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POOL AND SPA NEWS

Tips for Fiberglass Installation

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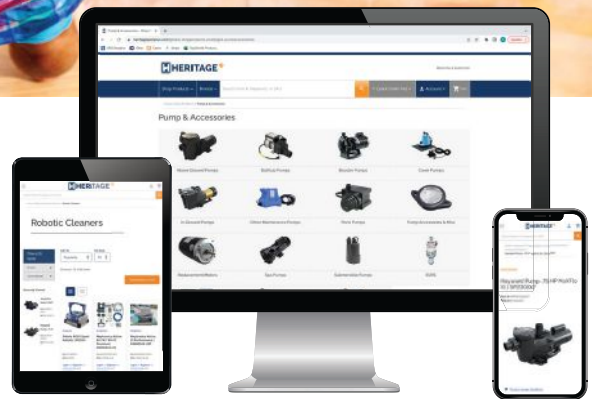
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Three Magic Phrases to Settle Customer Service Issues



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

These days, everyone's emotional setting seems to be stuck to "hair-line trigger." People readily jump on the outrage train, quick to anger and quickest to judgment. Nowhere is that more apparent than on social media, where TikToks of complaining "Karens" abound, Redditors heatedly argue over the morals of reclining an airline seat, and Tweeters spout every affronted thought or reaction for likes and retweets.

I'd argue that widespread use of social media itself has effectively trained us all for the Outrage Olympics — after all, the algorithms are designed to engage users, and nothing is more engaging than provoking outrage.

However, some users are valiantly swimming against the outrage tide. One such account wound its way into my feed the other day. Jefferson Fisher is a trial attorney who shares ways to persuade and communicate. He says these three simple phrases will keep someone from getting defensive and instead make them more receptive to your perspective. Here are his tips:

1. Find something you agree on. You don't have to agree with everything they've said. You can go macro and just agree that the two of you are talking — for example, "I agree that this subject is worth discussing," or "I agree that we should talk about this." As long as you use the words, "I agree," you automatically bring down their wall.

2. Tell them what you've learned. For example, "After listening, I've learned that this topic is really important to you." As long as they hear the phrase, "I have learned," it makes them feel like they're educating, that they're understood, which makes them less defensive.

3. Use the phrase, "That's helpful to know." If you tell them they've been helpful, it makes them feel that they're invested in mutual understanding and they become more receptive to what you have to say.

I found these all to be decent reminders on how to defuse but politely argue your point during a confrontation, which can be particularly useful when dealing with irate pool owners.

But a word of caution: I think they're only truly helpful if used with sincerity. People can smell manipulation from a mile away, and if your only intent is to "manage" them, then these phrases will only work to fuel the fire. You must convey to your customer that they are being heard and work to find a mutually satisfactory solution — some kind of concrete action — to back up your words.


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Court Case Places California Gas Bans in Jeopardy

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



A court decision has perhaps hampered a strategy of the California decarbonization movement that has had the pool industry there on edge for the past couple years.

A number of cities had enacted or were preparing codes that would prohibit the running of natural-gas lines in homes. Makers of gas-fired pool and spa heaters, and those who sold them, worried how Californians would affordably heat their pools.

Last month, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court's decision that said cities and counties could do that. In *California Restaurant Association v. City of Berkeley*, the plaintiff said a Berkeley, Calif. ordinance banning the installation of gas lines overstepped a federal law stating that only the U.S.

Department of Energy can establish conservation standards for building appliances. Berkeley said its ordinance fell within the restrictions of

the federal law, since it doesn't ban appliances, but rather prohibits the installation of gas lines. The Appeals court said they are the same thing.

With this decision, the 74 similar codes and ordinances that have been established throughout the Golden State are now in jeopardy. While not outright overturned, cities and counties would have to prove that the Berkeley recent decision doesn't apply to their own laws.

This is the highest court before the Supreme Court, which would be unlikely to hear this case if it's appealed, said John Norwood, Director of Government Relations for the California Pool & Spa Association. "It's a very positive decision," Norwood said. "These codes are very premature. The technology hasn't caught up, there are the potential costs ... There needs to be a lot more work done to come up with a product that will make the consumer happy."

Angi Releases List of Top Pool States

Angi (formerly Angie's List) recently issued lists of the states boasting the most pools. The Sunbelt dominated, with Florida, California, Texas, Arizona and Georgia building the most inground pools. On the aboveground side, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey topped the list.

The company also assessed which states showed the fastest growth during the pandemic. For inground-pool construction, this distinction went to North Dakota, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey and Nebraska. For aboveground sales, Idaho, Nebraska, Utah, Washington D.C. and New Mexico topped the list.

