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See who made this year's
list on page 25.

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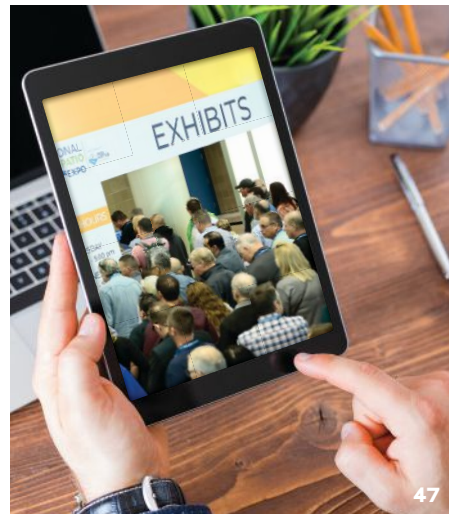


To the PSN & Jandy Top 50 Service honorees

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ABOVE RIGHT: INFORMA EXHIBITIONS U.S./ ADOBE STOCK

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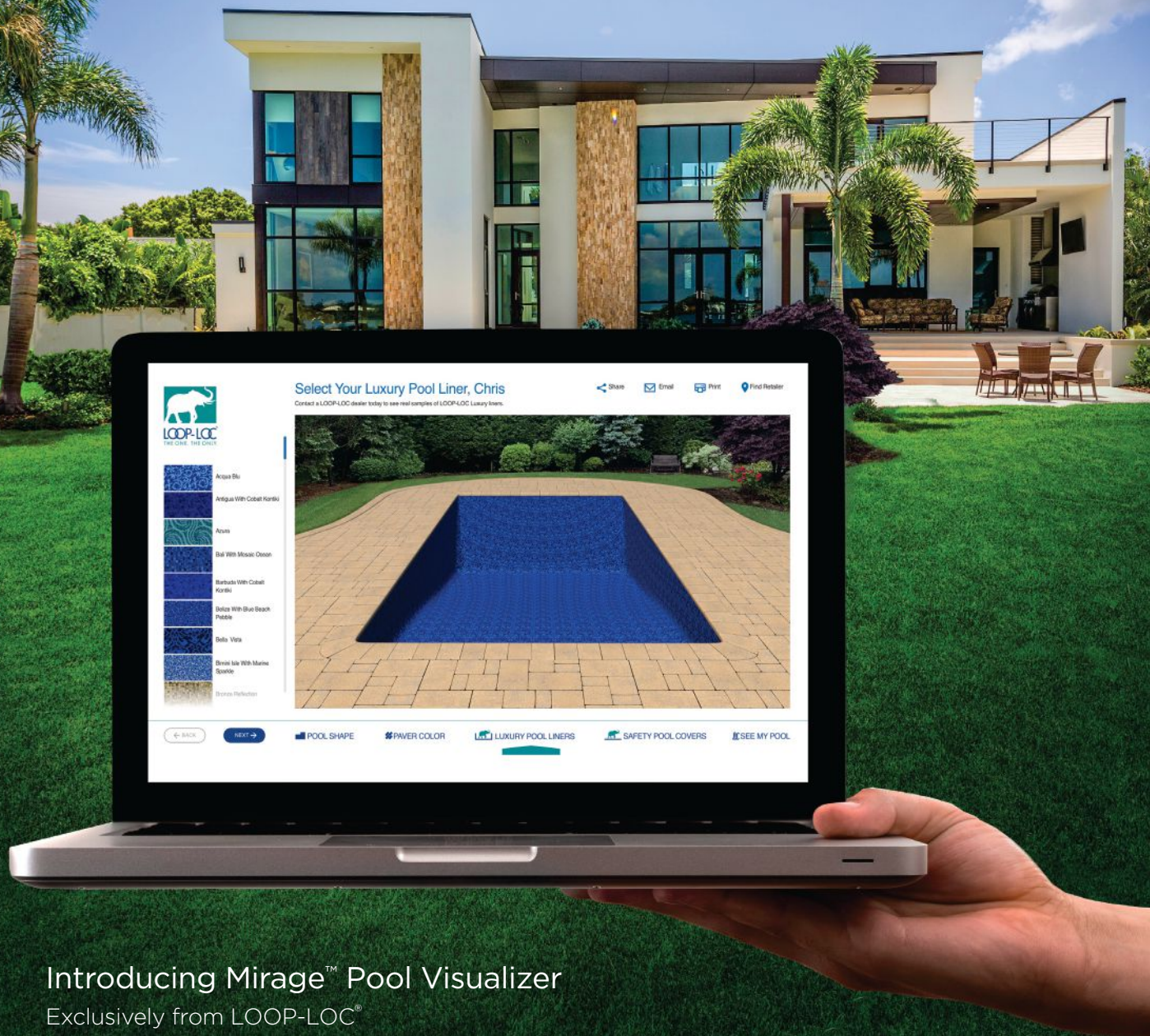
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The Top 50 Spirit



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

2020 isn't over yet, but I already have my hindsight goggles on. And, looking through the lens of our pool service segment, what I see is damned impressive.

Everyone will agree that it's been a tough year. The coronavirus pandemic has thrown unimaginable and constantly moving hurdles to challenge everyone. And service companies have handled them all with grit and determination.

We know this because we asked our service company CEOs several questions in our program submission form. The first two are fairly evergreen: Describe the best business decision, large or small, that you've made in the past year that has positively impacted your company. And, what was your company's biggest challenge this year, and how did you resolve it?

The answers to these two questions generally will yield useful takeaways for our readers. But this year, we added two more pandemic-related questions to find out how our service companies are dealing with this year's unique circumstances: How was your company affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and what changes did you make in response?

The answers revealed a lot of similarities. In the beginning, many struggled to keep up and comply with the rapidly changing government mandates. But since pool maintenance was considered an essential business from almost the very beginning and for the majority of the country, service companies needed to adapt to the new normal and quick.

For the most part, it looks as if these efforts were successful. Service firms were busier than ever. I assumed that

that meant revenue was up as well. This was the case for most, but not all. A few companies reported that, while they were busy, the impact from the ravaged economy meant that many of their customers had fallen on hard times through job loss or illness and could not afford to pay them.

Instead of dropping these customers, our service companies found ways to compassionately help them while still keeping their staff employed during this vulnerable time. Most were able to utilize the Paycheck Protection Program and other loans to protect their staff, and they offered payment deferment options to their affected customers. In some cases, they maintained pools for free for a month or two, until homeowners were able to get back on their feet.

It's this spirit of generosity that characterizes our Top 50 Service winners. This was especially apparent when judging the community service portion of the program. While we're unable to highlight these efforts in this issue due to space constraints, look for our next issue. In it, we'll profile five Top 50 companies that serve their communities in standout ways.

In the meantime, congratulations to this year's Top 50 Service honorees! It was hard earned and well deserved.


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by **HAYWARD**

Premier Pools Franchise Undergoes Aggressive Growth, Takes on Fiberglass

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ



The company behind one of the few franchised pool builders in the U.S. implemented an aggressive growth strategy this year and is beginning to incorporate fiberglass pools into its business model.

So far, Premier Franchise Management has added 26 new locations — 15 for its builder brand, Premier Pools & Spas; and 11 for its service operation, Premier Pool Service. The growth entered Premier into several new states, including Illinois, Montana, Utah, Oklahoma, Ohio, Idaho, North Carolina and Tennessee. It also added another five in Texas, where it currently has the most locations.

The company now includes 88 franchised offices in 35 states, and it expects to add about five more before year's end, said Paul Porter, CEO of Premier Franchise Management in Granite Bay, Calif.

The upcoming purchases will carry the Premier brand for the first time into South Carolina, Iowa and South Dakota, Porter added.

In 2021, Premier plans to enter new countries. For several years, it has had a presence in India. Now it wants to move into Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Bra-

zil and Europe.

This year, the company also entered the fiberglass-pool market. It started by integrating the product into some of its operations as a way to work around shotcrete shortages.

But now, PFM plans to make fiberglass a significant part of its business plan. Next year, the franchiser expects to open some fiberglass-only locations, partly by recruiting existing installers. In 2020, it is projected to have installed 500 fiberglass units, with a goal to sell 1,000 in 2021 — and introduce fiberglass pools into Sunbelt states that currently don't offer them.

"I'm very, very excited about that," Porter said. "The fiberglass market is shifting, and I think there's going to be market penetration for quite a few years to come."

The company is still exploring which fiberglass-pool suppliers to partner with.

This year marks 10 years since Porter and Premier embarked on an effort to consolidate builders across the country. In 2010, it began granting builders licenses to use the Premier name. In 2014, it switched to a franchising model.

That first year of licensing yielded the company approximately \$30 million in sales,

Porter said: "This year we think we're going to hit \$500 million in sales."

While PFM initially sought existing pool builders, it now recruits from outside the industry as well, he added.

"We're trying to bring the best candidates who have first and foremost integrity, then business acumen," he said. "We feel we can train them to build pools but you can't train them to have character."

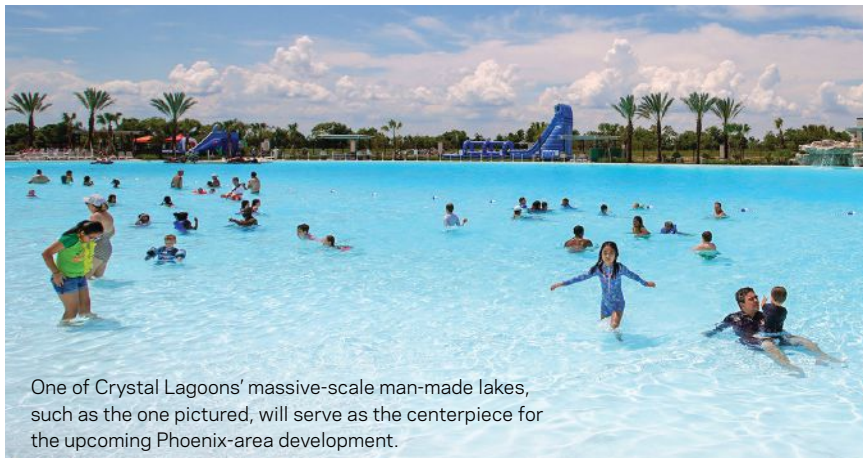
With the industry unable to stay ahead of the skyrocketing demand resulting from stay-at-home orders, he believes his company's growth will help the industry boost supply and serve homeowners who are currently being told they'll have to wait for a pool until next year.

