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POOL AND SPA NEWS

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POOLS
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EDITORIAL

JOANNE McCLAIN

Editor-in-Chief
jmcclain@zondahome.com

REBECCA ROBLEDO

Deputy Editor
rrobledo@zondahome.com

SALES

GARY CARR

National Sales Manager
gcarr@zondahome.com

LISA HEITNER

National Sales Manager
lheitner@zondahome.com

ART

CAROLYN SEWELL
MELISSA KROCHMAL

Design Director, Media
Graphic Designer

PRODUCTION

CATHY UNDERWOOD
STEPHANIE FISCHER

Senior Director, Print Production
Production Manager

ZONDA MEDIA

ANDREW REID
JENNIFER PEARCE
PAUL TOURBAF
JOHN TATUSKO
JENNIFER MALKASIAN
KATINA BILLADO

Chief Operating Officer
Executive Vice President/Chief Content Officer
Executive Vice President
Vice President/Sales
Director of Analytics
Director, Media Operations

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JEFF MEYERS
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ANDREW REID
TIM SULLIVAN
KURT NELSON
AMY DUDLEY

Chief Executive Officer
Chief Financial Officer
Chief Operating Officer
Senior Managing Principal/Advisory Group
Group Vice President/Talent Strategy
Executive Vice President/National Sales

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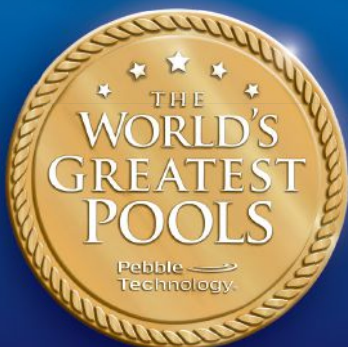


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Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

Shhhh! The business world has become a very quiet place these days. “Quiet quitting,” “quiet firing,” and now the latest business-speak: “quiet promoting.”

If you’re unfamiliar with these terms, it all started early last year with a viral TikTok by career coach Bryan Creely. In it, he points out the fundamental shift that’s occurred in how people view work after the pandemic spurred the Great Resignation. But for those without a financial cushion to absorb the fallout from quitting a job, Creely suggests quiet quitting, which he defines as “doing the minimum amount necessary in order to still maintain your position.” The term has now come to mean doing only what’s required of the job and not going the extra mile.

The next term, “quiet firing,” was coined to describe when management creates unfavorable work conditions that are not supportive of the employee, with the purpose of pushing them to resign. This can happen in a variety of ways: Perhaps the manager withholds opportunities or a promotion, sets unattainable performance goals, or shifts responsibilities that do not align with the employee’s job title and/or description. All are meant to demoralize the employee enough to quit.

So far, the word “quiet” is proving to have a negative connotation. The streak continues with “quiet promoting.”

This latest one describes what

happens when a company gives an employee more work and responsibility without added compensation. It can happen when someone in their workforce quits and company management decides to spread their duties onto other workers instead of rehiring. Or perhaps they’re unable to fill the vacant position but the work still needs to be done.

Regardless of the reason, quiet promoting is not a good business strategy. It’s sure to increase employee burnout, leading to decreased productivity and, ultimately, higher turnover as these valuable employees begin to quit, whether it’s loudly or quietly.

So how can pool and spa business owners create a culture where employees feel respected and valued, especially when they’re asked to take on more work? The answer is rather simple: Preemptively have conversations about fair compensation, whether that means a raise in salary, title, increased benefits such as PTO, or a combination of all of the above. Transparency is key in building trust and retaining mutual respect.

In the long run, it’s in the company’s best interest to loudly invest in its employees.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne McClain'.

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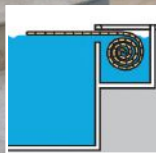
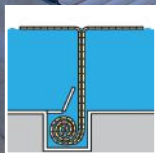
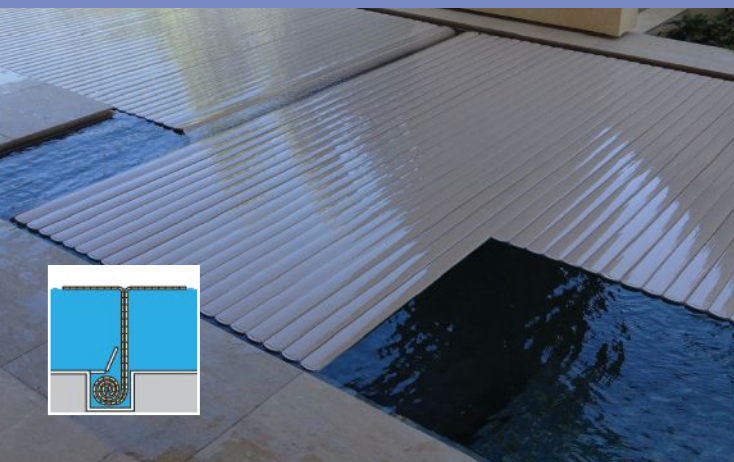


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PSN Top 50 Builder Contest Open

Apply soon for the chance to join this prestigious group.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

Builders, it's your time to shine.

Every year, Pool & Spa News names the Top 50 Builders across the U.S. The prestigious list is meant to accommodate virtually all business models and sizes.

Applicants are asked a series of questions about how they run their companies and how it performed the previous year. To ensure a slate of companies that excel in many aspects, applicants will be assessed based on the five judging pillars — staff management and training, industry involvement, total residential construction revenue for the previ-

ous year, company web presence, and community involvement.

We are trying to select truly well-rounded companies, so each category will be closely analyzed. Here are some tips to help your score:

- Allow plenty of time to answer all the questions. You will be asked for a breakdown of the previous year's revenue, as well as information about how you train your staff and other key aspects of the business.
- Remember that this list focuses on builders of residential pools, spas and water features. Do not include information about service, retail or



commercial work and training unless the question specifies.

- Answer the questions as thoroughly and specifically as possible to best distinguish yourselves.

- After submitting your form, check your account to verify it was received.

Companies must submit their forms by March 23 at 11:59, Pacific Daylight Time. Go to poolspanews.com to access the form and learn about deadline extensions.

Watershape University Introduces Pool Operator Certification

The education organization Watershape University now will offer a certification for commercial pool and spa operators.

The organization recently began to focus on offering certification programs and submitting them for approval by state and local governments to be used as training and continuing education toward licensing.

Called the Certified Watershape Operator program, it is the only one so far approved by the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code. It is completely administered online at the student's pace. "This is a federal level committee that has now certified and accredited our course to their standard," said Charlie Raphael, Watershape University's Director of Certification and Licensing.

The program also is accredited by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET).

Latest Riverbend Acquisition Expands Service Reach in the Lone Star State

Riverbend Sandler Pools, a consolidator of construction and service firms throughout Texas, has deepened its reach into the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

The company recently acquired Pool Steward, a pool/spa service firm based in Addison, Texas, and previously owned by Tim Kaiser, a small business entrepreneur with a commercial real estate background. All Pool Steward employees are expected to maintain their current positions.

"Pool Steward has a well-known reputation in the Dallas pool market for service, quality and commitment to technician training," said Riverbend Sandler CEO Bruce Mungiguerra, pictured right.

Riverbend Sandler, formerly a single-location pool builder in Plano, Texas, became an aggregator in 2021. At first it focused on builders, but has now begun acquiring service companies. This is its third service acquisition.



WAHC Now Held with PSP/Deck Expo

The World Aquatic Health Conference, an aquatic research forum managed by the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), now will occur alongside the national pool industry trade show.

WAHC will be held Nov. 13-15 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, at the same time as the International Pool |Spa|Patio/Deck Expo.

Specific WAHC tracks will be offered at the event. The Certified Pool Operator course will take place at the venue Nov. 11-13. WAHC organizers have put out a call for presentations. Interested instructors should apply by March 31.

WAHC was begun by the National Swimming Pool Foundation, which later merged with the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals to become PHTA. Those with questions can contact service@phta.org.



Pool Troopers Acquires Tampa-Area Firm

Tampa, Fla.-based service consolidator Pool Troopers has acquired Professional Pool Solutions, based in Carrollwood, Fla. Said Pool Troopers CEO Mark Patton of the previous owners, David and Colleen Pierre: "David and Colleen will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, and we look forward to leveraging their expertise to enhance our service offerings and expand our footprint in Tampa."

Pool Troopers serves said it serves nearly 20,000 customers in Florida, Texas, South Carolina, Georgia and Arizona.



Lyon Financial Hires Regional Sales Manager

Lyon Financial, a provider of pool financing, has rehired Judy Vargas as a regional sales manager.



With 20 years of experience in lending, Vargas also experience in commercial real-estate property sales. She previously served as a regional sales manager for the company from 2019 to 2022.

Lyon Financial is based in Mooresville, N.C.

BioGuard Makes New Hires

Water-treatment product producer BioLab has added Chris Arp (below right) as Western regional manager for its BioGuard and SpaGuard products. He supports customers in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Northern Nevada and Northern California. Amy Rullo (below left) joined the firm as district sales manager for New York and parts of Northern New Jersey and Northeastern Pennsylvania. She brings almost 20 years of industry experience.



RB Names New Tech Support Coordinator

RB Retail & Service Solutions Software, a Monroeville, Pa.-based supplier of business software for the pool and spa industry, has hired Alexandra Copeland as its tech support coordinator. In this role, she manages the technical support team to ensure productivity goals are met, and coordinates schedules for installations, testing and other customer-support duties. She has several years experience as a Tier 1 and 2 technical support team member familiar with SQL and simple queries, ability to troubleshoot hardware and software including Android and iPhone devices, web portals, Windows OS and audio video media.

TOP LEFT PHOTO: JOANNE MCCLAIN

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Woodsy Retreat

Rustic materials and a centerpiece gazebo help this watery living space fit seamlessly into the wooded lot.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

On this rustic getaway, a gazebo of western red cedar paired with rough textured Arkansas stacked stone takes the spotlight.

The team at Serenity Hardscapes, of Cordova, Tenn. chose the woodsy look to pair with the home.

Crafted with lead designer Jason Dawkins at the helm, the installation earned a spot in PebbleTec's annual book, "The World's Greatest Pools."

The team made the most of an elevation change, as well as the surrounding woods on the sprawling property.

"We wanted to feel like it snuggled right in there," says Rocky Wisley, president of the pool-building firm.

For the cabana, the team and homeowner put the focus on relaxation, foregoing an outdoor kitchen in favor of entertainment.

"It was all about creating like an extended den or living room," Wisley

says. "So they can relax and hang out, have people in the spa able to talk with the who are sitting at the cabana. It created this whole other living space on the lower half."

Adding to the sense of getting

away, the pool features a raised vanishing edge spilling toward the cabana, not only adding to the sense of seclusion, but producing a pleasant sound in the area. Raised planter walls with scuppers falling into the pool



PHOTOS BY JIMI SMITH

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further add to the sound and privacy. An inground spa sits between the pool and shelter structure.

