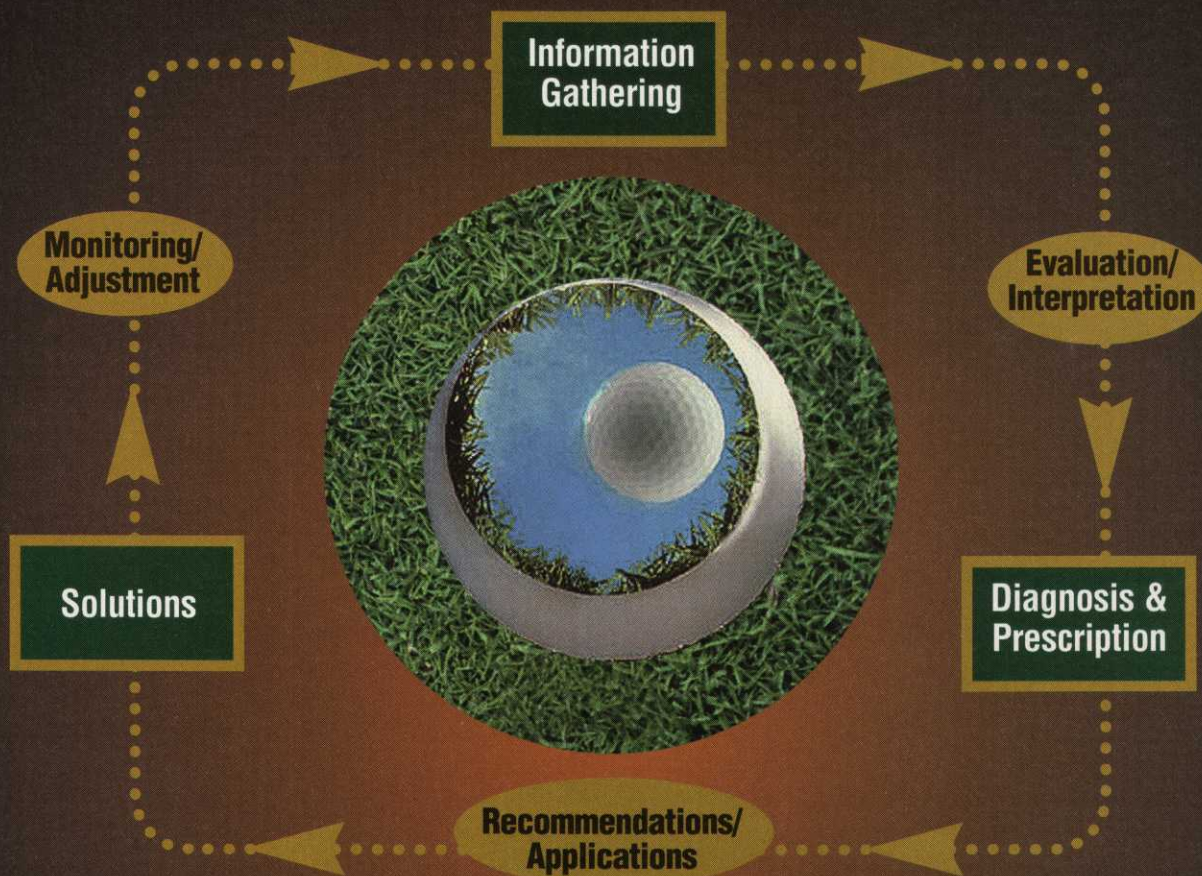


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Circle No. 116

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."

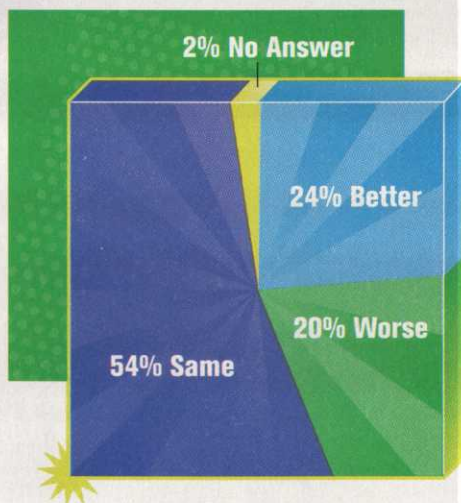
Oliveira says the industry and its leaders are placing too much emphasis on image, not on what superintendents are accomplishing on golf courses. It's one reason he believes job security is getting worse.