"There's a lot of demand," he said. "But I don't think that when the dust settles, there's going to be a whole lot of growth" in the industry."

So far this year PFM has seen a 45% boost in production franchise-wide. It also has doubled its corporate staff to enable the growth, Porter said.

With these changes in place, the franchise is shooting to add at least another 50 locations next year, Porter said.

First Crystal Lagoons-Branded Resort Planned in Phoenix



One of Crystal Lagoons' massive-scale man-made lakes, such as the one pictured, will serve as the centerpiece for the upcoming Phoenix-area development.

Crystal Lagoons, the Chile-based maker of its own proprietary man-made lake systems, will have a branded resort named after it.

The Phoenix suburb of Glendale, Ariz.,

will serve as the setting for Crystal Lagoons Island Resort. The City Council approved the project last month.

At the center of the mixed-use development will sit an 11-acre lagoon, which

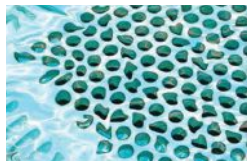
will be up to 10-feet deep. The development also will include seven individually themed islands, retail spaces, restaurants, amusement rides, theaters and other entertainment venues. At least 600 hotel rooms are expected, as well as office spaces.

The lakes, which the company describes with the trademarked term "public access lagoons," are surrounded by white sand beaches and can be accessed through ticketed entry.

Scheduled to open in 2022, before the city hosts the 2023 Super Bowl, the new property is expected to create 1,800 new jobs and to bring an estimated \$700.8 million in new sales, property and bed tax revenues to Glendale, as well as Maricopa County and Arizona, in the next 25 years.

Crystal Lagoons entered the U.S. market approximately five years ago. It currently has projects across the globe, including in Dubai, Japan, Brazil and South Korea.

Drain Cover Standard Sees Implementation Delay



The newest version of ANSI/APSP/ICC-16, the standard governing drain covers, will not be enforced for another six months, it was decided, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it has wrought on production.

Last year, after a long wait, the Consumer Product Safety Commission approved the latest version of the standard, which ensures the products comply with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act.

Among the more time-consuming changes, manufacturers must test their drain covers with all compatible plumbing sizes and provide separate flow ratings based on line size. Manufacturers also must provide more thorough labeling and information on drain covers, sumps and frames, including the manufacturing date of the unit and its service life in years. They must supply stickers and documentation for contractors to transfer that information.

The original compliance deadline was Nov. 24. Now, products manufactured on May 24, 2021 or after must comply with the standard. Those made before that date are not beholden to the change and can remain on the market after the deadline.

Chemical Reaction at Bio-Lab Plant Closes Freeway

Just over two weeks after Hurricane Laura contributed to a fire at its Westlake, La. facility, Bio-Lab experienced another incident.

On Sept. 14, the manufacturer's Conyers, Ga. plant emitted dangerous vapors and a strong odor, causing officials to close nearby Interstate 20 for six hours, according to local media.

On its website, Bio-Lab's parent company, KIK Custom Products, characterized it as a "chemical reaction that occurred ... due to water exposure ..."

The company was not aware of any injuries and said no fire occurred, despite local media reports.

In August, the company's Louisiana facility smoldered for two and a half days after Hurricane Laura. No injuries or illnesses were reported in that incident, either, which is still under investigation.

TOP PHOTO: DERRICK BRYANT

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The Flexible, Easy-to-Install Lighting Solution for Outdoor Living Spaces

A deck builder discusses the basics of low-voltage LED systems.

BY JASON RUSSELL



Twenty-five years ago, there weren't many lighting options for adding some evening pizzazz to decks or outdoor living spaces. While I never personally included one on any of my projects, electrician-installed 120-volt AC systems were fairly common. I've torn out more than a few old decks with line-voltage systems, most with light fixtures that had

stopped working years before. In some cases, the fixtures were full of water, basically health hazards and accidents waiting to happen.

When the first 12-volt DC systems were introduced, I jumped at the opportunity to include them in my designs, because they didn't require conduit or an electrician to install. But they were clunky-looking, as

well as difficult and time-consuming to hook up, or they came with flimsy connectors that inevitably failed in a couple of years.

The weakest link in the first generation of low-voltage deck-lighting systems was the bulb technology. Standard halogen, incandescent or fluorescent bulbs don't last very long, especially in an exterior

PHOTOS BY CALVIN RUSSELL AND JASON RUSSELL



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environment. And if you happen to touch a halogen bulb with bare hands during installation, that bulb's life expectancy becomes even more limited because you didn't give it the white-glove treatment (literally — oils from your skin left behind on the bulb's special heat-resistant quartz glass can start to etch it under high temperatures, creating hot spots that weaken the bulb). To accommodate these hot bulbs, fixtures had to be large, requiring sizeable holes cut into the framing to make room for the light housing.

Enter LEDs (or light emitting diodes), which have revolutionized the way we see everything at night. This technology has made outdoor lighting systems more stable and the fixtures more compact. With a life span approaching 50,000 hours, an LED fixture virtually guarantees that you will never have to worry about those lights for the life of the deck.

System basics

Today's low-voltage lighting systems consist of three basic components. The first is the power supply, a low-voltage transformer that converts 120-volt AC power to 12-volt (or, for certain systems or situations, 24-volt) DC power. The second is the low-voltage wiring that connects the transformer to the lighting fixtures. Finally, there is the most visible part of the system: the LED light fixtures, which must be approved for use in wet locations.

When designing a lighting system, first decide how many light fixtures to include and where they will be located. Drawing a simple diagram will go a long way when determining how much wire you will need and where to run it. But more importantly, you need to know the number of light fixtures in order to size the transformer.

Transformer. A simple rule of thumb when spec'ing the power supply is to choose a transformer that has enough watts to power all lights on the system. To figure this out, take the total watts of all the fixtures and add them together. For example, if there is a total of 25 lights, with each rated at 1 watt, you need a transformer that will power at least 25 watts. To be safe and provide a little reserve capacity, I'd use a minimum of a 50-watt transformer for this application. That's a small transformer, but this is a far lower power requirement than



Figure 1. Most LED lighting systems can be powered by a 12-volt DC transformer, but some systems are designed to operate at 24 volts DC (A). This 24-volt DC unit has an external programmable photoelectric sensor (B).



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Figure 2. Low-voltage two-wire cable is UV-protected and weatherproof, so it doesn't have to be run in conduit (A). While there is no industry standard for fittings, companies such as In-Lite offer high-quality waterproof cable connectors for extending lines (B, C), connecting fixtures to supply lines, and adding branch lines (D).

what is needed to drive older systems, in which even small incandescent or halogen fixtures with typical T5 wedge bulbs draw at least 4 watts and sometimes more than 10 watts for the same amount of lumens, or light output.

For safety, a transformer with a UL 1838 listing is limited to 15 volts output and 300 watts, which is plenty for most LED systems.

I like to use transformers that have a photoelectric sensor, which gives you the option of activating the lights automatically when it gets dark enough. It also allows you to program how long the lights stay energized: from dusk to dawn, for four hours, six hours, eight hours, or off altogether. Transformer technology is improving all the time, and I expect to soon see ones that allow the loads to be split into multiple zones, which can then be controlled with a smartphone app and activated separately (Figure 1).

Make sure you consider your transformer location before installing it.

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Low-voltage lighting systems need a 120-volt power outlet for the transformer to plug into. If there isn't a GFCI line-voltage circuit nearby, you'll need to have an electrician install one. Also, if you put the transformer where it gets too much light at night from auxiliary lighting, such as outdoor flood lights or internal house lights, the photo-eye on the transformer may not activate the LED system. If this is the case, you may need to make a shield from some metal flashing to protect the photo-eye from receiving too much light.

Wiring. What makes low-voltage lighting so simple to install is the wiring, which consists of two wires that are usually bonded together as one in a waterproof, flexible direct-burial sheath (no conduit required). This cable comes in multiple gauges and can be split in half when necessary.

The size of wiring available in your region may vary depending on your weather conditions. Here in the mild Pacific Northwest, where 16-gauge and 12-gauge wire is widely available, I generally use 12-gauge wire. When I'm running more than 500 feet of cable — which is not common on a deck, but may be more common when the system includes landscape lighting — I'll switch to even larger-diameter 10-gauge cable for the supply lines to minimize voltage drop.

Most LED systems will operate fine on 12-gauge wire, with a single hook-up to the transformer. Some larger transformers have higher voltage poles to hook up wire to. For example, there might be 13.5-volt and 15-volt terminals on your nominal 12-volt transformer. If you're not sure of the proper wiring configuration, consult the manufacturer in regards to wire thickness, length and transformer size (Figure 2).

This article, the first of two parts, originally ran in Professional Deck Builder. The second part will address light fixtures and installation.

Jason Russell owns Dr. Decks, in Tacoma, Wash., and is featured in the television program "The Deck Doctor." He's been building custom decks for 25 years and specializes in custom heat modification of PVC decking and railing products, automation, and custom audio installation.

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POOL AND SPA NEWS
& JANDY

TOP 50

SERVICE

The Highest of Rankings

Our third annual Top 50 Service lineup once again shows the depth and breadth of this crucial industry segment.