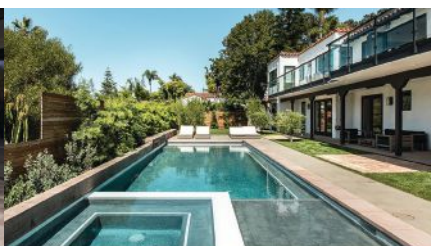
“With the negative edge, you have a hard time defining where the pool starts and the cabana starts and stops,” Wisely says. “When you look at it, your mind is kind of playing tricks with you.”

The pool elements were finished with similar materials. Different cuts of Oklahoma flagstone were used on the sunshelf and the coping. In addition to blending with the cabana, the stone was chosen for its density and ability to withstand submersion in chemically treated water.

The pool interior is finished with Ocean Blue Pebblesheen, while the waterline is accented with a 6-by-6-inch dark blue tile to complement the pebble. The deck is finished with a washed pea rock aggregate.

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An Art and Science

Tips for adding realism to cast-concrete artificial rock

BY ZAYVIAN CAMACHO

Cast-concrete artificial rock provides an easy way to create a waterfeature that turns your client's backyard pool into a backyard resort pool.

Today's cast-concrete rock component systems look real because they are molded off actual rocks to provide the same shape, character and texture of the real thing, while holding up to the freeze-thaw temperatures in the northern U.S. and Canada.

For this product to truly transform a pool into a magical place, it must be stained and mortared in the most realistic and visually appealing manner possible.

Some installers may choose to purchase kits, in which the stones come

from the manufacturer colored and ready to install.

For those who do their own coloring, here are several tips and tricks to ensure that you provide your clients with the most attractive rock water feature possible.

STAINING AND SHADING

Staining and shading the stone will be the most important step in creating the look you want.

Staining concrete is a true art form, but staining a cast-concrete waterfeature can be easier than getting natural stones to match and look good together. Cast concrete manufacturers provide kits to dye the concrete stone to mimic the surrounding natural

landscaping and deck treatments.

Be sure to select a blend of acrylic stains specially formulated to bond to cast concrete rocks. Some stains and paints are formulated to bond to porous surfaces but do not bond to a high-tech, virtually waterproof product like the fiber reinforced concrete (FRC) that is manufactured for pool waterfeatures.

The tools needed for this process include buckets, sprayers, water hose and sponge.

Here is a basic overview of the steps in coloring and shading the artificial rock: Damp the rocks; apply base color; sponge away any excess stain; damp rock again; add an antique stain; repeat the sponge-away process.

GETTING STARTED

It is recommended that builders begin the staining process at the back of the hardscape feature and work toward the front. It takes a good eye and some patience to get the cast concrete to look like real stone. Testing small sections at the back of the waterfeature is always a good approach as hardscape designers master the art of staining concrete.

It takes several layers of staining, in fact, to achieve a truly natural look. Building these layers of stain happens both before and after the placement of each piece. The initial staining happens before placement of the stone. This can be done by the manufacturer or installer. The final staining then



It takes several layers of color to create the shading and variegation found in natural stone.

PHOTOS COURTESY RICO ROCK

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occurs after the waterfeature is complete.

When doing this step, it is important to make sure the waterfeatures blend seamlessly with the pool's surrounding decks. Stain and shade the cast-concrete water features to match the surrounding natural rocks and pavers. Throughout the process, take time to stand back and look at the cast concrete in relation to the deck and any real stones that might be integrated into the greater landscape.

It's a very visual process, and builders should plan for adjustment and modifications, as the process involves a bit of artistry.

BEST PRACTICES

Follow these best practices when staining cast-concrete rock waterfeatures for pools. This will further help ensure the best, more realistic-looking artificial rock:

1. Washing: Start the color staining process by first washing off the rocks. Be sure to remove anything

from the surface that might interfere with the color bonding.

2. Moistening: It's important that the acrylic stain be applied to a moist surface. This will help the stain apply properly. Builders should use very large sponges to moisten the cast-concrete rocks. Make sure the rock is not too wet or too dry before adding the acrylic stain. If the rocks are too dry, the color will absorb into the concrete too quickly, causing a very dark, deep color. Applying the stain to a damp surface, rather than a wet surface, allows it to blend with soft tones and hide overspray errors. After wetting, allow the stone to dry for a few minutes, depending on the outside temperature. Very hot and dry conditions may require frequent re-wetting.

3. Application techniques: Always apply the accent color first, before the antique coat. Accent colors are those such as rust, reddish brown and golden amber, which create a realistic base tone to the rocks. It's very important to apply the stain color in a random fashion. You'll be working with a spray bottle, and you must be careful not to overspray. If the accent colors are concentrated too heavily in one area, the color will start to look unnatural.

Once you apply the accent color to the damp surface, use a damp, clean sponge to either lighten heavily stained areas or blend in the color to create a tone that matches the surrounding color scheme. Sponging the excess also creates variations in tone.

While doing this, shake the bottle frequently to keep the stain fully blended throughout the application.

Always keep a bucket of clean water and a clean sponge handy to wash away excess finish or color.

4. Adding color: Once the rock has dried, the stain colors may appear to be lighter than when the surface was

wet. If you're not satisfied with the current color feel free to add more.

Many builders find that, once they have achieved their desired color, they can make the stone "pop" more with the addition of what we call an 'antique' finish, which gives rocks a weathered, natural look. This finish highlights the natural cracks and crevasses or areas of heavy texture in cast concrete rocks. To get nice, deep dark cracks you want to concentrate the finish in the cracks and sponge away everything else around it and definitely sponge away any dripping or it will leave those marks.

Since this color is a darker gray color, it is very important to have a clean damp sponge in hand in order to be able to sponge-off any excess antique color from the rock or it might compromise the accent color.

CONCLUSION

Creating attractive waterfeatures using cast-concrete artificial rock is not difficult. By using stains designed specifically for cast concrete and using the techniques mentioned above, getting a handle on the process isn't as daunting as it might seem.

It's important to remember that the process takes time and does require some patience and a little artistry. Builders will need to stand back and use their eyes to be sure the colors blend with each other and with the pool and backyard landscape.

Remember there are also options to use pre-colored artificial rocks to make the process less intimidating.

Zayvian Camacho is part of the design and fabrication team at Rico Rock. He has studied landscape design and overseen construction for dozens of unique cast-concrete artificial rock projects in backyards, hotel resorts, bowling alleys, zoos, and other applications.



When dry, the colors will appear lighter than when they were wet.

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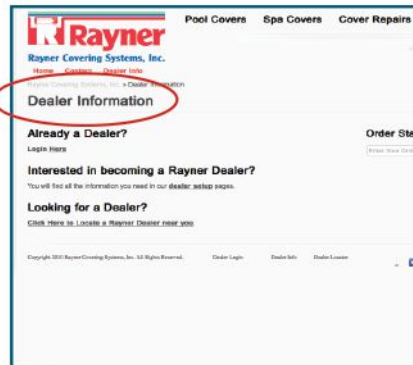


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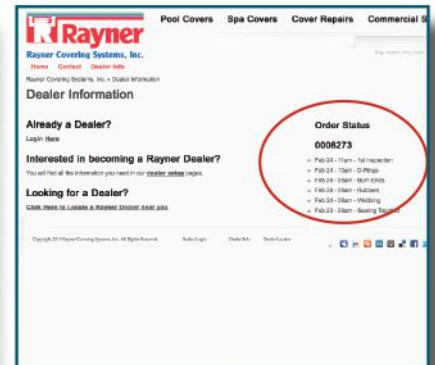
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Despite Recession, Housing Market Projected To Rebound In Second Half Of 2023

Robert Dietz, Danielle Hale, and Ali Wolf share economic forecasts for 2023 and the outlook for the housing market.

BY VINCENT SALANDRO



Elevated levels of inflation and mortgage rates and high construction costs are projected to continue the housing recession into 2023 and push the overall economy into a mild recession during the calendar year. Despite current challenges with affordability and slowing sales rates, the second half of 2023 could be a “turning point” for both the housing market and overall economy, according to NAHB chief economist Robert Dietz.

“Our expectation is that in the first quarter and the second quarter of 2023, we are going to see GDP declines. They are the dividends of

tightening monetary policy by the Federal Reserve. We [also] expect a rise in the unemployment rate [in 2023],” Dietz said during The Outlook: A Complete Guide to Housing Trends, Forecasts & Insights for 2023 session at the 2023 International Builders’ Show with Zonda chief economist Ali Wolf and Realtor.com chief economist Danielle Hale.

Dietz projected that with inflation showing signs of cooling, the Federal Reserve’s actions to raise interest rates should end in the first quarter of 2023 with a final rate hike in March. The NAHB projects the cumulative effect

of the rate hikes will be a peak mortgage rate just above 7%. However, he said mortgage rates are expected to fall below 6% by 2024, setting the stage for a housing rebound in the second half of 2023 and 2024.

The NAHB projects single-family production will fall for the second consecutive year in 2023 to 744,000 units before rebounding to a 925,000 annual pace in 2024. The association is projecting multifamily starts will fall 28% in 2023 to a 391,000 total and will stabilize at an annual rate of 374,000 starts in 2024. While the single-family sector is projected to experience a downturn in 2023, the residential remodeling sector is projected to grow 5% on a nominal basis this year and 4% in 2024, according to Dietz.

Dietz said single-family home building is likely to lead the economic recovery in the second half of 2023 and 2024, spurred by falling interest rates. While demand is projected to return to the market, supply-side issues — such as lots, financing, and building material constraints — are projected to worsen. However, he said the housing deficit of 1.5 million homes, favorable buyer demographics, and the interest rate environment will likely contribute to a strong housing market after the mild recession of 2023.

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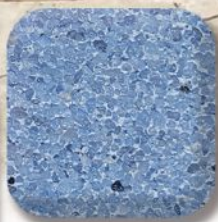
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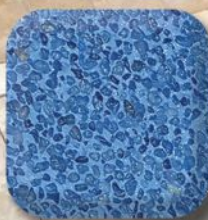
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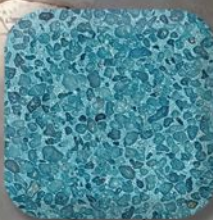
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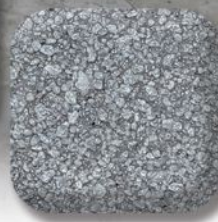
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plagued by the affordability shock brought on by mortgage rates rising rapidly from 3% to 7% in 2022, Wolf told the audience. The increase in rates has translated to monthly payments that are 30% to 60% higher than the beginning of 2022, contributing to buyer uncertainty. However, the market is showing signs of stability, with mortgage rates averaging below 7% for 11 consecutive weeks, she said.

“The fact that [interest rates] have stabilized out is contributing to a boost in consumer confidence,” Wolf said.

