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A New Year's Wish



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

I'm ashamed to admit it, but I was raised in a culture that is largely ignorant and dismissive — even disparaging — towards mental illnesses and those who suffer from them. As such, I was very narrow-minded, and skeptical about whether talk therapy really worked. It wasn't until I took a few psychology classes in college and met my husband, who worked in social services, that my attitude began to change.

I don't think I'm alone in my experience. A research paper on stigma published in 2016 by EMBO, a peer-reviewed scientific journal, stated that there is “no country, society, or culture where those suffering from a mental illness had the same societal value as people without mental illnesses.”

However, things have come a long way in terms of research and knowledge about the causes and treatment of mental illnesses in the last few decades, and this has helped to destigmatize certain conditions. (For example, it's common knowledge now that imbalances in brain chemistry can be a contributing cause of depression, and that taking a holistic approach of medication and talk therapy can be highly effective.) In addition, high-profile deaths due to mental health crises in the past few years have served to bring painful awareness to the forefront.

These are all steps in the right direction. No one doubts the importance of mental health anymore, particular-

ly now after the isolating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the National Institute of Mental Health stated that nearly one in five U.S. adults lives with a mental illness, and only about half of those receive treatment. I can only imagine how those numbers have ballooned post-pandemic.

But this is a business publication. Why does this matter?

In the workplace, business leaders carry enormous stress and responsibility, which can profoundly affect mental health. They also set the tone and example. Showing understanding and compassion to yourself by seeking care — whether that comes in the form of taking a mental health day, talking to a doctor or therapist, etc. — and extending that same grace to your employees can help you work out a better infrastructure within your company to be able to deal with these issues in a positive and proactive way.

The more people can be accepting of mental health issues in the workplace, the more you will be able to get ahead of it. Recognize it, address it, and help the individual get help sooner. This is not only good for business but it's good for humankind.

This is my wish for 2023. Happy New Year!


jmcclain@zondahome.com

PHTA Presents First Annual Scholarship, Names 2022 Award Recipients

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance presented an inaugural scholarship and named its award winners for 2022.

The 2022 Greg Garrett Scholarship Award went to Kelli Clancy (pictured left), owner of Legacy Pool & Spa in Carmichael, Calif. The \$5,000 prize, named after the late materials/chemistry expert and instructor, helps PHTA member builders or service professionals defray the cost of continuing education. Clancy earned the scholarship due to her time helping others in the industry to expand their knowledge. In 2020, she co-founded Pool Girl Pro Industry

Trainings, which hosts educational training and networking opportunities for women in the pool/spa industry.

Other awards included Builder of the Year, which sent to Kyle Chaikin of Chaikin Ultimate Pools in Deer Park, N.Y. “He has spent countless hours teaching classes, raising awareness of drowning prevention, and sharing advice on everything from construction techniques to dealing with supply chain issues,” PHTA said.

John Citta of Claffey Pools in Southlake, Texas, was recognized as Service Professional of the Year. Known

as a leader in the workplace, Citta organized the company’s continuing education committee and coordinated Claffey’s effort to help more than 800 clients recover from the freeze of 2021.

The Retailer of the Year honor went to Dustin Lockwood of Bontrager Pools in Elkhart, Ind. “One of Lockwood’s best qualities is his ability to build strong and lasting relationships with customers, employees and peers, making him a valued leader and friend,” PHTA said.

Nathan Coelho of Master Spas was named Volunteer of the Year (pictured right). He serves as Engineering Committee Chair for the International Hot Tub Association, and has helped develop or update several standards. He leads the PHTA/IHTA Portable Spa Coalition Working Group, which is working to develop federal regulations for the U.S. Department of Energy.

Caley Gibbs of Toronto-based Gib-San Pool and Landscape Creations was recognized as Young Professional of the Year (see profile in Dec. 19, 2022 issue).



Construction Material Prices Decrease in November

Construction input prices declined 0.9% in November compared with the previous month, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Producer Price Index.

On a year-over-year basis, construction input prices were 11.9% higher in November. Compared with pre-pandemic February 2020 levels, input prices were 40% higher in November 2022.

“The decline in wholesale prices for many construction inputs is generally positive news,” said Associated Builders and Contractors chief economist Anirban Basu. “Increasingly, we are receiving news that construction input inflation has peaked as supply chains continue to normalize despite a range of geopolitical stressors.”

According *(continued on page 12)*

PHOTOS COURTESY PHTA

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Amy Lemieux
Pleatco Perfect PoolGal 2022
Florida

Fred Goss
Pleatco Perfect PoolGuy 2022
South Carolina



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(continued from page 10) to ABC's Construction Confidence Index, contractors are expecting growth in sales and employment levels over the next six months. Additionally, Basu said Producer Price Index "will do little to curb that optimism."

"Prices for various services grew faster than expected, a reflection of a still very strong labor market associated with substantial compensation growth," Basu said. "Therefore, while supply chains may be improving, helping moderate the price of physi-

cal inputs, contractors will continue to face elevated and rising human capital costs."

New York Passes New Hot Tub Law

New York Governor Kathy Hochul signed a bill that allows the use of ASTM 1346-compliant safety covers to meet the state's barrier requirements on spas and hot tubs.

This overturns a more stringent requirement that applied even to portable hot tubs. The new law also aligns with the International Swimming Pool and Spa Code.

"This update to New York law ensures that the state will now harmonize with the ISPSC and other state codes on the issue of spa cover requirements," said Nathan Coelho, chair of the International Hot Tub Association Engineering Committee and vice president of engineering at Master Spas. "This is a significant win for spa owners and the industry."

The law went into effect immediately upon its signing November 23, 2022.

Leslie's Reports Record Results for 2022

National pool/spa retailer Leslie's reported a record 2022.

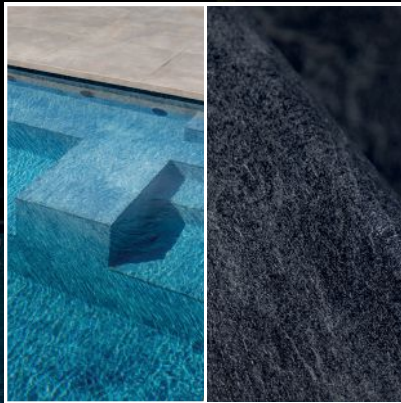
For the fiscal year, which ended in September, sales increased \$219.2 million, or 16.3%, to \$1,562.1 million. This compares with \$1,342.9 million the previous year. Gross profit rose \$78.5 million, or 13.2%, to \$673.7 million, compared to \$595.2 million in 2021. Gross margin was 43.1% compared to 44.3% the year before. The company attributed the decrease in gross margin to business mix.

Net income grew 25.6% compared to 2021. The company projects fiscal 2023 sales of \$1,560 to \$1,640 million.

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Heritage Acquires Minnesota Distributor

Heritage Pool Supply Group has acquired Guardian Distribution.

Based in Rogers, Minn., Guardian was founded in 2009 by Bill Shuherk. It services the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul market.

Shuherk will remain with the company, managing the location.

This gives Heritage a second location in that market. "We are pleased to welcome Bill and his entire team to the Heritage family," said the

company's president, Matt McDermott.

With the acquisition, Heritage now manages 17 distinct local brands over more than 100 locations in 29 states. Based in McKinney, Texas, Heritage was founded in 2021.

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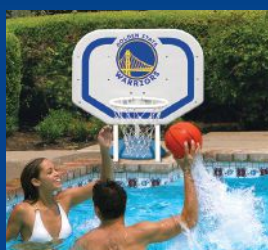
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SPS PoolCare Expands in SW Florida

SPS PoolCare, the pool-service consolidator previously known as Smart Pool Services, has made another acquisition in Southwest Florida.

The company acquired Groves Swimming Pool Service, a maintenance and repair firm in Naples, Fla.

This represents SPS PoolCare's fifth acquisition in Florida, and its 24th over all.

Groves Swimming Pool Service was founded more than 35 years ago. SPS PoolCare originated in 2021.

Pinch-A-Penny Expands in Texas and Florida

Retailer franchiser Pinch-A-Penny recently added two new franchisees.

In December, the company opened its first store in Austin, Texas. It is owned by Austin resident Joe Pruett, a certified public accountant who has held several CFO.

The retailer also opened a new store in Punta Gorda, Fla., outside of Port Charlotte. It is owned by Deep Creek resident Michael Doerr, who has 34 years' experience in telecommunications operations management.

Pinch A Penny Pool Patio and Spa recently was named as one of the Most Profitable Franchises and Innovative Franchises by *Franchise Business Review*. Founded in 1975, Pinch-A-Penny now holds almost 270 locations in the Southeast and Texas.

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The Quick Learners

The latest Pleatco Perfect Pool Gal and Perfect Pool Guy entered the industry later than others, but quickly made their impact.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



Every year, manufacturer Pleatco honors pool/spa service professionals who have been nominated and judged to be at the top of their game — the Pleatco Perfect Pool Guy and Perfect Pool Gal.

This year, the company honored two individuals who joined the industry after making career changes. Both have progressed through the trade quickly, not only capitalizing on skill sets gained from previous jobs, but also making the most of their newfound love for the industry and its products.

Perfect Pool Gal Amy Marie Lemieux and Perfect Pool Guy Fred Goss were honored at a ceremony held at the 2022 International Pool | Spa | Patio/Deck Expo in Las Vegas.

AMY MARIE LEMIEUX
Owner
Patchouli Pools
Englewood, Fla.

