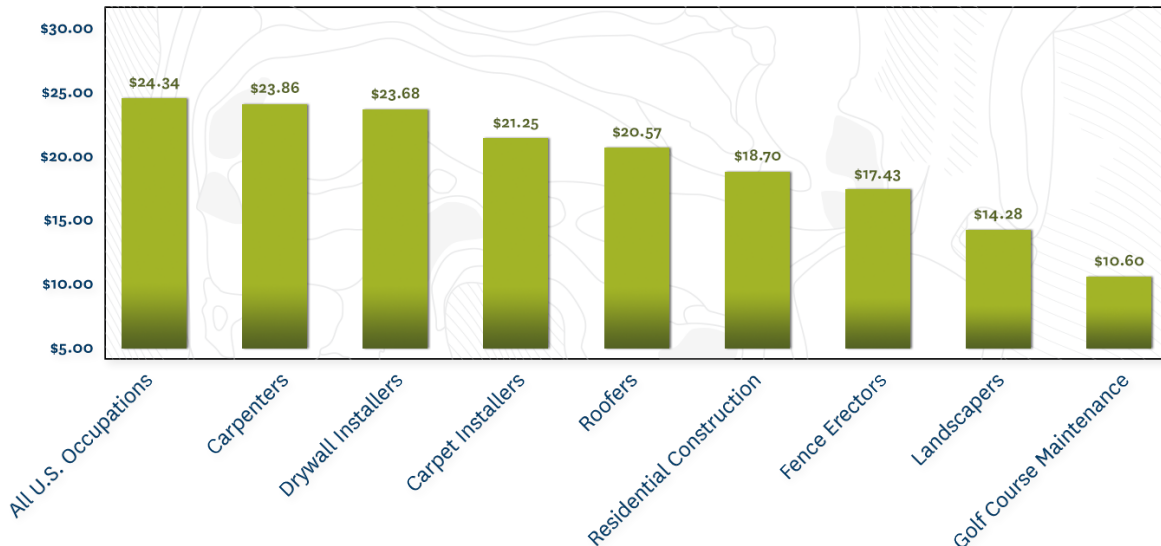
Superintendents face many challenges throughout the season, but for most the biggest challenge isn't growing turf. Labor, or the lack thereof, is perhaps the biggest challenge facing golf course superintendents today. This issue is complicated, and nobody seems to have the answer on how to solve it quite yet. Solutions will likely be complex and involve a multitude of changes in how our industry operates. Before we look at potential solutions in a future update, let's look at the labor situation by the numbers to help us understand where we are and what issues need to be addressed.

Hourly Earnings: According to multiple GCSAA surveys, general maintenance staff and operators are the positions where it is most difficult to hire and retain employees. Candidates for these positions are often qualified for jobs in other industries, such as various construction and landscape trades. Table 1 shows how the golf course maintenance industry compares to others regarding the national averages for hourly earnings, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Clearly, hourly wages in the golf course maintenance industry do not stack up well against other industries competing for the same staff.

Labor Availability: The availability of employees has been on a steady decline since early in 2010. The unemployment rate has dropped from nearly 10 percent in late 2009 to around 4 percent in early 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A steadily decreasing unemployment rate means that most people who want to work are working. To make matters worse for golf course maintenance hiring, from the

NATIONAL AVERAGES FOR HOURLY EMPLOYEE EARNINGS

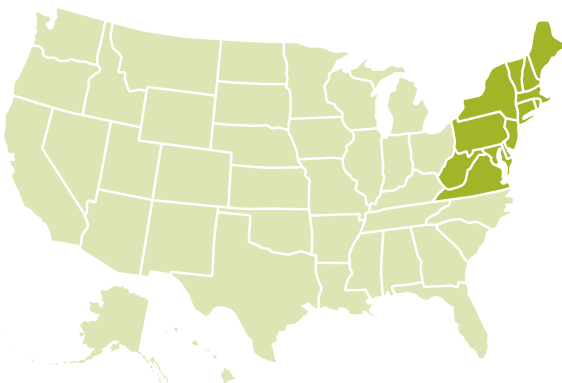
The average hourly wage for general golf course maintenance staff members is considerably less than wages in other industries.



fourth quarter of 2010 to summer of last year, the country saw new job creation every month. This means that more jobs are being created in other industries, with potentially higher wages, while unemployment continues to decline.

Non-Compensation Benefits: The impact of non-compensation benefits is difficult to quantify but cannot be disregarded. Some of the intangible benefits employers can offer include flexible scheduling, physical condition of the work environment and enjoyment at work. Most traditional golf course maintenance operations require employees to show up very early in the morning and work outside in the elements, often for long hours. While this may be the most efficient schedule to set up the golf course ahead of play, it offers very little flexibility. Other industries are offering flexible schedules and other non-compensation benefits to gain a competitive advantage in the labor market.

The labor situation on golf courses does not look rosy, but it is important to remember that this issue is not isolated to the golf course industry. As the availability of employees declines, golf facilities will be forced to improve efficiency and focus spending on areas that have the greatest impact on golfer satisfaction. An upcoming update will highlight ideas and methods facilities have implemented to help manage their way through labor challenges.



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