Angi also gauged which states hire the most service technicians, and the least. Florida, California, Texas, Arizona and New York ranked the highest, while Arkansas, the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana are least likely to hire service techs.

Federal Agency Considers Banning Most Noncompetes

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

The federal government is proposing a change that would significantly restrict the use of noncompete agreements.

The Federal Trade Commission has issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would invalidate all noncompete agreements — both existing and future — signed by employees. The documents would only remain valid when signed by company owners who hold at least 25% of a business.

Currently undergoing its open comment period, the proposal seeks to address what some consider an abuse of the noncompete agreement. These contracts originally were meant to keep previous owners or key employ-

ees of a company from using the previous company's contacts and other key information from compete against the original firm, says Steve Getzoff, outside national counsel for the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance, and a partner in New York-based Lester Schwab Katz & Dwyer.

But now, some employers are using them with line-level staffers.

"If you have your employees sign an agreement that says they can't work in their chosen field where they live for a year or two, what are they supposed to do?" Getzoff says.

This federal move continues what



several states have already begun, Getzoff said. Many courts have called them unreasonable for employees, and California has gone so far as to say that a contract will be invalidated completely, even if it only contains a few lines of noncompete language.

If the rulemaking passes in its current state, employers will have to not only consider these agreements void, but also communicate that fact to past and present employees who have signed one.

Pool Troopers Acquires My Clean Pool

The national service firm Pool Troopers has acquired a company in Orlando.

It most recently purchased My Clean Pool, marking its 19th acquisition since Dec., 2020, when it began its ongoing expansion across the Sunbelt.

Former owner Kurt Hinz will leave the company and relocate to California.

"I'm proud of what we've accomplished with My Clean Pool, but it's time for me to move on to new opportunities," he said.

Said Pool Troopers CEO Mark Patton: "This acquisition is a great opportunity for us to expand our presence in the Orlando area."

Fiberglass Company Hires Straub to Key Position

Explore Industries, a firm comprised of several fiberglass-pool brands, named Tom Straub as its director of business development and training.

Straub has more than 12 years' experience with fiberglass pools, most recently serving Latham, The Pool Company, as its president of the U.S. Division. He will focus on expanding the company's dealer network, enhancing training and innovating.

Explore Industries' brands include Leisure Pools, Imagine Pools, and Aviva Pools.



AquaComfort Acquires GreenStory

GreenStory, a maker of pool and spa filtration systems, has been acquired by the AquaComfort Water Group family of companies.

AquaComfort noted GreenStory's meltblown technology as a positive addition to its portfolio. The technology applies heat and pressure to melt plastic pellets and create a non-woven material made of ultra-fine fibers. GreenStory also produces a cyanuric acid remover.

"We are thrilled to welcome GreenStory to our family of companies," said Bob Miller, Chairman of AquaComfort Water Group. "...We see those technologies as real industry game changers."

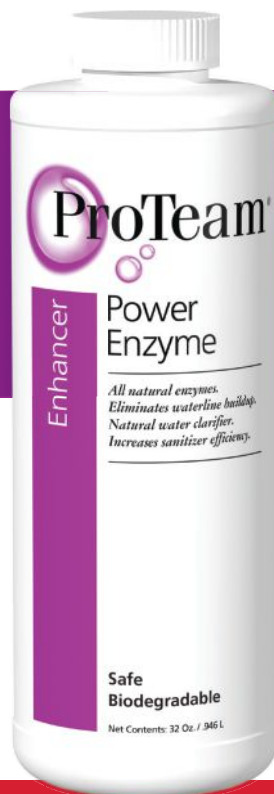
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Mutually Beneficial

After learning more about his staff, this company owner implemented new programs to help with employee satisfaction — and performance.

BY JOSH HENDERSON



In the spring of 2021, I started conducting individual interviews with each employee at the company that I had recently acquired.

I wanted to learn their personalities and goals, both personal and professional. Our employees inspired me to think outside the box.

During my interviews I discovered that many employees wanted to buy a house, a boat, etc., but most felt that those goals were unattainable.

I asked if they wanted financial help planning for those goals. Almost all said yes. Of those, I asked them to write down their monthly and weekly budget. Many didn't have a budget, so I asked them to write a list of their expenses. When I dug into their expenses, I learned they would eat at a convenience

store or fast food restaurant everyday instead of packing lunches or eating breakfast before leaving the house.

I noticed symmetries in how our employees got their nutritional sustenance and this perceived inability to purchase a house. I became concerned not only for the employees' financials, but also how they fed the physical energy demands of a full day. Because of the labor shortage and our industry's inability to find talent, I decided to focus on making sure we were maximizing the performance of our existing employees before doubling down on finding new help.

