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Observations from Atlantic City



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

We've just returned from Atlantic City after three days' attendance at The Pool & Spa Show Powered by NESPA.

You can read our report of the show on page 11, but my personal take is that it was a very successful event — it was well attended, the general buzz was upbeat and positive, and people were happy to be back to their old selves.

Part of the reason for this, I believe, is due to the busy year ahead. Despite the many gloom-and-doom prognostications of a tanking economy in 2023, the vast majority of the pool and spa professionals I spoke to were not seeing any signs of it coming soon. In fact, business was moving full speed ahead. And while it wasn't at the frenetic pace of the lockdown years, it still was a challenge to keep up with demand.

Granted, this is entirely anecdotal and taken from the very small sample size of Those Who Spoke to Joanne McClain in Atlantic City. But I do think it's indicative of a solid year for the pool and spa industry here in the U.S.

While negative economic factors may more quickly affect the housing market, the pool industry has

historically lagged behind by a good 12-18 months. This may give many company leaders a unique opportunity to position their organizations for the future.

In Atlantic City, I spoke with a pool builder who did just that. His company previously built pools for the low- to midrange homeowner. However, these customers were increasingly canceling their projects as their confidence in the economy sank. In response to all the uncertainty, this builder chose to restructure his marketing plan to target a wealthier and thus more stable demographic. He now builds fewer but more expensive pools and rarely deals with cancellations.

That's but one example. It'll be interesting to see how other pool and spa companies adapt to a post-COVID but pre-recession world, and beyond. I look forward to hearing more such stories as we head to the Florida and Western shows later this month and next.


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NESPA Show Returns to Pre-Pandemic Participation

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

The Pool & Spa Show: Powered by NESPA celebrated its first show out of COVID's shadow.

"This year was such a return to form, in not just what you saw with your eyes but just how it felt," said Dominick Mondì, executive director of the Northeast Spa and Pool Association, which organizes the event. "The industry was excited, they were happy to be there, they were happy to be with each other."

In 2021, the group offered its show virtually, while the emergence of a new COVID variant had its impact last year.

While officials continue to reconcile the exact data from the event, they estimate attendance in the same neighborhood as the 2020 show, which broke records.

"I think this year we delivered the right audience for the companies that were exhibiting," Mondì said.

Approximately 365 exhibitors occupied more than 105,000 square feet of booth space.

This year, the organization broke what some in the tradeshow business consider a cardinal rule — holding educational sessions during some show hours. While conventional wisdom says doing so will reduce the amount of time attendees spend on the floor with exhibitors, Mondì said the courses actually kept attendees in the convention center longer, and created more consistent traffic rather than drastic peaks in the morning and valleys in the late afternoon.

On the show floor, highlights once again included The Wall. Set along the back of the show, it featured hands-on seminars and demonstrations addressing vinyl-liner measurement, variable-speed pumps and tile, and heater troubleshooting. A miniature vinyl-liner pool was built so attendees could practice measuring, walls were erected so attendees could apply tile, and a few manufacturers displayed and showed their variable-speed pumps so students could learn the various technologies and techniques for each.

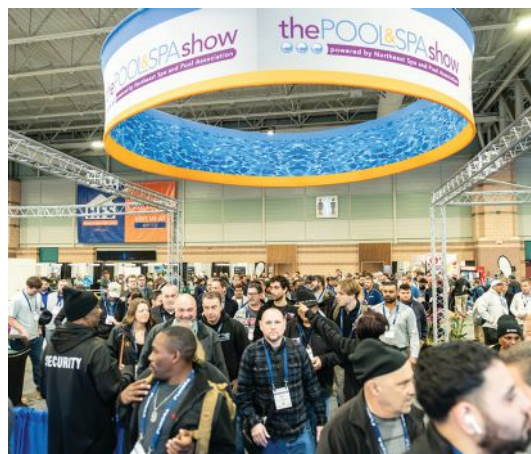
"If we had more seats, we would have [booked] more," Mondì said.

In all, the event included 127 educational sessions.

The mood on the floor was positive, not only because the crowd was happy to gather under normal conditions for the first time since January 2020, but also because they're expecting a good year, even if sales temper a bit from the COVID highs.

"I think everybody's expecting the momentum to carry us to a good but a normal good strong year," Mondì said.

Next year's The Pool & Spa Show takes place Jan. 23-25, 2024 at the Atlantic City Convention Center.



Easton Pool & Spa, Plunge Plus Name New President/Investor

PSN Top 50 Builder Easton Pool and Spa and its subsidiaries have taken on a new principal and investor.

This includes Plunge Plus Concepts,

which produces precast concrete plunge pools. Easton also owns Atlantic Water Services, a water transport firm.

All three are headquartered in South

Easton, Mass.

Tim Dooling now serves as president of the three firms and will take an equity stake in Plunge Plus. He has 30 years of experience in distribution, logistics and manufacturing, including 15 years of senior executive level experience.

Long-time second-generation owners David and Bob Hobaica remain fully active in the companies.

"I've known Tim personally and professionally for many years. With our significant growth ... it was imperative we bring in an operator and leader with Tim's level of experience to help manage our continued growth," said David Hobaica.

They made this move to help manage growth of all companies, with Easton Pool's volume more than doubling since the pandemic. It also frees David Hobaica, who had served as president, to focus more time on scaling the Plunge Pool business. It currently has dealers as far west as Chicago, with plans to expand westward.

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L-R: Tim Dooling, David Hobaica



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Genesis Names Tile Faculty Advisor

The construction and design education group Genesis has named an individual to head its tile education. Renowned pool/spa tile installer Greg Andrews will head up that niche, as Tile Faculty Advisor. The co-founder of National Tile and Stone Authority has worked in the tile industry for more than 40 years — 20 of them almost

exclusively on pools — and has participated in the drafting of tile installation standards. He has taught Genesis courses for more than 10 years.

In addition to helping coordinate Genesis' tile-related education, Andrews will field questions about tile, waterproofing and coping from industry professionals outside the classroom.

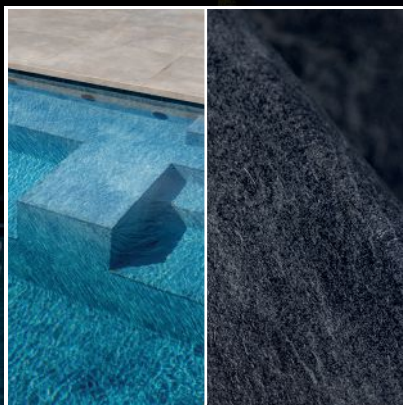


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Manufacturers, Distributor Boost Step Into Swim Fundraising

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance has gained three key partnerships in its Step Into Swim initiative, which aims to defray the costs of swim lessons to the less-advantaged. At the Pool & Spa Show Powered by NESPA, equipment manufacturers Fluidra and Hayward, as well as distributor Heritage Pool Supply, presented donations totaling \$180,000. The organization has set a goal to raise \$750,000 in 2023.

Lyon Financial Makes New Key Hire

Lyon Financial, which offers financing specifically for pools, has named Scott Pleasant as its Business Development Liaison, overseeing key accounts and strategic partnerships within the pool/spa industry.

For 13 years, he served as Director of Finance and Business Solutions for Paramount Capital, where he built relationships with pool builders, manufacturers and remodelers.

He brings a background in sales, customer service and business development.

"I have known and done business with Scott for many years and feel this is a great opportunity for us both," said Lyon Financial Founder and CEO, Richard Lyon.



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Remembering Industry Pioneer Leif Zars

Founder of historic San Antonio firm Gary Pools, Zars contributed greatly to efforts in preventing entrapment and diving injury.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

Leif Zars, founder of the historic pool builder Gary Pools, died Jan. 19, two days short of his 99th birthday.

