

Exploring The Green Industry

By Andy Kurth, President, Lawn Association of Wisconsin Network (LAWN)

Editors Note: Andy Kurth offers information on other career paths that golf course superintendents could excel at.

Reading Jake Schneider's column in a recent *The Grass Roots* had me really thinking where the Green Industry currently is and where it may be going. Jake and I spent some time a few weeks ago having lunch and discussing where golf course superintendents are successful, where they are undervalued, the state of the golf course industry and what some other options are for those in golf that feel that the "grass is greener on the other side."

As the current president of LAWN I've been thinking it was time to go through a few reasons and options for exploring lawn care as a viable career for current golf course superintendents. It has me thinking of ways to get more experienced people into the lawn care industry that are not only well qualified but may feel stymied or threatened with job insecurity in their current vocation.

There are two great opportunities to move into the lawn care arena: a management position in a thriving company or lawn care ownership through a franchising opportunity (taking proven systems of

growth) and maximizing your talent and earnings potential in the green industry. Some may decide to invest in lawn care while continuing their current position as a superintendent and partnering with a day to day lawn care manager they bring on board. Then join full time once it is more established.

There is an extraordinary amount of opportunity to take your existing skill set and move into management in lawn care as well. According to a study by Landscape Magazine, 89% of lawn care companies were optimistic for growth in 2013. 71% of companies surveyed said they expected positive growth this year. Our company has grown over 20% for four straight years in spite of the "down" economy. The need for additional quality minds in this industry is there and many opportunities with no ceiling preventing your personal and professional growth exist. At Weed Man, we employ 3 ex-golf course superintendents and 5 employees with various degrees related to turf management (one recently has also bought into the company). Two of these are franchisees in the Midwest with turf related degrees from UW and one is an ex-golf course superintendent.

A study by the National Golf Foundation found that only 12.5 golf courses opened in 2012...while 154.5 closed with 499.5 closing in totality since 2006. These are sobering statistics. I love to golf and truly understand the commitment, work ethic and earned respect of all of the golf course superintendents in the golf industry. If you are comfortable and happy with your career path, I applaud you and this is not an attempt to steal people from golf course management. However, it is an attempt to notify people that there are other great options out there with a path to a promising career of personal, professional, and financial growth in a flourishing industry. As Jake and I agreed, people need to know about the opportunities they have in the green industry outside of the golf course world.



The EIFG needs your support to:

- 

Fuel innovation through research
- 

Expand knowledge of golf course management professionals through education
- 

Tell golf's story through advocacy and outreach
- 

Help bright minds pursue their dreams through scholarships

Donate today at www.eifg.org



The Environmental Institute for Golf is the philanthropic organization of GCSAA.