Regionally, sales are slowing in Texas and Western metros more than markets in the Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast, according to Wolf. Many markets that grew the most during the pandemic—including Phoenix; Las Vegas; Riverside, California; Austin, Texas; and Denver—have also slowed the most in recent months. Wolf said in some Western markets, though, sales have begun to increase again, suggesting these markets have already hit the bottom.

According to Zonda data, the cancellation rate in December was 20%, double its pre-pandemic level but down from levels experienced in the latter months of 2022. The cancellation rate is much higher among entry-level buyers compared with other buyer cohorts, said Wolf. While cancellation rates are lower, only 10% of builders surveyed by Zonda indicated they would easily be able to resell a home after a cancellation. Approximately 45% of respondents said they were unable to easily sell homes without some adjustment in the form of incentives or price cuts.

Wolf said over 60% of builders continue to offer increasing incentives to prospective buyers and over 50% of all communities across the country are offering incentives. Interest rate buydowns are growing in

While actions from home builders can move some buyers off the sidelines, sales levels still remain low, and many builders are planning to scale back starts.

popularity among prospective buyers to bring rates down to levels in the mid-4s and low-5s. She said many builders are implementing an approach of cutting prices, offering incentives, and covering closing costs to bring buyers off the sideline rather than make incremental price adjustments that may not incentivize sidelined buyers to consider home purchases.

While actions from builders can move some buyers off the sidelines, sales levels still remain low, and many builders are planning to scale back starts. Seven in 10 builders surveyed by Zonda said they plan to slow starts to realign with sales activity to find a market equilibrium.

HOUSING MARKET OUTLOOK: EXISTING-HOME SALES

Hale said there are signs that the market has at least reached a temporary bottom in sales activity. While existing-home sales continued to decline to end 2022, the rate of decline slowed and pending home sales increased in December, indicating existing-home sales may be close to reaching a bottom, she said.

“There are reasons to think that maybe housing activity on the sales side is finding a bottom,” said Hale, “which is roughly in line with what we expect for the year ahead. We think sales will decline for 2023 as a whole, but improve from the level we were

seeing activity occur at in the fall.”

Existing-home inventory has benefited both from slower sales activity and time on the market, increasing 55% in 2022 compared with 2021. However, Hale said the inventory level in the existing market is well below pre-pandemic levels.

While existing inventory is higher on a year-over-year basis, Hale said this has not resulted in more sellers on the market. In December, the number of homeowners who put their home for sale was down 21% compared with 2021 and significantly below pre-pandemic levels. In addition to fewer sellers in the market, homeowners are still asking high list prices for homes that are put on the market. The average asking price for existing homes increased 8.4% on a year-over-year basis in December, according to Hale. However, she said homeowners are becoming more willing to cut prices to make a sale than in recent years.

“Home sellers are more than twice as likely as last year to make a price cut if needed,” Hale said. “It’s still not the majority of homeowners that are selling their home, but it is something we’re seeing become more common, especially in areas where we’ve seen inventory increase.”

This article previously appeared in sister publication Builder.



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A photograph of a modern, two-story luxury home at dusk. The house features large glass windows and doors, revealing a well-lit interior with contemporary decor. In the foreground, there is a large, rectangular swimming pool with a tiled deck. A series of water jets create a fountain effect in the pool. To the left, a long, narrow waterfall cascades down a wall. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall atmosphere is one of sophisticated elegance.

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CLOSE UP: VINYL LINERS

STAYING ON POINT

Manufacturers explain how to avoid the most common mistakes when working with vinyl liners.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ

PHOTO COURTESY POOL CRAFT/MEGNA POOLS

Vinyl-liner pools have continued their evolution into more intricate and customized amenities. While this has made the product more appealing to consumers, it also places more demands on installers.

“The current trend is that there are a lot of vinyl-over features, meaning there are a lot of steps, benches, tanning ledges and other features that are being constructed inside the pool,” says Alvin Geetan, design manager for Megna Pools, a manufacturer of package pools and vinyl liners in Pickering, Ontario, Canada. “Pools are getting a lot more complicated.”

Geetan sees another trend, as more builders choose to build their own features out of concrete, removing the factory precision that comes with pre-made components such as fiberglass or steel stairs.

“That means it can become much more difficult to fit the vinyl liner over something like that, especially if it’s not straight or plumb,” he adds.

For all these reasons, builders and installers need to take extra care when measuring and installing vinyl liners. Here, manufacturers explain how to avoid some of the most commonly made mistakes when measuring, ordering and installing vinyl liners.

■ SUPPLY ADEQUATE INFORMATION WITH YOUR ORDER.

Start by using the form provided by the manufacturer of the liner you will be ordering.

Each producer asks for a different set of measurements, based on their own CAD software, and they code things differently. If you provide the measurements based on another manufacturer’s form, you may be required to redo your work, if the producer doesn’t have everything they need, says Gregg Minton, southeast regional sales manager for Tara Pool

& Outdoor Products in Owens Cross Roads, Ala.

If taking A-B measurements, make sure the stakes are far enough away from the pool and each other. It isn’t as simple as placing the stakes at least 3 feet away from the pool.

“You need to envision a line going to infinity in both directions between your A and B [points],” Minton says. “If you go between A and B, and infinity past B and then infinity past A, that entire line cannot be any closer than 3 feet to the pool.”

When using the measuring tape, make sure it does not brush up against anything that could trip it up and throw off the measurements, says Marc Cornely, technical sales representative for Merlin Industries of Hamilton, N.J.

“It could catch on something — say, a brass anchor from the installation of the pool cover or some other kind of obstruction sitting on the deck,” Cornely says. “Then the tape is not going in a straight line from A to the point that’s being measured. Therefore the measurement [reads] longer than it actually is, so the points will not plot out correctly and reflect the pool’s shape.”

After you’ve finished taking measurements, check your work before leaving the site, advises Roshan Patel, technical support representative for Pegasus Products in Branchburg, N.J. If certain measurements are supposed to add up to a specific number, for instance, make sure they do.

“Sometimes when I get [the order], the installer has already left the job site,” Patel says. “So I’ll say, ‘Five plus five plus five equals 15, but this says the pool is 16 wide. Where is the disconnect? How do we need to change the measurement?’”

Also be sure to supply true measurements. Manufacturers recommend against fudging the numbers to yield a tighter liner.

‘The current trend is that there are a lot of vinyl-over features, meaning there are a lot of steps, benches, tanning ledges and other features that are being constructed inside the pool. Pools are getting a lot more complicated.’

“Some say, ‘Even though the pool is 18 feet wide, I’m going to say it’s actually 17 feet 10 inches wide. Then I’ll get the liner really small and it’ll stretch it into place,’” Patel says.

But keep in mind that manufacturers already size the liner to fit snugly. If the liner is too tight, it can withstand undue stress over time, resulting in premature wear.

“If the dealer tends to shorten or shrink the measurements ... then we shrink the measurements, then they’re twice shrunk,” Minton says. “That can lead to an extremely tight fit, which looks good in most cases, but it’s detrimental to the life of the liner.”

▪ TAKE EXTRA CARE WITH REPLACEMENT LINERS.

When replacing a liner, you’re working with a pool that has existed for years. You may not know the original builder’s quality of workmanship, and things just may have shifted over time. For this reason, you may need to take extra steps to make sure you provide true measurements for the pool.

On a simple rectangle, that may mean taking diagonal measurements to ensure the pool is built square, Cornely says.

“It could be like a trapezoid and you can’t even see it with the naked eye,” he says. “You can only catch that with measurements.”

When taking diagonal measurements on radiused corners, measure from where the 90-degree corner would form if the walls went straight and met at a point, rather than curving at the corners.

“Don’t take them to the middle of the radius that forms the corner,” Cornely adds.

When measuring an existing pool for a replacement liner, also mark where the pool wall is underneath the coping, and measure to there.

“The A-B measurements need to be taken to the top of the pool



Ideally, the vacuum should bring the liner as tight as a coat of paint before water is even added to the pool. For larger pools, more than one vacuum may be necessary.

wall,” Cornely says. “If the coping overhangs the wall ... you need to put chalk marks down on top of that coping, exactly above the pool wall. If that’s not done, the liner can be too small or too big.”

When the measurements are complete and verified, the chalk marks can be removed.

▪ KEEP TALKING TO MANUFACTURERS AFTER THE ORDER IS PLACED.

Don’t expect that your communication with the manufacturer will end once the vinyl order has been placed.

If, for instance, you ordered the liner based on the dimensions indicated on the dig specifications, you’ll need to notify the producer if pool’s dimensions don’t end up as planned.

“[Builders] may buy the pool package to have a 6-foot depth,” Patel says. “But while they were in the pool digging, maybe they hit rock or the water table is higher than expected.

So maybe the pool ends up being 5 feet deep. Remember to tell us.”

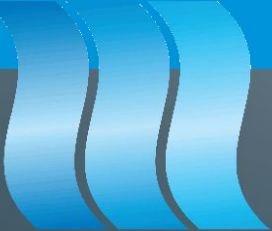
Also understand that the manufacturer may call with more questions. After taking your A-B measurements, consider keeping the stakes in place until the manufacturer says they have everything they need.

“As long as those A-B [stakes] have not moved, you can give us the additional detail we require, and save yourself re-measuring the pool from scratch,” Geetan explains.

Once the liner arrives, if you have a difficult time fitting it into place, stop everything and contact the manufacturer. Don’t continue with the installation, expecting the weight of the water to fix any problems.

“That’s not an ideal way to get rid of wrinkles, by adding water to push it out,” Patel says. “It’s supposed to be smoothed out when you’re setting the liner.”

When communicating a problem with the manufacturer, provide



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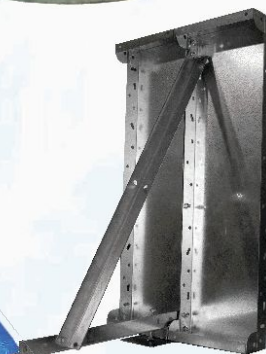
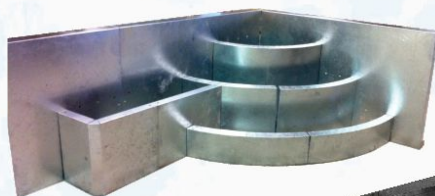


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multiple photos — some framing the whole pool, others showing close-up details of the problem areas, Geetan says. If they're to help, fabricators will need to see not only a problem wrinkle, but also the whole pool and how that wrinkle fits in the scheme of things.

While snapping the images, keep the vacuum on. Otherwise the liner will be sitting slack, and manufacturers can't get a true idea of how it's fitting or how to fix the problem.

▪ PROPERLY PULL THE LINER

When placing the liner, you often can tell if there's a problem before using weights, suction or water to help stretch and secure it.

