

**B**y the time you read this from when I wrote it (Jan. 12), who knows what will have happened to the economy? Will more jobs have been lost? Will more foreclosures have occurred? Will the stock market have bottomed out?

I can hardly wait to find out. Like you, I'm wrapped up in these stark financial times like I'm reading a novel that I can't put down. But I'm only a voracious reader of this economic news because I long to read something that says the economy is getting better. Will somebody please say we've hit rock bottom!

Unfortunately, I've also learned that reading too much about our economy isn't such a good idea. Most of the news is hard to stomach.

What scares me more than anything about the economy — more than the credit crunch and more than the housing and stock market messes — is the job loss. I know your eyes had to pop out of your head when you read that American job loss in 2008 was the highest it has been since 1945.

I read a story recently on CNNMoney.com that reports the recession will get worse if the job market gets worse because the more people out of work, the more who will lose their homes and default on their credit cards. It becomes a vicious circle.

And then there are the working people who are *worried* about losing their jobs (most of them won't) and stop spending money "just in case something happens." The lack of spending between the unemployed and those afraid about being unemployed impacts myriad businesses, from restaurants to retail, and causes sales to drop even further.

Alas, the job loss mounts.

Late last year we asked about 100 golf course superintendents if they had to lay off any employees from their golf course maintenance staffs. Forty-eight percent said, "Yes, we've felt the economic pinch." Thirty-seven percent said, "No, we haven't felt the downturn," and 15 percent said, "We will probably lay off employees in 2009."

The golf course industry is a small cog in an enormous economic wheel, but we can do our

## Our 2009 Mantra: Save the Jobs

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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part to help this economy get better. And that starts on the job front.

Now, I know that labor, which makes up the majority of superintendents' budgets, is the first thing to get whacked when maintenance budgets must be trimmed. That only makes sense. But during these difficult economic times — when we know that more layoffs only add to the problem — I urge superintendents to look elsewhere to make cuts. I know this could be a monumental and time-consuming task, but it will be worth your efforts if it saves some jobs.

The same holds true for other golf course decision makers. Owners and general managers should take the same approach. Try to save jobs at all costs.

I realize there might be no other alternatives to cut costs than to cut jobs. And if that's the case for you, I just ask that you don't fire people and forget about them. Try to help them find new jobs. Superintendents, general managers and owners are well-connected in this tight-knit industry. Use your relationships to help others.

Also, don't let firings strictly made over financial matters ruin people's self-esteem. Help those people stay positive by providing positive reinforcement.

Let's not view job loss only as a government statistic in this suffering economy. Job loss is also a delicate human-relations issue. It impacts family, lifestyle and health, among other things. If you've lost your job, I'm sure you realize this.

Finally, here's to some good economic news in 2009 that's *really* worth reading.

And, hopefully, it will be about less job loss and an improving economy.

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