A relative newcomer to the pool/spa industry, Amy Marie Lemieux has quickly made her mark.

Originally from Ohio, she joined

the industry after working in several other trades — many of them male-dominated. In one of her first jobs, she washed semi trucks for her stepfather's company. She has worked in auto parts stores, on farms, at state parks, where she could change toilets, hand dryers and other machinery. She also has cleaned houses.

Most of these jobs had one thing in common — they kept Lemieux outdoors. So when she and her husband moved back to Florida, after having to leave during the Great Recession, it seemed pools were the perfect fit for a new career.

"I wanted to be outside again," she says. "So I thought pools are the best thing in Florida — everyone has one, they're everywhere, and it's all year long."

Before starting her own company in early 2022, she worked for two other firms. It's not often that you come across a somewhat diminutive, female, 40-something rookie service tech, so she had to overcome some reservations to land her first job.

"I had to convince them that I was worth taking a shot on and that I would figure it all out," Lemieux says. "I had to convince them that I could lift the 40 pounds of salt, the 50-pound bicarb bag — that I could hold my own. Then they took a chance on me."

She mastered the job in quick order. She did research and took any and all educational opportunities available in the industry. Within a few years, she

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was training newcomers for her employer. She developed her own training program in that capacity.

"When I worked in North Carolina for a park, I was an environmental educator for small children in some park programs," she says. "I liked teaching, and I learned that when you teach, you learn more yourself and it solidifies the knowledge that you do have even more."

As a trainer and well-regarded employee, Lemieux advocated for other female job candidates, assuring her employer that she would train them to help get them started.

"When I talk to women, I tell them that if they clean houses, they can clean pools — and they might like it better," she says.

Now with her own company, she is starting slowly, reporting about 10 accounts in November.

"I believe in starting off where you want to end up," she says. "So it's just gaining the correct accounts instead of just tackling anything and everything, and not ending up where you want to be. I've researched it and realized the best way to do it is to take the accounts that fit your core values and move forward that way."

She plans to remain a single-person operation for the time being, maintaining a focus on service and maintenance. As one of her specialties, she plans to do start-ups for local builders.

"I just love pools, and I love the pool industry," she says. "I love all the educational opportunities. I wonder constantly, are other industries like this? Do they have all these resources, are all these people this great in other industries? I hope so, because the pool industry has just been open-armed and welcoming for me."

FRED GOSS

**Lead Service Technician
Heritage Pools
North Charleston, S.C.**

Pleatco's Perfect Pool Guy also entered the pool/spa industry as part of a career change. But it wasn't his first time here.

He actually began as a teenager in northwest Indiana, cleaning pools for the father of Heritage Pools' current owner, Michael Gesmond. He mostly did pool openings and closings, along with liner replacements, while attending high school with the younger Gesmond.

Eventually Goss left and gained experienced in a number of fields. He worked in a casino for several years and ran a pawn shop. In his last position before relocating, he worked in a cardboard-box factory.

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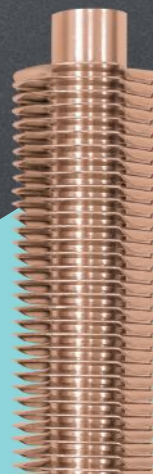


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All this time, he and the younger Gesmond remained friends. So, when Goss and his wife decided to move to South Carolina three years ago, Gesmond offered him a job. Goss could decide whether this would be a long-term career change or just help transition his family through the relocation.

"I fell in love with pools all over again, and they loved me, so I've stayed on and just continued to progress and work through the company," he says.

From his previous jobs, he had gained experience working in consumer-facing capacities or on production lines, for companies large and small. Those skills served him well here. And he appreciated the things that were different from previous positions.

"Being outside and working with

my hands and [gaining] a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day has been a very nice change," he says.

Goss began his second pool-industry go-round in maintenance, cleaning the pools. He has since progressed into service, performing repairs and other more involved tasks.

When the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in substantial turnover at Heritage, Goss had to learn quickly to help fill in the gaps. As a result, his progression through the company was sped up.

Despite his previous industry exposure, he still had a lot to learn upon re-entering. "The industry has definitely elevated quite a bit from 20 years ago," he says. "The technology obviously is the big one."

He learned quickly, taking advantage of any industry training programs

his employers would afford him.

"In the file [my company] submitted for my nomination, they joke and call me the Manual King," Goss says. "It's because I had to learn so much, so quick, and didn't really have someone to reach out to. If I was repairing or installing anything, I just downloaded the manual and read it. I still do it. Anything new I touch, basically, I just read the manual. It tells you everything you need to know."

Now, because of all that gained expertise, Goss trains new service techs in the company.

"I love to share knowledge," he says. "I love taking classes and coming back to work and sharing it with my colleagues."

Goss plans to continue moving up the ranks with Heritage, in the hopes of taking a supervisory or managerial position.



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An optical illusion highlights this stunner in the Valley of the Sun.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ



Set in the Phoenix area, this pool adds the elements of fire and water to the earthy red mountains beyond.

For this reason, the pool recently was featured in Pebble Technology's annual book, "The World's Greatest Pools."

To suit the nearly U-shaped space, designer Matt Coyle fashioned this combination vanishing-edge/slot overflow pool with a symmetrical footprint.

The black materials — PebbleTec interior, with large-format porcelain tile at the waterline and raised vanishing-edge walls — serve several purposes. They maximize reflection of the fire feature and other surrounding elements, while contrasting with the light colors on the home and matching the glossiness of the abode's large windows.

A gray marble serves as a coping, outlining the vanishing-edge catch basin at the back of the pool.

The sleek lines and materials provide a canvas for the fire feature that dissects the pool's length.

No doubt the fire and water feature turns heads, not only from the combination of elements, but with the illusion that the flame floats on the water. Water spills into a 1/4-inch slot around the fire pan. The slot is concealed by black fire glass to complete the illusion.

Coyle devised a shotcrete locker to hold the fire equipment underneath the pan and protect it from water that could migrate as a result of surges.

"The [space] where the water falls into is about 4" wide," says Coyle, pres-

ident/owner of Phoenix-based Venetian Outdoors. "Then we have another roughly 4-inch wall. Then the dry locker itself, which sits under the fire pan, is probably 4-feet-by-4 feet-by-almost-6 feet deep."

A false floor inside the locker elevates the ignition components, which are then covered, to protect them from water if there's a surge of any type, or if there's any pooling on the actual floor. Any such water goes out to through drain lines.

At one end of the pool sits a tanning ledge. The remaining length is devoted to the pool.

On either end of the pool, Coyle placed short columns, also finished in the black porcelain tile. These serve dual purposes. First, they mark the transition between the slot overflow at the front of the pool and the raised vanishing edge at the back. Secondly, they bookend the steps on either side that lead to the grade below.

The homeowner chose to place a portable hot tub near the pool, in near the RV garage.

"He wanted to be able to sit in his hot tub, see inside the garage and watch TV," Coyle says.

PHOTOS: ETHAN COOPER PHOTOGRAPHY

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Relationship Goals

Using neuro-linguistic programming to further your bond with clients

BY SCOTT COHEN



During the initial consultation, most salespeople make the mistake of talking incessantly about features and benefits. They say they are better because they use the best pool equipment, build a stronger concrete structure, use color lights, or whatever.

But these points have very little to do with the decision-making process for potential clients. To be frank, most other companies claim the same benefits, so it doesn't help the client differentiate between you and them.

When I take a sales trainee with me on a design consultation, they often are surprised by the same thing: "You never talked about the equipment, plaster, drainage, warranties, or energy efficiency, or why you are better than the other guy."

That's because I don't worry about any of that stuff — and neither do most prospective customers. They just want

to hire somebody they like and trust. So I focus entirely on building a relationship. This also positions me to design the best project for them: The quicker we become friends, the more information they will share, and the better my design will match their unique tastes. There is a reason there are 31 flavors at the ice-cream store. Metaphorically speaking, we need to find out their absolute favorite. (Side note here: Coffee is the best flavor.)

In the last installation, I discussed how to make a good first impression. The neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques that follow will help you bond with client as you move through the consultation and sales process.

WHAT EVERYBODY IS SAYING

Communication doesn't only occur through spoken word. Much of what we say comes through body language.

When your client speaks, use body language to show that they have your focus. Leaning in towards the person speaking shows your interest. Tilting your head, similar to how a dog does, helps them understand that you are listening and paying attention. Your hand on your chin indicates that you are listening intently.

Also pay close attention to their body language, so you can match and mirror it. Remember: People hire whom they like; and they tend to like people who they believe are similar to them.

This should not always be done during budget discussions. When a client demonstrates discomfort with their body language, by crossing their arms, frowning or wringing their hands, for example, you do not want to match or mimic this behavior. But you should discuss it.

Acknowledge that something changed. You could start with, "I noticed that when we started talking about budget, you got a little uncomfortable."

Then you can share your feelings or a story of yours. An example: "When I was growing up my family never talked about money, and now any time budgets are brought up I get uncomfortable."

But then explain why you need to discuss the budget: "Still, it's important that we openly discuss what things cost so that we can prepare a design that is right for you. I don't want to under design for you and leave you unimpressed, nor do I want to overdesign and leave you disappointed that the project is too far out of reach. I'm certain you two had a discussion about budget before I got here. Just between

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us (wink), what did that sound like?”

