

'Certifying' out the unqualified?



Ron Hall

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John is mad as hell and he called me up to tell me that he's not going to take it anymore.

John's a landscape architect with a degree to prove it. He says he's been in the landscape business for 23 years. For the most part, he's been glad he chose this career. But lately something's been bugging him, specifically the lack of a program to require "certified" landscapers on projects. Most of his aggravation concerns the activities of what he considers unethical landscapers on new commercial projects.

He tells me that he'll start his own landscape association if he has to help solve this problem. It will focus on "certifying" qualified landscapers. That way, he says, he and other legitimate and like-minded landscapers can get the respect that they deserve. They'll build an accreditation program as recognized and respected by the public as other professions and the skilled trades.

Hey, if a construction project requires plans drafted by a registered building architect and work provided by registered tradesmen, why not require a "certified" landscape contractor too?

John says that he's belonged to several landscape associations and they're fine for getting to know other good landscapers. But none of them really address the main problem which, he insists, is low-ball operators that move in, snatch up projects, and generally gum up the works for established firms.

The veteran landscaper, who works in the Memphis area, says it's way too easy to get into the landscape business, and what state or local regulations there are, usually aren't enforced.

John, I empathize with you. Really I do because I feel exactly the same way. But, you have to understand where I'm coming from.

[LANDSCAPE]

PAGE 4L ▶

Autumn's push for profit

PAGE 8L ▶

ALCA Student Career Days news

When I look at the number of young people pouring out of our nation's journalism schools, I wonder how anybody is ever going to make a living in journalism. There are too many of us reporters and editors in the marketplace already.

I sometimes think that if we could just reduce the supply of these ambitious, fresh-faced fledglings those of us already in the business could guarantee ourselves more job security and command better salaries.

Does the journalism industry need a certification program so that just accredited editors and reporters could work? No, I don't think so.

John, you can certainly argue that there's a big difference between being a low-ball landscaper and a journalist just breaking into the business; I'll grant you that.

But, ultimately the success of any industry is not decided by who is excluded, but by embracing and improving the knowledge of those within it. And particularly those at the bottom; they need it the most.

Certification isn't a gate to keep competitors out.

Again, I look at my own chosen profession.

I look at all of these young people, so eager to start their careers and make their marks, few of whom are qualified to be a journalist, not yet anyway... just as I wasn't almost 30 years ago.

Agree/Disagree? Comments/Questions? Column Suggestions? Let Ron Hall know at 440/891-26263. Fax: 440/891-2675. E-Mail: rhall@advanstar.com LM