In addition to breaking new ground in building a product that was just made accessible to the middle class, Zars leveraged his engineering background by performing research and overseeing industry standards regarding drain entrapment and diving safety.

Leif Alexander Zars was born January 21, 1924 in Munich. He and his family moved to the U.S. when he was a toddler, settling in Ohio. He joined the Navy at 17, during World War II. He spent part of his assignment on a ship that patrolled the East Coast, protecting the U.S. from German U-boats.

Zars earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech. Later in his career, in 1968, he graduated from the Advanced Management Program at Harvard's Graduate School of Business.

He began his career with the Ethyl Corporation, a chemical manufacturer, as a research engineer, securing them several patents. After moving around for work, he and his first wife, Patricia, decided to settle with their family in San Antonio and enter the infant pool industry. They founded Gary Pools in 1954.

"He had gone through Arizona and California in his travels and realized that there as a market for pools in these hot areas," says his son, Leif Zars II, now president of Gary Pools. "Being a mechanical engineer, he thought he could come up with a business around that."

Starting in the decade after World

War II, at a time when many Germans in America were wary about revealing their heritage, he named the company after of one of his sons.

At first, the firm built vinyl-liner pools, but the membranes didn't hold up to the Texas sun, says his son Keith Zars, owner of high-end pool builder Keith Zars Pools, also in San Antonio.

At this time, the industry was just starting to use the dry shotcrete process (gunite) as a way to place concrete in an easier way, making pools more affordable for middle-class families. It didn't take long for the elder Zars to convert as one of the first builders to use gunite in San Antonio.

"It was unique, because they more or less took a vinyl-liner mentality and put it into the gunite business, in that they thought more people should be able to afford a pool than you would have thought back then," Keith Zars says.

Over time, the elder Zars also developed a monolithic wall-to-wall cantilever structure to help pools withstand the infamous expansive soils in the area.

In addition to breaking ground in his own market, Zars applied his engineering knowledge to the issues of preventing suction entrapment and diving injury.

He chaired the national association's drain-cover standard writing committee when it drafted the first standard cited in the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act. (This was with the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals, precursor to Pool & Hot Tub Alliance.)

But he researched the issue well



before the federal law spurred quick change. For one thing, he was one of the first builders to standardize the installation of dual main drains as a means of preventing entrapment.

He had also performed research on the subject of pool geometry and its effects on diving safety. He served on myriad groups and published articles on both subjects.

"He was the visionary, with a focus on safety that was measurable in the field," says Steve Barnes, director of science and compliance at AquaStar Pool Products, who took over as chairman of the drain-cover standard committee after Zars left in 2014. "[He came to it] as a pool builder who was dedicated to safety at a time when there were no standards in many cases."

Leif Zars remained with Gary Pools until 2018, when his namesake took over. He had overseen the construction of more than 22,000 residential and commercial pools, his family said.

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The 45th Annual Western Pool & Spa Show is Coming

This industry event packs fun and knowledge into three days on the coast

BY LINDA G. GREEN

Soon it will be time to head for the beach — Long Beach, Calif. that is. The 45th Western Pool & Spa Show returns to the seaside city on March 23-25, 2023.

True, the coronavirus hasn't disappeared and organizers were still working on show details at press time, but it looks as if things are returning to a more normal state for the upcoming event.

As participants will remember, last year at

the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, there were sanitizing stations throughout the facility, separate entrance and exits, and attendees needed to wear masks and show proof of vaccination. As for 2023, organizers were working out the many details of the event when PSN caught up with Show President Peter Haverlation. But he was able to report that WPSS will not have the same look as it did earlier in the pandemic.

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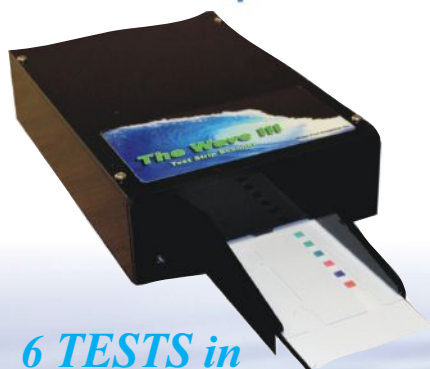
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Of course, organizers hope this year's show enjoys another good turnout. Haverlinton notes that the event will return to the 78,000-square-foot Hall C. There's no admission fee for people registering online; those who wait to register at the venue will be charged a \$10 admission fee.

The exhibit hall hours will vary: On opening day, Thursday, the show

floor will be accessible from 6 to 9 p.m. On Friday, the doors are open 2 to 6 p.m. And on Saturday, the hall will be open for business from 1 to 6 p.m.

Show details such as the Exhibitors Mixer, which has kicked things off in the past, were still being developed at press time. But it can be reported that product giveaways will return this year. Door prizes will be awarded all

three days of the show. And, yes, the highly anticipated \$20,000 giveaway will end the event on a high note.

GOLF, ANYONE?

Speaking of giveaways, the popular putting contest on a 9-hole course on the show floor is returning. The goal is to raise money for the California Pool & Spa Association

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and, as Haverlation notes, the show has been able to give CPSA \$10,000 for a number of years. “We hope to do so again,” he says. “They do so much for the industry.”

He also points out that attendees often bring their children to the show and the 9-hole course gives the kids something to do.” And, let’s face it, the grownups get a kick out of the putting green too.

But that’s not the only thing golf enthusiasts have to look forward to. The CPSA golf tournament for pool and spa professionals returns to Skylinks at Long Beach Golf Course on the Wednesday before the show, March 22. It will include a buffet lunch beforehand, and prize contests at certain holes.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

A major part of the show is the educational program, and once

again, organizers have put together a comprehensive schedule. With 84 sessions, many of which also are taught in Spanish, pool and spa professionals should have no trouble brushing up on basics — and exploring new topics of interest.

Even a quick look at the lineup for Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows the variety of topics to be covered. From water chemistry, algae, hydraulics, filtration, plaster issues and stains to marketing, billing and more, the lineup has something for industry newcomers and veterans alike. And, yes, Haverlation will be an instructor again, leading a class titled “There’s More to Know Than Pushing a Pole,” on Friday at 11 a.m.

As for the array of classes, he says chemistry is a topic that “everyone wants to know about.” Besides various industry professionals and companies

leading classes in their specialties, there also will be sessions by the Pool, Spa & Aquatics Alliance and GENESIS.

Last year there was a two-day virtual CPO class and, reports Haverlation, “Some learned better online — a benefit of the pandemic.” As of this writing, it looks as if the virtual class will be returning.

The Product Showcase is coming back this year, giving attendees a look at new and useful industry items. Indeed, last year 18 companies were represented.

Finally, reflecting on the upcoming show, Haverlation says, “One hopes that the more people know, the more they can learn. I’m 53 years in the business and have been teaching classes; I’m trying to pass on information so we can be even better than last year.”

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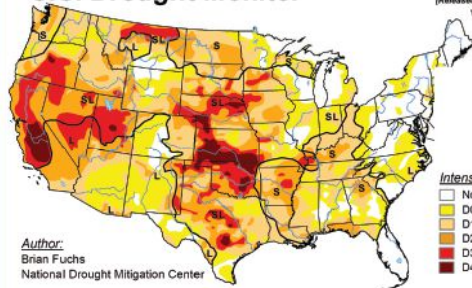


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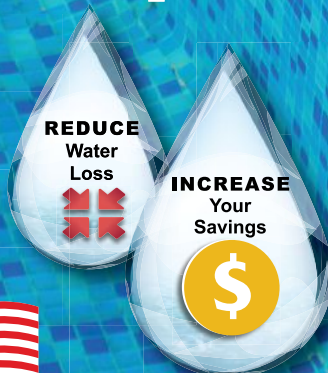
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Readying for the Next Phase

Whether you want to sell your company, partner with an investor or integrate it into a franchise system, the right steps will help draw the right buyer or partner.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ

PHOTOS: ADObESTOCK





It's an interesting time to think about leaving your company or changing your business model.