Have an open discussion about budget and priorities. When a range or number is presented, I always first agree that it is a lot of money. Next, I test it for validity: “Two hundred fifty thousand dollars is a lot of money, but let me ask you this: If I were to come up with something amazing, everything you ever wanted in a backyard design, but it cost \$300,000, should I show it to you, or wait to share it with another client?” The answer is almost always “Please show it to us,” indicating that the real budget limit is likely about \$300,000.

ANCHORS AWEIGH!

“Anchoring” is a natural phenomenon. It happens accidentally all of the time — for example, when the smell of a perfume reminds you of someone you knew long ago, or a song brings you

back to a fond memory from your youth.

We use NLP anchoring to help our new friend or potential client associate us with the good memories and not associate us with the bad stuff. As clients respond to your questions and provide information, tap your chest and nod your head when they say something positive. Then use hand movements as if to throw away any negative statements. This may feel a little awkward at first, but with a little practice it will look and feel natural.

As an example, I might ask my clients what they are looking for in a design-build contractor. My client might say, “I’m looking for a professional (point to yourself and tap your chest) who shows up on time (nod head, smile and tap your chest), and charges a fair price for their work (nod head, and tap your chest as this applies to you).”

The next statement might be, “I

definitely don’t want the project to be my job to manage (here you physically move your arm down and away from you as if to toss a piece of garbage, and shake your head no).”

These body-language anchors are strong reinforcers and set you in the mind of the client as the candidate who meets their requirements for the positive stuff, and not the guy who would disappoint with their negative concerns.

Scott Cohen is president of The Green Scene, an outdoor design/build firm in Chatsworth, Calif. He also is a construction defect expert witness, consultant, instructor, author, and president of the California Pool & Spa Association.



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NESPA's 2023 Show Continues a Popular Tradition

The East Coast pool and spa show offers in-person interactions and education.

BY LINDA G. GREEN

Looking ahead to NESPA's upcoming show in Atlantic City, N.J., you can sense a new feeling in the air. True, COVID is still a consideration — in daily life and when gathering together for events. But thanks to event protocols and medications that have been developed in recent times, gatherings such as trade shows

are safe places to be.

And that's good news for show organizers and attendees.

So it is that the in-person format, reintroduced at the NESPA show last year, is back. Slated for Jan. 24-26, 2023, the show will feature new, longer exhibit floor hours, not to mention

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A WILD WELCOME

The 2023 Welcome Party returns to The Saloon Bar at Wild Wild West (in Bally's casino) on Monday, January 23. The \$25 ticket gets you into the cowboy-themed event to enjoy live music, barbecue treats and the design award winner announcements. It's first come, first served, so plan to hop into your cowboy boots and hats — and vamoose over there asap.



staggered start times for events and educational sessions lasting all day.

Show Manager Trish McCormick notes that last year's show protocols worked smoothly: "The show hours, education all day and the exhibit hours — it worked out amazingly. People loved it; they were not so inundated."

This year's show protocols prom-

ise more of the same. The Centers for Disease Control has called for physical distancing in common areas, exhibit halls and meeting rooms at the venue. Social distancing means staying 6 feet apart — also, increased frequency of cleaning high-touch areas and use of hand sanitizer is urged. There's also been talk of wearing personal protective equipment or

clothes, aka PPE.

Officials at the Atlantic City Convention Center also have offered helpful tips to stay safe, such as wearing PPE whenever interacting with others, which certainly occurs at trade shows. Frequent washing with hand sanitizer also is encouraged.

As for expected attendance in Atlantic City, the show organizers say



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it's too early to predict how many attendees will be heading their way. But based on past years, a good turnout is expected.

EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

The Experience Pass, which debuted at last year's show, is returning with even more features. It includes full access to the show's business and

technical passes, the welcome party, a new VIP reception, access to education, the four-day Business Pass and the four-day Technical Pass. And after the show, Experience Pass holders can access on-demand content.

A returning workshop, "Women in the Industry: Staying Afloat Together," has been expanded to

include more networking, learning and fun, say organizers. Facilitated by leadership expert Anne Obarski, it will cover leadership training and industry learning focused on preparing participants for the 2023 season and beyond. Workshop size is limited to enable participants to have more one-on-one interaction with instructors and each other.



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Education Schedule

Education Conference information is as of December 4, 2022. Information is subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, visit www.ThePoolSpaShow.com.

Session Time	Session Title	Session Type
Sunday, January 22		
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	GENESIS C201: Construction School Concrete Pools (CBP) - 3 Days (Day 1)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	GENESIS: D265 Master Designer Methods: Kirk Bianchi, Crafting the Outdoor Space as a Living Art Form - 2 Days (Day 1)	Specialty
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Hot Tub Technician 3 Days (Day 1)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Maintenance Specialist 3 Days (Day 1)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Service Technician 3 Days (Day 1)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	Watershape University E4311 Advanced Fluid Engineering Workshop - 2 Days (Day 1)	Specialty
8:30 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Pool Operator 2 Days (Day 1)	Certification
1:00 PM - 05:00 PM	OSHA 10-hour General Industry Training (additional 2 hrs Pool Industry Focus) (Watershape University) 2 Days (Day 1)	Specialty
Monday, January 23		
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	Comprehensive Water Chemistry for Residential Pools	Specialty
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	GENESIS C201: Construction School Concrete Pools (CBP) - 3 Day (Day 2)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	GENESIS: D265 Master Designer Methods: Kirk Bianchi, Crafting the Outdoor Space as a Living Art Form - 2 Days (Day 2)	Specialty
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	National Plasterers Council (NPC) Pool Start Up Certification	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	OSHA 10-hour General Industry Training (additional 2 hrs Pool Industry focus) (Watershape University) 2 Days (Day 2)	Specialty
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Hot Tub Technician 3 Days (Day 2)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Maintenance Specialist (Day 2)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Service Technician (Day 2)	Certification
8:00 AM - 05:00 PM	Watershape University E4311 Advanced Fluid Engineering Workshop- 2 Days (Day2)	Specialty
8:30 AM - 01:00 PM	A Pro's Guide to Above-Ground Pool Assembly & Liner Installation	Specialty
8:30 AM - 01:00 PM	Pool Inspections and the Real Estate Market: New Opportunities	Specialty
8:30 AM - 05:00 PM	PHTA Certified Pool Operator (Day 2)	Certification
9:00 AM - 04:00 PM	PHTA/ICC Present the 2021 International Swimming Pool & Spa Code	Specialty
9:00 AM - 04:00 PM	Women in the Industry Leadership Development: Staying Afloat Together	Specialty
9:00 AM - 05:00 PM	Training for New Trainers: How to Develop, Design, & Deliver Your In-house Education	Specialty
9:00 AM - 05:00 PM	What's Next? Creating Certainty in an Uncertain World	Specialty
12:30 PM - 05:00 PM	From Rookie to All-Star; The Fundamentals of Pool Service	Specialty
12:30 PM - 05:00 PM	Pool Opening Essentials	Specialty
1:30 PM - 03:00 PM	A Dive Into Digital Marketing	Business
1:30 PM - 03:00 PM	ANSI/PHTA Standards Guiding You to Better Water Chemistry (RWQC/PHTA)	Technical
1:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Don't Kill Your Golden Goose - Protect & Perpetuate Your Business	Business
1:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Hydraulics & Circulation System Basics	Technical
1:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Spanish - Pentair Automation Systems (including IntelliCenters & EasyTouch)	Technical
5:00 PM - 06:00 PM	PHTA Wave Event: Young Pool & Hot Tub Professionals Thriving in an Unknown Future - SOLD OUT!	Specialty
Tuesday, January 24		
8:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Are You a Positive Energizer? Make the Connection between Positivity and Profit and Watch Your Business Soar!	Business
8:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Delivering Service That Makes the Competition Weep	Business
8:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Gas Fired Heaters: Everything You Need to Know	Technical
8:30 AM - 01:00 PM	From Rookie to All-Star: The Fundamentals of Pool Service (ENCORE)	Specialty
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Be Ready for Anything: The Proactive Way to Open Pools in the Spring	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Detailed Overview of Employee Handbook & Importance of Job Description	Business
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Developing Leaders from Within	Business