We proudly introduce the third annual Top 50 Service roster.

This group employs 1,222 full-time service, maintenance and repair technicians who, in turn, serve 76,480 residential customers and 3,641 commercial accounts. In 2019, their labors proved fruitful, enabling them to generate \$126.69 million in revenue from their residential accounts and \$16.87 million from commercial.

These firms come in all types and business models, including service-only companies large and small, as well as service departments within pool building firms. Revenues range from \$150,000 to the \$16.5 million earned by our No. 1 company.

And, once again, Texas made a strong showing, with 16 of the Top 50 firms headquartered in the Lone Star State. This subgroup manages 26,267 accounts — 33% of the total from the Class of 2020.

This year's Top 50 proved itself to be strong in a number of disciplines — namely, our judging criteria of revenue, staff management, web presence, industry participation and community participation.

According to a survey of this group, whose results are found on the following pages, these companies didn't miss a step this year, despite the unprecedented times.

Turn the page to learn more.

2020 TOP 50 SERVICE

	Company	Headquarters	President/CEO	2019 Total Service Revenue	2019 Residential Service Revenue
1	Pool Troopers	Tampa, Fla.	Gary Crayton III	\$16,459,664	\$16,459,664
2	Keith Zars Pools	San Antonio, Texas	Keith Zars	\$15,541,551	\$11,578,313
3	Great Valley Pool Service	Frazer, Pa.	Tracy Bond	\$4,119,000	\$4,100,000
4	Hines Pool & Spa	Austin, Texas	Andy Hines	\$8,733,423	\$2,515,359
5	Gib-San Pool and Landscape Creations	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	Ed Gibbs	\$4,800,000	\$4,800,000
6	All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living	Orland Park, Ill.	Doug Mayhall	\$1,571,059	\$1,445,375
7	Pure Swim	Santa Clarita, Calif.	Rich Gallo	\$1,473,118	\$1,473,118
8	Swim Chem	Sacramento, Calif.	Jerry Wallace	\$3,818,697	\$3,622,751
9	Crystal Clear Pools and Spas	Austin, Texas	Jimmy Harvey	\$7,600,000	\$5,000,000
10	Ambiance Pool Service	Tucson, Ariz.	Michael J. Baker	\$2,600,000	\$2,550,000
11	Richards Total Backyard Solutions	Houston, Texas	JR and Julie Richard	\$261,033	\$261,033
12	Gohlke Pools	Denton, Texas	Matt Gohlke	\$4,701,658	\$3,559,692
13	Fronheiser Pools	Bally, Pa.	Ron and Adam Fronheiser	\$2,098,336	\$2,098,336
14	B&B Pools	Pompano Beach, Fla.	Bryan Banta	\$2,414,954	\$1,477,833
15	AquaBliss Pool Services	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	Ken Scott	\$685,000	\$375,500
16	Burton Pools & Spas	Fort Smith, Ark.	David Burton	\$3,508,435	\$2,069,978
17	Aqua Pool & Patio	East Windsor, Conn.	Michael Giannamore	\$2,477,500	\$2,467,500
18	Riverbend Sandler Pools	Plano, Texas	Charles Barnes	\$6,977,180	\$6,977,180
19	Patriot Pool and Spa	Austin, Texas	Hal Denbar	\$3,499,055	\$3,499,055
20	Poolman 2000	Phoenix, Ariz.	Waylon Bennett	\$11,594,325	\$6,200,017
21	Poolwerx Forest Lane	Dallas, Texas	Wayne Kamper, Service Manager	\$5,760,689	\$5,099,920
22	Pool and Spa POSEIDON	Longueuil, Quebec, Canada	Nicolas Guillotte	\$3,438,800	\$2,063,280
23	Robertson Pools	Coppell, Texas	Ron Robertson	\$3,681,582	\$3,681,582
24	Memphis Pool	Memphis, Tenn.	Mark Reed	\$3,065,000	\$2,400,000
25	Payan Pool Service	Santee, Calif.	Javier Payan	\$954,385	\$715,788
26	Morehead Pools	Shreveport, La.	Michael Moore II	\$2,282,870	\$2,139,282
27	Stewart Pools	Fort Worth, Texas	Aron Stewart	\$1,517,536	\$960,903
28	Ohio Pools & Spas	North Canton, Ohio	Amanda Annis	\$1,324,000	\$1,324,000
29	Spartan Pool & Patio	Norman, Okla.	Jordan Demeter and Sam Stroud	\$1,447,266	\$1,442,001
30	Goodall Pools & Spas	Camp Hill, Pa.	Nick Taylor	\$3,109,967	\$1,844,567
31	Nejame & Sons	Danbury, Conn.	Tom, Ed and Greg Nejame	\$3,218,760	\$3,057,822
32	National Pools of Roanoke	Roanoke, Va.	Mea Vaughan	\$2,800,000	\$1,120,000
33	Swimming Pool Services	Waukesha, Wisc.	David Thompson	\$1,414,692	\$1,414,692
34	Chlorine King Pool Service	Seminole, Fla.	Erik Taylor	\$478,600	\$475,000
35	Claffey Pools	Southlake, Texas	Charlie Claffey	\$1,753,739	\$1,753,739
36	Poolwerx Union Hills	Phoenix, Ariz.	Mark Howard	\$4,096,180	\$1,925,639
37	Poolwerx Redlands	Redlands, Calif.	Cal and Sharon Boothby	\$17,742,651	\$1,728,472
38	Unified Pool Solutions	Houston, Texas	Mark Uberecken	\$382,690	\$362,691
39	Platinum Pools	Houston, Texas	Scott Waldo	\$545,000	\$545,000
40	Heritage Pools	North Charleston, S.C.	Michael Gesmond	\$150,000	\$150,000
41	Splash Pool Service	Las Vegas, Nev.	Scott Thomas	\$2,147,000	\$2,147,000
42	Lucent Pools	Lewisville, Texas	Richard Ash and Justin Marshall	\$478,053	\$456,089
43	Regal Pools	Spring, Texas	Joshua Buzzell and Edwin Escobar	\$2,034,638	\$1,254,218
44	Clearly Poolman	Lewisville, Texas	John Saunders	\$2,224,170	\$1,759,490
45	Signature Pool & Patio	Norman, Okla.	Don and Robin Allen, Curtis McCarty, Mike Todd	\$256,000	\$254,000
46	Superior Pools of Southwest Florida	Port Charlotte, Fla.	Jon Krawczyk	\$3,153,211	\$1,136,406
47	Van Kirk & Sons Pools & Spas	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	Bobby and Tim Van Kirk	\$420,000	\$378,000
48	Poolwerx Beaches	Jacksonville, Fla.	Nicholas McAbee	\$345,000	\$245,000
49	Independently Dunn	Kenmore, Wash.	Matthew Dunn	\$275,000	\$197,000
50	Coral Sea Pools	Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.	Anthony Torchia	\$2,769,280	\$2,129,280

2019 Commercial Service Revenue	Residential Service Accounts	Commercial Service Accounts
\$-	14,594	0
\$24,751	7,871	13
\$19,000	1,603	4
\$3,274,162	1,304	772
\$-	1,500	0
\$125,684	1,282	108
\$-	252	0
\$-	4,063	0
\$2,600,000	797	164
\$50,000	360	2
\$4,111	108	1
\$187,352	687	7
\$-	2,364	0
\$937,120	639	127
\$309,500	167	41
\$385,927	1,954	87
\$10,000	800	2
\$-	7,603	0
\$-	886	0
\$1,394,836	6,064	156
\$660,769	850	30
\$1,375,520	1,420	420
\$-	446	0
\$665,000	1,681	196
\$238,597	573	52
\$197,108	1,132	113
\$190,226	327	17
\$-	127	0
\$5,265	180	2
\$217,000	100	20
\$96,562	1,230	18
\$1,680,000	1,502	997
\$-	2,500	0
\$3,600	170	1
\$-	946	0
\$1,857,895	515	220
\$14,179	679	13
\$-	158	0
\$-	816	0
\$-	284	0
\$-	1,178	0
\$18,865	126	2
\$-	380	0
\$103,932	1,940	16
\$2,000	115	0
\$-	504	0
\$42,000	-	0
\$100,000	135	20
\$78,000	1,068	20
\$-	500	0

Overcoming Obstacles

This year, the CEOs of our Top 50 Service companies were asked: **What was your company's biggest challenge this year, and how did you resolve it?**



1
Pool Troopers
GARY CRAYTON III

In 2019, we only got 40% of the pools sold back on service. We came up with a specific actionable plan to improve this and set a target of 70% for 2020. The plan included personal follow ups and free pool schools for new pool owners. To date we are at 62%.



4
Hines Pool & Spa
ANDY HINES

Finding new qualified staff has been very difficult. We first look internally at younger staff and provide training to accelerate their development. We also look for people from other parts of the country and those trained from other service-based industries.



2
Keith Zars Pools
KEITH ZARS

Our biggest challenge has been finding skilled labor. So we have re-energized our sign-on bonus and employee referral bonus programs. We've also retained a temp employment agency that will provide us with general and skilled labor on a temp-to-hire basis.



5
Gib-San Pool & Landscape Creations
ED GIBBS

When our retail store was forced to close due to the pandemic, we quickly created an e-commerce website in 7 days. Within the first month of operation our e-commerce site more than broke even and was well worth the investment.



3
Great Valley Pool Service
TRACY BOND

We created an open floor plan to combat teamwork issues and separations. Now, both service technicians and office personnel are in one, open area and technicians are able to communicate with office staff from the same room.