"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

Continued on page 35

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



cent of superintendents say 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

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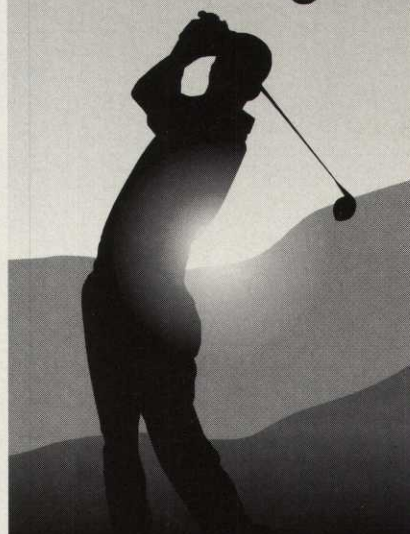


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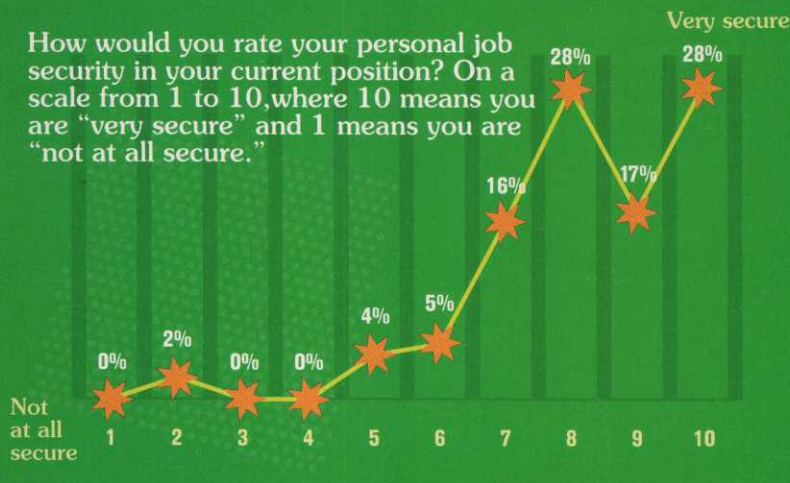
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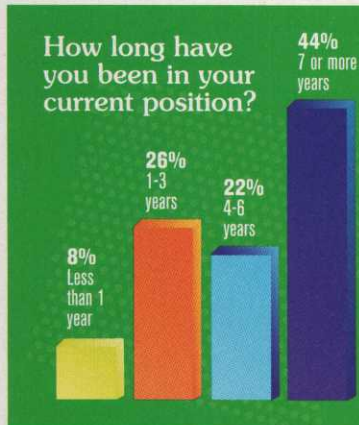
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How would you rate your personal job security in your current position? On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 means you are "very secure" and 1 means you are "not at all secure."



How long have you been in your current position?



ember, 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

Continued from page 32

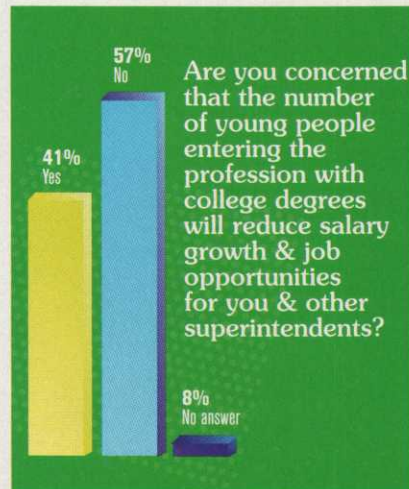
from their jobs because their courses suffered from bad weather.

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-





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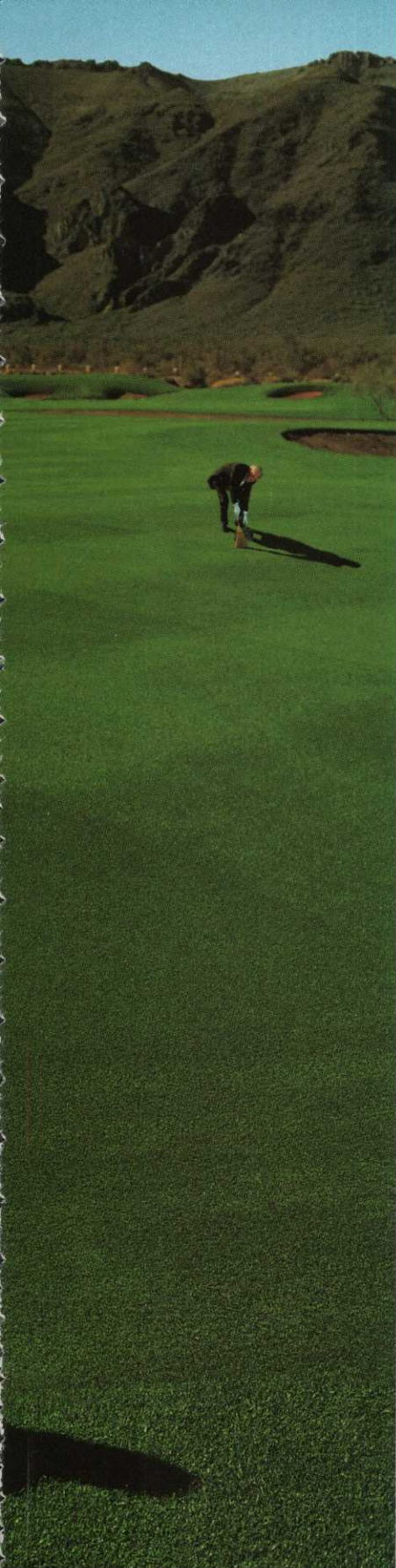