Session Time	Session Title	Session Type
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Fluidra Supplemental Sanitizing with AOP Systems	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	GPS Marketing: Setting Your 'In-Store Stage' to Drive Your Sales	Business
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Leak Detection Basics	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Marketing Renovation Sales (Watershape University)	Business
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Recreational Water Balance	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Salt Chlorine Generators for the Beginner	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Small Space Design & Construction (GENESIS D111)	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Spanish - Basic Hydraulics & Circulation Systems	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Spanish - Profiling Outstanding Projects, Start to Finish (Watershape University)	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Upselling the Benefits of Solar Energy Heating for Pools	Technical
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	HVAC & Indoor Pools (Watershape University)	Technical
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Tile & Coping: Glass Tile Installation & Waterproofing Hands-On Workshop	Specialty
01:00 PM - 4:15 PM	Confronting 2023's Critical Issues: Strategies & Tactics for Getting Work, Retaining Employees and Keeping Profits	Business
01:00 PM - 4:15 PM	Pool Water Chemistry Basics for Service Techs	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Artistry of Vanishing Edge Design & Details (Watershape University)	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Bonding & Grounding	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Creating The Delivery of Exceptional Business Experiences	Business
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	CYA Smart: A Movement Toward Better, Healthier Water	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Everything You Didn't Realize You Wanted to Know about Algae	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Hayward Supplemental Sanitizing with AOP Systems	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Independent Contractor or Employee: Classifying Your Workers	Business
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Proper Techniques for Prepping a Pool Shell for Plastering	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Pumps/Motors & DOE Compliancy	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Safety Cover Measuring	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Scale Your Company without Additional Labor: Proven Tactics That Work	Business
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	So You want to Be a Master Salesperson	Business
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Spanish - How (& Why) Standardizing Pool Chemistry Should Be a Top Priority in the Pool Service Business	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Spanish - In-depth Pool Heating Overview	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Stains on Your Finishes & Solutions So You Get Paid	Technical
01:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Understanding Your Contract: How to Protect Your Company in a Changing Environment (PHTA)	Business
02:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Heaters Hands On Workshop - SOLD OUT!	Specialty
Wednesday, January 25		
08:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Electricity for the Pool & Spa Service Professional	Technical
08:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Introduction to HR Fundamentals	Business
08:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Spanish - Advanced Hydraulics for Builders/Service Techs	Technical
08:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Team Up for Success: How a Culture Can Cure your Staff Needs	Business
08:30 AM - 01:00 PM	Pool Opening Essentials (ENCORE)	Specialty
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Advanced Water Chemistry: Keeping Your Pool Water Safe	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	ANSI/PHTA/ICC-10: Reduce the Risk of Mold & Structural Design in Elevated Pools (PHTA)	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Changes to NEC 680	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Comprehensive Swimming Pool Inspections with Leak Detection	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Don't Believe Everything You Think	Business

Session Time	Session Title	Session Type
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Energy-Efficient Pool Heating: Solar, Heat Pumps & Hybrid Systems	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	In-Depth Pool Heating Overview	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Job Costing for Profit Versus Existence (GENESIS B331)	Business
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Pentair Automated & Alternative Sanitization	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Spanish - Pumps/Motors & DOE Compliancy	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Specialized Solutions for Smarter, More Efficient Pool Care	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Splash Pad Development & Design (PHTA)	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	The Power of Effective Communications	Business
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	The Upshift Manifesto - Thriving in the Post Pandemic Marketplace	Business
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Trading in Today's World & How it Affects Short Term & Long term Planning	Business
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Vinyology 101: The More You Know the More You Sell	Technical
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Water Balance from a Cause & Effect Perspective	Technical
09:00 AM - 01:00 PM	PHTA Certification Exam Day	Certification
11:00 AM - 02:00 PM	Tile & Coping: Glass Tile Installation & Waterproofing Hands-On Workshop	Specialty
01:00 PM - 04:15 PM	In-Ground Pool Vinyl Liners: Getting the Perfect Fit Every Time	Technical
01:00 PM - 04:15 PM	Video Tips & Tricks: How to Create Stellar Videos for Every Stage of the Buyer's Journey	Business
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Advanced Pool Electrical Safety for Builders & Service Technicians	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	ClearComfort AOP Systems: Are They for Me?	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Electronic (Spa) Control Packs: From Then to Now	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Employment & Best Practices to Avoid Lawsuits & Business Risk	Business
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	How (and Why) Standardizing Pool Chemistry Should be a Top Priority in a Pool Service Business	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	How to Successfully Use TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest to Grow Your Business	Business
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Hydraulics for Pool Service Professionals (Intermediate)	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Maintaining the Water in Salt-Chlorine Generator Pools - The Case for Borates	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Managing Expectations: What Your Homeowner Needs to Know About Vinyl Liner Warranties	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Optimize Staff & Inventory in Your Service Department	Business
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Pool Chlorine Mysteries: Where is All My Chlorine Going?	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Saltwater Pool Troubleshooting: Beyond the Equipment	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Spanish - Fluidra Supplemental Sanitizing with AOP Systems	Technical
01:30 PM - 03:00 PM	Structured Sales Process (Watershape University)	Business
02:30 PM - 04:00 PM	Heaters Hands On Workshop - SOLD OUT!	Specialty
Thursday, January 26		
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Advanced Measuring Techniques for All Pools	Technical
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Interior Cementitious Finishes: Setting Realistic Expectations	Technical
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Proper Inground Spa Jet Design in a Variable Speed World	Technical
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Recognizing (and Profiting from!) Residential Pool Fails	Business
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Spanish - Be Ready for Anything: the Proactive Way to Open Pools in the Spring	Technical
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	System Level Hydraulic Design for Pools & Spas	Technical
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	The 2023 "Everything Google" Playbook for Builders, Service Companies and Retailers	Business
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	The Who, What, and Why Around Today's Acquisition Surge	Business
08:30 AM - 10:00 AM	What's THAT on the Pool Surface	Technical

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MANAGING THE UNKNOWN

Inflation and threats of recession loom, while business remains brisk for many. Follow these tips to help prepare your company for uncertain times. **BY REBECCA ROBLEDO**

A big question loomed at this season's industry trade shows: What should we expect in 2023?

While every year ends with projections and prognostications, this one seems especially puzzling, as economic forecasts seem to collide with work realities for many in the industry. Increasing interest rates and inflation become a reality, while some experts see a recession in the not-so-far future. And as some pool/spa companies are experiencing a softening of leads, others are maintaining a brisk pace.

Cautious optimism seems to be the theme going into this year. It may be a good time to focus on the cautious. Here, industry veterans share some tips to prepare your company for the uncertainty.

*** Get the most from the work you already have.**

It's an unusual time. While many in the pool/spa industry are concerned about the year ahead, they still are experiencing robust business, particularly in service.

All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living in Orland Park, Ill. is seizing on this opportunity to garner more of a commitment from its service customers.

First, the company began requiring these clients to sign annual agreements as a condition for All Seasons to perform its service and maintenance. And, where many of its customers used to buy their own chemicals, which the service techs would then apply, clients now must purchase the chemicals from All Seasons. Not only does this open another revenue stream, but it makes the work easier for the service technicians and, therefore, more efficient for the company.

"If [the techs are] familiar with the product, they don't have to spend time trying to figure out what they're working with in the shed," says co-owner

"We haven't been shy about raising prices," says Mark Reed, president of Memphis Pool, in Memphis, Tenn. "Even if you have product on the shelf that you bought six months ago, the cost to replace it is going to be that new price. So you have to adjust."

Dan Lenz. "For instance, the algaecide that we use primarily is a certain dosage that the techs know right off the top of their heads. They ... pour it right out of the bottle, into the pool, and they're on their way. Whereas if you have somebody who has a gallon of who-knows-what, you're trying to read the label or Googling the product to see what is the dosage of this product."

*** Charge what you actually need.**

When replacing products for clients, charge them current prices, even if the unit was purchased some time ago for less.

"We haven't been shy about raising prices," says Mark Reed, president of Memphis Pool, in Memphis, Tenn.

"When we get a price increase, we raise the price. You do it now because, even if you have product on the shelf that you bought six months ago, the cost to replace it is going to be the new price. So you have to adjust."

When increasing the customer's price, consider going the route of margin percent rather than margin dollars. Say a piece of equipment used to cost you \$1,000, and you sold it for \$1,500 — a 50% markup. If that unit increases to \$1,200, mark it up by the same percentage to \$1,800. Don't simply add the same \$500 markup to the updated cost, which would amount to \$1,700.

"Because of that, our profit margin dollars are up from a year ago, even though the quantity of [equipment] we sold is down," Lenz says. "We sold less but made more."

When he receives calls from homeowners who fall out of the company's general service area, insisting that they want All Seasons to maintain their pools, Lenz will determine what it would really take to make it worthwhile to send a technician so far away. Sometimes it's significantly more than other customers are paying. But if they're game, then the company will take on their pools.

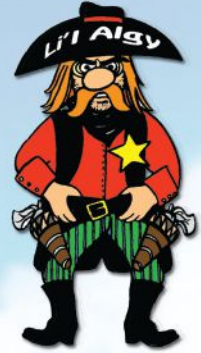
*** Move toward diversification.**

With demand being so hectic, some companies have pared down to their core products and services to keep up. Some builders, for instance, took a break from renovations in order to focus on the demand for new pools.

Now's the time to consider going back to services the company once offered, or perhaps even adding new services. Builders who strayed from renovations can consider offering that service again in order to cast a wider net and perhaps compensate for any reductions in leads and backlog.

All Seasons is taking on more renovations again. But it's also preparing

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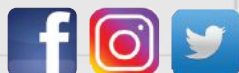
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to add a new service. The company is putting 10 to 12 of its staffers through the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance's certified pool inspector training. Some of these trainees hold positions you'd expect — service technicians who are very familiar with the mechanics of a pool. But Lenz and his team didn't limit it to these employees.

"I also have sales staff who are going through it, and my service office manager is going through it," Lenz says. "My intent to be able to fulfill everybody who calls looking for an inspection and fit whatever their timeline is, even if it's today."

*** Rethink your sales approach.**

To work with the most realistic prices, builders might want to try something that they probably wouldn't under any other conditions, suggests Paul Porter, CEO of Premier Franchise Management, based in Granite City, Calif.

Usually, contractors advise their clients and peers to nail down a complete design, with all features and materials specified, as early as possible to avoid the confusion and disruption of last-minute changes.

But with the possibility that prices can increase at any time, Porter suggests leaving room for additions to be made after construction begins. This way, if a customer adds something later down the line, then the pricing will be closer to real-time, leaving less of a chance of losing profit from an underbid.