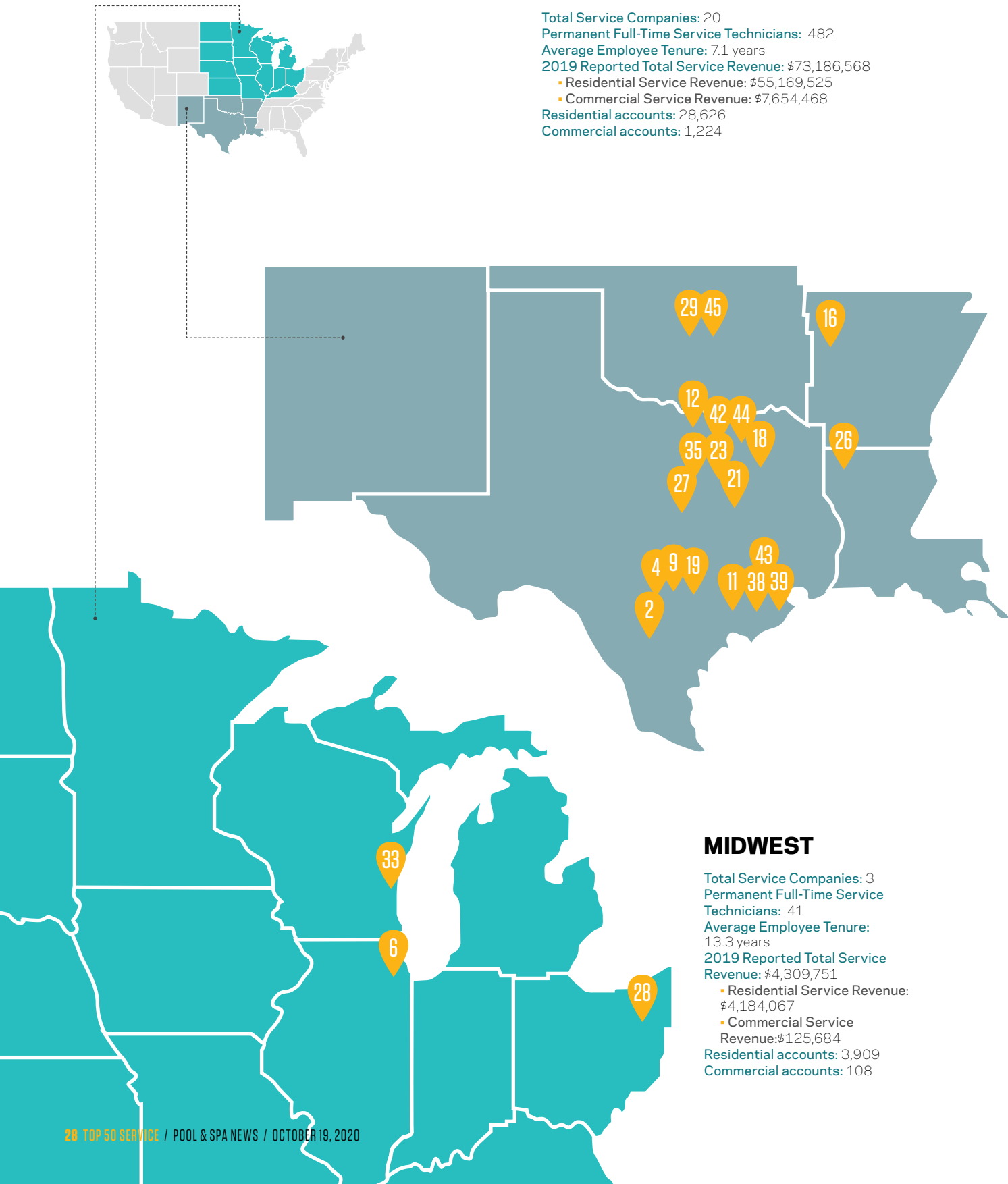
6
All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living
DOUG MAYHALL

COVID-19 has been, and still is, the biggest challenge of 2020. We developed safety protocols, where there was no precedent, found ways to provide for people to work remotely, and handled employees who became ill.

TOP 50 SERVICE by Region

SOUTHWEST

Total Service Companies: 20
 Permanent Full-Time Service Technicians: 482
 Average Employee Tenure: 7.1 years
 2019 Reported Total Service Revenue: \$73,186,568
 ■ Residential Service Revenue: \$55,169,525
 ■ Commercial Service Revenue: \$7,654,468
 Residential accounts: 28,626
 Commercial accounts: 1,224

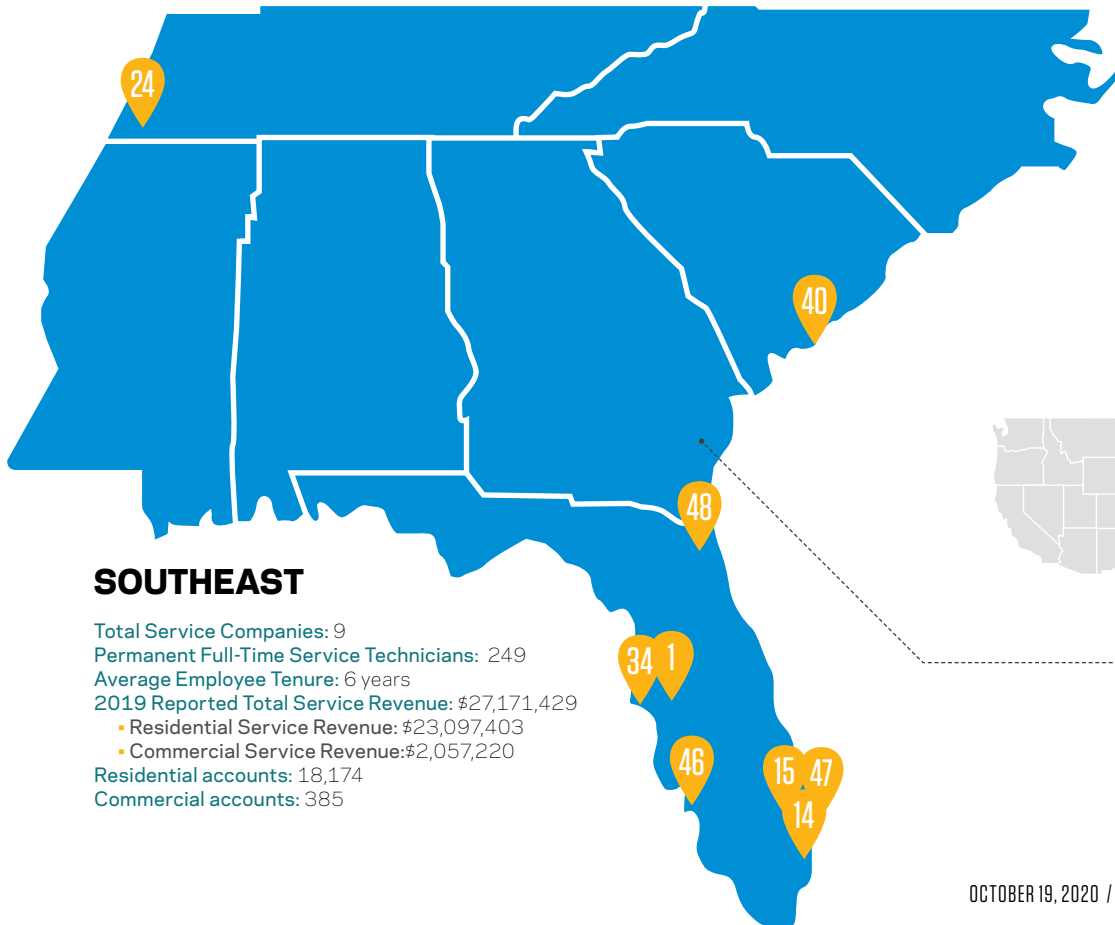


MIDWEST

Total Service Companies: 3
 Permanent Full-Time Service Technicians: 41
 Average Employee Tenure: 13.3 years
 2019 Reported Total Service Revenue: \$4,309,751
 ■ Residential Service Revenue: \$4,184,067
 ■ Commercial Service Revenue: \$125,684
 Residential accounts: 3,909
 Commercial accounts: 108

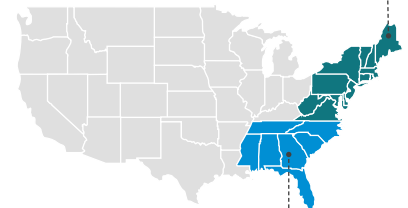
NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC

Total Service Companies: 9
 Permanent Full-Time Service Technicians: 164
 Average Employee Tenure: 10.9 years
 2019 Reported Total Service Revenue: \$28,831,643
 • Residential Service Revenue: \$23,680,785
 • Commercial Service Revenue: \$3,398,082
 Residential accounts: 11,019
 Commercial accounts: 1,461

