

continued from page 38

read about called "auto suggestion" made it easy. He made up two posters on which he wrote these slogans: "People first, everything else second," and "I'll spend 1 hour each day recruiting."

Max placed the posters on the wall where they would be impossible for him to avoid: directly across from his desk.

4. Program yourself to make it happen.

It may sound simplistic, even naive, but this process of recommitment to a new approach worked for Max as it will work for you. Once you *think* something is a good idea and make a mental/emotional commitment to making that thought a part of

your life, you begin to *program your subconscious mind to make it happen*. Max used this technique to make the necessary changes in his thinking and routine and he succeeded in developing, and implementing, a much improved recruiting strategy.

It all began for Max when he decided to reset his priorities: Put people first. Then, he acknowledged that more time should be devoted to staffing, including a long-term commitment to the process.

You need people to make a team

The sidebar beginning on page 37 presents Max's five key steps to improving recruiting effectiveness. In the process, Max

learned that people take lots of time, but people are also your most precious resource. No manager can succeed on individual effort alone. Like Max Terrier, you need a motivated staff. And the sooner you accept the need to place the highest priority possible on recruiting, the sooner your staffing problems will go away.

Max Terrier learned you never stop recruiting! **LM**

The author is director of training and development at Scotts Lawn Service in Marysville, OH. He says Max Terrier is a composite of two real people who worked for him in Texas.

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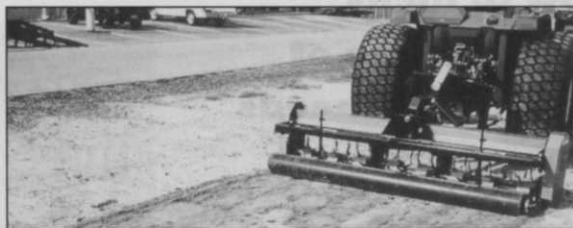
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How to supervise 'special' people

When you hire young employees, older workers and the frequently unemployed, you have special management challenges. Learn how to focus on each type of employee's needs

BY DONALD W. JACKSON

Hiring and retaining employees can be challenging at best. We all want knowledgeable and dependable workers, but most landscape organizations are only as solid as their weakest employee. Since our industry is largely seasonal and dependent on staffing through fairly low-paying, manual labor positions, it is critical to make hiring the best possible employee a top priority.

These 'special' employee types can be suitable and productive candidates with the proper supervision.

Hiring the frequently unemployed

Many seasonal and entry level positions are filled by individuals with less than perfect work histories. Either they have had significant periods of unemployment or are transient and continually move from job to job.

Also, they may not have graduated from high school or earned a GED equivalency degree.

Those who are frequently unemployed may have family responsibilities that can

be financially and emotionally demanding, and their sketchy work histories can sometimes be traced to having had little guidance to prepare them for workplace responsibilities.

Often, they are inexperienced in functioning within a structured work environment and may not have developed social skills involving relationships with coworkers and supervisors or adhering to workplace rules.

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Hiring: Three faces with special needs

EMPLOYEE PROFILE # 1

Frequently unemployed

Robert Mills

Age: 34

Height: 5'9"

Weight: 175 lbs.

Marital Status: 4 children: ages 5, 6, 11 and 15

Education: GED equivalency degree

▶ Robert has had four jobs in the last five years, with frequent periods of unemployment over the last 15 years. These lapses

often last between six and nine months.

▶ Robert does not have any criminal record and has no history of alcohol or drug abuse.

▶ He has worked primarily as a diesel engine mechanic, heavy equipment operator and as a laborer in landscape and nursery operations.

▶ Robert is known to have a hot temper, which has caused him to be somewhat difficult to supervise over long periods of time.



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4500	39HP
4600	43HP
4700	48HP



Circle No. 112 on Reader Inquiry Card



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Training ideas

Remember the letters "SSR" when you train frequently unemployed individuals. It is important that all training be simple (S), specific (S) and as relevant or "real life" (R) as possible. Also remember that visual aids help a person understand the concepts you're teaching.

Be thorough in all training and encourage personal interaction to assure they understand the topics you cover. Reinforce key points when on the job. Encourage and reinforce positive behavior and accomplishments.

Finally, try to establish and promote cooperation between current, trusted employees and newly hired seasonals or entry-level people.

He's just a kid!

High school and college age students offer our industry another source of labor, and although many are ambitious and genuinely looking to succeed, their goals are often short term and usually measured in weeks or months rather than years. The quality of a young person's home life,

along with the level of guidance from other adults, can vary widely along with their maturity.

