

Walk out of your shop and back in again.
If you were a top candidate, would
you want to work here?



A better way to hire

BY BILL HOOPES

To win, you just can't allow yourself to hire losers. Focus hard on how and whom you hire. You simply cannot afford preventable turnover. Most causes of turnover are controllable. It begins with the selection process.

Recruiting tips

- ▶ **Improve the content of your classified ads.** Don't run ads for "lawn techs" or "landscape crew" unless that is what you want to hire. An ad that attracts a higher-grade candidate gives you something to work with. Start your ad copy with a grabber heading like "Great Green Industry Careers." Emphasize the opportunity to learn, succeed and grow on the job. In the copy, talk about working independently and outdoors. Emphasize your benefits and that you provide a positive, team-oriented work environment.
- ▶ **Use a variety of recruiting sources.** Pay your staff a referral bonus. Employees referred by current staff turnover at a lower rate than all others.
- ▶ **Use the Internet.** Today's workers look for jobs there. There are several good Green Industry sites that are easy to access. Google landscape/lawn care jobs and see the options.

Interviewing tips

- ▶ **Improve your interviewing environment.** Stop sending all the wrong signals. Walk out of your shop and back in again. This time look around. If you were a

top candidate, would you want to work here? Was the window so dirty you couldn't see inside? Did you step over a pile of cigarette butts to get in the front door? How were you greeted? Was the office clean, how about the staff? All these factors send signals. To hire the best, the signals have to be positive.

People will take a job if it looks good but only keep it if it feels good. We are talking about making the job look good. All a candidate knows is your reputation in town and what they find when they show up. So, clean up, post an interview schedule and have someone greet candidates as they arrive.

- ▶ **Don't "wing it" in interviews.** Plan and rehearse interviews. Provide a private setting. There should be no interruptions. The candidate and the candidate's application should be your only point of focus. The candidate needs to feel he/she is the most important thing on your mind if you want to be the most important thing on his.
- ▶ **Explain what the job is, what the expectations are.** But start with a firm handshake. Plan five open-ended questions that help you learn as much as possible about previous performance. Forget what he/she liked. You want to know what the candidate did, how he/she handled similar situations and what the outcome was. Past performance is the key.
- ▶ **Make a decision.** If the candidate is your piece of cake, second and third interviews almost never change opinions. Get a commitment now.

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