

Opportunities for attracting good foremen



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No commute in southern California, you know, is a short commute.

Flagging down a Los Angeles-area taxi cab not long ago, I thus had the opportunity to engage the driver in a desultory but rather lengthy conversation.

He's 30 years old if he's a day, and a college graduate, I come to find. As a matter of fact, he's got his master's degree in business administration from a prestigious East Coast university whose name you'd recognize. The reluctant cabbie had moved to the West Coast months ago, seeking gainful employment in his area of specialization, eager to lend his services to the highest bidder.

Unfortunately, the highest bidder was the local cab company—a sad reflection on the tight job market in Los Angeles that also applies to the market in the green industry and other industries.

Just over the past few months, Americans have started to question the validity of some government statistics. Unemployment, President Clinton contends, is very low, and more Americans now hold jobs than ever before.

What the statistics *don't* say is that large corporations like AT&T are laying off skilled workers in droves, that callous major employers are behaving as if the country's human resources are mere pawns in a chess game where the prizes are increasing corporate profits and skyrocketing stock market prices.

Which, if the national news magazines are to be believed, is true. A recent edition of *Time* noted that the rich are getting richer, the poor are pretty much staying poor, and the middle class is edging ever so precipitously downward.

In a recent survey conducted by LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, "finding middle managers" was one of the problems most cited by our readers. Might this be, then, an opportunity for green in-

dustry employers?

If there are truly uncounted, intelligent masses unable to find work in their area of expertise, might they be willing to settle for something less? A job, perhaps, that would be out from under the confining walls of their latest corporate experience, where they could take a deep breath and not gasp at recycled air? A job that offers opportunities to excel by innovation, to lead by example, to develop both mind and body equally?

No, the new level of employee wouldn't be making \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year. But with your understanding and assistance, they could make a good living and savor at least some of the benefits of their previous job.

And, yes, you would have to pay a premium for the educational level of this burgeoning workforce. But you might not have to break the bank.

Don't get me wrong here, readers. This is not a perfect fit by any means. But if the employment market continues to dictate further "downsizing," "out-sourcing" and other various fancy names for workforce cuts—and if you can offer the slightest incentive for coming to work in the green industry—you might be surprised at the kind of quality employees that are available.

Certainly, many of those middle managers laid off by our corporate giants might want to work for a smaller organization, where they are on a first-name basis with the top guy. Where they'll be fairly sure that their employer will remain loyal to them, as long as they meet their job-related responsibilities.

Just because they are beating the bushes for jobs, however, these exceptional people will not casually gravitate to the green industry without a proper introduction. You'll have to recruit, and you'll have to tell your story.

What can you do to attract this new generation of middle manager? Will a little extra incentive make a great difference in your profitability and/or efficiency?

Next time you're in a taxi cab, maybe you should ask. **LM**

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