The pandemic has delayed retirement for some, so they're overdue. Others just feel burned out by the insane workload experienced over the last three years.

On the other side of the coin, others want to take advantage of heightened demand and expand their companies more.

No matter what kind of partner you're interested in — investor, acquirer, or franchiser — the industry offers more options than ever. There are more regional and national companies looking to partner with existing operations, whether it be the consolidators growing large-scale companies by acquiring, or the franchises that have been in the industry for years or even decades. Even smaller companies are purchasing neighboring firms in greater numbers to expand the reach in their markets.

It's true that investors initially were drawn to the industry by the historic growth it showed during the pandemic. While those numbers are tapering off, investors remain interested, some observers say.

"Because of the essential services branding that we all had over the last couple years, that has given investors a sense of comfort that, no matter what gets thrown at us — pandemic, economic correction, etc. — we're fairly resilient," says Troy Hazard, a business

consultant and chairman of the board for Dallas-based pool/spa retail/service franchiser Poolwerx.

But whether looking to work with a purchaser, investor or franchiser, you'll need to prepare the business. Follow these guidelines to ease the transition and position the move as positively as possible with all parties involved.

START FROM THE BEGINNING

Before presenting your company to potential buyers or partners, establish your own goals.

"I ask my clients for their definition of success when they look back on their career," says consultant Scott Hunsaker, founding partner of Ardent Group and former president of aquatics design firm Counsilman-Hunsaker. He sold his family firm to employees and specializes in that route.

With that goal in mind, you can more easily map your strategy. As the seller, your goal may be to get the highest price possible.

"Start at the finish line," Hazard says. "If the finish line is to sell the business for the best enterprise value that you can possibly get, then start with that and focus on demonstrating what that value has looked like in the last three years, and what that value is likely to look like in the next three to five years."

But that isn't always the end goal, Hunsaker says. "Many of the people that I know in the industry were the

founding owners," he says. "For many of them, their business is their family, it's their baby. The people they work with and their clients are near and dear to them."

"Three components are usually important to a founding owner — what happens to the employees, the customers, and the legacy of the business. So I find that, once a lot of founding entrepreneurs start thinking about it, money sometimes isn't the most important thing."

DOWN TO BRASS TACKS

In any discussion about selling your business, converting to a franchise or taking on an investment partner, your company's books will be the first thing to come up. This topic immediately springs up for two reasons — it's the most important indicator of how viable the company is; and it's also the area where small business owners seem to be the weakest.

Interested parties want to see how your company performed in the recent past, and how it is expected to do in the near future. When looking at smaller operations, such as most pool/spa builders, retailers and service firms, some potential partners may be happy with one year back and one year projected. Others will want three going back and looking forward.

And the data must be clean. When business owners use company earnings

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to fund portions of their personal life — no judgment, these experts say — it can muddy the books. Some prospects will not have the patience to wade through the books and figure out how the data would change without those personal expenditures.

“You can’t have it both ways,” Hazard says. “You’re either running a business to make it profitable ... because your multiple is going to be based on that profit. Or you run it ... a tad messy, and that’s the stuff that we move on from quite quickly.”

At the very least, a potential purchaser or partner will want to know specifically which costs are more personal and wouldn’t be carried forward in the future.

“When we’re buying a business, we’re trying to determine or estimate the costs of the business today, the profits of the business today, what are the costs of the business tomorrow, and what are the future profits to the business tomorrow,” says Bruce Mungiguerra, CEO of Riverbend Sandler Pools, a consolidator of pool construction and service firms in Texas.

“So if your life is run through the business, then you just need to be able to separate that. Taking your family on vacation and charging it to the business would not be a future expense in the business.”

If you have a long-term plan to sell or take on a partner, it would be cleaner to stop making those purchases through the company altogether, they say. If nothing else, it shows potential buyers and investors that you run a cleaner ship.

If your company has multiple divisions, provide separate figures for them. This especially applies when trying to partner with a company that specializes in one segment of the business. A firm that consolidates or franchises service operations, for instance, may not want to know about your company’s construction side.



“When it’s all on one ledger, it’s really challenging to understand [whether] the builder business is propping up the retail or service business, or vice versa,” Hazard says. “Without that clarity, that’s the sort of deal that 90% of these guys would walk away from.”

When providing data, you can’t only focus on the past, but will need to provide some projections and budgets for the upcoming year or two. If you’re suggesting that you can grow the company at a certain rate, provide detailed plans explaining how you expect to do that, and data justifying your projections.

Otherwise, Hazard says, “It’s a blue-sky number that you’ve just made up to make it look attractive, but I’m probably not going to believe you.”

Be able to articulate your goals. If you’re looking for an investor to help grow the company, you’ll need to know how much you need, what you’ll do with the investment, and how much growth you expect from the change.

“They might say, ‘If I had \$300,000 of capital, I could go buy six more trucks, and we could add 300 more

weekly routes to our business,’” Mungiguerra says. “It’s sometimes just as simple as that.”

KNOW YOUR KEY EMPLOYEES

To position your company for its next phase, you may have to do some preparatory work with employees, especially key staffers.

Some business owners don’t want to tell employees when they’re thinking of making a major change to the business, fearing they might scare the staff, or word might get out.

But if you plan on retiring from the business, you should have a plan for how the work will continue to get done without you, and who will carry the institutional knowledge. In other words, potential purchasers and partners will want to know which key employees will stick around and how they will make up for the void left by your departure.

Consider having a conversation at least with your key staffers, these experts suggest. Explain to them why you want to make the change, and ask what this means to them. Would they expect to remain or look elsewhere?



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"Is there a person in the business who can run it, or do we need to find somebody who's going to run that business?" Mungiguerra asks. "We certainly don't want to acquire a business if we don't have any idea who we think is going to stay or go."

Look at ways to increase the value proposition for both the new partner and key staffers. If your plans include promoting employees to play a more important role in the next phase, provide them training so they increase their value to the operation. To make the deal more enticing to the staffer, consider offering them a package to stay.

EXTRA POLISH

Presentation matters. Make sure your books are clean literally as well as figuratively.

Furthermore, Hazard suggests, practice your presentation.

"You can't just throw the books in front of somebody and say, 'Hey, I want to sell my business. What's it worth?'" Hazard says. "You actually have to sell it. You have to physically put that sales process in place, which means you have to prepare your presentation to suit that particular buyer so that you meet their needs, answer their questions and you're succinct."

He refers back to when he was helping Poolwerx seek out a private-equity partner. "I would playbook every meeting ... so I'd know exactly what I was going to say, where I want to take the conversation and what information I'd like to get out of them that will help me prepare the next presentation and answer some of their questions before they ask them."

GET THE RIGHT INPUT

If this all falls out of your wheelhouse, don't feel bad — that's the case for a lot of small-business owners. Consult with an accountant, attorney or other specialists. You could even take it a step further.

"I would encourage getting a team of people who can help you make a knowledgeable business decision," Hunsaker says. "That might include an accountant, a lawyer and a business-evaluation firm."

This not only helps potential purchasers or partners, but you as well.

"You have all the information to make a timely and accurate decision on how to move forward for your organization, but more importantly for your goals and objectives of the organization after you leave," Hunsaker says.

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PHOTOS: BREYER CONSTRUCTION AND LANDSCAPE

MANAGING LARGE-SCALE OUTDOOR LIVING PROJECTS

To keep larger and more complex jobs on track, grow your team and improve your systems.