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Circle No. 119



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E-Commerce

Still Faces Uphill Battle

Despite sophisticated marketing designed to convince superintendents that electronic commerce is the wave of the future, the message is still struggling to be heard, judging by our Superintendent State of the Industry Survey. The results show that superintendents are split on using the Internet for business purposes. Twenty-eight percent use the Internet daily to conduct business, 25 percent use it weekly, 26 percent use it occasionally, and 21 percent say they never navigate the Web for business purposes.

As for purchasing supplies online, the numbers are more stark, at least in the short term. Forty-two percent of survey respondents said there was "no way" they would

buy any supplies online in the next 12 months, and only 3 percent are currently buying online. That means that e-commerce companies have more convincing to do if they hope to capture a substantial portion of superintendents' business.

One of the hindrances to e-commerce in the industry is a lack of Internet access from some superintendents' offices, says Carlos Vega, superintendent at Vista Hills CC in El Paso, Texas. He says he would buy online, but he's not linked to the Internet.

"That's one of the major barriers that is preventing superintendents from committing to e-commerce," Vega says. "We all have computers, but not all of us are online yet. As more superintendents get hooked up, more e-commerce will take place."

Vega says he plans to be online at his course within the next five months. He plans to purchase spare parts for his machines and chemicals through the Internet.

Bruce Rickert, certified superintendent at Medford CC in Medford, N.J., uses the Internet daily for business purposes and says it's "somewhat likely" that he will pur-

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chase supplies or products online in the next 12 months.

He says he foresees a day when the Internet will replace salespeople. But companies who want Rickert's business can't just send him broadcast e-mails about equipment deals. They must tailor their marketing plans to meet his specific needs, he says.

"Right now, most of the companies aren't customizing their pitches to me," Rickert says. "Companies are going to have to work harder to get information that specifically targets me, and they will have to provide that information

concisely. My time is precious, and the companies that make it easier for me to make online purchases will be more likely to get my business."

Rickert says e-commerce companies also suffer from the fact that they lack a history. He says he's more likely to buy from a Web site that bears the name of an established company rather than a newcomer he knows little about. "I'm leery of doing an online deal with people I don't feel like I know," Rickert says.

Kevin Goolsby, superintendent at Sportsman of Perdido GC in Pensacola, Fla., says he uses the Internet to gather information on products. He also uses e-mail to confer with fellow superintendents before deciding which products to buy. He listed himself as a "very likely" to purchase items through the Web in the next year.

"One drawback to buying items on the Web is that you risk losing contact with expert salespeople," Goolsby says. "That's scary for a lot of people, particularly when you depend on them to help you make a purchasing decision."

But as more golf courses focus attention on bottom-line performance, Goolsby says e-commerce will provide a faster, cheaper way to procure goods and services.

"We all have budgets that we have to stay within," he says. "If buying online will help us do that, then that's where the industry is going to move."

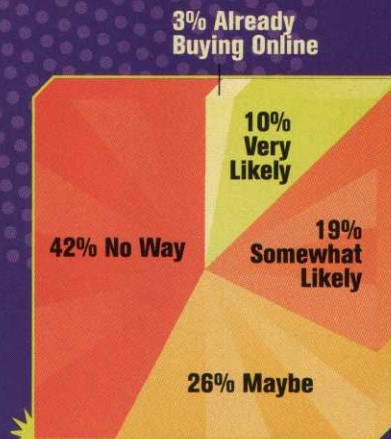
Vega also says he's not sure he'll ever buy equipment like greens mowers and utility vehicles on the Web. "I'll probably still contact my local distributor because I'll still want to see what I'm buying," he adds. ■

— Frank H. Andorka Jr.

How often do you use the Internet for business purposes?



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