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## MAKE SURE YOU'RE PREPARED

If you ask yourself whether you're ready to be a golf course superintendent, you're probably not. Being ready to be a head superintendent isn't something that magically happens one morning after a couple of years as an assistant. It takes time, effort and dedication.

The job market has changed during the past 20 years. Back then, if you were an assistant, you were likely one for less than a year before moving up. Now, the job market is full of well-qualified superintendents and assistants looking to move. Assistants have to be prepared to interview along with experienced superintendents to secure the job. You must do your best to prepare yourself to make the successful move and be a step above others applying for the same position.

Among the best ways to prepare to be a superintendent are being involved, networking, asking for more responsibility, being assertive and always being prepared.

Become involved with your local, state and national associations so you can network with peers and members. Being involved with your association is more than just showing up to play golf and knocking a few back. Volunteering, serving on the board if your association (if possible), and writing articles for newsletters and trade publications are a few ways of becoming more well known.

If your employer doesn't provide the funds for membership, pay for it yourself. The pros far outweigh the cons. You need to be able to say you're an active member because this allows you to track your education and involvement. If you break it down over a year, the cost is less than a soda a day.

Becoming involved in the associations helps to keep you more in the know. The more you can make yourself visible, the

better your reputation and perception will be. This allows you to be prepared to take the next step.

Vendors, USGA agronomists, salespeople, golf professionals, general managers, etc., are all people you need to know. You should also get to know members and/or active golfers. The problem is you might know a wealth of people and be able to call them by name, but if they don't remember you when discussion of a potential job arises, your networking isn't effective. Nowadays, it's not who you know, but who knows you. The best thing is to stay visible. Make sure you use every chance you have to make contact, say hello and participate in a conversation. When you're prepared to make a move, make sure those in your network know. Getting the word out that you're in the market for a position only helps you stay on the tips of the tongues of people who might help secure an interview for you.

We all know how to grow grass and run a crew, but you need to be proficient communicating with members or golfers, general managers, golf pros, etc. You also need to deal with the human resource aspect. Ask to help plan the operational budget and capital budget. Ask to help with invoicing and ordering. Work with the mechanic to improve your aptitude with equipment repairs. To be a successful superintendent, you have to be able to do the jobs of everyone who works under you.

Try to get involved with more than the daily jobs and supervising the crew. If you believe running a crew and working on projects is all you need to be a superintendent, rethink your plan. Be as involved as your boss and improve your time management to be able to complete all your regular tasks, plus the new ones, successfully.

Superintendents should be more than willing to let their assistants try their hand at these tasks. It makes sense if they feel you have what it takes to succeed in the industry.

Sometimes, you have to keep asking and asserting yourself to be able to take on some of these tasks. Explain to your boss your intention is to improve yourself. If your boss is against the idea completely, ask for copies of a budget or meeting minutes and read over them all in detail at the least. If your boss is against helping you learn and grow, find another job. Working for someone that doesn't believe you need to have a well-rounded experience and isn't willing to help you learn does nothing to help prepare you for the next move.

Always be prepared for the big interview. When you feel you're prepared and ready to take that next step, prepare more. Interview for some jobs, even if you have no intention of taking the position. You don't want to go into the interview for the job you really want and fumble around because you aren't ready. You can read all the articles you want about interview preparation, but nothing prepares you for sitting a table with an interview team questioning you. You need to perfect your strategy and become accustomed to the pressure. Take a folder with examples of procedures and projects you've initiated to show your ability. You must be able to sell yourself and your abilities to secure the job you want. These steps can give you the upper hand when that job comes around.

Take the time to start developing strong skills to make you the most desirable candidate. Make a plan for the next five years of what you want to achieve and what steps are needed to achieve those goals.

Becoming a superintendent takes more than checking greens and trenching drainage. You need to prepare yourself, not just your work techniques, to become a successful superintendent. **GCI**