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Off The Fringe

Show Me the Money — At Least on Paper

LISTING PAY SCALES IS CRUCIAL IN JOB POSTINGS

By Ron Furlong

When a golf course superintendent posts a job opening, the description of the job is extremely thorough. The job description often lists vital course information, such as whether the course is public, private or a resort; the type of irrigation system it uses; the types of grass it has; and how many holes and acreage it occupies.

Of course, also listed are the requirements for the job, the type of individual required ("a real self-starter"), and the education applicants must have. Yes, the job postings list a lot of things. But they tend to neglect what the job pays.

If you think about it, nothing else on the posting really matters without that bit of info to the person reading the posting. But once applicants know the pay range the golf course is willing to offer, then they can determine if the job is right for them.

I have to admit: I haven't job searched for more than five years, which is a good thing, and hopefully I won't be looking anytime soon. But when I did, I looked for salary range first. That one piece of information always determined if I even needed to look at anything else within the posting.

What if the posting reads, "salary negotiable?" Well, they almost never do. For almost every superintendent position listed in national or regional industry job postings, the salary range is listed. Don't believe me? Check it out for yourself.

I did when I started to write this article. Just to prove myself right, I did a fake job search and came up with the

following statistic: 80 percent of job postings for superintendent positions list a salary range. That's eight out of 10, folks.

And now to the gist of my beef: Since knowing the salary range is so important to us as superintendents when we are searching for a new job, why is it we feel like we don't have to extend the same courtesy to those we want to hire?

If you do, you're in the minority. Just one in five superintendents looking to hire specialized professionals like assistant superintendents, irrigation technicians, equipment technicians and landscapers include a salary or wage range.

I'm absolutely amazed at all of the postings I receive in the mail just from my local association, written by my peers, that exclude a salary range for these specialized fields. I'm not talking about seasonal help on your crew, although I include the wage range when I run an ad in the local paper in the spring, too.

Irrigation technician — salary negotiable.

Assistant superintendent — salary commensurate with experience.

Landscape Technician — salary competitive within the industry.

Why is it we expect the superintendent salary range to be listed but we don't extend the same courtesy to the professionals we're trying to hire? Do we need to extend the same courtesy we enjoy? Of course, the salary *is* negotiable. But it is negotiable within a certain range.

I started to consider the reasons for

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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

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Make Upgrade, Get Cash

Upgrade your golf course's irrigation system and get a cash rebate from the electric company for saving energy? It sounds like Cupid is on the loose.

A three-year pilot project underway in Southern California hopes to show that by upgrading irrigation systems, golf facility operators can reduce operating costs by using less energy and water. Southern California Edison (SCE) calls the pilot program, "Agricultural Energy Efficiency Program for Golf Course Customers," and it's intended to encourage operators to upgrade and replace old irrigation equipment with more energy-efficient technology. The utility company is offering these customers cash rebates based on the energy savings achieved. In some cases, the rebates are enough to amortize the cost of the upgrades within three years.

Andrew Staples, a golf course design and construction expert who has spearheaded the pilot program, said the Southern California project could lead to a nationwide effort. There are about 1,000 golf facilities in California, and about 320 of them are in the SCE service area. For the pilot project, the goal is to upgrade 85 facilities by the end of 2008, Staples said. Pump station manufacturer ITT Flowtronex is assisting Staples and his team of consultants on the pilot project.

Pulliam Has New Duties

Keelan Pulliam, who has led the Lawn & Garden business unit for Syngenta Professional Products — which includes the golf, lawn and landscape, ornamental and aquatics markets — was named president of Conrad Fafard, succeeding Andy Fafard, who retired Dec. 31. In his new role, Pulliam will oversee the continued alignment of Conrad Fafard and Syngenta Professional Products and the ongoing growth and expansion of Fafard throughout North America. Syngenta purchased Conrad Fafard, a leading manufacturer of packaged growing media for professional ornamental growers and consumer retail outlets last July. Syngenta said it will name a successor for Pulliam as the head of the Lawn & Garden business at a later

Quotable

"Why does the rough have to be so sexy?"

—Jim Thompson, general manager of Angels Crossing Golf Course in Vicksburg, Mich., on turf grooming to the extreme

"We are the caretakers of the world's resources."

—Thomas Kimmell, past executive director of the Irrigation Association, on its members' responsibilities

"We have moved beyond Carl and 'Caddyshack.' "

—Tommy Witt, director of golf course operations at Northmoor Country Club, on image in the golf course maintenance profession.

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this. Do we have something to hide? The only halfway-sane reason I could come up with why we don't want to list a wage is that it might not get us the best applicants. Is this the reason? And if so, then this is crazy.

If you want to hire the best available people out there, then you have to pay a competitive or even higher wage or salary. I don't think we're going to be able to trick anyone into accepting less money for a position simply because we didn't initially list the wage. List the range! You know you have one, and you better get one if you don't.

Maybe we figure we'll get such a wide range of applicants that pin-pointing a wage might alienate an applicant. Trust me, list the higher end of your range and let the process work.

If you're paying a competitive salary, or even above, which we all should be doing, then let the resumes come in. Trust yourself to weed through them and interview the people who stand out clearly.

If I'm forthright about the pay

scale, then I won't trick anyone into interviewing with me who can't afford to work in that pay range.

I want someone comfortable with that salary range coming into the interview. If I cost myself the chance to interview a few people who wanted more money, then so be it. How am I going to hire them anyway if I can't pay higher than the top of my range? Don't feel you are married to the highest number of the range. A range is just that. You are entitled to use any number within that range for an offer.

So let's try it: "Assistant superintendent wanted, salary range is \$30,000 to \$33,000."

You can do it!

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