"If you can, don't sell the kitchen sink," Porter says. "We still do up-selling [in the initial sales consultation], but we want to leave some dry powder. Some consumers won't go for that — they want the whole package, and they want it done. I'm just saying that right now, with pricing pivoting, sell them a pool they can afford, and if they want to add things, let them add it at a price there's margin in."

MORE TIPS FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

It appears some economic pain lies ahead. But if you can handle it in a rational and transparent way, clients will remember. Here, Rob Corbo, a building contractor based in Elizabeth, N.J. who specializes in high-quality gut rehabs and renovations of inner-city residences, shares some strategies that may help ease the pain:

Postpone large purchases. I hate to discuss postponing a purchase, because it reduces economic activity, contributing to a recession. But if you see a business slowdown on the horizon, it may be best to put off buying the pickup truck, excavator or roll-off truck. (Though, if the vehicle is leased and the buyout price was negotiated two or three years ago, it might be worth considering the purchase.) Even if you have the cash for a capital purchase, it might pay to wait. A slowdown may result in a better price, or supply disruptions may clear, increasing inventories and reducing prices.

Avoid debt. The economy and business cycle are outside our control, but the amount of debt our business carries is not. Debt is risk. Postponing a large purchase helps limit risk if the economy slows. Reducing balances on lines of credit and credit cards is another way to prepare.

Inflationary price increases. One way to protect your company from having to absorb unexpected price increases is to insert a "material price increase clause" in contracts and estimates to pass material price increases to customers. Without one, you may get stuck during fast-moving inflationary periods, and what should have been a profitable job might become a disaster. Keep the clause simple: If prices increase more than a certain percentage from when the estimate was presented or the contract signed, the customer is responsible for the increase. Apply this to a list of materials "including but not limited to" lumber, plywood, siding, steel, flooring, appliances, and so on. Be prepared to show price increases through quotes and material lists accumulated during estimate and contract preparation. Just be sure you openly discuss the clause with clients so there are no surprises.

Flexible employee inflation assistance. As David Gerstel has stated in his books, you take care of your employees. If you do, you will enter any period of inflation with your employees fairly compensated by a combination of wages and benefits. However, even with fair compensation, employees may need additional assistance during this period of high inflation.

Our economic situation is multilayered and makes knowing exactly how to provide assistance difficult. I suggest you provide flexible or temporary assistance that can be easily changed as conditions change. This will help employees through an inflationary period and help the company weather a recessionary time. While inflation persists, an employee gets assistance. If a recession occurs, assistance is stopped and hopefully jobs are preserved.

Consider offering a weekly or monthly stipend for gas. While prices have come down, gasoline prices saw an increase of 55% over the last 12 months. A gas stipend may ease the pain of an employee's commuting expense. Their monthly savings can then be applied to other household basics. The stipend can remain as long as high inflation persists and company revenues continue unabated. I'm suggesting an equal stipend for each employee's commute and not a gas card. Gas cards might be abused or benefit the owner of an inefficient guzzler over more conscientious employees, and might be harder to take away. A gas stipend is only one way of providing assistance; you may decide to use other methods that are more appropriate for your employees or business.

— R.C

This was condensed from an article in sister publication, JLC.

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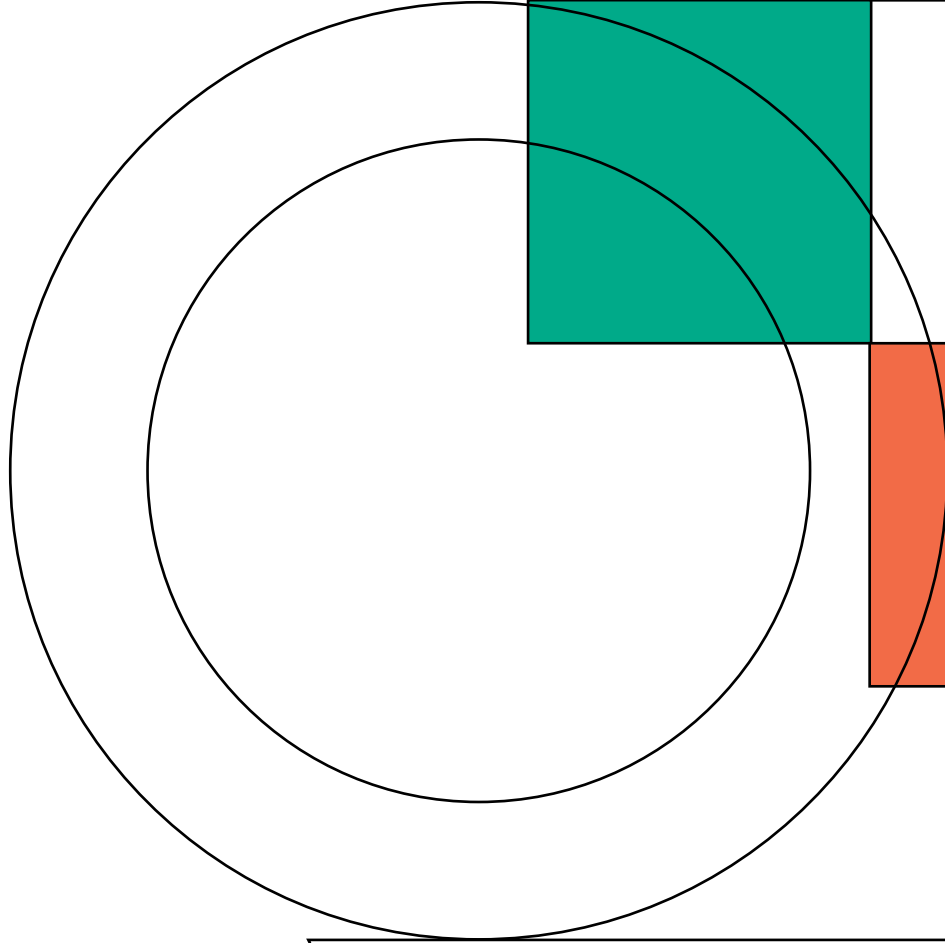


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REMODELING YOUR THINKING

How to use the tenets of cognitive behavioral therapy to change your construction business for the better.

BY DAVID GERSTEL

When a friend asks me to recommend a construction contractor, I give them a name from the very short list of guys I feel I can suggest with confidence. “Bob,” as I call him in my new book, “Building Freedom, A Construction Pro’s Path to Financial Independence,” is on the list. Even so, when I recommend Bob, I do hesitate. That is not because Bob fails to check off all the boxes. He does. Bob produces

first-rate work. If he gets a callback, he jumps on it. When he charges for preconstruction work, his estimate is transparent. He does not conceal overhead and profit in charges for labor and material. The guy practices integrity with every nail he sets and with every communication.

So why do I hesitate when I recommend him? Because I know that even as Bob takes good care of my

friends, he'll woefully undercompensate himself financially. Bob places mental obstacles between himself and the level of pay enjoyed by other well-established builders in our area. He's in need of what I call "thought remodeling." That's a practice akin to the down-to-earth approach to mental health challenges known as "cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)."

THOUGHT > EMOTION > ACTION

The core concept underlying CBT is: Thoughts precede and create emotion. Emotion undergirds action. That is, thought > emotion > action. The neurological underpinning of CBT, as I understand it, is that the more often we think a thought, the deeper its pathway in our minds. The deeper a pathway, the more likely our thoughts are to go down that pathway. Eventually, as a thought courses through our minds over and over, thinking it becomes a habit. And in due course, the habit can harden into a belief that rigidly governs our decisions and practices.

Construction Industry Thinking Errors

- Over-obedience
- Underpricing
- Revenue obsession
- Profit neglect
- Balance sheet pride
- Overhead obliviousness
- Name your own

Therein lies our problem. Some thoughts are bad habits. They are, in the language of CBT, "thinking errors" that foster unhealthy emotion that, in turn, ignites ill-advised action. As construction pros, we can become habituated to thinking errors in our work life.

Bob commits the thinking error CBT labels "mind reading." He believes that his clients think of him as a mere

"handyman" and not deserving of the pay commanded by top-drawer pros. To that he adds a second error, "catastrophizing." If he submits a bid for a job and does not get it, he worries that he will never get another project.

Catastrophizing has driven Bob to push his prices so low that he "wins" seven out of 10 bids. More astute construction pros aim to win roughly three out of 10. If they are winning more than that, they conclude they are bidding too low and increase their prices. Meanwhile, Bob, gripped by his thinking errors, is trying to get his prices so low that he will win nine out of 10 bids!

Bob's thinking errors have jeopardized his future. Soon he will be entering the "golden years." Those years can be more like pitted copper if you have not piled up a fair amount of gold—namely, cash-producing investments that support a healthy and comfortable lifestyle. Bob has denied himself the income needed to build those investments.

He is not unique. Melanie Hodgdon described the situation in her JLC article "Job Pricing Blunders" (May/20): "The very characteristics that make contractors incredible neighbors all too often lead to decades of hard work with little to show for it." They produce work that delights their clients. They treat employees like daughters and sons. But they neglect their own welfare. As they age and are no longer able to stand the stress and strain of construction, they find themselves facing a threadbare future. A variety of thinking errors, long rationalized or ignored, have come home to roost.