To help these staffers meet their personal goals, and foster the company's success, I initiated some new programs as a result of these interviews.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Professional athletes use their bodies to earn a living, so they tend to treat their bodies as finely tuned machines with personal trainers, chefs and life coaches.

But where most professional sporting events last three hours, our employees spend eight to 10 hours a day using their bodies to earn a living. Much of that work is done in blistering heat, rain, snow and cold temperatures. But not all of us can afford personal trainers, chefs and life coaches. And many employees were relying on convenience stores, fast food restaurants and energy drinks to fuel the grueling work day.

To help, I hired a holistic counseling business to take on our Human Resources Department. Mosaic Health and Wellness, located in Birmingham Ala., has nutritionists, dieticians, cognitive behavioral therapists, yoga instructors and an ordained pastor on staff.

We also offered financial education. We began by teaching how to properly read a pay stub and about how earning compound interest through a 401k program can be a significant strategy for long-term financial security.

Secondly, we explained that convenience stores, fast food lanes and energy drinks were an expensive options for nutritional sustenance. Being disciplined and packing a lunch was healthy and could produce financial benefits. On average, an employee spends \$25 to \$30 per day buying meals and snacks. Packing a lunch could result in a savings of almost \$20 per day. Extrapolated across a work week,

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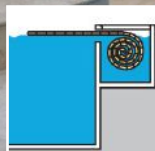
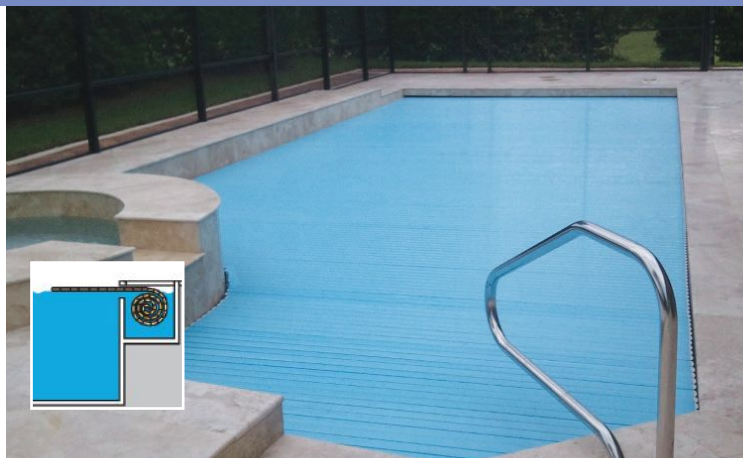
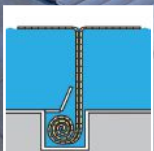
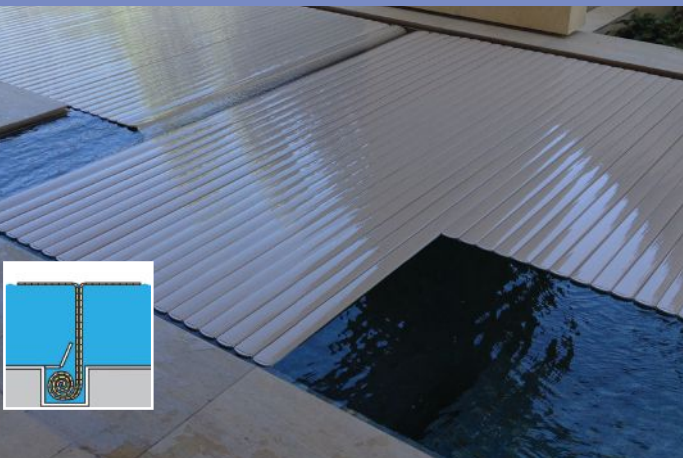


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month and annually that could result in a savings of \$100 per week, \$400 per month or \$4,800 per year. This savings translate into a down payment on a house, car or family vacation.

Essentially, we were eating our goals that we didn't think were attainable.

In addition, a diet of convenience store snacks, fast food and energy drinks can produce employees who crash mid-afternoon. It seemed that changing how we fueled up could result in more productivity by supplying the necessary energy to complete the last several hours of the work day. I pitched the concept of voluntarily ditching convenience stores and fast-food restaurants. Our employees weren't super receptive, so I decided to outlaw stopping at convenience stores and fast food restaurants while on the clock. In exchange, the company provided water and Gatorade, and then we placed YETI coolers on each

truck, so employees could keep their lunches and drinks cold.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Through the interviews, I also learned more about generational differences, especially the feeling by seasoned staff that newer employees don't work long enough hours, and that they spend too much work time on their cell phones.

