



The bad and not so bad of hiring today

While applicants abound, contractors learn to hire smarter, control labor costs and build their management teams.



It can be a gamble weeding through so many applications — you don't always know what you're going to end up with."

Labor costs remain under control, according to the National Federation of Independent Business' September Economic Trends Study — good news for those worried about inflation but bad news for workers.

And for those contractors looking to build or improve their management teams, "now is a good time if you're fortunate enough to do so," says Bruce Bachand, vice president of Orlando's Carol King Landscape Maintenance. "There may be more time spent weeding through applications for labor positions, but the managerial pool and available supervisor level individuals are more plentiful." **LMM**

In *Landscape Management's* survey

results and contractor interviews, there is one thing that was fairly unanimous: No one is having a problem with hiring today.

But that also depends how you define "problem."

While contractors are receiving an unprecedented amount of applications for open positions from what they describe as desperate people without jobs looking for work, this also means they are spending triple the time weeding through a lot of unqualified applicants to find the few who might fill the bill.

"There are a lot of people looking for work," explains Giuseppe Baldi, landscape maintenance manager, Baldi Gardens, Arlington, TX. He put an ad for an open position on Craig's List and within two hours got overwhelmed with calls. "But it's hard to find good people even though there are so many to choose from. A lot of people want to work but don't have experience in landscaping or don't want to work hard.

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Labor Setbacks

1. Overabundance of less qualified applicants.
2. Lengthened hiring process.

2011 Labor Goals

1. Build management team from newly available pool of applicants.
2. Hire slow, fire fast.
3. Retain good people as the economy improves.

TODAY'S HOURLY RATES

	0 to 5 years experience	> 5 years experience
Mower operator	\$10.38	\$11.89
Spray technician	\$12.36	\$15.32
Construction worker	\$11.63	\$14.70
Irrigation technician	\$12.73	\$15.94

TODAY'S SALARIES

Crew foreman/ team leader	\$30,444
Salesperson	\$45,556
Equipment mechanic	\$32,792
Landscape designer	\$41,108
Landscape architect	\$52,889



Account manager	\$40,752
Supervisor	\$44,782
Operations manager	\$54,845
Owner/president	\$69,738