COMMON THINKING ERRORS

During my decades in construction, I've observed a range of thinking errors across our industry. Below, I will discuss a few of the most prevalent:

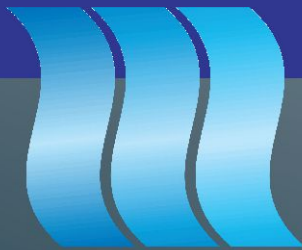
Over-obedience. It's akin to what CBT terms "outsourcing happiness,

As they age and are no longer able to stand the stress and strain of construction, some contractors find themselves facing a threadbare future. A variety of thinking errors, long rationalized or ignored, have come home to roost.

giving outside sources the final say" in our thinking and decisions. A builder buddy of mine suffered from that error. Then one evening as we drove to a meeting of our association, he exclaimed, "Know what my problem is? Every time I hear someone in our group extol the latest and greatest thing they are doing, I think I have to do it, too, or fall behind." He was suffocating in the clutter of procedures he had adopted. He changed his thinking, cleared out the clutter, and remodeled his business into a leaner and more efficient operation.

His problem is widespread. One industry expert reports that when he starts with a new client, he typically finds that fully half of the procedures executed in their offices are of no value. One example (mine, not his) of valueless effort: compulsive job costing that wastes time at jobsites for the filling out of overly detailed time cards and in the office for getting the time card info into a job cost record—all without any verifiable benefit for project management or future estimating.

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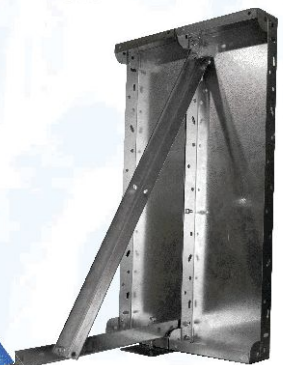
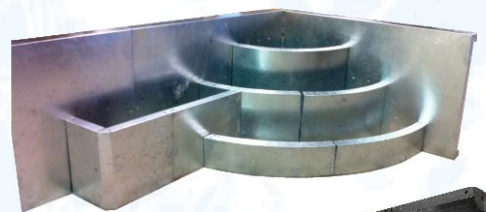
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ities can distract from focus on work vital to the health of a company—notably bidding and estimating. Though the heartbeat of any construction company, bidding and estimating is often given short shrift. It gets done, but casually rather than systematically, with the imprecise results excused by clichés such as “estimating is an art, not a science” or “you can’t know what a construction project will cost until it is over.”

You may be a whiz at marketing, sales, and even production. But if you cannot systematically choose the right jobs to pursue and nail your estimates for building them, eventually you will be toast.

Underpricing can result from thinking errors that lead you to sell yourself short like Bob. The good news here is that errors can be corrected. Each time you catch yourself committing an error, you willfully replace it with better thinking. Eventually, the error will die out and the new and more functional thought will replace it.

Paul Winans, a builder who in time became the national head of NARI, was held back early in his career by thinking errors similar to those embedded in Bob’s mind. Unlike Bob, Paul remodeled his mind, removing the errors and putting new thinking in their place. In his memoir, *The Remodeling Life*, Paul recalls that early in his career he was not charging enough for his work. He thought and feared that if he raised his prices, he would not get enough work. He was challenged by a mentor to test his thinking. He did, gradually raising his prices. To his surprise, with each increase, he continued to get plenty of work. He quenched his old thinking and replaced it with a new belief: “I sell value, not price.”

Paul’s correction of his error helped motivate another builder to remodel his thinking. That would be me. I, too, underpriced due to flawed

Underpricing can result from thinking errors that lead you to sell yourself short ... The good news here is that errors can be corrected. Each time you catch yourself committing an error, you willfully replace it with better thinking.

thinking. My thinking error was of a different type than Paul’s. It was akin to what CBT terms a “false sense of responsibility.” Though I had no real idea of a client’s financial position, I would worry about an imagined burden the costs of their project might impose on them. On one project, I cut profit entirely out of my bid. Right after I completed the job, I spotted a brand new luxury camper van parked at the client’s house. That experience definitely intensified my motivation to remodel my thinking about pricing.

Like Paul, I installed a new belief in my mind and presented it to clients. “We are not cheap, but we are a good deal. May I tell you why?” Generally, they said “yes,” listened, and accepted my charges—including those for estimating and other preconstruction work.

Revenue obsession and profit neglect. Certain thinking errors come in pairs. One pair is “revenue obsession” combined with “profit neglect.” Remarkably, those errors are sometimes fostered by the very folks who sell consulting services to our industry. When marketing their services, they trumpet the increases in

top line revenue reaped by their star clients. Similar ballyhoo rings out at our meetings of our associations. If you attend them, you’ve heard the bragging—“We’re doin’ 20 mill this year.” More substantial indicators of company health—employee morale and low turnover, percentage of work from references rather than marketing to strangers, and solid year-after-year profitability—are barely noted by the consultants or the braggarts.

Writing those lines, I think of my drill rig operator. He figured out it was not his gross sales volume that really mattered. “I take home more money and enjoy life more with just my one rig, operating it myself, than I did when I ran 20 rigs and had a far bigger top line number.” I have lost count of the construction pros who have told me a parallel story. I also know men and women who have successfully built sizable companies. They are amazed by what they have been able to do. However, it is not that top line, the gross sales, but their employees and profitability they focus on and are proudest of.

Balance sheet pride and overhead obliviousness. A second pair of thinking errors—namely “balance sheet pride” coupled with “overhead obliviousness”—is related to the first. They also divert attention from the factors that actually make for a financially healthy construction business. In *Building Freedom*, I wrote about them in detail. Here, I have room only to note that the balance sheet that feels good during boom times can turn on you when demand for construction shrivels. The warehouse, the big equipment, and the elaborate office that once stoked pride can transform into cash-eating predators. They become liabilities, not in the formal accounting sense, but in reality. As they sit idle, they gobble up capital reserves for payments, storage, maintenance, and security. Steadily,



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they slide toward obsolescence, losing value.

Balance sheet pride is joined at the hip with “overhead obliviousness.” We see that from the bottom to the top of our industry. We hear it from the startup guy who says, “I don’t have any overhead.” (Really? No truck? No phone or computer? No time spent meeting potential clients and generating estimates and bids? None of the dozens of other overhead costs I list in Nail Your Numbers?)

We find overhead obliviousness promoted by the advisors who service more established companies. One urged an audience of builders to focus on four numbers: You, as owner, concentrate on construction costs and profit margins. Have your production manager focus on sales and estimating. She assigned to no one the task of monitoring, managing, and contain-

We construction guys, especially those of us who came up through the trades, are good at getting up early, grabbing a coffee, and cranking up production at the office or jobsite. At standing back, examining our patterns and the thought/emotion sequence that gave rise to them, we are not so good.

ing overhead. The consequences of such negligence can be brutal.

If you are oblivious to overhead, your balance sheet can steadily become overloaded with “assets” of dubious business value. They may have been purchased for the sake of “professional image.” They may be “big boys toys” purchased on impulse. They may have been purchased in a misguided belief that they were essential to the operation of a real construction company.

Whatever the supposed “assets” are, in time, the costs of maintaining all the stuff listed on your balance sheet contribute to ballooning overhead. It can readily grow to half of the markup you can get during times of strong demand for construction. Then an economic crunch comes. Now you can’t get projects with enough markup to even cover your inflated

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overhead much less anything for your own pay or company profit. You are hemorrhaging cash and teetering toward insolvency. If the recession that seems to be underway as I write this article does take hold, that is going to be the experience of construction companies caught in the thinking errors of balance sheet pride, overhead obliviousness, revenue obsession, and profit neglect.

ACQUIRING AWARENESS OF OUR THINKING

Take a close look at your thought > emotion > action pathways, and you may find that your errors are different from any I have mentioned. If you are able to spot them, you will have taken the hardest step toward thought remodeling. We construction guys, especially those of us who came up through the trades, are good at get-

ting up early, grabbing a coffee, and cranking up production at the office or jobsite. At standing back, examining our patterns and the thought/emotion sequence that gave rise to them, we are not so good.

How can a construction pro acquire awareness of thinking errors that are getting in their way? To get started, you could adopt a practice encouraged by Gino Wickman in his book, *Traction*. Wickman advises this: Weekly, make an hour appointment with yourself. Make it at a quiet place well away from your office or jobsites. Keep the appointment without fail. Spend the hour reflecting about your practices and the thinking and emotions that give rise to them.

I have done that for years. I make my thinking appointment at a favorite café, treat myself to a latte, and sit for an hour considering my prin-

ciples and practices and decisions about projects. It is hard work to just sit and think. But I have had a great run in construction, enjoyed working with many talented designers and craftspeople, and reached financial freedom. Those weekly think appointments help me to spot and remodel problematic beliefs and continue on my way.

David Gerstel has been a builder for over four decades and is the author of "Running a Successful Construction Company" (often cited as an industry bible) and "Nail Your Numbers: A Path to Skilled Construction Estimating and Bidding." His latest book, "A Construction Pro's Path to Financial Independence," is now available from Amazon or at the bookseller of your choice. You can contact David via his website, DavidGerstel.com. This article previously appeared in sister publication, JLC.