BY MATTHEW BREYER

Times are changing, and client expectations are evolving. The rebound after the recession a decade ago, combined with the expansion of internet commerce and easy mobile web browsing, has fundamentally altered traditional business models. As I review the last couple of decades, we've definitely seen a progression in our own firm. Where we were once hired to build single, simple "things" — like a deck — now we are often asked to build multilevel decks with a roof, a patio, lighting, conditioned space, a fire feature, and often major yard reconstruction.

The increased complexity brings with it the necessity for more material suppliers, subcontractors, detailed building plans, and multiple inspectors and inspections. We need to be able to commu-

nicate effectively and efficiently with all of them. At the same time, we need to be able to interact with educated and involved clients, many of whom have construction time-frame expectations built on years of watching HGTV episodes.

Even if you could try to keep it simple and shy away from the "million dollar" backyards, logistical complications will follow you into the simpler projects as well. The environment we all work in has changed so drastically that even single-service providers must become proficient at these new skill sets.

Fortunately, the tools and techniques to mitigate problems, manage expectations, and deliver consistent results have been in use by larger full-service remodeling companies for years and, with some refinements, can be adapted to work well



To keep multiple jobs on schedule, an effective production manager coordinates the subcontractors for not just one project but for many different projects, so that equipment and resources are available when needed.

for us as deck builders. Let's look at a few of these tools and their application: the people, the paperwork, the conversations, contingencies, and completion.

To keep multiple jobs on schedule, an effective production manager coordinates the subcontractors for not just one project but for many different projects, so that equipment and resources are available when needed.

INVEST IN THE RIGHT PERSONNEL

Skilled craftspeople are obviously key to the success of a construction company, but the supporting cast is just as important in meeting the demands of a modern business. In a smaller company, a single individual might hold several job titles, but as a company grows, these positions will eventually need the full-time focus of a dedicated person.

Front office and initial client communication. The first point of contact with a prospect ideally gleans as much information as possible about the project and the client expectations and sets the stage for how the relationship will continue moving forward. Though this task can be outsourced, it's difficult to find a third-party provider who can communicate the culture of

your firm over the phone as well as someone who lives and breathes it every day.

Production management. This role, though often overlooked and passed off to project managers, is the "network hub" of all upcoming projects, all ongoing projects, and any past projects that may be up for warranty work. This individual looks at the backlog to optimize the schedule and make sure resources are lined up and ready at just the right time. The focus is on overall production, not just a single project.

Project management. The title and nuance of the job description will vary with each firm, but the basics generally include interacting daily with the clients and ensuring that project details are completed on time and on budget, with expectations met. On-the-fly adjustments and quick communication without creating panic are important, as well as knowing when to let someone else do a specific task.

Punch-out person. Maybe this is a handyman, or perhaps a "director of complete client satisfaction." Either way, this person ensures one last time that the jobsite is clean and that any special requests have been addressed, prospective future projects have been noted, and, of course, outstanding pay-

ments have been collected.

With a good team, you can cross-train and make sure that these responsibilities are covered even in times of growth or attrition. As an added benefit, members of a great team will keep each other accountable and encouraged.

MANAGING PAPERWORK

The "paperwork" doesn't have to actually be paper; I think of it as the tools and process that a company uses to track job progress and make sure nothing is overlooked.

Lead/prospect tracking. Whether you use a complex and customized commercial program or a simple spreadsheet, it's imperative to know when someone contacted you, what they contacted you about initially, and why they reached out to you specifically, along with any notes. If you don't know what forms of advertising are generating the best leads, you're flying blind. Use this tool to also gather insights that can be passed along to the rest of the team, to exceed expectations at every interaction.

This information should be shared between your front office and design/sales staff, with any pertinent notes gleaned and passed along to the production teams.

Project backlog report. Let's assume that the project is designed, estimated, and proposed accurately (that is a detailed discussion of its own). To determine how much work we can accomplish in each upcoming month and quarter, we need to know what types of projects pair well together and we need to have historical data to measure expectations against. Done well, this report lets you optimize your schedule for greatest productivity without burning out your team, while giving advance notice if you're starting to slip, or if there might be an opening coming up that could be filled.

This information should be shared among your production teams (man-



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Create a Custom Composite Deck:

- Utilizing existing framing and structure, install additional framing members and sub structure to create a deck frame approx. 14' deep and approx. 29' wide.
- The new deck space will have two clipped corners (not shown in renderings) - only if the final design **does not** include the pergola option.
- Existing decking and railing will be removed from the frame.
- The frame will be cleaned, inspected, and adjusted as necessary to support the new decking installation.
- The existing steps will be removed and a new set of 6" wide steps will be installed on the side of the deck.
- In front of the door, an additional 4' wide set of steps will be installed.
- The new deck area will be framed using Pressure Treated lumber and includes all applicable hangers, hardware, and fasteners.
- TimberTech Terrain decking, in your choice of color, will be installed with hidden fasteners where applicable.
- The railing will be a custom BCL vinyl railing in White with round black aluminum balusters.
- The concrete pad for a propane tank will be removed and mulch will be installed in its place.
- All old materials & construction debris will be removed & disposed of, and the site will be left "broom clean".

Trim & Fascia Option:

- Deliver and install White PVC fascia around the exposed edges of the deck and steps.

Create a Custom Walkway:

- At the bottom of the 4' set of steps, install a walkway, approx. 4' wide down to the lower patio level.
- The walkway will include approx. 10 Cambridge Palisades steps to more comfortably navigate the elevation change in the yard.
- A Westbury aluminum railing will be installed along the steps.
- The pavers used to create the walkway will be matched as closely as possible to the existing patio block.

The author consolidates renderings and project information from the original proposal onto a single page, which he distributes to the project manager and to subcontractors. Sometimes, but not always, the jobsite project sheet includes a detailed set of construction drawings, depending on project complexity.

agement and subcontractors specifically), your design/sales team so they don't over-promise anything, and your company ownership, who will need to know if things are slipping or if there is room to grow in a specific area.

Jobsite project notes. This often takes the form of a stripped-down proposal, without pricing but including any design images as well as notes on existing site conditions, client "special requests" that may have been captured

earlier, and any permitting information (including the required inspection schedule).

This information should be readily accessible on site and copies shared with any project leads and primary subcontractors. If it's updated, make sure the updates get out, and the old copies are eliminated. For example, if the clients buried a beloved pet where a deck footing might go, this is where it should be noted.

Completion report. This can take many forms, depending on your staff and the level of trust. It could be the entire client folder, or a few selected documents, or just a summary sheet with notes. It's what your punch-list crew will carefully review to make sure that everything has been addressed, all inspections have been passed, payments have been received, and any possible future projects or sales notes have been passed back to the design team and front office for follow-up when appropriate.

The on-site team, the designer, and the production manager should review this information for accuracy. We also utilize GuildQuality to perform client satisfaction surveys; if anything was overlooked, we schedule an additional visit to address it. We also use feedback from the surveys to improve how we handle this final stage.

CONVERSATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

When we think of conversations, often we focus on how we communicate with the clients. It's also important to view those conversations all together as a story line, not isolated chatter. There must be clarity and continuity in what is presented, from the initial prospective phone call all the way to the final cleaning. If you answer the phone and say you also remodel bathrooms, you had better not have an employee along the way saying that you're terrible working inside a client's house! More than simply making sure you "keep your story straight," it's about making sure everyone on the team understands the company's vision, values, and priorities.

Team members also need to be on the same page when discussing project-specific concerns with the client. For example, if you no longer use "X" brand of decking or pavers because of something specific, make sure everyone knows the reason, so that there is alignment and clarity.

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Each job's project manager should be able to communicate effectively with both clients and team members to make sure that project details are completed on time and on budget.