There are obvious exceptions, but the overall affluence and level of disposable income among this age group is relatively high compared to previous generations. As a result, in a period of a strong national economy like the present, it's the employees who end up vying for people in this age group.

A positive work environment means more than a competitive wage at this age. This may mean better working conditions and flexible work hours. It is important to be adaptable and timely in making changes. The computer age has forced technology changes to move at a very high rate of speed. Capable and intelligent young employees seldom have much patience waiting for improvements their supervisors promise.

Younger employees often need to feel a sense of purpose from their jobs. Completing a task simply because their supervisor instructs them to do so may not be sufficient for a stimulated and forward-thinking student. Try to communicate the intention

and rationale of each job assignment to the best of your ability.

Finally, be realistic in your expectations and objectives. We are sometimes quick to fall back upon the "when I was their age ..." philosophy in evaluating the productivity of younger employees.

Appreciating older employees

Many industry organizations rely heavily on older employees. That's because they may be critical to the operation's success, as well as an important influence on the dependability and motivation of other employees.

Factors that wear on older employees relate to their physical and emotional well-being. Influences such as heredity, living conditions, diet and financial responsibilities can impact an older worker's health and productivity. Family-related stresses can include dependent children and grandchildren. As with any age group, the ability to cope with job-related and personal stress varies greatly from person to person.

Because the number of older employees in our industry continues to grow each year, more landscape managers are realizing how productive they can be:

- ▶ Job-related turnover is often much less with older employees compared to younger workers.

- ▶ Older employees are frequently more safety conscious, maintain a more consistent attendance record, and, due to their many years of experience, are often more skilled at their jobs.

- ▶ Older workers matched to the right job can be very productive. Tasks that require accuracy, judgment and dependability over swiftness are frequently better suited to them.

- ▶ These employees characteristically bring assets to the table that can be of great value to their immediate supervisors and the organization. Through experience, they have learned to see the "big picture" and

EMPLOYEE PROFILE #2

Young employee

Richard Thomas Jr.

Age: 19

Height: 6' 0"

Weight: 195 lbs.

Marital Status: Single

Education: High school graduate

- ▶ Richard took a year off to work after high school before attending college.

- ▶ He is an only child and was raised in a single-parent home. Both his mother and his high school guidance counselor advised Richard to work for a year to give him time to mature.



- ▶ Overall, Richard was a B+ to A- student in high school but was particularly gifted in the areas of English, speech and debate. He is entering Wake Forest University in the fall as a psychology major. Richard will most likely go on to law school.

- ▶ Richard has matured significantly as a result of job responsibilities and is currently employed as a summer crew leader with a landscape maintenance company in southeastern Connecticut.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE #3

Older employee

Samantha Hunt

Age: 59

Height: 5'6"

Weight: 145 lbs.

Marital Status:

Married with two

grown children

Education: Degree

in Business Man-

agement from The

Ohio State University



▶ Samantha was employed for more than 35 years with a large farm equipment manufacturer based in the Midwest. She was a regional sales manager with the company when she elected to retire early at age 57.

▶ She worked the next two years as a pickup and heavy truck salesman at a dealership just outside of Cincinnati before assuming her current position as commercial sales-customer service representative for a large midwestern nursery and landscape operation.

▶ Her extroverted personality, high standards and dedication to detail have allowed her to quickly excel in her current position in the landscape business.

are able to look at jobs with a more long-term, global perspective. This is especially important when the job requires contact with clients — older employees are frequently more attuned to the nuances and delicacies of good "people skills."

Make it legal

Good ethical, moral and legal standards are important to the longevity and overall success of any business, and such standards are no less important within our industry.

The selection, training and retention of

quality employees is important at all job levels. Unfortunately, too many employers subscribe to an open or "swinging door" philosophy when it comes to staffing.

It takes time and effort to develop quality employees at all levels and learn how to

manage them, but it's worth the effort. Try it. You will reap well-deserved benefits!

— The author directs the horticulture, landscaping and turf management program at The Williamson Free School, Media, PA.