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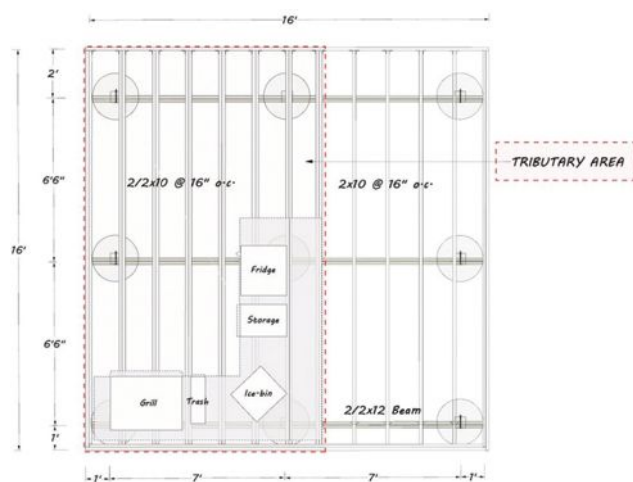
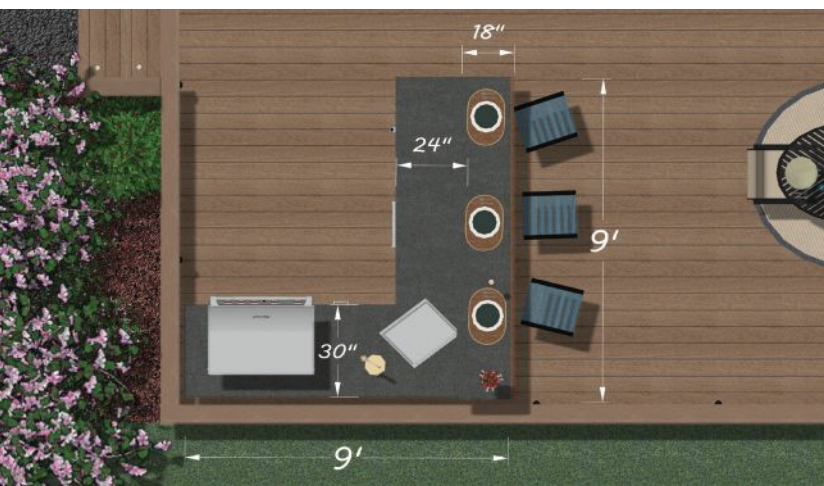
When I began building decks more than 20 years ago, a project that included an outdoor kitchen was a rarity. Now, over half of our deck designs call for a kitchen, often combined with a roof structure like a pergola or pavilion. It's easy to understand why: Like its indoor counterpart, an outdoor kitchen is a welcoming place that brings people together to talk, eat, drink, and socialize while food is being prepared. An outdoor kitchen is also a great investment

that is easy to upsell to clients because it will add value to their home (in my area, ROI can be up to 100%).

DESIGN

We work directly with clients to design their outdoor kitchen. Most have a hard time visualizing what they are trying to achieve, so the 3D renderings we create using Realtime Landscaping Architect are invaluable during the process.

We start with basic requirements—location, size, privacy concerns, sun exposure, view—and then move to appliances. The main components in most of our designs are a built-in grill with storage below, a fridge, and additional storage. Sometimes, clients think they want an outdoor sink too, but after a conversation about the advantages and disadvantages, often they decide that the added convenience is not worth the extra cost. In fact, most of our outdoor



The author used a CAD program to create 3D renderings, including an overhead view with dimensions (left). As shown in the framing plan (right), joists were doubled in the tributary area where the kitchen is located to accommodate the added weight of the kitchen appliances and cabinetry.

kitchens don't include a sink; instead, we install a built-in ice bin.

Once we've settled on a rough layout, I create a preliminary 3D rendering with views from different angles, together with an overhead view showing the dimensions. When the plan has been approved, I fine-tune the rendering by adding outlets and light fixtures and adjusting the stone and granite selection.

FRAMING REQUIREMENTS

Sometimes the kitchen will be located at grade over a concrete patio, in which case the enclosure walls can be built with 6-inch CMUs. But when the kitchen will be installed on an elevated deck, we frame the kitchen with pressure-treated or galvanized steel studs. Even so, the standard 50-pound-per-square-foot design load for an outdoor deck is not sufficient to also support the weight of an outdoor kitchen. Not only do the framing, finishes, and equipment add weight, people tend to gather around this area more.

As a rule of thumb, we double the design loads for the tributary area where the kitchen is going to be installed, so that the dead loads are 20 pounds (instead of 10) per square foot and the live loads are 80 pounds (instead of 40) per square foot. As a result, joist and beam spans are reduced, while the size of footings is in-

creased. To make sure the deck will be strong enough, I have the final plans reviewed by an engineer for approval (see floor plan, above).

Before construction of a kitchen can begin, we make sure all appliances that will require a rough opening are on site. This includes things like storage drawers and ice and trash bins, as well. That way, we can lay out the walls confidently, using cardboard templates cut to the rough-opening requirements of each appliance instead of relying on printed specs.

Prior to installing the decking where this kitchen would be located, we covered any doubled joists with 4-inch-wide G-tape acrylic flashing tape to prevent water from pooling between members. We also installed horizontal blocking between the joists where the perimeter walls for the cabinetry would be located.

We framed the kitchen's perimeter walls with pressure-treated 2x4 studs 16 inches on-center, and the bar wall with PT 2x6 studs 16 inches on-center, joining the framing together with 3-inch ring-shank galvanized nails and 3-inch structural exterior screws.

We framed the counter walls so that the finished height after the stone countertop was added would be 38 inches, rather than the standard 36 inches (I like to think bigger when designing and building outdoor

kitchens, both in height and in square footage, to provide extra room for seating, grilling, and dining). We framed the bar wall at 46 inches so that it would be 8 inches higher. We always slope the framing for drainage so that there won't be any standing water on the countertops after a rain shower.

After we framed the walls on the deck, we set them in place and made sure they were level and plumb. Then we used 4-inch exterior structural screws to fasten them to the horizontal blocking installed beneath the decking. As we built the walls, we used cardboard templates cut to the rough-opening requirements of each appliance and accessory to make sure everything would fit, making adjustments as needed. This can be done either before or after the perimeter walls are built.

Clearances for appliances are usually specified by the manufacturer, but in general, we plan on at least ¼ inch of space on each side of an appliance. For refrigerators, we leave a clearance of at least ½ inch on each side and 1 inch in the back to maximize ventilation.

Utilities. After all the framing was completed, we scheduled the electrician to do the wiring. We like to include at least one or two outlets at the raised bar and one under the cabinet for a transformer for low-voltage lighting. All the wiring is UF-B outdoor-rated cable, which we secured

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Using cardboard templates sized to fit the appliances (A), workers framed the kitchen's perimeter walls on the deck (B) with pressure-treated 2x4s and 2x6s, then screwed them together and through the decking into blocking installed between the joists (C). The cabinet walls are clad with cement board over a vapor retarder (D).



with stainless steel staples where we didn't run it through conduit.

On this project, we included three low-voltage LED light fixtures under the bar, and six recessed floor lights in the work area. All are connected to the transformer that is plugged into an outlet inside one of the cabinets.

Gas grills are typically connected to the main gas line serving the house and need to be installed by a plumber. Fortunately, running the utilities for an outdoor kitchen is pretty straightforward.

STONE-VENEER FINISH

To create a substrate for the manufactured-stone-veneer cladding used on this project, we wrapped the framing with $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Durock cement board secured with $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screws 8 inches on-center. When cement board is used over treated framing lumber or plywood, we install a Class III (medium permeability) vapor retarder underneath the cement board, since it will retain moisture if it gets wet. Without the vapor retarder, any lumber next

to the cement board will always be damp, especially when a kitchen is not covered by some sort of roofing.

After completing the cement-board installation but prior to installation of the stone veneer, we dry-fit the appliances to make sure they would go in smoothly. Then we removed them and put them in a safe area where we knew they wouldn't get damaged and called the granite company to schedule a measuring for the stone countertop.

Our client chose Eldorado Shadow Rock manufactured stone veneer for the cladding, and ipe for the bar top. We installed the stone veneer over a mortar scratch coat and galvanized wire lath, using stainless-steel roofing nails every 6 inches vertically and every 16 inches horizontally to secure the lath to the cement board.

We mixed up the scratch coat using three parts masonry sand, one part Type S mortar, and water. We let the scratch coat dry a full day before starting installation of the veneer stone.

While stone veneer can have

mortared joints, on this project the stone was dry stacked, with no mortar between the joints. Starting at the corners, the masons worked in 3-foot-by-3-foot sections, first arranging the stone for each section on a piece of plywood to find an aesthetically pleasing look. They used an angle grinder fitted with a diamond blade wherever a stone needed to be cut to fit or to give it a straight edge around an opening.

To set the stones, they used the same mortar mix as the scratch coat, back-buttering each one and pressing it into the scratch coat until a little bit of the mortar squeezed out.

COUNTERTOPS

Prior to installing the granite countertop, the installation crew carefully checked the top of the cabinet surface with straightedges to make sure it was completely flat. Where necessary, a grinder was used to remove bumps and high spots to prep for installation.

Granite is heavy and needs to be handled with care, so we rounded up

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Masons troweled on a mortar scratch coat over galvanized diamond lath fastened to the cement board (A), then allowed the mortar to cure overnight. When applying the manufactured stone veneer, they started at the corners (B) and worked in sections (C), back-buttering each stone and pressing it into the scratch coat. Workers checked the top of the cabinet surface with straightedges (D) and used a grinder to remove high spots (E) to make sure it was flat prior to installing the granite countertop (F). Ipe trim on the bar overhang (G) offers a warm contrast to the stone veneer cladding (H).

as many workers as we could to help out on the day of delivery. Before lowering the countertop into place, we applied an ASTM C920 silicone sealant around the perimeter.