"You can tell if a liner is hanging in the right position by looking at the wrinkles in the fabric before you even turn a vacuum on," Minton says. "If the wrinkles are going straight up and down, or very close thereto, then the liner's positioned properly. But if, like in a radius, the wrinkles

are at a diagonal, then something's not aligned properly."

When filling the pool, make sure to secure things in place with water bags, salt bags or other weights. If the liner is left loose, it will likely pull down when water is added, potentially dislocating the liner from special features such as shelves and benches.

You also run the risk of the shallow-end liner being pulled toward the deep end: As the deep end fills first, the accumulating water places more weight in the deep end, yanking down on the fabric at the other end of the pool.

Installers can avoid this by creating a dam of water bags, salt bags or other appropriate weights at the shallow-end break, right before the slope starts.

"Put a row of heavy bags along that break line and then put water in the shallow end," Cornely says. "[The water will] start to pour over the dam between the bags at some point, but ½ inch or 1 inch of water in the shallow

end locks that vinyl in place. Then as it fills the deep end, the vinyl that's supposed to be in the shallow end stays in the shallow end."

Make sure the suction is adequate. The liner should cling to the walls and floor when the vacuums are activated. If that is not occurring when the vacuum is activated, then you may need more vacuums, or stronger ones.

▪ DON'T CUT THE FITTINGS TOO EARLY.

When you want to move to the next job, it can be tempting to speed through the installation process, set up the pool to fill and go. But that's not necessarily the best course of action.

For instance, many installers cut their liners to accommodate fittings too soon in the process, Patel says. They may start doing that before water has begun stretching the liner. But once the water fills the pool, things will likely shift, no matter how tightly it's vacuumed.

Don't cut the fittings until after the weights have been placed in the shallow end and, perhaps, the corners and steps, and the water is about to reach the fitting.

"As you fill, you'll see it stretches in," Patel says. "And then as the water's getting close to the step, that's when you cut it out, or when it's getting close to the skimmer, that's when you cut it out."

The same holds true for cutting around steps, Cornely says.

▪ TRY TO AVOID COLD-WEATHER INSTALLATION — OR AT LEAST MAKE ADJUSTMENTS.

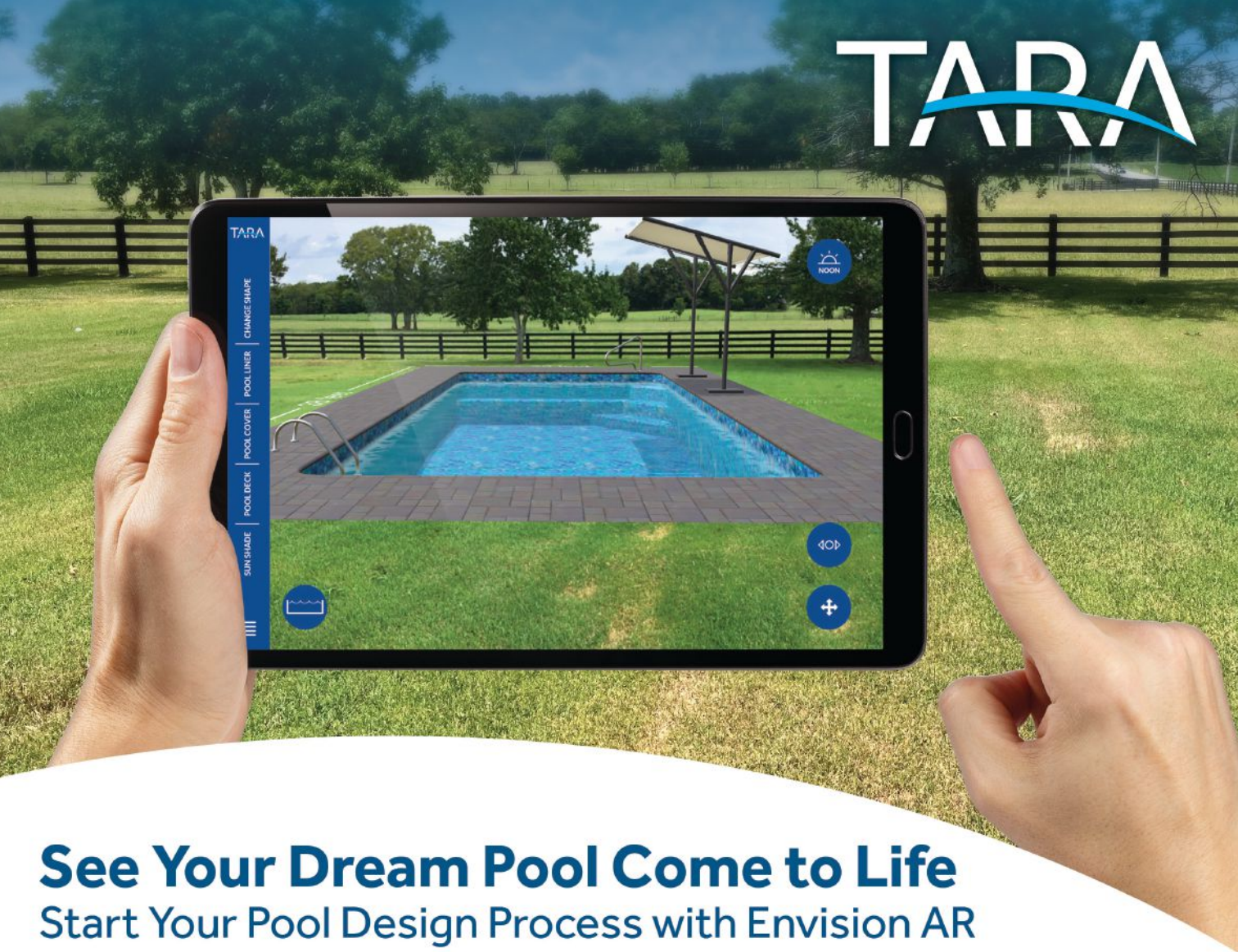
Even in the cold-weather states, pool construction is becoming a year-round enterprise.

When it comes to vinyl-liner pools, however, builders need to take precautions. Liners, especially thicker



Weighing down steps, benches and other special features can help secure them in place while the liner is stretched in place.

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ones, have a harder time stretching when it's below 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Especially on some of the more complicated liners, or 28-mil liners, they don't stretch as well when it's cooler, the sun's lower in the sky or on cloudy days, or if they've been stored in cool places," says Jeff Duke, national sales manager of Loop-Loc in Hauppauge, N.Y.

It becomes even more difficult if the installation has steps, benches and other special features. Those areas are even more resistant to stretching.

If there's sun on one side of the pool and not the other, the sunny side will stretch more, distorting the installation, Duke adds.

Don't install in the cold weather if you can avoid it. But if you must, begin by letting the manufacturer know. They likely will cut the liner differently than a spring or summer installation. Ask for any advice they might offer for measuring and installing it.

Once you receive the liner for cold-weather installation, store it indoors at room temperature for several days before its set in place. Use domes or tenting systems, heaters and other methods to warm the site. You also may need to use more vacuums than normal to provide stronger suction to pull the liner.

The same holds true for water bags, salt bags or other appropriate weights — you may need more than normal to pin the liner in place, as it will be more resistant to stretching.

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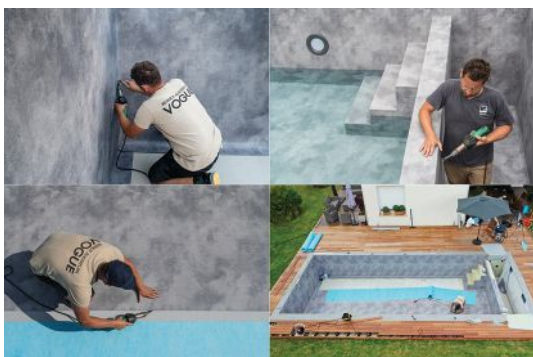
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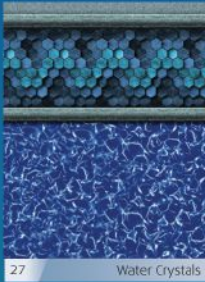
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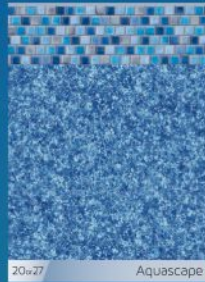
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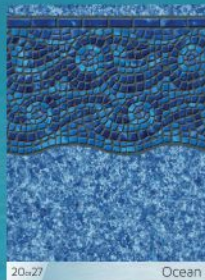
20x27 Rocklyn



27 Rustic



20x27 Mountain Top



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20x27 Braid



20x27 Garden Gate



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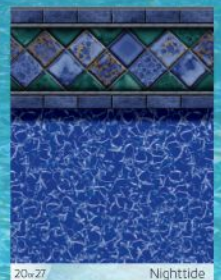
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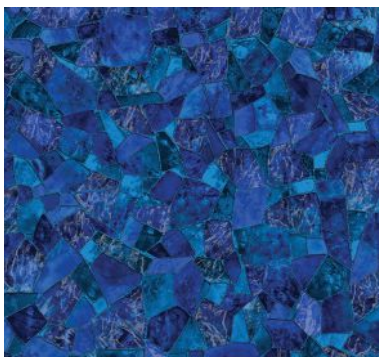
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Loop-Loc

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..

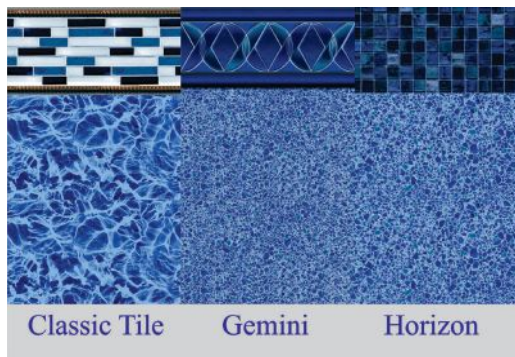
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McEwen Industries

Kuri Bay Pearl is a new inground vinyl liner pattern and part of McEwen Industries' Pearl Reflections Collection. It's printed on brilliant blue vinyl and features silver highlights, which gives it an overall luminescent quality. This 27-mil pattern is exclusive to McEwen Industries.

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Megna Pools

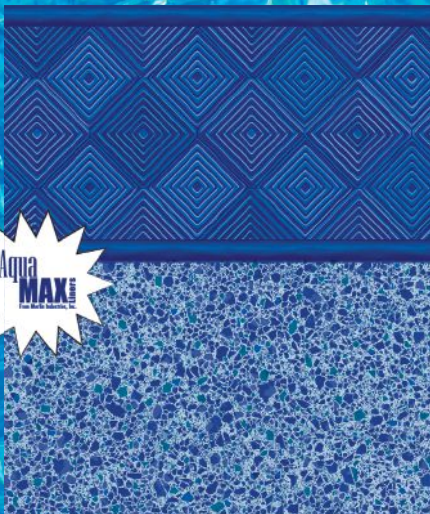
Megna Pools is introducing three new Premier Series Liner Fashions for 2023. The new Antigua patterns feature a refreshed classic pattern pebble with either the Horizon mosaic tiles at the waterline or the Gemini circular diamond pattern.