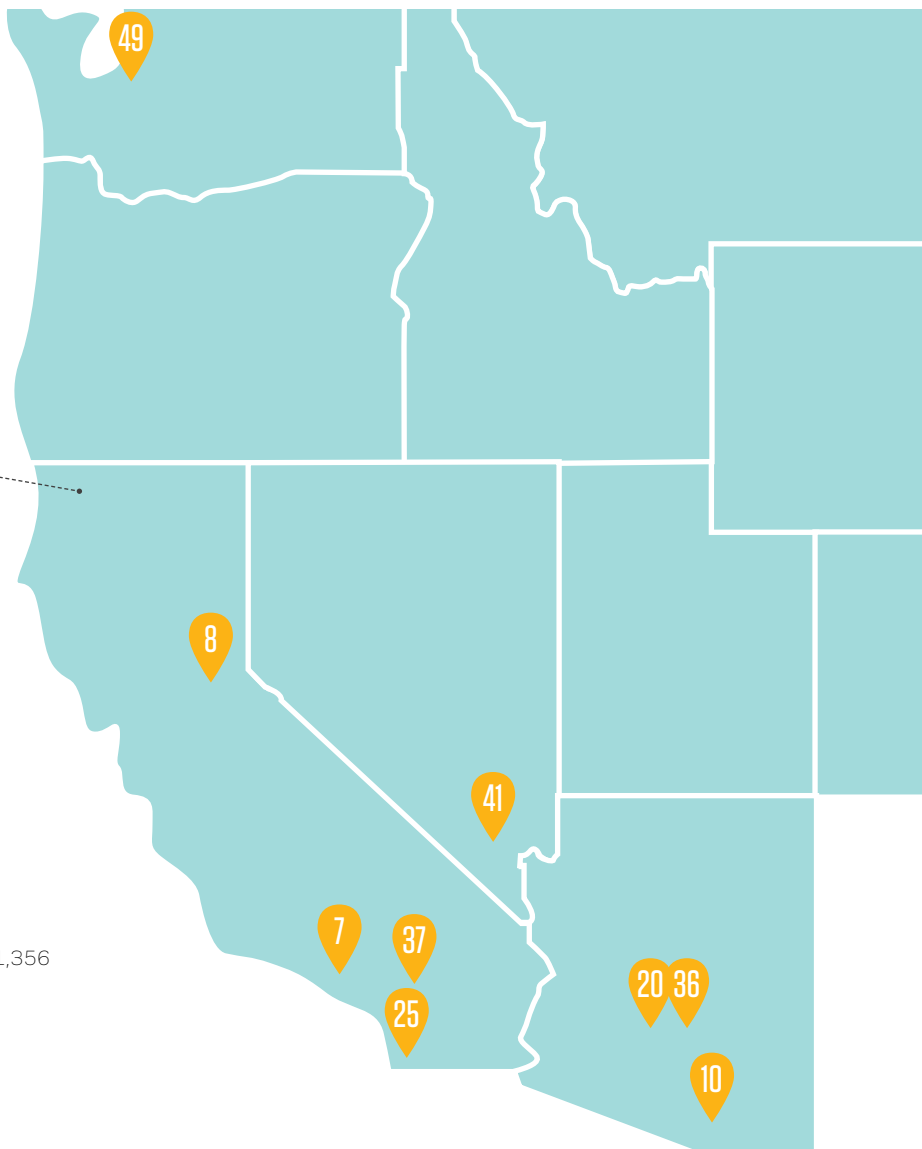
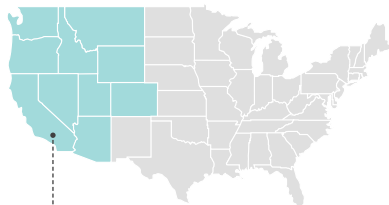


SOUTHEAST

Total Service Companies: 9
 Permanent Full-Time Service Technicians: 249
 Average Employee Tenure: 6 years
 2019 Reported Total Service Revenue: \$27,171,429
 • Residential Service Revenue: \$23,097,403
 • Commercial Service Revenue: \$2,057,220
 Residential accounts: 18,174
 Commercial accounts: 385



TOP 50 SERVICE by Region



WEST

Total Service Companies: 9
Permanent Full-Time Service Technicians: 286
Average Tenure: 6.84 years
2019 Reported Total Service Revenue: \$44,701,356
 • Residential Service Revenue: \$20,559,785
 • Commercial Service Revenue: \$3,633,507
Residential accounts: 14,752
Commercial accounts: 463



7

Pure Swim
RICH GALLO

The biggest problem was the amount of new business that came in January. California's AB-5 required all pool workers to be classified as employees. Having legitimate employees is the best decision I've ever made. They have my back and I have theirs.



8

Swim Chem
JERRY WALLACE

We resolved to improve our systems, chemical application system and totally re-routing our entire route system. These were all large undertakings that resulted in creating efficiencies for a shorthanded staff. I am not going to say it was/is easy.



9

Crystal Clear Pools and Spas
JIMMY HARVEY

The biggest problem was communication throughout all of the company's divisions. So we made the transition from using three softwares down to one universal company-wide cloud based software. It paid off HUGE with the onset of COVID.



10

Ambiance Pool Service & Supplies
MICHAEL J. BAKER

We bought a pool water recycling trailer. In the past, we got a lot of push back when we'd tell our customers that they have bad water and needed to drain their pools. We listened and came up with a solution. We have saved about 2 million gallons of water!



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TOP 10 Training

Top 50 applicants provided extensive information about their training programs, describing their in-house regimens, what outside instruction they utilize, and certifications earned by staff and management.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company
6	All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living
10	Ambiance Pool Service & Supplies
16	Burton Pools & Soas
13	Fronheiser Pools
5	Gib-San Pool & Landscape Creations
12	Gohlke Pools
3	Great Valley Pool Service
4	Hines Pool & Spa
21	Poolwerx Forest Lane
7	Pure Swim



11

Richard's Total Backyard Solutions
JULIE RICHARD

We gave weekly updates to clients who were simply waiting on service parts to ship from the factory. We understand the client's frustration. Staying in constant contact and providing updates allowed us to keep customers happy and satisfied.



13

Fronheiser Pools
RONALD FRONHEISER

We'd have trouble finding a certified HVAC technician to recharge heat pumps. So we attended Hayward's week-long training and this allowed us to certify three in-house technicians. This helped close a big hole in our service department.



12

Gohlke Pools
MATT GOHLKE

We created route supervisors to oversee several maintenance technicians each. They visit every pool each month and fill out a checklist to be sure the technicians are doing a good job. This has resulted in higher quality work and eliminated complaints.



14

B&B Pools
BRYAN BANTA

We successfully closed our office to my staff, upgraded technology to enable them to work from home and instituted safety procedures to comply with the strictest mandates so we would not be shuttered for noncompliance during the pandemic.

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15

AquaBliss Pool Services

KEN SCOTT

We made the conscious decision to not only meet, but exceed all of the insurance requirements on general liability, commercial auto and workers compensation. We utilized resources from within trade organizations to be able to secure the proper coverage.



16

Burton Pools & Spas

DAVID BURTON

Our biggest challenge is retaining and hiring qualified technicians. We are addressing the problem with creating a training center that will provide continued education.



17

Aqua Pool & Patio Service Corp.

MICHAEL GIANNAMORE

Due to COVID, we created policies to limit one person per vehicle, no outside staff allowed inside the building, masks required when in the yard, paid time off (2 weeks), furlough for any that wanted or needed to isolate and vehicle sanitizing requirements.



18

Riverbend Sandler Pools

CHARLES BARNES

The biggest challenge is keeping our maintenance department fully staffed. We've met this challenge through a combination of training, compensation structure and culture enrichment. We make sure our techs are well trained and feel that they are part of the team.

TOP 10 Total Revenue

Revenue comprises one of the judging categories. To measure like for like, we add each company's reported residential and commercial service revenues.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company	Residential + Commercial Service Revenue
1	Pool Troopers	\$16,459,664
2	Keith Zars Pools	\$11,603,064
9	Crystal Clear Pools and Spas	\$7,600,000
20	Poolman 2000	\$7,594,853
18	Riverbend Sandler Pools	\$6,977,180
4	Hines Pool & Spa	\$5,789,521
21	Poolwerx Forest Lane	\$5,760,689
5	Gib-San Pool & Landscape Creations	\$4,800,000
3	Great Valley Pool Service	\$4,119,000
36	Poolwerx Union Hills	\$3,783,534

TOP 10 Web Presence

Especially in these times, the internet continues to increase its role in marketing and informing the public. For this category, we looked at entrants' websites and social media accounts to gauge the level of information that's helpful for current and prospective service customers.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company	Web Address	Facebook Link
10	Ambiance Pool Service & Supplies	www.Tucson-Pools.com	facebook.com/TUCSONPOOLS/
34	Chlorine King Pool Service	www.chlorinekingpools.com	facebook.com/chlorinekingpools/
9	Crystal Clear Pools and Spas	poolrelief.com	facebook.com/crystalclearpoolrelief/
42	Lucent Pools	www.lucentpools.com	facebook.com/Lucentpools
19	Patriot Pool and Spa	www.patriotpoolandspa.com	facebook.com/patriotpoolandspa/
22	Pool & Spa POSEIDON	www.psposeidon.com/	facebook.com/psposeidon/
1	Pool Troopers	pooltroopers.com	facebook.com/PoolTroopers/
29	Spartan Pool & Patio	www.spartanpoolandpatio.com	facebook.com/Spartanpoolandpatio/
8	Swim Chem	www.swimchem.com, www.aquachloronline.com	facebook.com/Swim-Chem-Inc-163836144082/ facebook.com/Aqua-Chlor-by-Swim-Chem-230426573012/
33	Swimming Pool Services	swimmingpoolservices.com/	facebook.com/swimmingpoolserviceswi/



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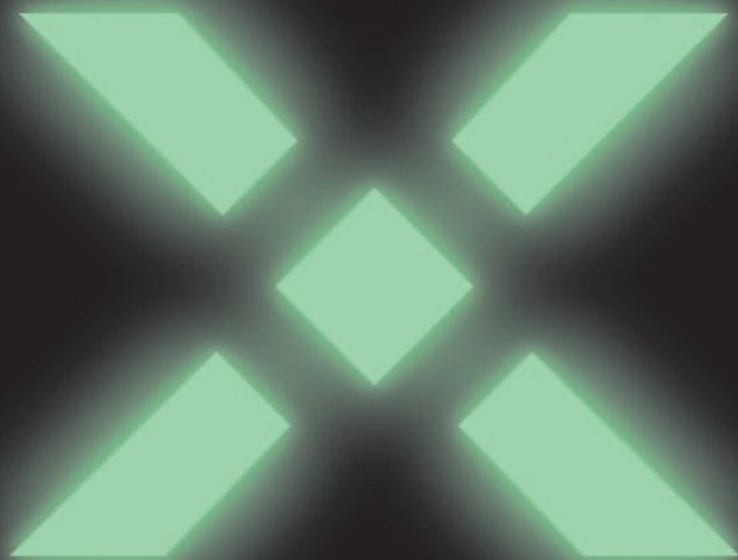
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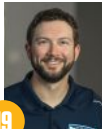


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19

Patriot Pool and Spa
HAL DENBAR

I don't think I realized how badly we needed full-time HR help until my co-founder, Laura Denbar, joined the team. As a result, our hiring, onboarding and benefit processes are so much healthier. General morale and cultural health of the team are far better, too.



