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The economy is rocking and rolling. People are working and have leisure time and dollars to play. Golf courses are being built and people are using them.

On the down side, these booming economic times have put a real crunch in the available labor pool. An abundance of well-paying construction jobs has cost numerous Chicagoland supers trained and valuable employees. Many of us are unable to match the offers that are coming in. All of us know the value of a seasoned and competent worker. Irrigation repair, equipment operation and fertilizer and plant protectant applications are often detailed to trusted, dependable staff.

I foresee that labor issues, costs and benefits will become much larger issues as we enter the new millennium. The problem of keeping good help that many of us are facing this year is just the tip of the iceberg. I have heard this story from more than a few supers: one of your key staff comes in and says he's been offered \$18/hour at another job—he loves working for you,

loves the job, but... Some of us may have the kind of dough to keep the guy. I think it's fair to say that most of us don't. So you say goodbye, run an ad or put out the word that you're looking for people, and find out that where there used to be a nice selection, there is one guy who a couple of years ago you wouldn't have even interviewed. So you bring him in and true to your gut feeling, he ends up causing more problems than he's worth.

Since paying \$18/hour is out of the question (in this year's budget, anyway), what do you do?

It makes you appreciate the good people you still have and want to keep. One way to do this is to recognize all employees as individuals and acknowledge that cultural diversity exists. Work to assimilate this awareness into your operation to make your employees feel more at home. Many of us employ Hispanic workers who work during the golf season and go home to their native land over the winter. At last year's NCTE, I attended a half-day seminar taught by Jennifer Thomas on understanding the Hispanic culture. During her four-hour presentation, she outlined different situations and explained how a person from the "American" culture might handle something as opposed to someone of Hispanic culture.

An example of this occurred several years ago when I was working as an assistant at the Mount Prospect G.C. One of our better employees was mowing greens with a triplex mower on a drizzly fall morning. He was about three-quarters finished with his greens when he noticed that one of the front reel

hydraulic oil hoses was leaking. It only leaked in the mow position and was spraying from the underside of the hose onto the green. As a result, he had striped the last three greens like little football fields. Even though anyone would have had a hard time discovering the leaky hoses, he obviously took it to heart—that was the last day he showed up at work. I could never understand why the employee chose to abandon his job rather than communicate his problem. While generalizations can be dangerous, a cultural difference in the way problems are perceived and communicated is sometimes apparent. I learned at Ms. Thomas' seminar that in the Hispanic culture, people are taught responsibility at an early age and are reluctant to "bear bad tidings." It seems, on the other hand, that we hear "but it's not my fault" all too often in the "American" culture.

By being knowledgeable about some of the differences among cultures in this great melting pot we call America, we can reach out to all of our employees to make their tenure with us more comfortable and productive. Not only is it incumbent upon us in our leadership roles to be sensitive and fair, but as we are learning, labor has become a seller's market!