Contact: megnapools.com

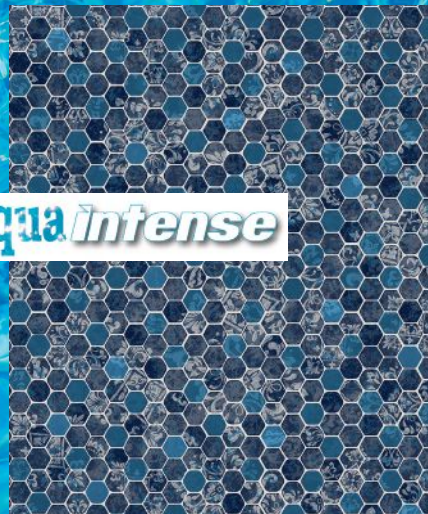


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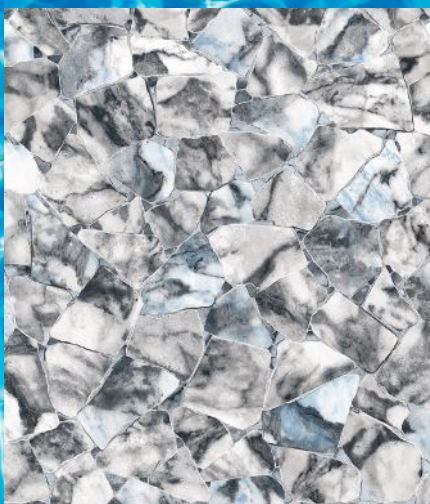
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LAZING ALONG

A high-end outdoor pool and spa complex at dusk. The scene is illuminated by warm ambient lighting and vibrant red underwater lights that glow from the pool's depths. A winding water slide descends from the upper right, its exit point creating a small waterfall into the pool. A series of stone steps leads up a grassy hillside, flanked by dense evergreen trees. In the foreground, a circular hot tub with a stone rim is visible on the left, while a circular lounge area with two black chairs and a potted plant sits on the right. The pool deck is paved with large, light-colored stone tiles. The overall atmosphere is serene and luxurious.



LARRY HUENE/COURTESY PLATINUM POOLS

No longer for waterparks
only, lazy rivers are finding
their way in more backyards.
Find out what's involved.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ

There's little doubt that lazy rivers remain largely the domain of commercial properties, such as waterparks and leisure pools.

But nobody disputes another fact: High-end pools are becoming crazier and crazier. And homeowners want to enjoy some waterpark-style amenities in their own backyards.

That's why Peter Davidson, owner of Current Systems, a manufacturer of products used to move the massive amounts of water in lazy rivers, is seeing more residential requests.

"It's catching on," he says. "We've been trying to encourage this market ... and it's been steady growth."

This type of installation requires that builders adopt new mindsets in some respects, and employ common sense in others. It becomes especially important as no design standard exists for this type of feature.

Here, professionals share their advice.

BIG JOB

In some respects, these projects are vastly different from regular pools.

Running a lazy-river system entails moving tens or even hundreds of thousands of gallons of water at typical speeds of 1 to 3 miles per hour. This will not happen with your standard pool circulation or even waterfeature system. Generating such high flow rates often is achieved using low- or medium-head pumps, which must be placed differently.

Estimating the space needed may prove difficult at first. Vaults may be needed so non-self-priming pumps can be placed near water level. Plumbing sizes will hover in the 10- and 12-inch range, so even predicting how much area to give can be difficult, says

Rick Chafey, co-owner of Red Rock Pools & Spas in Mesa, Ariz.

So, even after a builder gets one or two of these features under his or her belt, they likely will not become regular fare for residential builders. That's why professionals should plan to seek assistance with every installation — especially at the beginning.

"The first couple I designed, I relied on [the system manufacturer] a lot," says Paolo Benedetti, president of Aquatic Technology Pool and Spa in Morgan Hill, Calif. "Once I had a good understanding of what needed to be done, we did all the design work and sent it to them for kind of a blessing and to specify the pumps."

The scope can affect all aspects of the project. For instance, they generally need an atypical amount of electrical power, likely requiring a power upgrade to the standard residential property.



The sheer scope of these projects can complicate areas one may not predict. For instance, plumbing can measure 10 or 12 inches in diameter. Compounded, that means a lot of space. "A 12-inch, 90-degree elbow is 2 feet by 2 feet, so it's not easy just to turn a corner," says Rick Chafey, co-owner of Red Rock Pools & Spas in Mesa, Ariz. "So you definitely need good prior planning to manage that."

PHOTO COURTESY CURRENT SYSTEMS



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Soil conditions may be a concern in one respect: Because lazy rivers cover more ground than most pools and spas, there is increased risk of differential soil conditions, which could lead to uneven settling. Builders and designers should seek the counsel of soils engineers.

Designers and installers also may find themselves exposed to different code requirements for equipment, since it often will have to be placed below-grade, necessitating submerged electrical applications.

And filtration will need to be accomplished separately. Trying to use the lazy river system for filtration is not efficient or, in some cases, viable. The river system should not operate unless the feature is in use, because it requires so much power and is pushing considerably more water than is necessary for mere filtration. In many cases, using the river system for filtration isn't even possible. If they're powered by low- or medium-head pumps, then the back pressure created by the addition of heaters, automatic sanitizers and other features must be avoided.

The filtration system will require its own inlets and suction outlets. Some designers use skimmers, others don't. If so, they must be carefully placed so debris

can't zip past them with the current.

When going without skimmers, builders likely will need to avoid diatomaceous earth filters. "We did the suction from floor drains, so I couldn't put DE in because there's no way to recharge the DE filters," Benedetti said. "They're relatively large bodies of water, so I put in high-rate sand, because it's easy and low-maintenance. But we've used cartridge filters also."

While the river system isn't appropriate for circulation, sometimes it can help disperse chemicals when you need it done quickly, Chafey says.

PROPER PLANNING

A lazy river isn't much good unless it sprawls. That's why Chafey doesn't generally propose one unless he can get at least 50 or 60 feet of length.

Still, Davidson says, a designer can get the job done with a 30-by-45- or 30-by-50 plot of land. "The initial misconception is that it has to occupy an

extremely large footprint, and it really doesn't," he says.

If space is a concern, designers can employ creative solutions to make the most of the space available.

David Peterson, president/CEO of San Diego-based Watershape Consulting and co-founder of Watershapes University, recommends creating a loop with the river, then using the resulting island inside for something useful. It could serve as a nice getaway with a spa or lanai area to replace entertaining area that otherwise would have abutted the house.

"How do you use that island to maximize its potential?" Peterson asks. "Why not have the [river] almost like a moat around a whole other entertaining area, where you cross a bridge? In your mind, it's taking you away from your house and you're going to a new destination. You can create a space that feels like something very different from what's at the house and maybe has its own privacy."

Designers must walk a fine line between using up more space than necessary, and short-changing the feature. Generally speaking, lazy rivers have a minimum width of 6 feet, with depths starting at 3-1/2 feet.

This can largely vary, depending on how clients plan to use it. First of all, what will they use to float on? Will they use inner tubes or larger air mattresses? Do they want to float in single file, or have little party cliques sailing down the stream together? You want to leave enough room to make sure the devices don't bounce off the sidewalls all the time.

These issues can affect more than just width. Designers may need to make the curves broader to accommodate larger devices and denser crowds. "If you're using big truck inner tubes, if the turn is too tight, it might hang up in a corner," Benedetti says. "So it's better to have large, sweeping radiuses."

This sounds straightforward, but



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some clients have difficulty describing their visions. But persist with questions. “Really try to get into their heads and get them to imagine what the experience they’re after is going to be,” Davidson says.

Also find out how long they’d like to take going down the river. A laid-back ride might require a rate of 1 or 2 miles per hour, while something slightly jauntier would take closer to 3 mph.

For the sake of safety and comfort, also find out how high clients want the water to come up on children. They will be trying to board a mat in moving water and push into the current, so they may not want much depth, Davidson says.

To ease entry in the stream, it also can help to create a separate loading/unloading space. This can be a simple bump-out where the water is more calm and shallow. “It’s practically impossible to drop the inner tube into the lazy river while it’s running and then jump in,” Benedetti says.

He likes this section to measure 12 to 18 inches deep. It should veer on the deeper side if homeowners will use inner tubes: Hindquarters protrude through the hole and could drag on the floor without enough lift. More than 18 inches may make children nervous.

Access stairs that protrude, on the other hand, may not be a great idea, Peterson says. These sometimes can work on residential applications, where there will not be too many users. But designers must take care: You wouldn’t want stairs placed near one of the river system’s outlets, or other spots where the water is expected to move faster. They probably should be recessed, too, to avoid any collisions.

THE SHELL

When it comes to constructing the shell of a lazy river, the same methods apply. As with regular pools, the wall’s thickness, steel schedule and other factors will have



Lazy rivers take up a fair amount of area, however designers can use creative ways to save space. The stream can coil around spas or special deck areas that provide a nearby getaway from the home.

to do with site conditions.

There is one difference, however, which comes from the sprawling nature of these features. A soils specialist should come onsite and take more borings than they normally would for a regular pool. Because of the additional real estate, there is an increased chance of differential soil conditions, where spots in the feature show different ground characteristics, potentially leading to uneven settling of the structure. “When you complicate things with a lazy river, that might challenges things a little bit,” Peterson says. “There should be additional testing for that.”

Safety also becomes a factor in building the structure and surrounding features. While people will move down the river at a leisurely pace, it’s still fast enough to hurt if they should crash or scrape against a static element.

When laying out the river and peripheral features, be sure to place, size and elevate elements so they don’t get

in the way. Generally speaking, rocks should not hang over the coping into the river. Exceptions may be made for very round and smooth rocks and boulders that protrude so slightly they won’t get in the path. For the most part, they should stay out of the course.

Bridges are attractive features on rivers, as they create access over the water and into your separate spa or entertainment space. Keep in mind that bodies — and heads — will be bobbing underneath, so clearances should be allowed for.

When drawing out the course itself, avoid abrupt changes in direction. All curves should be fairly sweeping in nature, so that rafts and the current can smoothly glide in a controlled manner without hitting into walls, which can result in injury to humans, and eddies from the reverberating water.

If the river needs to make a 90-degree change in direction, plan to do this with a radius in the neighborhood of 8 to 10 feet, Davidson says.