20

Poolman 2000 LLC
WAYLON BENNETT

With more pools being converted to salt and the increased regulations on gas, we felt 2019 was as good a time as any to make the switch. We are now using other means to sanitize, and while cost has seen an increase, we've been able to see a number of benefits.



21

Poolwerx Forest Lane
WAYNE KAMPER

We implemented new software to improve and increase touch points with our clients. Increased client communication has proven to be a real game changer. Keeping clients more informed has led to greater client retention, increased average transaction value and revenue.



22

Pool & Spa POSEIDON
NICOLAS GUILLOTTE

The biggest challenge this year was to find employees that wanted to work in the pool business. We went to numerous job fairs, posted online on our website, got help from local job shop. We needed to be everywhere and find employees here and there in all those places.



23

Robertson Pools
RON ROBERTSON

We wanted to protect not only our employees but also our customers. We performed daily temperature checks and elevated sanitation protocols for all trucks, tools and customers' equipment. Customers who have fallen on hard times can also defer payments for service.



24

Memphis Pool
MARK REED

Our biggest challenge this year, and every year, is finding and retaining staff. We've seen some success with social media advertising, mainly Facebook. We can advertise to our followers and their friends, who are most likely familiar with the company culture.



25

Payan Pool Service
JAVIER PAYAN

Inefficiencies in our billing process was causing a lot of redundancies. We on-boarded a specialized billing software that centralizes the invoicing for all of our departments into one and enables our clients to receive and pay their invoices directly.



26

Morehead Pools
MICHAEL MOORE II

Our challenge has been deciding what our growth model looks like. Was it to grow actual work by marketing and increasing market share? Or was it a price increase and continue on at the same production rate? Ultimately it ended up being a mixture of both.

NEW

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10



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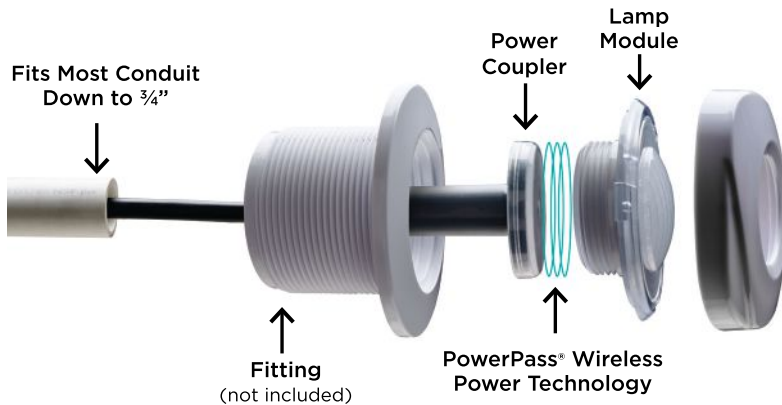
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TOP 10 Community Involvement

These companies have initiated the most ambitious, hands-on community service projects in the field.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company
15	AquaBliss Pool Services
14	B&B Pools
5	Gib-San Pool & Landscape Creations
12	Gohlke Pools
4	Hines Pool & Spa
2	Keith Zars Pools
24	Memphis Pool
39	Platinum Pools
11	Richard's Total Backyard Solutions
38	Unified Pool Solutions

43 of the Top 50 Service firms offer health benefits.

TOP 10 Residential Accounts

Residential clients accounted for the vast majority of accounts for these companies. These 10 serve the most.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company	Residential Service Accounts
1	Pool Troopers	14,594
2	Keith Zars Pools	7,871
18	Riverbend Sandler Pools	7,603
20	Poolman 2000 LLC	6,064
8	Swim Chem, Inc.	4,063
33	Swimming Pool Services	2,500
13	Fronheiser Pools	2,364
16	Burton Pools & Soas	1,954
44	Clearly Poolman	1,940
24	Memphis Pool	1,681

TOP 10 Commercial Accounts

These firms hold the most commercial service accounts of the bunch.

Overall Top 50 Ranking	Company	Commercial Service Accounts
32	National Pools of Roanoke	997
4	Hines Pool & Spa	772
22	Pool & Spa POSEIDON	420
36	Poolwerx Union Hills	220
24	Memphis Pool	196
9	Crystal Clear Pools and Spas	164
20	Poolman 2000	156
14	B&B Pools	127
26	Morehead Pools	113
6	All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living	108



27
Stewart Pools
ARON STEWART

We reevaluated our overall mission, vision and values. We realized that to move forward, we would need to stop WORKING for our clients and instead start PARTNERING with them. It's a subtle difference, but it makes all the difference in the world.



28
Ohio Pools & Spas
AMANDA ANNIS

Our biggest challenge was staffing. We did multiple surveys to get every employee's feedback and learned (to my surprise) that the staff felt we should hold them more accountable. Through monthly one-on-one meetings, we set better expectations.



29
Spartan Pool & Patio
JORDAN DEMETER

We have struggled to bring in the right people. So we partnered with a staffing agency for the first time. The results have been good. We eliminated a lot of our leadership teams' time spent interviewing candidates. We could focus on training and development instead.



30
Goodall Pools & Spas
NICK TAYLOR

It is a little more difficult than in past years to find good help. We have made a concentrated effort to get involved in our local technical schools. It's allowed us to introduce the pool and spa industry to young tradespeople and create interest.

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- Ideal for new and existing installations
- Works with all equipment brands
- Extends filter cycles by at least 4 times
- Dramatically reduces waste water



31

Nejame & Sons
ED NEJAME JR.

Our biggest challenge was getting our service techs to communicate with customers after the service was performed. We created a Pool Opening Care sheet that the techs fill out after a pool opening is checked off by the customer, which makes them accountable.



32

National Pools of Roanoke
MEA VAUGHAN

Our main goal is to protect our staff from COVID while continuing service operations. We have seen a significant increase on upgrades, heater installation, energy-efficient pumps, and salt generators to ensure equipment and water quality is top-notch.



33

Swimming Pool Services
DAVID THOMPSON

This year we implemented a new customer relationship management system. It helps keep us organized with managing our clients within our different departments, such as new construction, service, renovations, retail and hot tubs.



34

Chlorine King Pool Service
ERIK TAYLOR

Our biggest challenge this year is handling the growth we're getting. We've gotten 60-80 calls a day during this season. The key is organization, staying on top of a tight schedule, not taking on work way out of your service area along with hiring quality people.



35

Claffey Pools
CHARLIE CLAFFEY

In response to a greater demand for holiday services, we instituted full on-call staffing our service department over the Memorial Day and Fourth of July Holidays. We also instituted no-cap overtime plans for personnel in service, remodel, and construction.



36

Poolwerx Union Hills
MARK HOWARD

Attracting new blood into the industry still seems challenging. We have continued to train and provide incentives to our existing staff and have attended job fairs (pre-COVID). It helps to showcase the pool industry while changing common misconceptions.



37

Poolwerx Redlands
CAL BOOTHBY

Our staff has been concerned about their health along with economic uncertainty. We have communicated with our employees regularly and established safety measures to keep ourselves and our customers safe. We reassured them that their jobs are secure.



38

Unified Pool Solutions
MARK UBERECKEN

Our biggest challenge was handling our growth while experiencing a global pandemic. Recently, we added local chemical delivery which drove traffic to our website, increasing our web presence. We also added a web review solution for quality control.

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COVID-19 Survey



39

Platinum Pools

SCOTT WALDO

The biggest challenge was meeting our goal that a client is ours for the life of the pool and doesn't think about calling anyone else. We created a marketing plan to reach out to our completed pools/owners letting them know of our services.

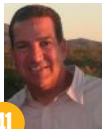


40

Heritage Pools, LLC

MICHAEL GESMOND

We were somewhat short-staffed in our management department and we were not providing the top-notch service our homeowners deserve. We met as a team and determined which departments needed more assistance and we sought out new team members.



41

Splash Pool Service

SCOTT THOMAS

Dealing with the uncertainty of COVID-19 and its impact on our company and staff has been challenging. We implemented safeguards to limit exposure for our employees and customers, and hired extra personnel in preparation of an outbreak.



42

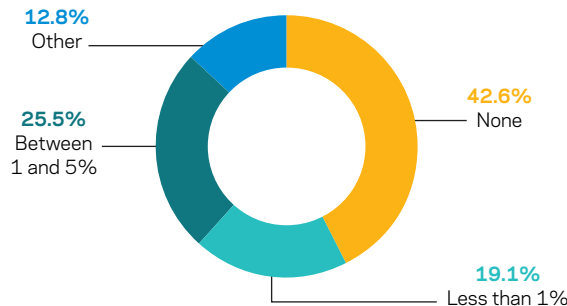
Lucent Pools, LLC

RICHARD ASH

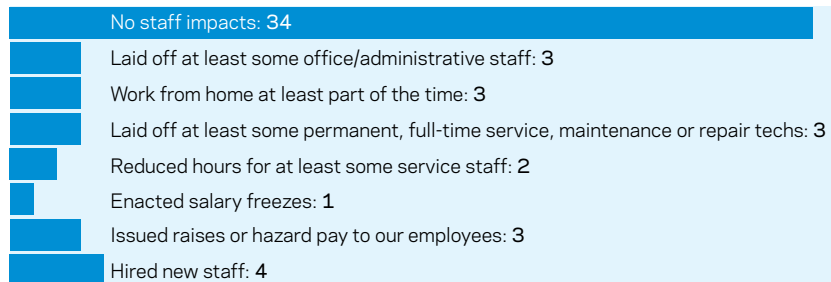
Many customers needed to cancel or reduce their services for financial reasons. We asked what would help and found that many just needed deferments on payment. It has been difficult but we utilized the small business loans and grants to keep us afloat.