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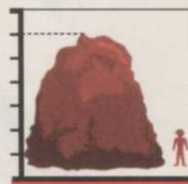
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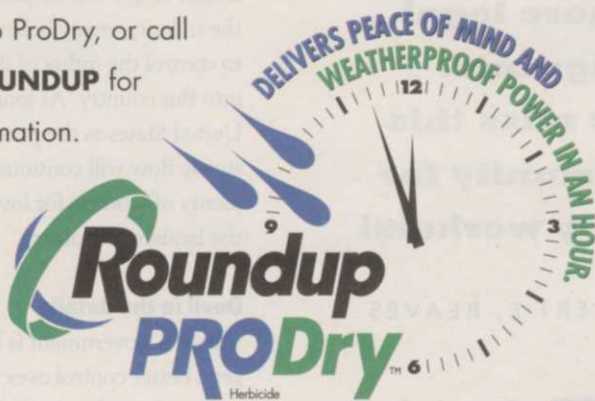
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H2B:

The legal alternative

Savvy contractors are already making this system work for them and there's room for more legal immigrants. Don't miss this opportunity for quality workers!

BY ROBERT E. REAVES

Ask most landscape managers to make one wish and, in most cases, they would wish for a reliable, skilled workforce made up of local citizens. That wish probably won't come true, since most Americans shun hard labor positions in the landscape industry. Illegal workers from Mexico now make up a large portion of the seasonal landscape labor force in most areas of the country.

Work site raids have become a low priority of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). It has now initiated a less intrusive process: making appoint-

ments with businesses and auditing employee work documents. The major enforcement focus is now at the border, where the U.S. Border Patrol is expected to swell to more than 20,000 members in the next few years.

Unless we build a wall extending the length of the U.S.-Mexico border or send in the military, many believe there's no way to control the influx of illegal immigrants into this country. As long as they see the United States as the promised land, the steady flow will continue. And this means plenty of workers for low-skilled jobs in the landscape industry.

Devil in the details

The U.S. government is looking for ways to get a better control over the illegal alien situation. One idea that seems to be gaining ground with congressional leaders is a streamlined visa program allowing companies to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis.

Joe Greene, director of the INS district office in Denver, is skeptical. "With a guest worker program, the devil is always in the details," he says. "How do you control people to ensure that if they come in to work, they leave if it's temporary?"

There's an existing visa program for seasonal workers known as H2B, which allows up to 66,000 immigrant workers into this country per year. Controlled by the U.S. Department of Labor and the INS, it

grants American companies permission to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis — up to 10 months at a time — as long as they can prove they were unable to find U.S. workers to fill the positions.

H2B's biggest advantage is the higher probability of finding workers already skilled in landscape maintenance. And because the worker is legally in the United States, there won't be the usual problems with the INS. Many landscape contractors say the source of Mexican workers with green cards has dried up, another reason to use H2B.

Advantages for the workers

What's in it for the foreign worker? Under the H2B visa program, workers receive protection under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which stipulates that workers are to receive overtime, at least minimum wage and pay income taxes.

Many criticize H2B, especially the paperwork that comes with it. To facilitate the process, some landscape contractors hire an H2B agent — labor contractor — to take care of it. Labor contractors locate workers with landscape skills and see their clients through the entire process.

Do-it-yourself options

Is it a requirement to use an H2B agent to secure H2B workers? No.

Although it is more time consuming to handle the entire process on your own, it is

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entirely feasible. You'll also save around several thousand dollars the agent would have charged as a fee.

The first step is to work with your state's workforce commission and the U.S. De-

partment of Labor. Make sure you put a dollar value on the time it takes you to work through the certification process. Compare it against the cost of using an H2B agent.

Even if you use an agent, you will still be required to write letters. Remember,

the H2B agent can't provide you with shortcuts around the legal process. In other words, don't get a false sense of security that the INS and U.S. Department of Labor will "look the other way" because you are involved with the program or working with an agent.

Use of the H2B program in the industry continues to grow. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the program is so successful that the number of workers certified has more than doubled in the last two years.

"Two years ago, the Dallas regional office did not even certify workers in the H2B program for landscape and related jobs. We thought there were enough U.S. workers," says John Bartlett, certifying officer with the U.S. Department of Labor's Dallas office.

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Top five reasons H2B workers quit

1. Housing is too expensive. Most H2B workers can only afford \$25 per week. The H2B housing should not be a direct company rental or it would fall under HUD standards.

2. Bad attitude from the foreman or supervisors. Use of foul language drives workers away.

3. No ride to and from work.

4. No evening recreation. These men are many miles from their families.

5. "Us" versus "them" atmosphere at work. They don't feel they are part of things.

Note: Check your local Labor Certification Office at the U.S. Department of Labor/Employment Training Administration for more information.

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