PHOTO: MICHAEL WOODALL COURTESY RED ROCK POOLS & SPAS



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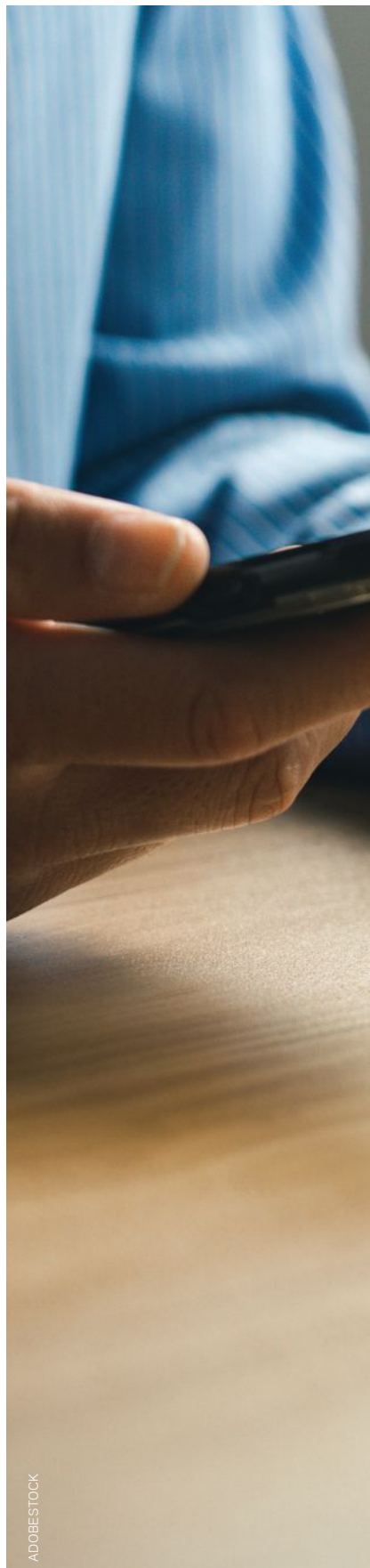
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INVESTING IN YOUR CONSTRUCTION COMPANY: THE PROS, CONS, AND POSSIBILITIES

What type of company will you build to
reach financial independence?

BY DAVID GERSTEL



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As the owner of a construction business, you understand the need to invest in your company. You realize that at the very least “you will make a huge investment of both spirit and time,” as one veteran general contractor puts it. You will also plow a substantial amount of the money that your company earns back into it. You must do all of that if you want a company that remains productive and strong enough to weather the ups and downs of the economy.

ESSENTIAL INVESTMENTS

To begin with, you will invest in your employees. You will make sure they feel respected. Respect, along with autonomy, is at the very top of the list of what employees want at their jobs. You will provide them with every financial benefit that your company can afford, from tool allowances through good wages and profit sharing. Or at least you will do that if you have your wits about you.

As I have emphasized in my book, *Building Freedom, A Construction Pro's Path to Financial Independence*, respect and generosity toward employees are acts of enlightened self-interest. If treated well, employees stick around; you don't have to constantly replace them with new people.

Turnover costs you. It may not be visible on a balance sheet or an income statement. But if you have more than a bare minimum of turnover, it's eating away at your company. Advertising for prospective new employees, interviewing them, processing their paperwork, and then training and meshing them with your existing workforce costs time and money.

Along with compensating your employees as well as possible, you will need to provide them with good equipment. Investing in good equipment is part of the respect you want to show to your employees. Wally Staples, a veteran home builder in Maine who

has created a thriving design/build company, says that whenever he sees equipment that can protect his workers against injury and/or improve their productivity, he buys it. The enhanced safety says to workers, you matter to us; we don't want you to get hurt. The more efficient equipment says we want to support your efforts to be excellent at your craft.

Investment in workers is a must not only at the jobsite but in the office. There, too, you must spend for systems and tools that enhance productivity and safety. All that investment pays off for you, your company and each of your employees. It reduces or eliminates workers' compensation claims and the attendant, often severe, rise in insurance costs. And it keeps your company competitive and profitable.

You may or may not find it worthwhile to spend money on marketing beyond doing good work for your clients and relying on their references to bring in new projects. If you try it, just make sure it is returning more than it costs. I once read an article by a popular industry consultant who recommended a marketing program that clearly, as evidenced by their own numbers, would cost more than it returned in company profits!

Finally, you must put company earnings into a working capital account. Just as an individual needs money in the bank for basics when hard times come, a company needs capital in reserve to get through down years for the economy. That's emphatically true for our industry. When the economy slides into recession, construction can experience depression. Construction projects are largely optional, or at least not urgent. They can be postponed. They can be dropped altogether. And during hard times, they often are.

BEYOND ESSENTIALS

When we move beyond essential

Some construction pros settle on a strategy for putting earnings back into their construction company that, in my experience, appears to often be ill-advised and misguided.

expenditures like broad compensation for employees and building up of capital reserves, just how earnings should be put back into a construction company is less clear cut. Some construction pros settle on a strategy that, in my experience, appears to often be ill-advised and misguided: They plow their capital into fancy new trucks rather than maintaining sound, older vehicles, into impressively big shops that largely sit empty or unused. And into unnecessary layers of office staffing and site supervision or handsomely remodeled offices.

What drives those investments? A range of motivations, I imagine. But definitely in some cases, a dream of “building a brand,” selling the business, harvesting much cash, and riding off into financial freedom. Victoria Downing, the president of Remodelers Advantage, says she regularly hears that dream from new clients who enlist in RA's educational programs. When she explains what it takes to build a company that can be sold for a significant amount of money, many of her clients shelve the dream.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SALEABLE COMPANY

Creating a construction company that can be sold for enough money to enable financial freedom is a

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serious challenge. To understand how a construction company owner interested in selling their company might meet the challenge, I interviewed business brokers as part of my research for *Building Freedom*. They all stressed the importance of selling when times are good, not hesitating in the hope that a boom will continue and your company's value will rise. They underscored, as well, what a company must not be and called out the characteristics it must have to be saleable.

To begin with, the company must not be "a hub and spoke" operation. The owner can't be at the center and handling all the critical tasks from marketing through project management. Instead, a competent management team, versed in the use of effective systems, must be responsible for those tasks.

The well-organized management team must serve customers so well that they give the company high marks for performance. The company must be profitable. It must stay clear of debt. It must have clean books —

that is, no financial records for submission to the tax authorities, on the one hand, and under-the-table cash flows on the other. Why is that? Because the hidden income cannot be considered when the company is valued, for its existence cannot be proved.

After considering all those requirements, you may think you can meet the challenge. Even so, before deciding that building a brand is the path you want to travel to financial freedom, consider what you might actually get for your company.

REALITIES OF SELLING

When I inquired of brokers what a typical construction company might go for, they offered a range of factors that can be multiplied by a company's profit to suggest a market price. As you can see in the sidebar below, the brokers indicated that the sales value of a construction company is between one and four times its average profits — or perhaps somewhat higher for a plumbing or HVAC company. The cases I have seen suggest the midrange multiplier of two to three times profit is realistic.

If you have spent decades building up a remodeling company, and it is earning \$500K in actual profit (as distinct from owner's pay), then you might expect to get one million to one and a half million for it. Bear in mind, however, that even if you are fortunate enough to actually sell your company, your take will be reduced by taxes along with legal and other frictional costs of the sale — notably the broker's commission, typically 10% of the sales price. The broker gets their commission even if you aren't paid in full. If you do not sell for all cash, and the buyer falters and fails to pay you, the broker will be long gone with their commission.

All in all, the prospects are daunting for reaching financial freedom via

sale of your construction business. There are good reasons for that. Typical small construction companies are not worth much. They are too vulnerable to the ups and downs of the economy. They are besieged by competition from newcomers who will underprice and thereby win jobs en route to going out of business. That's why, when they are sold, it is often to employees — folks not likely to know much about investing.

SELLING TO EMPLOYEES

An owner can sell directly to one employee. They can sell to a group of or even all their employees via the legal arrangement called an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

ESOPs are far too complex to explore fully in this short article — though in *Building Freedom*, I have sketched the basics and suggested a resource for readers who want to learn more. Ownership of several construction companies in my area has recently been transferred to their employees via an ESOP. During the recent boom period, the companies appeared to be continuing on successfully.

ESOPs, however, are costly, requiring expensive legal services, and they can be risky for an owner. ESOPs may finance the purchase of the company by taking a bank loan. Banks know that construction companies are vulnerable business entities that often collapse. They are not eager to extend a loan secured only by such a business. So they require that the owner's assets serve as collateral. If the ESOP falters and becomes unable to pay off the loan, the bank can take those assets.

Even when no ESOP is involved, a sale to employees can be hazardous for an owner. The founder of one respected company sold it to an employee who had been with him for years. He thought he had the right guy to take over the firm. He agreed to take

Typical small construction companies are not worth much. They are too vulnerable to the ups and downs of the economy. They are besieged by competition from newcomers who will underprice and thereby win jobs en route to going out of business.

payment in installments. The new owner soon bankrupted the company, never paying his final installments. In other cases, new owners have realized they were in over their heads trying to run a company. They handed the company, sometimes badly damaged, back to the original owner.

ACHIEVING THE DREAM

For all the challenges and harsh realities, I want to emphasize that the dream of building and successfully selling a company is not an impossible one. Now and again some builder does realize the dream.

There are, in addition to employees, buyers for construction companies. There are buyers from outside our industry who want to break into it. There are buyers interested in growing revenue via acquiring other companies operating in the same or a similar niche. There are existing companies interested in expanding into new areas. For example, the owner of a large cabinet shop in my area acquired a general contracting company that today dwarfs their cabinet operation.

The owner of even a small construction company can list it for sale with a business broker and turn it over to a new owner for cash on the barrelhead. That is what Paul and Nina Winans accomplished. Paul has described their journey in articles for sister publication *JLC*. With an eye toward creating a saleable company and then retiring from construction, Paul and Nina developed systems for all aspects of their company's work and trained employees in using them. They methodically upgraded their projects and increased profitability. Ten years after beginning their program of improvements, they engaged a broker who found them a buyer that paid them not in installments but in full at the time of sale.

Accomplishing a sale like the

Winans' can take more than methodical hard work. It can require luck. Paul candidly reports that was the case for himself and Nina. They were fortunate, he notes, to exit the construction industry when they did. They happened to sell at the end of the building boom terminated by the Great Recession of 2008. Not long after their sale, the recession began. Construction companies, including the Winans' after the sale was completed, began winking out of existence. Selling their company during that recession, Paul points out, would have been difficult at best.

A DIFFERENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Early in my career, I concluded that investing in a construction company, especially one engaged in the kind of custom work I was doing, was a dubious strategy and a dicey path to financial freedom — which I was hell bent on achieving. I opted for a different path: It did include making the essential investments in my company, especially creating an employee-centered company free of turnover. It incorporated a commitment to doing such good work that satisfied clients constantly referred us to their friends and relieved us of the costs of marketing. And it involved organizing an ultra-lean company with the lowest overhead consistent with our other values.