We polled the Top 50 Service companies about how they fared in these unprecedented times. When stay-at-home orders first went into effect, more than half expected decreases, although slight. But the outcomes have been more positive: A full 81% reported an increase in revenues from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020. Even more astonishing: 22.6% experienced increases above 20%. Find out more below.

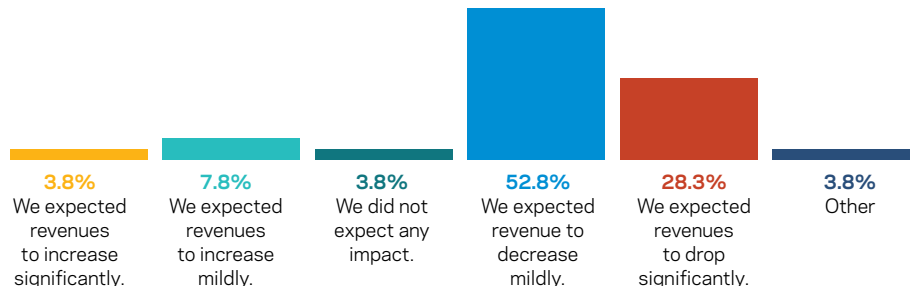
What percentage of clients did you lose as a result of the pandemic and economic strain?



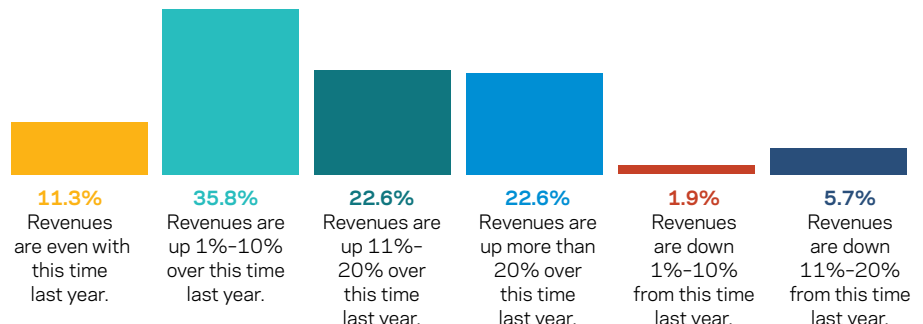
Which of these measures did you implement with your service staff?



When the stay-at-home orders first began, what impact did you expect for this year?



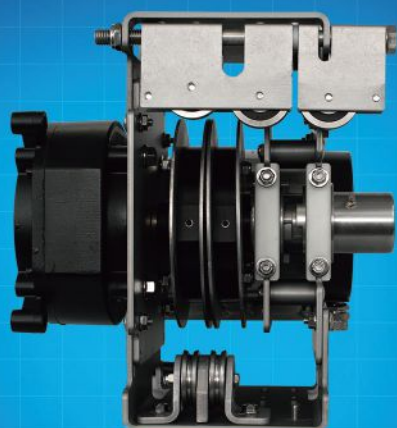
How is your service company or division doing this year compared with Sept. 2019?



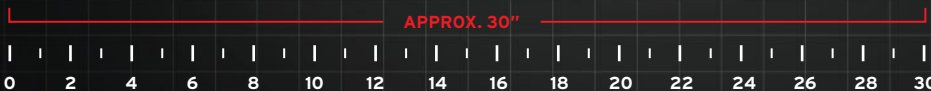
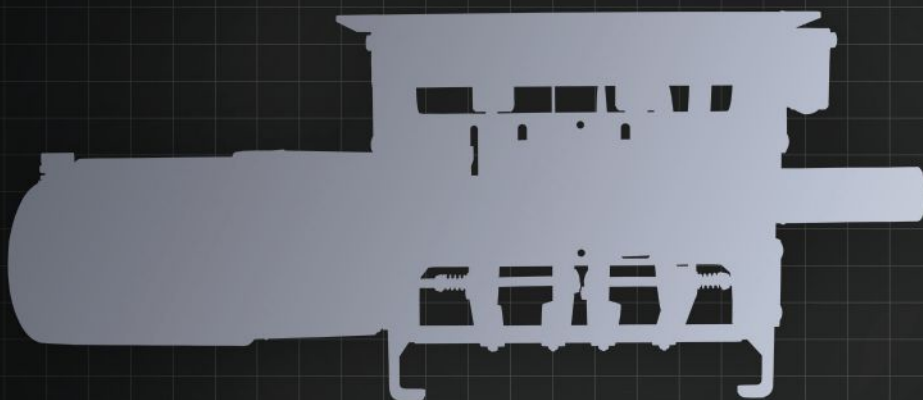
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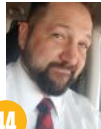




43

Regal Pools, LLC
JOSHUA BUZZELL

Covid was our biggest challenge. Managing our staff and clients to make sure everyone was safe and up to date with any changes, and our leadership team being on the same page and ensuring our staff was confident that what they were doing was safe and correct.



44

Clearly Poolman
JOHN SAUNDERS

We noticed a decline in the morale of our route technicians, and found that our GM had lost his drive to run the department. With a heavy heart, we parted ways. I interviewed several people, and found our new GM internally. Now morale is much improved.



45

Signature Pool & Patio
ROBIN ALLEN

One challenge was tracking and scheduling the routes. We totally redid the routes so we did not backtrack, and kept the guys on the same side of town in case help was needed on one of our pools. They could quickly lend a hand without driving for 30 minutes.



46

Superior Pools of Southwest Florida
JON KRAWCZYK

Our biggest challenge/concern is to keep not only our clients safe, but to insure that our staff is also protected and provided with the proper PPE to insure we are following the recommended CDC guidelines.



47

Van Kirk & Sons Pools & Spas
BOBBY VAN KIRK

The thought of being at home for a considerable amount of time really influenced potential customers to obtain more information about the services we can provide.



48

Poolwerx Beaches
NICHOLAS MCABEE

Our biggest challenge has been client retention during the pandemic. We had many customers fall on hard times. But because of the PPP loan, we were able to offer deferred payment plans and, for some, provide a free month or two of maintenance.



49

Independently Dunn, LLC
MATTHEW DUNN

By leasing a warehouse, we are able to keep our pool business completely separate from our lives. We purchased a blue Sprinter Van that seems to turn heads. We also better branded ourselves by purchasing new t-shirts.



50

Coral Sea Pools
ANTHONY TORCHIA

Finding people who just want to work and learn has proven to be a better experience than trying to find already experienced pool pros who can have a bad attitude at a new company. This will continue to be one of the hardest problems our industry faces.

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A Preview of the **Virtual** 2020 PSP/Deck Expo

The national trade show for pool, spa, deck professionals moves into uncharted territory

BY LINDA G. GREEN

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. So it is that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Pool | Spa | Patio/Deck Expo has morphed from an in-person show to a virtual event occurring Nov. 11-13, 2020.

Originally slated for Las Vegas, the event had been fine-tuned, with special safety procedures for attendees and show floor/seminar spaces falling into

place. But as the health crisis deepened, it became clear that in-person trade shows weren't going to be possible at this time.

So the 2020 PSP/Deck Expo now will be occurring online. The format may be different from in-person shows, but there's still an emphasis on products, education and networking. Organizers also note that this year's PSP Expo is being held in



collaboration with DeckExpo — hence the “new” name. Such co-locating of shows acknowledges the way backyard environments can encompass elements such as pools, spas, outdoor kitchens, decking and more.

“This will be the kick-off to the 2021 season,” says Ray Giovine, group director for Informa Markets, which organized the show. “There is such strong momentum in the industry now — and this virtual edition will carry us through next year.”

The show will run from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (EST) daily. Registration opened in late September, and is complimentary for those coming in for the core education and virtual Expo. There will be a \$199 fee for the GENESIS/PHTA seminars.

While it’s too soon to compare attendance and exhibitor numbers for this year’s virtual event vs. last year’s in-person show, Giovine suggests there will be several thousand visitors and 80-plus exhibitors at the 2020 Expo. “Everybody’s

100
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A Warm Welcome

Right about now, you may be wondering if there will be a welcome party. After all, each year, the much-anticipated event kicks off the Expo. It provides a space for attendees to unwind and catch up with industry friends from around the country — and to meet other industry professionals.

Fear not: There may

not be an in-person party, but Master Pools Guild is offering a fun way to kick off the show nonetheless. Normally, MPG hosts a members-only cocktail hour on the first day — this year, the event will be virtual and MPG is opening it up to all show attendees. Calling it the “Master Pools Guild Make a Splash Reception,” it’s scheduled

for the first day of the show, Wednesday, Nov. 11, at its usual time, 4 to 5 p.m. (EST).

“Our goal is to toast to the first day and help attendees renew old friendships, make a few new ones, and have a little fun in the process,” says Teri Wiltshire, CMP, special projects manager at MPG.

Those wanting to attend

the MPG reception can sign up online on the Expo’s main registration form.

Details such as maximum number of attendees allowed and the registration cut-off date were not available at press time. Interested people are encouraged to register early and check back for details on the Expo site (poolspapatio.com).

