DISENCHANTED SUPERINTENDENTS MAY WANT TO CONSIDER A CAREER IN LAWN CARE

The Green Industry May Be Greener on the Other Side of the Fence

BY PHIL FOGARTY

More than 20 years ago, I entered the green industry by accident. I began treating lawns because I needed a better job. At the time, I was certain it was a temporary thing. Now after growing my own business, selling it, consulting for other lawn care operators and joining Weed Man, the fastest-growing franchisor of lawn care anywhere, I find myself as an advocate for the industry.

Hopefully, you are one of the lucky superintendents who have found a satisfying and financially rewarding situation on the links. But in case you're a little stressed out, worried about your career or looking to grow your *own* thing, I hope what I say at least gets you thinking about the possibilities just over the industry fence.

Let me say that for my whole life — as a caddie, a golf course employee, a hacker and finally as a fellow green industry professional — I've admired the work of superintendents. I've worked with some of the best in the GCSAA on green industry committees and listened attentively at seminars to learn about things like *Poa annua* and how to control or not control it. Superintendents produce super-natural looking turf under extreme pressure with little appreciation and less loyalty from golfers.

It's amazing what you do, but even more amazing to me sometimes is why you do it. For as hard as you guys and gals work, one would think you own the place. Yet there is no security in many cases, let alone equity.

Which brings me to my question: Why do so many in the golf industry pass up the opportunity to control their own destiny, gain equity and have more of a life by working one lawn at a time? Look at the skills that would translate into green for you:

Salesmanship — How many times have you sold the greens committee on the right thing to do or the necessary investment for the future?

Staffing — You pull together the best team possible every season and inspire them to do the impossible day after day.

Financial wizardry — Look what you do with half the budget you really need.

Technical know-how — Who knows more about growing grass than you?

The landscape industry is waking up *en masse* to the idea that lawn care service is the most profitable segment of the green industry and builds a resellable asset in the process. Superintendents seem interested but are a bit lukewarm to the idea.

My theory is that the home lawn might be a bit beneath you. After all, you didn't go to school to combat dandelions, and growing anything you cut at 2 inches or above is mere child's play. Everybody knows that 18 holes are far more sexy than 1,800 residential clients, right? Well, not necessarily. I've seen a lot of wealth created over the years, not to mention a lifestyle that allows people a chance to enjoy it.

Even if you looked down at the weed-and-feed guys of the world at one time, now may be a good time to stop overlooking the gold mine that exists just over the hedge from the No. 9 tee. With all the rollups, mergers and buyouts, a local lawn care company has a better opportunity than ever to gain ground and customers.

So as you are busy working greens and tees, think about your counterparts creating the neighborhood fairways — where life may seem a little greener, less complex and on par with your dreams. Take it from a guy looking for a part-time job: This is a great business to grow with.

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