By working out of a compact office and storage area and honing systems so efficient that only minimal office help was needed, I drove out-of-pocket overhead below 2% of revenue. I also minimized my owner's pay. Consequently, virtually all markup remained in the company for profit — both for my own use and for distribution to employees. I put my share of that profit into diverse investments outside of the company — largely

By working out of a compact office and storage area and honing systems so efficient that only minimal office help was needed, I drove out-of-pocket overhead below 2% of revenue.

real estate, stocks, and bonds, though only when they have been available at historically moderate prices and never during bubbles. While those investments, too, have their ups and downs and complications, they do produce more reliable returns than companies operating in the turbulent world of construction. And they require far less management time.

That investment strategy worked. I reached financial freedom at a young age — much faster, I observed, than certain fellow builders who elected to plow earnings back into “building a brand” — and I have strengthened it ever since. Additionally, I enjoyed a benefit not available to people who sell their companies. Because I still own David Gerstel/Builder, if the urge strikes, I can fire it up and take on a project. And I like that, for though financial freedom is delicious, I still love construction.

*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), “Nail Your Numbers: A Path to Skilled Construction Estimating and Bidding,” and “A Construction Pro's Path to Financial Independence.” You can contact David via his website, DavidGerstel.com. This article previously appeared in sister publication *JLC*.*

Product Profiles: Safety and Disability



CamerEye

CamerEye is a complete AI-camera safety system built just for the pool industry. It offers construction monitoring, alarm inspection and pool safety.

CamerEye allows pool builders to better monitor multiple job sites during pool construction with a customized builder portal that provides live video monitoring 24/7 and remote oversight capabilities of job site status, personnel activity and equipment, analytics of the construction process and time-lapse video and photo documentation to track each stage of construction from excavation to pool opening.

CamerEye then helps homeowners pass alarm inspection — it meets ASTM F2208-08 pool safety standards and can replace door alarms, floating pool alarms, and in-pool splash alarms.

Once a project is complete, CamerEye can be offered to homeowners for pool safety to monitor the pool 24/7.

Contact: Angarak — CamerEye | camereye.ai



Hydramatic Automatic Safety Cover

The motors of Aquamatic's Hydramatic covers run on hydraulic pressure rather than electricity. That means one-fourth the moving parts, no lubrication, and ropes that self-adjust, says Tom Dankel, cocreator of the AI-camera safety system built just for the pool industry. It takes only four bolts to assemble, making installation simple. Another time-saver is Aquamatic's patented cable compensator, which automatically aligns both sides of the cover as it extends and retracts. "Technicians are constantly telling us, 'I started your system up, and it worked right away with no fuss,'" Dankel says.

Every Aquamatic cover meets the ASTM F1346-91 safety standard and is custom-fitted down to the half-inch. Consumers can choose from 11 standard colors and six designer colors.

Contact: Aquamatic Cover Systems | aquamatic.com



Pool Lift Model IGAT-180

The IGAT-180 is Aquatic Access' most popular pool lift model for ADA compliance in public pools and for residential use when independent operation is desired.

This environmentally friendly lift is powered solely by water from a hose or plumbed-in line, with a lifting capacity of 400 pounds.

"The best thing about this product is its simplicity," says company CEO Linda Nolan. "It's a green product, with zero energy costs. The 2.2 gallons of water used to lift the seat is discharged into the pool upon descent, replacing evaporated water. The lift is ready to be used all day with no energy expended, which is part of the ADA requirements."

Included accessories are the socket for installing in the deck, a flip-up loading side armrest, a stationary poolside armrest, and a seat belt. Other options include a headrest and extra seatbelts.

Contact: Aquatic Access Inc. | AquaticAccess.com



AquaticAccess.com

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Jessica Blechar, Caldwell NJ Community Center



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Cover Care LLC Offers Professional Auto-Cover Installation, Replacement and Maintenance

Cover Care, LLC, is a national, full service company specializing in installation, repair and maintenance of automatic pool covers.

Cover Care technicians are trained to service and repair all brands, makes and models of automatic pool covers. Like any installed product, repair, maintenance and service are a part of any automatic pool cover. Cover Care has specialists in over 44 cities in the U.S. allowing any pool retailer, pool builder or pool service professional around the country to partner with Cover Care in the installation and service of pools that include an automatic pool cover.

Cover Care repairs covers that won't open or close, covers that are crooked, systems that make unusual noises or aren't working properly. Cover Care is prepared to maintain covers and keep them in perfect working order.

Contact: Cover Care LLC | covercare.com



Coverlon Safety Cover

Offered in mesh or solid materials, these covers are available in a variety of colors. The solid covers come in natural, earth-tone colors of gray and tan, in addition to blue and green. Super-mesh comes in green, blue and tan; regular mesh is available in those colors, plus black.

The safety cover is fabricated with durable materials, and strapping on the top and underside — the entire length and width of the pool — making for a stronger, safer cover, notes Frank Patel, company owner/president. "Our regular spring is what other companies refer to as 'heavy duty,'" he says. "Customers are pleased with the construction, especially for waterfeatures and complicated pools. They comment on the superior fit, construction and longevity of the covers."

Installed properly, children and pets cannot fall or accidentally slip into the pool. They also are tamper proof, requiring a special tool to remove or install.

Contact: The Cover Co. | coverlon.com



eXact iDip Pool Professional Test Kit

The eXact iDip Professional Test Kit combines two state-of-the-art water quality test instruments. The first is the eXact iDip Smart Photometer System, which integrates patented two-way wireless communication with any compatible iOS or Android smart device and has the potential to test more than 40 water parameters. The second is the new eXact pH+ Smart Meter System, which uses electrochemistry technology combined with Bluetooth connectivity.

The kit is compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch with the minimum iOS system version 9.0 and Android version 4.4 with Bluetooth 4.0.

The pre-configured kit is housed in a rugged and durable plastic case with secure fasteners and padded compartments.

The iDip is NSF-certified.

Contact: Industrial Test Systems | exactidip.com



Aqua-Xtreme Virtually Solid Mesh Cover

Loop-Loc's Aqua-Xtreme Virtually Solid mesh covers are constructed with light blocking fabric that not only deters algae growth but drains lightning quick, at up to 80 gallons per minute without clogging, eliminating the possibility of a standing water hazard, says LeeAnn Donaton-Pesta, Loop-Loc's president/CEO.

"Aqua-Xtreme covers are built super strong and will last for many years to come," Donaton-Pesta says. "Homeowners and dealers love opening up Aqua-Xtreme Covers in the spring to a pool almost as clean as the day it was closed".

Tough, double thick solid polypropylene webbing straps surround the perimeter, and the springs are made of noncorrosive 302 stainless steel for superior weight-bearing capacity.

All Aqua-Xtreme Virtually Solid mesh covers are supplied with a 15-year, pro-rated warranty.

Contact: Loop-Loc | looploc.com



Merlin Industries Professional Safety Covers

Merlin Industries is your best choice for safety covers, says Alyssa Selvaggio, Merlin's marketing manager. "With five professional safety cover choices, there is something to fit everyone's needs."

Merlin's Dura-Mesh II features a combination of sunlight shading, abrasion resistance, tear strength, and burst strength.

In addition, Merlin's patented SmartMesh safety cover is the first and only mesh material to provide 100 percent shade from sunlight and offers 40 micron filtration of debris, says Selvaggio.

Technical support can be found by calling 800-289-1836.

Marketing materials are available upon request.

Covers come with 15-year limited warranties.

Contact: Merlin Industries | merlinindustries.com



MeycoLite - The Original Safety Cover

MeycoLite fabric was used in the original safety pool cover created by Meyco founder, Fred J. Meyer, Jr., and is the fabric of choice for some of the world's largest winter pool covers, says Phil Saltzman, Meyco's director of sales.

MeycoLite is lightweight at just 4.4 ounces per square yard, which makes it easy to install and remove. Its generous weave eliminates the need to pump off surface water, allowing it to drain through the cover. Meycolite is treated for color fastness to minimize fading and requires minimal care over the winter.

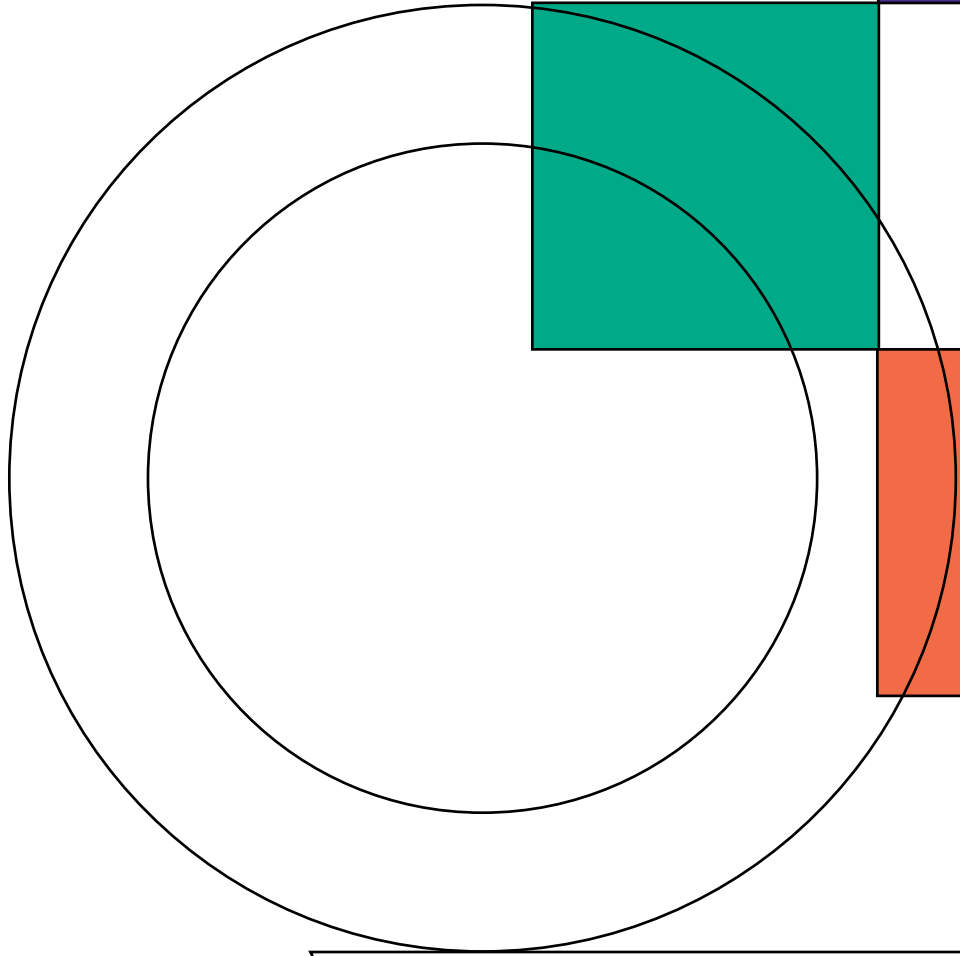
"Meycolite also blocks 95% of the sun's rays, reducing UV damage to the pool area," says Saltzman.

