

Out of Harm's Way?

Joe Oliveira, superintendent of Green Valley CC in Portsmouth, R.I., says he enjoys the relaxed feeling that comes with his job security. But Oliveira believes that job security for most of the nation's superintendents is getting worse.

Job security is an ongoing issue among superintendents. According to our Superintendent State of the Industry Survey, more than 70 percent of superintendents feel secure in their current positions. However, only 24 per-

cent of superintendents feel that job security has improved in the industry. Twenty percent side with Oliveira and say that job security is deteriorating.

On Jan. 1, Oliveira will celebrate his first anniversary as superintendent at Green Valley. He has worked at the course for 14 years, 11 years as an assistant. Green Valley is a semi-private club and has no green committee. Oliveira says club politics don't exist. "I have good rapport with everyone," he adds.

Since there are no politics and because Oliveira feels secure and empowered in his job, he's more passionate about his livelihood. He has never risen in the morning and not wanted to go to work. "This is a nice place to be," he adds. "You always do a better job if you're enthusiastic about it."

Does Oliveira feel fortunate about his employment situation?

"Absolutely," he says. "I hear the horror stories about guys who have been at courses for 15 years, and then one day they get fired. It's a crime."

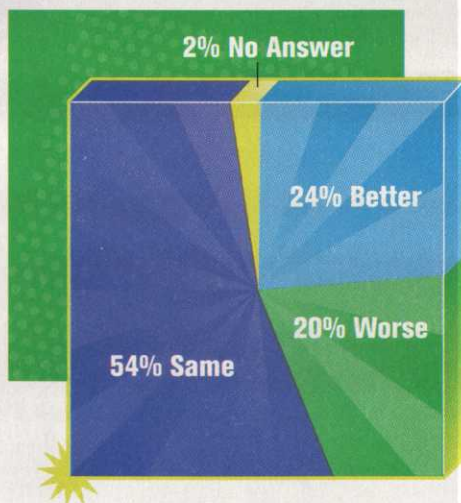
Oliveira says the industry and its leaders are placing too much emphasis on image, not on what superintendents are accomplishing on golf courses. It's one reason he believes job security is getting worse.

"There's more emphasis on image than the finished product," he says. "I have a tough time coming to grips with that."

James Starnes, superintendent of Crooked Creek GC in Fuquay Varina, N.C., says he feels insecure about his job because his accomplishments are sometimes at the mercy of Mother Nature. Starnes, too, has heard the tough-luck tales of superintendents who were fired

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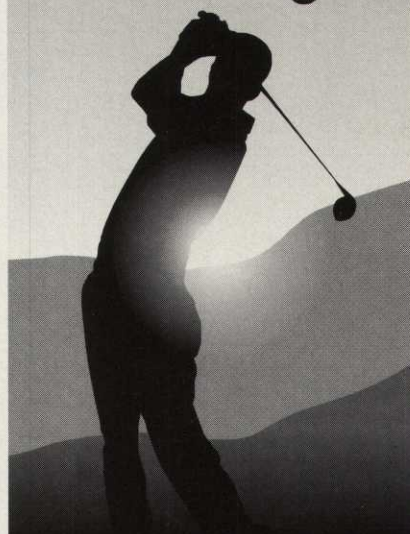
Industry-wide, do you feel that job security for superintendents is better, worse or about the same as it used to be?



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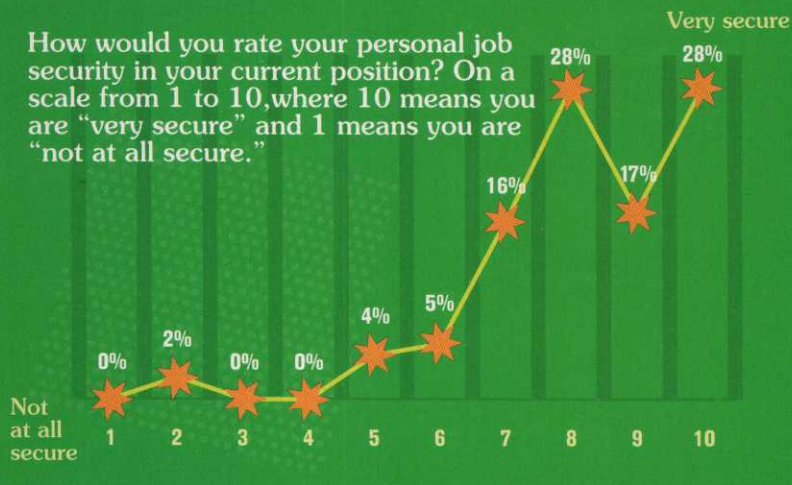
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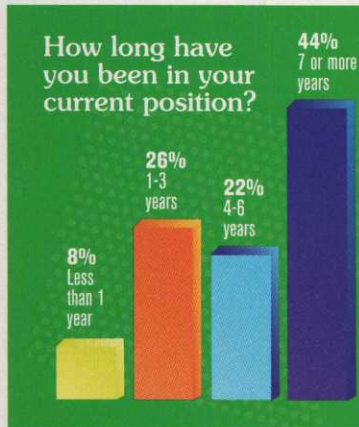
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How would you rate your personal job security in your current position? On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 means you are "very secure" and 1 means you are "not at all secure."



How long have you been in your current position?



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from their jobs because their courses suffered from bad weather.

While Starnes believes the owners at his semi-private club are pleased with his performance, he's still not secure because of the elements he can't control, like droughts and floods, which can wreak havoc in the South.

Most superintendents would probably feel more secure in their jobs if communication was improved with their superiors, Starnes notes.

"Problems can arise when owners, green committees and superintendents are inaccessible," he adds. "The better the communication, the better the understanding and knowledge."

Tim Hatfield, superintendent of Geneva Hills GC in Clinton, Ind., says he's unsure about his job security, but his uncertainty has nothing to do with his on-the-job performance. Last De-

cember, the owner of Geneva Hills GC died, and the course could close.

"The entire staff doesn't know what's going to happen," Hatfield says. "It's one of those acts of God that's out of your control. But it affects my livelihood."

Job security has much to do with the influx of new college diploma-toting superintendents entering the industry. According to our survey, 41 percent of superintendents say they're concerned that the number of young people with college degrees entering the profession will reduce salary growth and opportunities for them. Fifty-seven percent, including Oliveira, aren't concerned.

"Young guys know the books, but when it comes down to doing [tasks on the course], they're green," Oliveira says. "There's no substitute for experience." ■

— Larry Aylward

