



Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@adelphia.net or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

SEARCH GOES ELECTRONIC

After having dedicated several columns to the superintendents' side of the career Web-site issue, I'd be remiss if I didn't address the complementary impact electronics, in general, and career Web sites, specifically, soon will have on the search-committee process.

However, before looking at the impact electronics will have, search committees need to determine the quantity and quality of candidates they wish to attract to their job openings first. Too often, search committees feel their clubs will be dishonored if they fail to attract a high number of job applications. Accordingly, they tend to write all-inviting job notices hoping to catch the eye of every level of experienced candidate. The problems with this approach are twofold: first and foremost, upper echelon candidates don't respond to "cattle call" invitations to apply for job openings, and second, this is a guaranteed way to attract more resumes than the search committee can deal with effectively (i.e., they don't have the experience to identify the better four, five or six candidates to interview when so many resumes are received). Consequently, the better candidates often aren't considered.

If ever there was a solid example of less delivering more, it's when a golf facility understands it will fair better attracting as few as 25 quality applications than 90 to more than 125 applications from mostly less experienced candidates. To do this, the club/course should:

Write a tight job notice that will encourage the better candidates to apply because of the challenge the job opportunity presents, while at the same time dissuading the lesser-experienced candidates from applying; and

Directly invite several well-qualified candidates to apply. The best way to identify well-qualified candidates is through regional/state golf association staffs because they interface with virtually every superintendent within a region from one year to the next.

When converting to an electronic-based process, search committees should commit to the following seven-step process:

Step 1: Make the formal decision to require all applications be submitted electronically.

Step 2: Then, immediately register for a unique domain name to receive applications independent of the regular club/course e-mail address.

Step 3: Circulate an appropriately tight job notice that would (i) attract the desired number and quality of applications; (ii) advise that all applications must be submitted electronically to the e-mail address indicated by a specific deadline date; and (iii) advise that applicants who incorporate personal career Web sites within their applications will be given priority (not exclusive) attention. (This approach will encourage the better candidates to apply.)

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Step 4: Forward applications electronically, as received, to each search committee member for review well before interviews. This will avoid building the dreaded tall pile of hard copy applications that are generally read at one time only after the closing deadline passes – an approach that discourages all candidates because it's so easy for the better applications to get lost in the shuffle.

Step 5: Once the closing date passes, delay the traditional approach of immediately selecting candidates for interview and invite about a dozen of the better qualifying candidates to submit time-sequenced, budget-

supported plans of action electronically to the search committee by a specific date (about 10 days before interviews begin). Upon receipt, the plans of action would be forwarded electronically to members of the search committee.

To facilitate this process, clubs/courses should (i) provide candidates with information packets (recent budgets, course consulting reports, OSHA records, etc.) they'll need to complete their due diligence homework and to prepare effective plans of action; and (ii) assign a committee member or two to personally escort candidates through their initial tours of the golf course because this is a unique, informal opportunity for both parties to gain comfortable insights of each other that generally aren't obtainable during the more formal traditional interview process.

Step 6: After a review of the submitted plans of action, identify the four to six candidates the committee believes have earned the privilege to be interviewed because of the quality of their applications and the merits of their submitted plans of action.

The benefits that accrue here are precedent setting. First, search committee members will come to the interviews well informed about the candidates' employment history and their anticipated approach to the job, if hired. Then, the pressure will be taken off the candidates to hard-sell themselves cold turkey during the brief interview minutes. These two elements taken in combination virtually assure a more relaxed, in depth and informative Q&A exchange that significantly enhances the likelihood of hiring the best candidate available.

Step 7: Finalize the selection process and move on.

Without question, just as term papers and the like are submitted electronically throughout the academic world, assistants and superintendents should get their mind sets and Web sites ready to compete for jobs within this constantly evolving electronic world as soon as possible because there will be little other choice in two to three years. Electronic communications is a search-committee party waiting to happen. **GC**