All Meyco covers have thick straps and double perimeter webbing for increased tensile (break) strength and are made with stainless steel buckles and aluminum tips that won't rust or stain pool decking.

Contact: Meyco Pool Covers | meycocovers.com

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covering all facets from
design and construction to
maintenance and retailing.



Pool Safety Cover

Rayner Covering Systems manufactures duplicate and custom pool covers.

The company uses materials such as mighty mesh, which offers 98% UVA/UVB protection; standard mesh, which offers 93% UVA/UVB protection; or solid vinyl, which provide 100% UVA/UVB protection.

All covers are webbed on top and bottom with 1-inch web that is double stitched with UVA/UVB-protected thread for durability.

Rayner offers free measuring and install (for fee) programs for pools as well as a repair program for existing covers.

"Individual attention is given to each customer for every order," says Richard Rayner, president. "Customers are very pleased with Rayner's ability to successfully cover very difficult or elaborate pools that other companies have turned down."

Rayner offers up to a 25 year warranty on covers depending on the material.

Contact: Rayner Covering Systems | raynercovering.com



HD Mesh Safety Cover

Tara HD Mesh safety covers give customers the benefits of a solid safety cover and doesn't require an automatic drain pump.

The densely woven mesh fabric filters out nearly all dust and small particles. It also blocks 99% of sunlight to keep algae from growing so the pool stays clean all winter.

Like all of Tara's mesh and solid safety covers, the HD Mesh covers are built with double layer webbing around the perimeter and all of the cross-strapping. They also come with heavy-duty single coil springs at no charge.

"The heavy-duty springs are one of the best features on these covers because they will last for years without stretching or ovaling out," says Thomas Kennedy, Tara's marketing director. "They also feature angled ends so that they lie flat against the deck and they come with a D-ring and a buckle so customers can choose how they want to attach the anchors."

The HD Mesh covers are available in green, blue or tan.

Contact: Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com



Ornamental Aluminum Fence

Ultra's aluminum fence products provide a safe and secure boundary for inground and aboveground pools.

Ultra Aluminum Mfg. has provided code-approved fence/accessories for pool installations throughout North America for over 27 years.

"Our products are easy to install and with our Powercoat finish, they offer long-lasting beauty that is virtually maintenance-free," says Ben Jodoin, midwest sales for Aluminum Mfg. "With a comprehensive line of privacy fence along with custom fabrication capabilities, design options are only limited by customers' imaginations."

A lifetime warranty is standard on all fence products.

Contact: Ultra Aluminum Mfg. | ultrafence.com

Product Profiles: Pool Finishing Materials



Pump Shut-off System/ SVRS

Vacless' VGB-compliant SVRSs feature an electrical pump shut-off system with an alarm or siren, which instantly turns the pump off upon entrapment.

The SVRS is automatically resettable in 3 minutes, and features no nonsense programming, no false tripping, choice of air or no-air induction, and no by-passing for pool vacuum cleaning.

It installs in 5 minutes onto the pump in place of the suction side drain plug without the use of tools, and is designed for use with pumps of up to 25 horsepower.

"The best thing about this product is the easy installation, no nonsense programming and unquestioned reliability," says Hassan Hamza, Vacless' president.

Marketing materials and technical support are available.

The units are covered under a 3-year warranty.

Contact: Vacless Systems | vacless.com



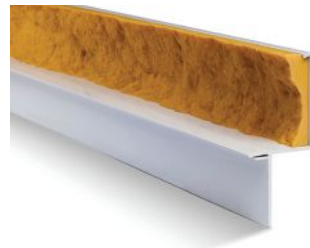
Dimension Series Morning Fog 2x4

Launched in January 2023, the new Dimension Series glass tile comes in three unique colors: Cirrus Blue, Dusk and Morning Fog. Matching 2x4 bullnose trim tile available for the most functional, professional and attractive way to finish corners and edges.

"This uniquely shaped glass tile is frost proof and will last a lifetime," says Missy Kent, marketing coordinator for Artistry in Mosaics. "Our customers love this tile because of its unique shape."

The company offers more than 100 stylish glass tile options from trendy to classic. Marketing materials can be ordered at artistryinmosaics.com/request-catalog.

Contact: Artistry in Mosaics | artistryinmosaics.com



Z Poolform

Z Poolform is a reusable PVC form used to create decorative concrete copings for swimming pools. Interchangeable Form Liners will allow for a variety of different edge profiles and textures not previously possible.

Z Poolforms can be used with vinyl liner, fiberglass, or concrete pools. They attach to the pool wall without the need for tie wires, and are rigid enough to screed on and vibrate against. The forms are not stripped until the concrete has cured, meaning there is no need to finish or dress the edge while the concrete is still green, saving time and money.

"Any pool builder or concrete contractor who does at least one pool deck a year will love this product," says Dario Baldoni, the company's vice president of marketing and technology. "The high level of relief and detail created with the textured form liners can be matched to the stamp, resulting in a realistic stone look."

Contact: Concrete Countertop Solutions | concretecountertopsolutions.com



New PebbleBreeze (Luxurious-Polished) Pool Finish

Pebble Technology's newest pool finish — PebbleBreeze — combines the beauty and durability of traditional pebble finishes with an exceptionally smooth-polished surface. Glass beads create captivating colors while providing a non-slip finish.

"Pebble Technology's proprietary additive and a chemically-resistant base material also give this smooth finish industry-leading durability," say company officials.

For more information, call 1-800-937-5058.

Contact: Pebble Technology International | pebbletec.com



Stratford White Porcelain Paver

The Stratford Paver Collection is a beautiful group of bold natural shades, ideal for covering outdoor contemporary spaces.

Made in Italy, the Stratford Paver has an anti-slip texture making it ideal for swimming pool deck use.

Available in two colors in both a paver and tile format. Impervious porcelain is resistant to stains, scratches, chemicals, extreme temperatures and UV exposure.

"The contemporary looking Stratford is stunning in the white color and is a very durable, but easy to clean product," says Charles Vasquez, QDI Surface's director of sales. "We have received numerous comments from our customers about the sophisticated look and they love the lighter color and the matching interior tile that is available along with decorative Hexagon tiles."

This product has a lifetime residential warranty and a 10-year commercial warranty.

Contact: QDI Surfaces | qdisurfaces.com



Ramuc Hi Build Epoxy

Ramuc Hi Build Epoxy is a self-priming, two-coat system that rolls easily and builds to 8 mils dry per coat, rendering "smoothing" qualities on rough surfaces. It provides stain, chemical, and abrasion resistance and offers up to 8 years service life.

"This superior high-build epoxy renovates aged concrete, plaster, and fiberglass/gelcoat surfaces at one-third the cost of plastering," says Thomas Maellaro, Ramuc's vice president of marketing. "This has been the go-to refinishing paint for contractors all over the U.S. due to its excellent performance and long service life."

Hi Build Epoxy is compatible with saltwater systems and is VOC compliant in the U.S. and Canada. It's available in one or two gallon kits.

Technical support and marketing materials are available on the company's website: ramucpaint.com.

The product is covered under a 1-year warranty.

Contact: Ramuc | ramucpaint.com



Quarry Block Waterfalls

RicoRock Quarry Blocks are made of a high tech concrete mix and do not deteriorate like those cut from natural limestone, especially important in swimming pool applications, says Bruce Riley, RicoRock's managing director.

The Quarry Blocks come with sheer type waterfall weirs built in with access to plumbing under the precast cap. The plain quarried faces work well with modern designs but also is easy to veneer with tile or a thin stone veneer for a more traditional look. The cast concrete units weigh between 300-600 pounds and are suitable for sitting or as a platform for fire features. The interior space can accommodate a propane tank but require vents

RicoRock Quarry Blocks install in an hour or two and do not damage the pool deck. They can be configured in several ways or used as a single feature.

All RicoRock products come with a limited 5-year warranty.

Contact: RicoRock | ricorock.com



Diamond Brite Jewels

Created with the homeowner in mind, Diamond Brite Jewels is an exposed aggregate pool finish created with a patent-pending proprietary formula designed to be highly UV stable, durable, and fade resistant.

"The high-quality Diamond Brite Jewels colors have an unparalleled fade resistance," says Robert Pritchard, SGM's general sales manager. "These factors are the catalyst for keeping your pool looking as colorful as when it was first installed."

The unique colors reflect the gems they were named for: Alabaster (light blue water), Blue Topaz (medium blue water), Moonstone (gray water), Obsidian (black water), Paraiba (teal/green water), and Tanzanite (dark blue water).

Diamond Brite Jewels come with a one year warranty. However, a homeowner may receive a 10-year limited warranty by registering their pool online within 30 days of installation.

Contact: SGM | sgm.cc



HS-1 SL

Deck-O-Seal HS-1 SL is a one-part, self-leveling hybrid sealant, developed with silyl-modified polymer (SMP) technology. It cures under the influence of atmospheric moisture to form a medium modulus sealant with excellent adhesive properties and resistance to ageing and weathering.

HS-1 SL is designed for horizontal expansion joints in swimming pool decks, patios, and sidewalks. HS-1 SL is self-leveling and does not need to be tooled.

It is packaged in a convenient easy-to-use 32-ounce pouch, which eliminates the need of a caulking gun that is required when using cartridges. The pouch comfortably fits in the hand for easy application.

"The HS-1 SL has become a fan favorite very quickly," says Jim Dill, the company's division manager. "This new innovated pouch really makes a difference in the ease of application."

Contact: W.R. Meadows Deck-O-Seal | deckoseal.com

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New Products

BY PSN STAFF



Fluidra

Designed for quick, intuitive use, the new Jandy SpeedSet controller is capable of controlling pump speeds for multiple features with 10 daily schedules, plus eight additional on-demand timed runs. SpeedSet is built with an easy-to-access wiring connection point for all Jandy automation systems.

Contact: jandy.com/speedset



ProTeam

Quick Shock's fast-dissolving, stabilized chlorine granules are formulated to quickly destroy algae and bacteria. Quick Shock comes in convenient pre-measured one pound bags — making it easy to add 1 pound per every 10,000 gallons of water while the pump is running. Made in USA.

Contact: proteampoolcare.com



RB Pool & Spa

RB Retail and Service Solutions software now offers a fully integrated construction software solution designed specifically for pool and outdoor living builders. This module tracks construction costs, inventory, and the actual progress of each job — with customizable notes.

Contact: rbretailandservicesolutions.com



SeaKlear

SeaKlear's Chitosan Clarifier now uses an improved high-quality chitosan formula. It contains recycled shells from the seafood industry that would have otherwise ended up in landfills. It works with high sanitizer levels and can be used at the same time as shocking your pool.

Contact: seaklear.com



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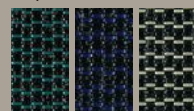
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