

disagrees and says superintendents can bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their roles as assistants.

Both men present compelling cases for their points. Read on and see who you agree with. If you form your own opinion on the matter and would like to express it in *Golfdom*, please drop us a line at info@golfdom.com.

I've said it before and I'll say it many times again before I retire: Our industry's strong sense of brotherhood is one of the many reasons I entered this profession. That's why the notion of not even considering hiring a current or former golf course superintendent for an assistant's position is so completely lost on me.

Ten years ago, this situation really didn't exist, as it was fairly common to hire former superintendents for assistant positions. There were many reasons why superintendents would be interested in making seemingly backward career moves. Some were looking to change facility types from public to private courses. Others were interested in changing climates from northern geography to southern or vice versa. And, in some circumstances, superintendents were simply out of jobs because their courses shut down. Regardless of their situations, these experienced former superintendents made excellent candidates for assistant positions at other facilities.

Apparently, with today's volatile economy and contracting marketplace, some superintendents and directors have a completely different frame of mind — one where former superintendents are automatically disqualified from assistant's positions in their operations.

In a time when there are more out-of-work superintendents than ever, being able to capitalize on these uniquely qualified candidates for an assistant's position makes both common and practical sense.

Experience carries an enormous amount of value when selecting and evaluating candidates for any job openings in any field. When you take into account the very specialized nature of our profession and the ultra-specific skill set we must develop to become successful, experience becomes an even greater asset.

Former superintendents already possess a foundation of experience that allows them to hit the ground running without the costly need to begin training at square one, unlike many other candidates. Now, that certainly doesn't mean they don't need to be trained. Every golf course operation performs similar job tasks, but goes about them in different manners.

It's an incoming assistant's responsibility to learn and operate within the established procedures of the new facility. Both the current superintendent and the incoming assistant should have a crystal-clear understanding of

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BY CHRISTOPHER
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Superintendents Debate

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their respective roles and expectations.

As superintendents, we're only as good as the people we work with. Believing that a potential candidate has "too much experience" for an assistant's position flies in the face of that fundamental philosophy. By surrounding ourselves with the most qualified and experienced people, we're not only improving our maintenance operations, but also our personal ability to successfully manage a variety of people with different skill sets.

When it comes down to it, fear and insecurity on behalf of the people doing the hiring are the most overwhelming reasons why former superintendents wouldn't be considered for assistant's positions.

There's a fear of hiring an assistant with comparable skills, and often times, more practical experience, but at a

salary much less than the superintendent's own. This carries with it a perceived inherit risk for those managers who aren't secure with their current positions and/or abilities.



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We've all heard the rumored stories about how an unethical assistant replaced the superintendent after some behind-the-scenes,

political bad mouthing. While this scenario has probably happened at times, it's certainly not the norm. Yet, the fear it represents is very real.

The bottom line is most people, including superintendents, will do virtually anything to protect and provide for their families. I get that. But to believe that every former superintendent looking at an assistant's position is planning to go behind your back to sabotage your career is simply close-minded and reeks of insecurity.

There shouldn't be any reason not to consider hiring a former superintendent as an assistant. The benefits they bring to the table, such as practical experience, maturity, proven work ethic and industry-specific knowledge, qualifies them as ideal candidates and most likely a valued asset to both you and your operation. ■

Gray is superintendent and general manager of the Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Ky. Gray is also an award-winning contributing editor and columnist for Golfdom.