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2020 Int'l Pool Spa Patio Expo **Virtual** Conference Schedule

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

10:00-11:15 a.m. ET

Retail Power Panel (Live Session)

Moderator: Matt Gohlke (Gohlke Pools)
Panel: Mallory Bjekich-Wachowski (DesRochers Backyard Pools and Spas), Jane Merritt (Anchor Pools & Spas Inc.)
General Business/Special Events — Retail
All Levels

4:00 p.m. ET

Master Pools Guild Make a Splash Reception

Master Pools Guild
Special Events

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. ET

Virtual Expo Hall

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

10:00-11:15 a.m. ET

Builder Power Panel (Live Session)

Moderator: Steve Barnes (AquaStar Pool Products)
Panel: Buzz Ghiz (Self-Employed), Charlie Claffey (Claffey Pools), Scott Cohen (The Green Scene)
General Business/Special Events — Builder
All Levels

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. ET

Virtual Expo Hall

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

10:00-11:15 a.m. ET

Service Power Panel (Live Session)

Moderator: Javier Payan (Payan Pools)
Panel: Julie Kazdin Boucher (Kazdin Pools), Mitch Donald (Superior Pool Service), Steve DeCook (Ekonomy Pool Service), Dan Lenz (All Seasons Pools & Spas, Inc.)
General Business/Special Events — Service
All Levels

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. ET

Virtual Expo Hall

PRE-RECORDED/ON DEMAND SESSIONS

Cash Flow and Cash Flow Budgeting

Tom Grandy (Grandy & Associates)
General Business
All Levels

B208: 10-Ways to Crush the Competition

Brian Van Bower (Aquatic Consultants, Inc.)
GENESIS
GENESIS-General Business
Beginner

C248: The Five Most Common Pool Tile issues and How to Avoid Them

Greg Andrews (National Tile and Stone Authority, Inc.)
GENESIS
GENESIS-Builder
Intermediate

D423: Outdoor Living — How to Create Beautiful and Comfortable Outdoor Rooms

Kate Wiseman (Sage Outdoor Designs)
GENESIS
GENESIS- Outdoor Living
Intermediate

How to Prepare for Federal Pool Pump Regulations That Will Impact Your Business and Boost Sales

Jeff Farlow (Pentair Aquatic Systems), Scott Petty (Hayward Pool Products)
PHTA
PHTA University-Service
All Levels

Analysis and Understanding of Source Water

Terry Arko (Hasa Chemical), James W. Egan, Jr. (LaMotte Company)
PHTA
PHTA University-Service
All Levels

Winning Customer Satisfaction — How to Win Your Clients' Hearts, Minds and Wallets

Brett Abbott (Pool Builders)
General Business
All Levels

The 10 Keys to Retail Store Success!

Matthew Gray
Retail

Millennial Matters: Attracting a New Generation of Talent

Reid Schindler (Schindler Design Co.), Rick Harvey (Biolab Inc./KIK Custom Products), Tyler Rasmussen (Pool Chasers Podcast)
PHTA
PHTA-General Business

Standards, Codes, and Ordinances; A Builder's Guide to Proper Implementation

Terry Brannon
GENESIS
GENESIS- Engineering
All Levels

E221: Advanced Water Purification Technologies

Cameron Tapp (ClearWater Tech - Pentair), Tim Chew (ClearWater Tech - Pentair)
GENESIS
GENESIS-Service
Intermediate

S242: Sanitation Controls and Monitoring

Alvaro G. Mendoza (Commercial Energy Specialists)
GENESIS
GENESIS- Service
Intermediate

Bouncing Forward: Ideas to Remain Afloat and Profitable

Anne Obarski
Retail

Finding Leaks — Turn Headaches into Profits

Lance Anderson (Anderson Manufacturing Company Inc.), Brad Madison (Anderson Manufacturing Company Inc.)
Service
All Levels

C424: Waterproofing

Ken Milbery (Lunada Bay Tile)
GENESIS
Genesis-Builder
Advanced

Mounting Secure Deck Ledgers

Mike Guertin
Deck

Adding Leak Detection To Your Services

Darren Merlob
Service

Water Balance Basics — The LSI is Your Friend!

Wayne Ivusich (Taylor Technologies, Inc.)
Service
Beginner, Intermediate

Managing Effectively Through Effective Leadership

Mario Rossetti
General Business

Secrets to Retail Merchandising: Beating the Big Box Stores

Mario Rossetti
Retail

Design the Ultimate Staycation

Mike Farley
Builder

The Deadly Dozen Company — Crushing Killers

Brett Abbott (Pool Builders)
General Business

cautiously optimistic,” he notes. “The industry is having a banner year and we’ll want to provide a platform to meet, talk, and present services and products.”

He also pointed out a benefit not typically seen at traditional shows: The educational content will be available for registered attendees during and after the show until Dec. 13. Organizers stress that to be able to access educational content after the Expo ends, be sure to register, regardless of how much time you plan to spend at the virtual show. (For more on classes, see “Virtual Education”)

How it works

For folks who’ve never been to a virtual show — and, let’s face it, that’s most of us — certain questions arise, such as: Will there be a show floor with booths, and can I wander around looking at them? Can I “visit” a booth and talk with someone about products? Can I set up meetings with manufacturers?

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Virtual Education

Education has always been a big part of the Expo and this year is no exception. The format — a mix of live and on-demand sessions — may be different, but the goal of providing quality educational sessions for pool and spa professionals is as strong as ever.

"The classes were carefully selected to be conveniently delivered," says Brandi McElhaney, CMP, senior conference manager at Informa. "Not only are the sessions timely for the industry, but an attendee can watch at their leisure

starting on Wednesday, November 11."

So it is that each day of the 2020 Expo will kick off with a live Power Panel, running from 10 to 11:15 a.m. (EST). The discussions and sharing of insights by industry professionals ensure that the sessions will be a show favorite.

The Power Panels will have a live Q&A; the on-demand sessions will still have a Q&A, just a bit modified, McElhaney notes. She explains that class attendees will turn in their questions, which will be forwarded to the speaker for him or her to answer.

The Retail Power Panel is up first on Nov. 11. The

moderator will be Matt Gohlke of Gohlke Pools. Panelists are Mallory Bjekich-Wachowski, Des-Rochers Backyard Pools and Spas; Jane Merritt, Anchor Pools & Spas Inc.

The Builder Power Panel is next on Nov. 12. Moderator is Steve Barnes of AquaStar Pool Products. Panelists are Charlie Claffey of Claffey Pools; Scott Cohen, The Green Scene.

The Service Power Panel is set for Nov. 13. Moderator is Javier Payan of Payan Pools. Panelists are Julie Kazdin Boucher, Kazdin Pools; Mitch Donald, Superior Pool Service; Steve DeCook, E-Konomy Pool Service Inc.; Dan Lenz, All Seasons Pools &

Spas Inc.

As for the general Expo education slate, it's expected to be more streamlined this year. Normally, there might well be 45 classes or so; this year there will be around 25. But unlike a typical in-person show, the educational content for this virtual event will be available for registered attendees until Dec. 13. To take advantage of the longer availability of classes, you must have registered for the Expo.

When it comes to instructors, it wasn't difficult to find people willing to lead virtual classes, says McElhaney. True, some speakers had never taught

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this way, but they were willing to adapt to the format. In fact, she said some were “super-adaptable,” with only one or two potential presenters saying “no” to learning the technology required to lead a virtual class.

It’s important to note that live questioning of the speakers will not be possible because the classes will be pre-recorded.

A buzz always builds up around certain classes at the Expo, and this year is no exception. While the aforementioned Power Panels are expected to be very popular, a number of sessions on the schedule are sure

to draw a lot of students, too. At the time McElhaney spoke with PSN, registration was just under way, so it wasn’t easy to name a lot of classes sure to pack ‘em in, so to speak. But likely favorites include the GENESIS classes, as well as sessions covering business issues, water balance and leak detection. Other expected crowd-pleasers she mentioned were “Designing the Ultimate Staycation,” led by Mike Farley, and PHTA’s panel on how to attract a new generation of talent.

When you get right down to it, the array of learning opportunities and flexibility to

plan each day at this virtual trade show make this experience not only unique, but even more user friendly. “An attendee can join in the morning, watch a live Power Panel, then view some sessions, ask questions, perhaps take a meeting with a vendor — and they’ll still have the rest of their day,” McElhaney observes.

“We know our attendees and exhibitors are busy,” she adds, “and this format allows a great blend of absorbing the education and making new contacts while still keeping their commitments to their family, pets, home life, and more.”

where the priority is networking and matchmaking,” Giovine says, adding that the process works thusly: When an attendee registers, they’ll answer a few questions about the sector they’re in, or the kinds of products they’re looking for. Based on that, show management will set up meetings with exhibitors who can handle the requests of visitors.

“Attendees can come in having meetings that are already set, similar to a hosted buyer program,” he continues. “Via this AI-powered matchmaking, attendees can spend more time learning and connecting. Or they can poke around the virtual expo hall and request drop-in meetings with exhibitors.”

A natural question is: How will manufacturers exhibit virtually? Each will have a booth setup, which Giovine describes as looking like a booth rendering, to create more of an expo hall experience. Exhibitors can showcase a wide arrangement of their technology and products a number of ways — by uploading PDFs, videos,

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brochures or catalogs, along with photos of their technology being used.

Of course, attendees can do more than just look at virtual booths. The booths will be staffed and visitors' questions can be answered. Qualified buyers can be connected with manufacturers via matchmaking. For their part, exhibitors will be able to sort buyers by multiple demographics such as sector, the product they're seeking, residential vs. commercial, and more.

"If all participants can walk away with something and know their time away from 'the office' was worthwhile, we'll consider that a huge success," Giovine says.

And for those hoping to see new products and technology at the show, yes, there also will be a Product Showcase in the virtual expo hall.

Looking ahead, what can we expect in 2021? "We'll return to in-person next year, when we'll be in Dallas," Giovine says. "But we are expecting a hybrid model, where it's a mix of in-person and virtual. What that looks like exactly, we're not sure yet."

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The virtual D204: 3D Modelling + Presentation Graphics class was great. Jason was excellent and really insightful. I'm looking forward to taking all of the GENESIS courses and getting SWD certified.

Scott Miller, Cristallo Pool/Backyard
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