

# A Question of Ethics

*Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the Spring issue of The Florida Green.*

I am writing this in an anonymous fashion because I do not want to implicate anyone for wrongdoing, but I sincerely believe the subject that I am about to embark upon definitely needs to reach all of our people in the golf course management industry.

I recently experienced a problem with my putting surfaces at a facility where I was employed. The cause for the problem was beyond my control, but as we unfortunately see all too often, I was asked to resign my position because it is the easiest way for management to save face and calm down the membership.

After leaving, and a few weeks of self-evaluation, I felt that there were things I could have done better dealing with the situation, and know that at least I have learned a few things from this bad experience.

My reason for writing, however, is not for sympathy, but to tell of a situation that is to me, becoming very alarming in our profession. The number of people that encroached upon my position by calling my manager, trying to be the first to get their foot in the door, before an official announcement was issued, was beyond belief!

My manager was very professional and denied that there were going to be any changes made, but many he told me of were very aggressive and continued to call him. Many of the job seekers were people looking to move from the rank of assistant superintendent to their first head superintendent position.

The person who eventually took my place was a former employee of mine. He never had the ethical decency to call me to see what the situation with me was. He interviewed with our management and accepted the position, all without even calling to let me know he was involved in the process.

I realize that there are many people out there that are graduating from turf school and need to find golf course superintendent positions, but these people need to realize that the GCSAA has a good code of ethics in our business. It is everyone's responsibility to uphold it. I know for fact that my replacement took the job for a much lower salary than I was being paid. I believe he never had any concern for upholding the salary scale for my area. I doubt if he ever tried to find out what the range was.

Before I interviewed for the job, I first called the chapter leaders to introduce myself and to find out about the area salaries and other important information about their group of superintendents. It was very easy to do, and believe me, it helped me in my negotiations. It also helped the existing superintendents to continue to upgrade their salaries.

We all have a tremendous responsibility in our business, and it has taken a lot of hard work by all of us to get the due respect and compensation we are receiving today.

I am hearing about more and more superintendents being replaced by people that are coming in 10-15K less than the previous superintendent almost on a daily basis.

These people don't realize the tremendous amount of pressure that is associated with being the head superintendent. It is impossible to imagine until you are in that position. When I left the ranks of assistant superintendent, I fortunately listened to my boss, and although I was very eager to get my first head job, I went to the bargaining table determined to be paid for the responsibility that I was taking on, and to uphold the salary range of the superintendents in the region.

The kind of cut-throat behavior that I have experienced, and am hearing about, needs to stop. We are all facing more and more responsibility and pressures from the public and media, and I feel that well-educated, ethical and hard working golf course superintendents will meet these challenges head on.

As we become more and more responsible, we deserve to be compensated well for the great amount of time and effort required to do our jobs to the highest standard. We do not need our own people shooting us in the foot. They will be the ones who eventually will pay the price.

—Anonymous

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