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Bickel		Framing, Roof Beam JL, JS, N	Roof Framing JL, JS, P	Roof Framing JL, P	Framing, Stairs, Decking, Electric JL, P, JS, CS	Roofing, Beam Wrap N
Cocchimiglio				Framing Insp 10:00	Demo, Site Prep, Footers JS, T, D	Footer Insp 2:30
Crestmont		Footers SD	Footers Insp 9:00			
Gibson				Excavation, Piling, Rocks RE, A, N		
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Kelly - Electric - CS						
Kang - JE, E					Berger - Demo, Site Prep - JS, T, D	
A - Off, B - Off		A - Off	A, Off, TH - Last Day	A - Off	N - Off, JK - Off, A - Off	

Distributed weekly to the entire team, the schedule helps keep projects, employees, and subcontractors on track. The schedule includes a few gaps to allow flexibility for weather problems and subcontractor delays.

Conversations should also naturally encompass the hand-off of each piece of reporting referenced above, including any updates to those notes. If something changes, make sure to communicate with everyone who might be impacted.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Deck builders are problem solvers by nature. Where others see gaping holes and inaccessibility and impossible budgets, we see solutions, opportunities, and perfect entertaining spaces. But we're also idealists at times — having trained ourselves to look for the potential,

we risk overlooking the pitfalls. On a large project especially, it's important to build in a margin of error for uncertainties.

We don't have to know which uncertainty, but it's rare to complete a project without a rain day, or a supplier delivering a damaged board, or a mistake about a client's new color selection, or even a miscut railing. Something is going to go wrong, so plan for "something," and when it inevitably happens, you will be better prepared to address it.

For us, this takes shape in how we book appointments (with a few gaps in the schedule in case meeting times

change), how we plan projects (with extra helpers or some additional time allocated), and how we budget (both for our client projects, as well as in our corporate long-term planning). With townships and permit approvals, it's best to have plans submitted a month early, rather than the week prior to project commencement. With subcontractors, always have a back-up contractor or a company "pinch hitter" should you need to bridge the gap while your subcontractor is running behind.

COMPLETING THE PROJECT

The completion is where it all comes together. Full disclosure: This is currently our firm's greatest challenge. These comments are painful and come learned (and re-learned) at great expense. What we've learned is that the completion efforts done by your punch-list team require steady, methodical people who are detail-oriented, and focused. Not "big picture" people, but "list people." Here are some of our takeaways:

- When a project is finishing up (not two weeks later), be sure to ask your subcontractors for feedback on what project notes were vague or what site layout items could have been improved upon; if you wait too long to ask, they will forget.
- While giving the deck or patio a courtesy wash after completion, point out the need to schedule an annual cleaning. It's also the perfect time to view the backyard with a new perspective from the new deck and perhaps discuss the idea of a future shed or fire pit with the client.
- Completion also touches on nagging warranty work. Sure, it may not be your fault that the neighborhood squirrels left their vegan diet to dine on your clients' low-voltage wires. And while by contract you could bill your clients, sometimes promptly replacing the nibbled light fixtures is a small expense now that can deliver huge referrals later.

You need to be prompt and proactive, and not reactive or antagonistic.

One last note: Completion work spans beyond the specifics of the project, or even the potential for future work. Think of it this way: Your clients have just completed what was for them a big investment, and it can be an emotionally sensitive time as they evaluate the perceived value they received and work through expectations against the completed realities. Sometimes having a friendly, approachable listening ear can help reassure your clients that yes, this was a big investment, but it really was worth it. Thank-you cards, small welcome gifts, and the like work well to add that “little extra” to the experience. And at the end of the day, it’s often that final “feel-good” experience that will make your firm memorable enough to mention for years to come.



Outdoor living projects represent a significant investment and potentially a prolonged construction environment for your clients. Taking the time to see that your efforts met their expectations can yield positive reviews and referrals.

Matthew Breyer is president of Breyer Construction and Landscape, in Reading, Pa., and current president of the North American Deck and Railing Association

(NADRA). He’s a former chairman of NADRA’s Education & Codes Committee. This article previously appeared in sister publication Professional Deck Builder.

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Learning Labs

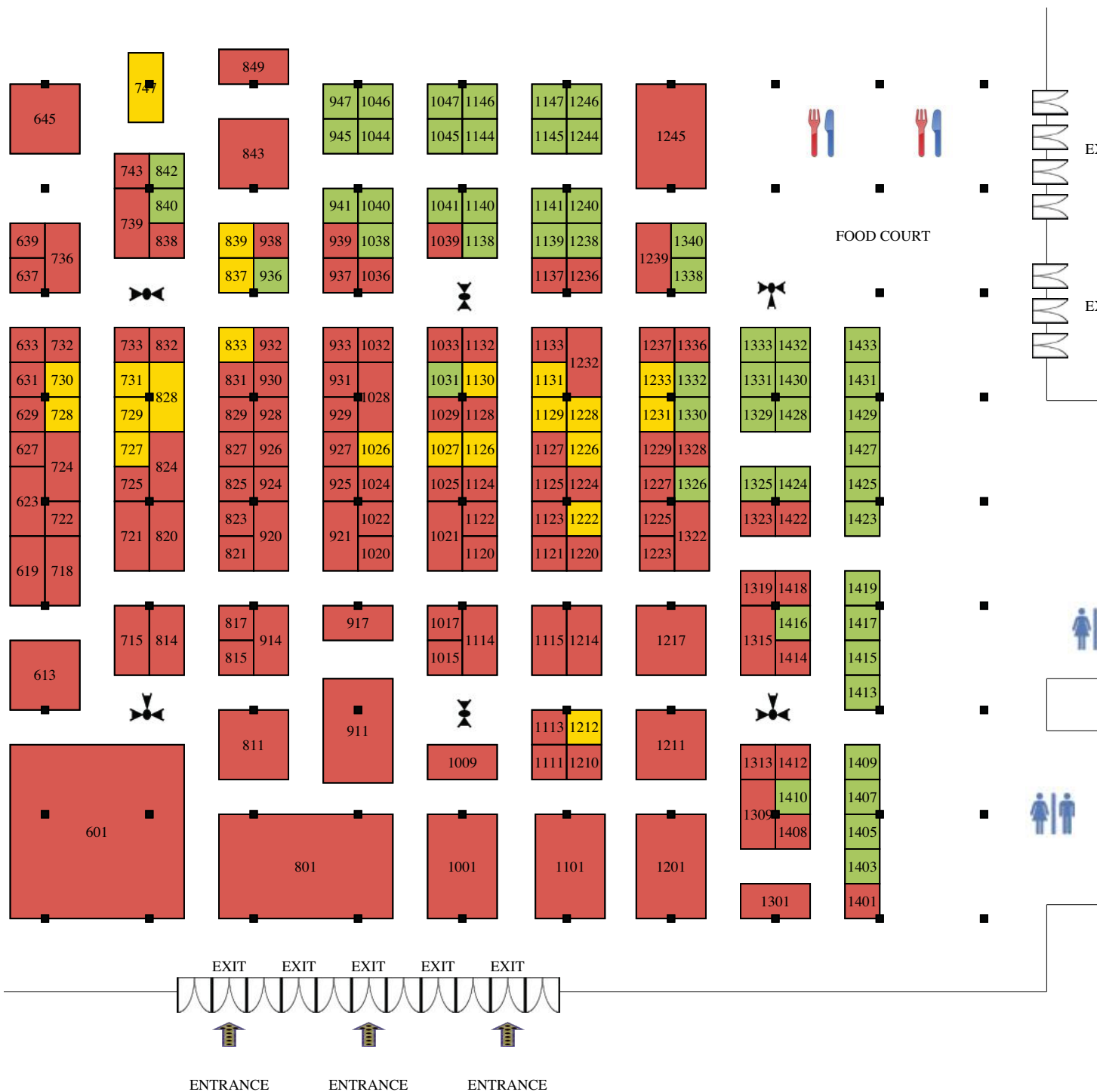
Friday

12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Identifying, Removing, and Preventing Staining and Discoloration in Swimming Pools and Solving Everyday Issues

12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Raypak's Newest Small Footprint Gas Fired Pool & Spa Heater w/ WiFi



2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Introduction to Raypak Small
Footprint Hi Efficiency
Crosswind Pool Heat Pump

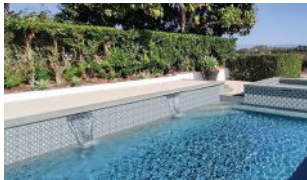
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Installation and Operation
of Green EVO® Variable
Speed Replacement Motors
with Century ConnectIM
Technology

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
A Better Way to Manage Your
Jobs From Start to Finish -
JobTread Demo

Saturday
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Installation and
Troubleshooting Raypak
Avia Gas Pool/Spa Heater &
Crosswind Side Discharge
Heat Pump

Everything Under the Sun Expo Exhibitors Marketplace

Details on products of exhibitors at The Everything Under the Sun Expo are based on materials provided by the manufacturers.