Finally, we covered the bar overhang with a 1x8 ipe board directly secured through the cement-board sub-

strate into the framing with plugged screws and a dab of PL Premium exterior glue. We drilled $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-diameter holes about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep, followed by $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch-diameter holes the rest of the way through the wood. After driving the 2-inch exterior screws into the framing, we placed drops of exterior

glue into the holes and filled them with $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-diameter ipe plugs to give the bar top a finished look.

Clemens Jellema owns Fine Decks Inc., in Calvert County, Md. This article previously appeared in sister publication Professional Deck Builder.

PSN

POOL AND SPA NEWS



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is the resource for exclusive online content, new and innovative product information, and the comprehensive POOL AND SPA NEWS Directory—the industry’s comprehensive business resource list.

Product Profiles: Package Pools and Vinyl Liners



RENOLIT Weld-On-Site PVC Membranes

The RENOLIT ALKORPLAN PVC is a new line of designer PVC pool liner membranes that gives residential pools or commercial aquatic facilities a high-end designer look to match the latest in outdoor décor. This new PVC membrane is a textured liner membrane pattern inspired by nature and imitates the look and feel of slate, sand, stone, granite and marble.

This 80mil-thick reinforced membrane is welded in place and lines the interior of the pool. It requires no special equipment and installation takes days not weeks. There's no need to wait on suppliers — simply order the material for the pool and dealers can install the membrane quickly on their own schedule.

"Reinforced PVC membranes are the world's most reliable waterproofing solution and are quickly becoming the preferred solution for waterproofing both pools and pool decks," says Matthew Sands, sales engineer for American RENOLIT Corp.

Contact: American RENOLIT Corp. | alkorplan.info



APC 365 Auto Cover for Vinyl Liner/Package Pools

Pool builders and installers of vinyl liner pools now can offer Automatic Pool Covers' APC 365 auto cover specifically designed for vinyl liner pools.

The APC 365 uses a coping and housing system that allows an automatic cover to be integrated into the pool construction by using a 48-inch coping that encapsulates the pool corners. This provides a 100% accurate fit.

The system uses a slide-on polybox housing that saves installers hours of time, and keeps the housing's lid perfectly flush with the deck.

"It is the most comprehensive and best-engineered automatic cover solution for vinyl liner pools," says Michael Shebek, the company's president.

The complete unit includes a high-density poly box, coping, electric motor drive, flush lid, premium grade vinyl, Invisa-Rope and a personalized PowerTouch operation system to secure the pool in 45 seconds. It's available in 8 different colors and four corner styles.

Contact: Automatic Pool Covers | automaticpoolcovers.com

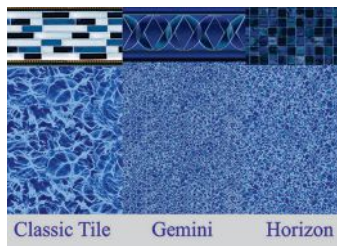


Imperial Pools' Nexus Double Feature

Imperial Pools' Nexus Double Feature is a steel panel modular pool entry system.

The system consists of approximately 31 individual steel components. These components can allow installers to configure thousands of stairs, sundeck, and bench side-by-side options.

Contact: Imperial Pools | imperialpools.com



Loop-Loc's 2023 Innovative Liner Designs

All of Loop-Loc's 42 designer patterns are manufactured with the Clear-Loc Invisible Floor Seam Technology, designed to provide smoother, less noticeable seams.

Loop-Loc has added two new exclusive patterns to its line of Luxury Liners, including SeaDreams, the latest additions to the company's PearlEssence line. Infused with iridescent inks that shimmer and sparkle, PearlEssence liners transform any pool into a glittering oasis.

Bronzed Cocoa, Rutland Waters (shown above) and Widemere Lake are new additions to the company's exclusive collection. In addition, Loop-Loc continues to offer its extensive line of PearlEssence, Boutique, Embossed and Cherished favorites.

State-of-the-art computer technology and manufacturing equipment ensure a perfect fit in any pool. Made in the U.S.A.

Contact: Loop-Loc | looploc.com

New 2023 Premier Liner Fashions

Megna Pools is introducing three new Premier Series Liner Fashions for 2023.

The new Antigua patterns feature a refreshed classic pattern pebble with either the Horizon mosaic tiles at the waterline or the Gemini circular diamond pattern.

The new Classic tile features linear tiles and a dramatic water effect floor.

"These are updated and exciting liner patterns which accent our Premier Liner Fashion series," says David Rice, manager of Megna Pools. "Customers love that these new patterns round out our Premier Series Liner Fashions offering."

Megna Pools offers a 25-year limited warranty on all seams.

Contact: Megna Pools | megnapools.com

Titan & Trimax Steel Panels, Structural Armor & Fuzion 5010 Composite Panels

OnlyAlpha offers two package pool components, Titan and Trimax Steel Panels and Structural Armor & Fuzion 5010 Composite Panels.

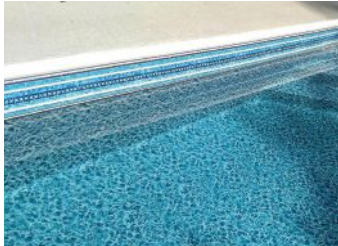
Titan Steel is the company's strongest, most corrosive-resistant steel panel. It's made of 14 gauge galvanized steel, with panel heights ranging from 42- to 52 inches. Turnbuckle bracing and optional deck supports. New are 6-foot panel length on 48-inch height panels.

Trimax XP3 are steel wall construction components. This pool system is not only flexible to various sizes and shapes, but also provides critical strength and rigidity to the structure of the pool. It's made of 14 gauge galvanized steel, 42-inch wall height, and multiple bracing options, including adjustable and deck supports.

Structural Armor & Fuzion 5010 Composite Panels offers four major benefits: design versatility, dimensional stability, strength and corrosion resistance.

Contact: Only Alpha Pool Products | onlyalpha.com

Product Profiles: Construction Equipment



Pegasus Inground and Aboveground Vinyl Liners

Pegasus' experienced engineers and products can accommodate a more comprehensive range of needs. "The quality of our product is second to none," says Frank Patel, owner/president. "We have high standards that we adhere to, from raw goods to the finished products." Patel cites the unique variety of patterns with a realistic appearance as being among the key features of his company's products.

The material for the liners is made using virgin-grade vinyl that contains ultraviolet inhibitors as well as fungicide and biocide protectors. Using the latest in computer-aided design and cutting, Pegasus can customize its liners to fit its customers' pools perfectly.

Technical support is available at the company's toll-free number. A variety of marketing materials, including brochures, banners, fliers and liner material samples, are available upon request.

Contact: Pegasus Products | pegasus-products.com



Envision AR App

The Envision AR app from Tara brings the power of augmented reality to the pool design process. Dealers can use the app to show homeowners how a Tara liner will look in their backyard.

Using the camera, the app allows dealers to place a pool in any backyard. They can choose the shape and begin customizing the liner pattern and deck color to find the perfect combination. Then, they can add a safety cover and sun shade to complete the design.

"Envision AR is the perfect tool to assist customers with their liner pattern selection, because it personalizes their pattern choices by showing them how they will look in their own space," says Thomas Kennedy, marketing director for Tara Pool & Outdoor Products. "We've had homeowners tell us that it was very helpful in their pattern selection process."

The app is free to download and available for Apple and Android phones and tablets.

Contact: Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com



The Quikspray Carrousel Pump

The Quikspray Carrousel Pump and related sprayed equipment are specifically designed to pump and spray aggregated cement formulas with and without reinforcement fibers for the construction of manufactured rocks or artificial rocks, pools, waterfalls, faux rock sculptures and landscaping features.

Unlike a rotor/stator pump, the Carrousel Pump can run dry with no problems. Also, there are no seals, boots, or gaskets to replace. Clean up is accomplished in only minutes with a couple of sponges.

"This equipment is being used worldwide because of its simplicity, dependability, ease of maintenance and operation," says Leah Barker, Quikspray's sales and marketing specialist. "It's recommended by many material manufacturers and contractors who are also spraying fireproofing, stucco, shotcrete, cement/plaster interior and exterior coatings, acoustics, waterproofing, texture coatings, EIFS and many more, plus grout applications."

Contact: Quikspray | quikspray.com

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New Products

BY PSN STAFF



Floating Luxuries

The Kai Side Table features a spacious top to hold larger items such as an ice bucket, towel, iPad/tablet, or book. The top also features a lip to keep things more secure and in their place. The unique engineered two-point grip securely holds the Kai Luxury Umbrella and is designed to resist tipping and lifting.

Contact: floatingluxuries.com



Polaris

The Polaris ATLAS suction-side cleaner introduces HALO technology that provides advanced debris removal. Its concentrated scrubbing action removes stuck-on debris and its powerful turbines generate the climbing ability to cover the entire pool from floor to waterline.

Contact: polarispool.com



GreenStory Global Pool & Spa Filtration

The GreenStory Global Cyanuric Acid Remover filter fits in any skimmer basket to reduce overall CYA levels at an average of 10-20 ppm per week. There is no need to drain the pool and it has no effect on pool chemistry. It works at any water temperature and is environmentally friendly.

Contact: greenstoryglobalpoolandspa.com



Pür Spas

The new Feeling spa offers the Feel It station to experience a pleasant feeling in the hands or feet as they're rubbed over the protrusions. Additional features include a back lit, cascading waterfall and hydrotherapy massage provided by 24 adjustable jets. Made in Canada.

Contact: purspas.com



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