Aquabella Tile, Booth 538

Product: Chateau - New Porcelain Series

Features: new Chateau series evoke playful and stress-free tones of the French countryside

Contact: aquabellatile.com



AquaStar Pool Products, Booth 820

Product: Pipeline Pumps

Features: full-featured variable speed pumps with a unique patent-pending high-efficiency volute design; automation compatible through its RS485 communication port; Wi-Fi enabled; two sizes available

Contact: aquastarpoolproducts.com



Blue Square Mfg., Booth 724

Product: Vivid 360 Retro Pool & Spa Lights

Features: engineered to replace most existing pool and spa lights; use to replace a broken light or upgrade to a more colorful brighter LED light

Contact: bluesquaremfg.com/vivid/



CamerEye, Booth 1229

Product: CamerEye

Features: monitors, detects and alerts on jobsites and for customers' pool safety after construction is complete; designed to improve job safety and quality control, reduce liability

Contact: camereye.ai



Carvin Pool Equipment, Booth 1239

Product: StarFall

Features: 22-inch LED backlit waterfall for aboveground pools; easy to install — simply replace the existing upright on the aboveground pool; cascade of water is adjustable and remote controlled

Contact: carvinpool.com



CCEI USA, Booth 402

Product: Tild pool automation system

Features: remotely control any heater, pump and lights via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi; easy-to-use interface

Contact: na.ccei-pool.com



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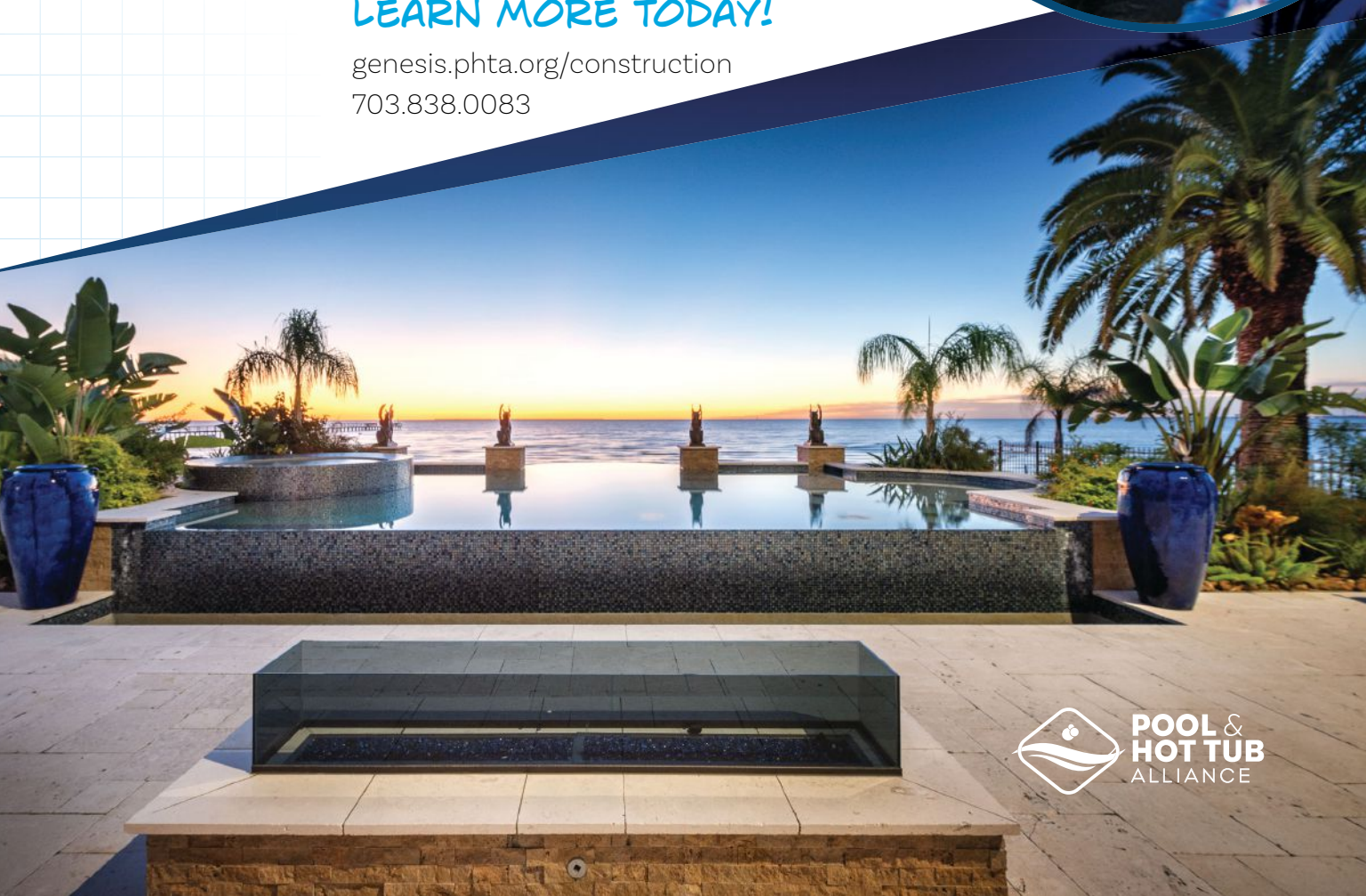
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Clear Comfort, Booth 415

Product: CCW100 AOP Pool System

Features: designed for simplicity, the CCW100 is simple to install and has easy system maintenance, only needing an annual 5-minute cartridge exchange; 5-year warranty and 90-day money-back guarantee

Contact: clearcomfort.com



Clearwater Pool Systems, Booth 1039

Product: pH PURE (PH-50)

Features: control box and a CO2 tank releases trace amounts of carbon dioxide in time-controlled amounts

Contact: clearwaterpoolsystems.com/ph-pure/



Floating Luxuries, Booth 1322

Product: Kai Shelf Lounger

Features: in-pool lounge keeps users cool and comfortable while partially in the water; oversize resort width; built-in cup/phone holders; drain port; use on tanning shelves with less than 9 inches of water

Contact: floatingluxuries.com



Fluidra, Booth 601

Product: Jandy TruClear XL Salt Chlorinator

Features: combines saltwater chlorination for large inground pools with consistent chlorine dispensation; large window provides convenient blade inspection; intuitive app-based control using AquaLink

Contact: Jandy.com



Hammerhead Patented Performance, Booth 436

Product: REMORA XR1600 Portable Pool Vacuum

Features: designed for DIY or limited-access cleaning; wearable lithium battery pack, two-speed Smart Switch, short power cord, battery charger, debris bag, and carry handle; run-time is 50-75 minutes

Contact: hammerheadvac.com/remora



HFS Financial Services, Booth 1201

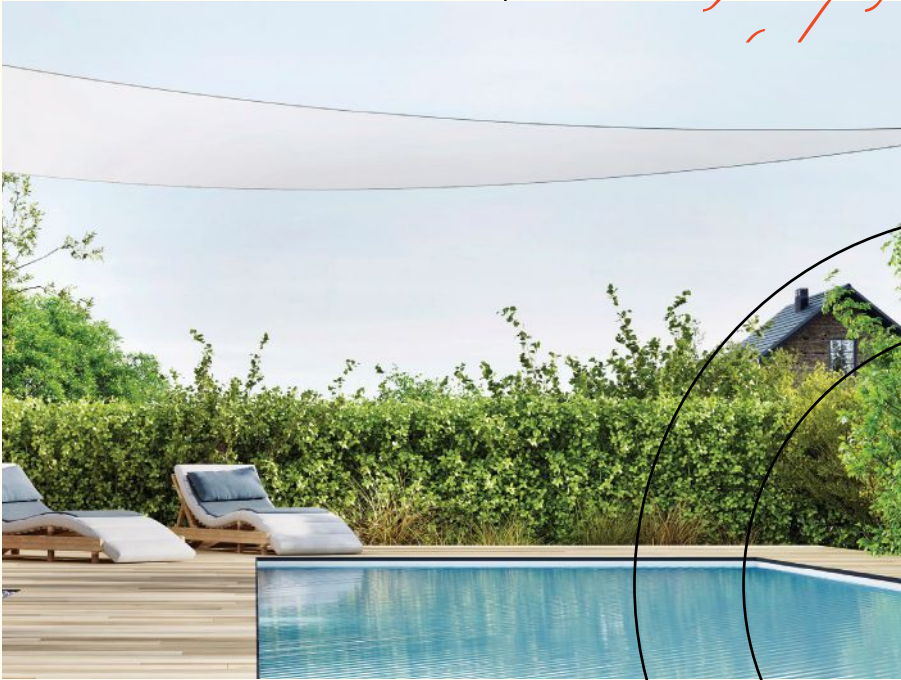
Product: Home Improvement Loans

Features: 100% unsecured loans with terms of up to 20 years; loans of up to \$500,000 with no stage funding; direct-to-consumer funding model allows the contractor to treat the customer as a cash buyer

Contact: hfsfin.com

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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.



Industrial Test Systems, Booth 1210

Product: eXact iDip Pool Professional Test Kit

Features: combines eXact iDip Smart Photometer System and eXact pH+ Smart Meter System

Contact: exactidip.com



Jack's Magic Products, Booth 1021

Product: The Emerald Stuff and the Sapphire Stuff

Features: time-saving flocculants formulated to help clean pools; use 8 ounces per 10,000 gallons to drop dust, debris and other particles to the bottom of the pool, allowing it to be vacuumed as waste

Contact: jacksmagic.com



King Technology, Booth 928

Product: FROG @ease Floating System

Features: hot tub sanitizer uses minerals and a unique chlorine called SmartChlor; formulated to kill bacteria two ways while reducing chlorine use up to 75% and shocking to only once a month

Contact: frogproducts.com



LaMotte Co., Booth 825

Product: Insta-TEST Strips

Features: new look with multilingual (English, Spanish, French) instructions for the label and blister card; instant read test strips come in a convenient PopTop bottle with a molded desiccant liner

Contact: lamotte.com/pool

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Ledge Loungers, Booth 1217

Product: Autograph Collection

Features: the centerpiece of this collection, the Autograph Chaise, features a sleek new design with improved ergonomics, a simplified fill system, and works in up to 12 inches of water

Contact: ledgeloungers.com



Lyon Financial, Booth 645

Product: Unsecured Swimming Pool Financing

Features: low fixed rates for unsecured pool loans; help makes the dream of a pool an affordable reality for homeowners, one low monthly payment at a time; company pays builders directly, ensuring payment on time and in full

Contact: lyonfinancial.net



Magic Plastics, Booth 1124

Product: Union Assemblies

Features: easy connection, self-aligning Buttress Threads and deep socket connections with glue traps are designed to be reliable and leak-free; features patented VibeProof locking feature to assure the Union Nut will not loosen or backout should vibration occur; available in a variety of configurations in 1-, 1½-, 2-, 2½- and 3-inch IPS sizes

Contact: magicplastics.com

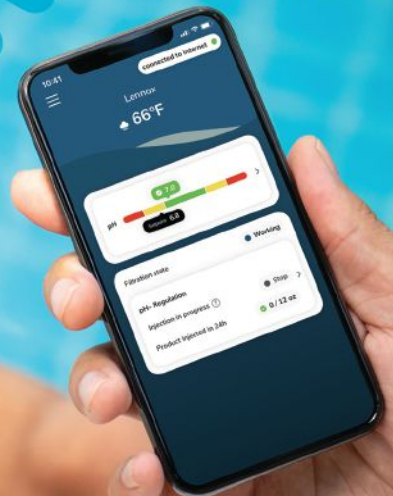
(continued on page 58)

SIMPLE. RELIABLE. CONNECTED.

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www.ccei-pool.com



Simple set up and easy to use, monitor and dose your pH and liquid from afar via Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. Receive notifications and be alerted when your pool falls out of balance. The dosing pump lights up in various colors to alert you of your pool's pH and ORP levels.



Product Profiles: Chemicals



All Clear Professional Pool and Spa Chemicals

If there's a problem or a watercare need for a pool or spa, the All Clear line has an application for it.

Manufactured for more than 50 years, this complete line has eight selling categories.

The list includes large and small stabilized chlorinating tablets, granulated stabilized chlorinating products, algaecide products, non-chlorine sanitizer and acid/PH decreaseers.

The 3-inch tablets and sticks are extremely hard and slow-dissolving.

Dealers and consumers love the All Clear Professional Pool and Spa Chemicals, from the quality of the child-resistant packaging to the attractive color-coding system, according to the company.

Technical support is provided on the website, where SDS's are posted for all products.

Contact: Aqua Tri | aquatri.com



Phileo VP

The new Phileo VP is a connected peristaltic pH chemical feeder that offers real-time information about a pool's pH and chlorine levels.

Connected via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi, users can monitor and dose a pool into balance. Now available at all major distributors.

Contact: CCEI USA | na.ccei-pool.com



pH PURE

pH PURE is a new CO2 injection system designed specifically for residential pools for pH control.

The system consists of a control box and a CO2 tank that can easily be installed in under an hour. Trace amounts of carbon dioxide are injected into the pool's water in time-controlled amounts throughout the day with the computerized control system.

"You will never need to use muriatic acid again to control the pH, and balancing the total alkalinity remains fairly steady without using sodium bicarbonate to raise it," says Ryan Duksa, sales manager for Clearwater Pool Systems. "The cost of muriatic acid has skyrocketed and the system is about 1/5th the price to operate vs. muriatic acid."

The system is compatible with all sanitizing systems including salt-chlorine generators.

Technical support is available by calling 800-756-7946.

ph PURE comes with a 3-year warranty.

Contact: Clearwater Enviro Technologies | ClearwaterEnviro.com



BufferZone Service Scheduling & Water Test Software

The new BufferZone software can schedule and keep track of service jobs, repairs and weekly cleaning routes. Water testing can be done in the field by blue tooth connection using the LaMotte Spin Lab to smart phone or tablet.

The in-store version can save time and money by incorporating two water labs. The Wave Test Strip Scanner and the Spin Lab. Either lab can be run by a click of the mouse.

Fast and cost effective, The Wave provides six water test in about 20 seconds, and costs about 18 cents. For a more comprehensive test, the Spin Lab provides up to ten tests in 1 minute.

"Our customers love the ease of the Wave Scanner and low cost per test," Richard DeLeo, Home Port's partner. "With the ability to run the Spin Lab they love the full spectrum of pool/spa water analysis needed for troubled pools."

Contact: Home Port Water Testing Systems | homeportcomputer.com



Pool eXact EZ Photo-meter Kit

The new NSF/ANSI 50 L1 Certified Pool eXact EZ photo-meter Kit is engineered to deliver 10 important pool water parameters with lab quality results by the poolside.

Contact: Industrial Test Systems | sensafe.com



The Emerald Stuff and the Sapphire Stuff

The Emerald Stuff and the Sapphire Stuff are flocculants formulated as a time-saving method to help clean pools.

Use 8 ounces per 10,000 gallons to drop dust, debris and other particles to the bottom of the pool, allowing it to be vacuumed as waste. Resume swimming after 24 hours.

Contact: Jack's Magic Products | jacksmagic.com



FROG @ease

FROG @ease is a complete, self-regulating hot tub sanitizing system designed to use less chlorine.

The system uses sanitizing minerals plus a low level of chlorine to kill bacteria two ways. In addition, only monthly nonchlorine shock is needed — not after every use. Plus, it contains no cyanuric acid; there's no buildup of harsh, smelly, cloudy, problem-causing water.

Hot tubs do need effective sanitizers that don't require constant maintenance or create problems that lead to premature draining. FROG @ease makes maintenance even easier with prefilled cartridges.

And now, FROG @ease cartridges are recyclable with FROG's new recycling program.

For more information and technical support, call 800-222-0169, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., CST.

Contact: King Technology | frogproducts.com



WaterLink Spin Touch Lab

The WaterLink Spin Touch with Centrifugal Fluidics Photometry uses a patented WaterLink Spin reagent disk to measure 10 different tests in just 60 seconds. It measures Free Chlorine, Bromine, Total Chlorine, Combined Chlorine, pH, Alkalinity, Hardness, Cyanuric Acid, Copper, Iron, Phosphate and Salt.

In addition, the water analyst can be proactive, since they are able to measure all of these important tests and recommend the correct products to fix their water chemistry issues when using the WaterLink Solutions PRO software program.

"We have received a lot of feedback from customers about how the innovative WaterLink Spin Lab has improved their business by making water testing so easy anyone in the store can use it and receive accurate results," says Rich DeMoss, LaMotte's global pool business director. "Many retailers have mentioned that the lab has increased their chemical sales by 20% because they are testing everything every time."

Contact: LaMotte Co. | lamotte.com



Ultrapen PT4 FCE Pocket Tester

The Ultrapen PT4 Free Chlorine Equivalent (FCE) Pocket Tester provides one-button, instantaneous, reagent-free pH, ORP and FCE testing in a rugged aluminum field tester.

Daniel Robinson, North American sales manager for Myron L Co., explains how it came about: The firm took decades of industry knowledge and combined that with years of pocket tester user feedback to design and build "the benchmark in accuracy, reliability and simplicity — the PT Series Ultrapens. By fully potting this product line in an aircraft aluminum tubular enclosure, it provides the toughest, most reliable pocket tester on the market."

A quick-start guide, product data sheet/brochure and posters are available for the PT Series Ultrapens. They come with a manufacturer's warranty.

Contact: Myron L Co. | myronl.com



FIXX IT! Water Saver

FIXX IT! Water Saver forms a clear, invisible barrier on the surface of pool water, reducing evaporation, and conserving water usage.

“Water Saver dramatically reduces water loss due to evaporation,” says Ed Price, vice president of sales and marketing at Phoenix Products Co. “Reducing water loss increases your savings, and it helps everyone do their part in conserving water.”

Conserve even more energy when Water Saver is used with chillers.

Water Saver is compatible with all chemical programs. It's easy to use and comes in convenient 32-oz. packaging. Larger sizes are available for service and commercial. Simply add 4 oz. per 20,000 gallons once or twice weekly.

Water Saver is non-toxic and safe for children and pets. It is environmentally friendly.

FIXX IT! Water Saver is made in the USA.

Contact: Phoenix Products Co. | phoenixproductsco.com



The Attendant

The Attendant is designed to control and monitor any pool equipment from existing manufacturers in the industry.

The cloud-based automation system continually monitors equipment, water quality and temperature to determine energy efficiency, and helps poolowners save money and lower their overall environmental impact.

Contact: Poolside Tech | poolside.tech



Poollife NST System

The Poollife NST System includes everything needed to oxidize, sanitize and remove algae from the pool.

The NST Prime Sanitizer uses a proprietary slow-dissolving cal hypo technology, which clarifies without adding any cyanuric acid (CYA) to the pool water. It's formulated to eliminate bacteria, contaminants and algae without overstabilizing for clear water that's ready for use, all summer long.

The system includes:

Poollife NST Prime Tablets

Poollife NST Purify

Poollife NST Patrol

For technical support, call 866-476-6538.

Contact: Solenis | poolife.com

Product Profiles: Pool Cleaners



The VacDaddy - V2W (Vacuum To Waste)

The VacDaddy's new V2W Vacuum To Waste attachment quickly replaces the existing diffuser cap of the VacDaddy and allows users to attach a hose and vacuum waste water, debris, silt, sand, algae and other super fine sediment out of the pool with ease.

"With over 18 feet of head, this portable but powerful Vacuum To Waste option allows you to quickly and easily clean after flocking or clean up a DE spill," says Matthew D'Aguanno, managing member of Advanced Pool Technologies.

Simply attach a vacuum hose, apply the backwash hose to the far end of the vacuum hose. Direct the water wherever it needs for draining, and turn on the VacDaddy. Begin vacuuming to waste; it's simple.

"Now your weekly service vacuum becomes your full service year-round pool vacuum," says D'Aguanno.

Technical support is available by calling 888-536-8186.

Contact: Advanced Pool Technologies, LLC | thevacdaddy.com



REMORA XR1600 Portable Pool Vacuum

The REMORA XR1600 portable pool vacuum is designed for DIY or limited-access cleaning and features a wearable lithium battery pack, two-speed Smart Switch, short power cord, battery charger, debris bag, and carry handle.

Its run-time is approximately 50-75 minutes.

Contact: Hammerhead Patented Performance | hammerheadvac.com/remora

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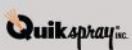
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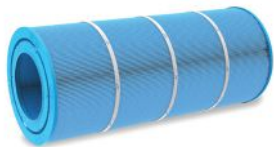
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www.sunbeltmidwest.com



(continued from page 51)



On Core Filtration, Booth 828

Product: EverFlow+ Antimicrobial Pool and Spa Replacement Cartridge Filter

Features: offers a pointbond design to prevent mildew and bacteria buildup; high-filament count spunbond polyester are capped with chlorine and mildew resistant urethane

Contact: oncorefiltration.com



Poolside Tech, Booth 406

Product: The Attendant

Features: cloud-based automation system controls/monitors any equipment from existing manufacturers

Contact: poolside.tech



Raypak, Booth 505

Product: NiTek Heat Exchanger Technology

Features: engineered to create an ideal surface to protect against scale formation and erosion resistance, without compromising on the AVIA heater's 84% thermal efficiency

Contact: Raypak.com/NiTek



Speck Pumps — Pool Products, Booth 407

Product: BaduJet Turbo Pro System

Features: designed to provide a smooth and strong swim lane; the system features a magnetically coupled motor for seal-free operation

Contact: usa.speck-pumps.com



Tara Pool & Outdoor Products, Booth 1422

Product: Sundara Liner with Paddling Paws Option

Features: Paddling Paws is a new pet friendly option made with enhanced scratch/puncture resistance

Contact: tarapools.com



The VacDaddy, Booth 838

Product: VacBaggy

Features: designed to hold a VacDaddy plus all other vacuuming equipment in one simple and compact place in your vehicle; wheels and telescoping handle so users can roll it across hardscapes but easily pick it up to carry up and down steps or over lawns

Contact: thevacdaddy.com



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