I needed them to better understand our younger staff. Just because they liked working long hours didn't mean everyone around them should. Instead of focusing on deficiencies, we should focus on each employee's strengths and put them in environments where they would succeed.

As a compromise, we told younger employees that they could check text messages and social media accounts in between customers and store duties. We created a private group on Facebook

which is only for Adcock employees. This allows us to communicate with our staff company meeting dates and announcements, but on their terms. Our private group is now also a fun way for employees to share their days with members of other departments.

In 2022, we more than doubled our new pool builds versus 2021. Retail store sales also doubled time frame. While COVID and inflation have created an uptick in revenue growth for many pool businesses, I believe one reason Adcock's is surviving succession is because of our newfound understanding of our employees.

Josh Henderson is general manager and owner of Adcock Pool & Spa in Ellisville, Tenn. With more than 20 years in the industry, he has led teams in service, retail and marketing, and contributed to the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance and Master Pools Guild.

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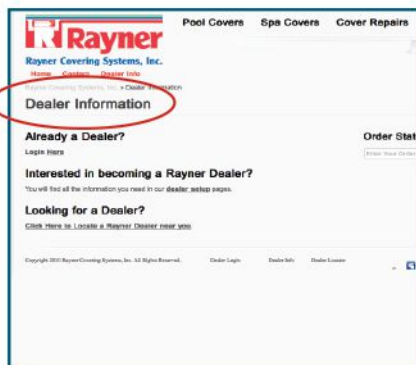


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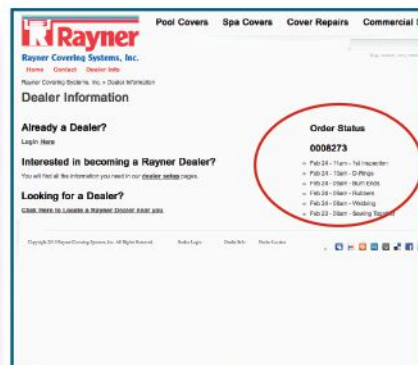
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The Best Company Is One that Runs Without You

The less your business depends on you being there, the more valuable it becomes.

BY PAUL WINANS



Many business owners find themselves a prisoner of their company. “How can I leave when I need to be available to deal with the unexpected? Even my best employees don’t have what it takes for me to be away.”

That’s head trash. I believe that the best way to find out how good your respective employees are is to go away and allow them to make decisions without your input. How do you create the ability to do that, as you tend to be the only one running your company while you are there?

ASK QUESTIONS, DON’T DICTATE

A typical owner is providing direction all the time. They also love to be the person asked a lot of questions, such as “What do we do now that this has happened?”

Don’t provide the answers. Ask clarifying questions. “What exactly has happened? Have you thought of a solution? What is it going to cost

in time and money? How will you let the client know about the situation? What would you do if I wasn’t here to answer your question? Who would you talk to and why that person?”

Basically, take every situation where you would otherwise automatically jump in with your answer and first ask a lot of questions. By doing so, you train those you employ to think.

PROVIDE A POINT OF REFERENCE FOR DECISION-MAKING

Every company has a mission statement and a short list of core values. Many companies don’t have them written down, which makes it so each person who works in the company has a different idea of what they are.

Work with your team to get these important points of reference for decision-making written down. Ask everyone to write one or two sentences that are the essence of what they think the company’s mission

statement is. Then have everyone, with you going last, read out loud what they’ve written and explain why they think that’s the company’s mission statement.

Then you take all the input and come up with a draft of the mission statement which you distribute for review and comment. Consider any suggestions for improvement that are offered to you and produce the final version.

Do the same thing to create a list of core values.

Now you and your people have the needed points of reference for decision-making.

PREPARE TO BE AWAY

Pick a date when you and your family will be away for a short time. Tell your employees several weeks ahead of time that you will be going away. Tell them you won’t have your phone on and want to be able to disconnect 100%.

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Ask them to think ahead about the projects that they're working on and what they might want to ask you about while you are away.

Meet with your employees a week before you are going away. Answer any questions they have regarding what might come up while you are gone. A couple of days before you depart, see if anyone has new questions. Help them figure out answers which fit the mission statement and core values by asking them clarifying questions.

GO AWAY FOR A LONG WEEKEND

Go away for a personal holiday. Take your family and leave work behind. Have a good time detoxing from being indispensable to your employees and to your company. Keep busy having fun and simply enjoying life.

EVALUATE WHAT HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE GONE

When you return, meet with your employees. Ask them what happened and how they responded to the unexpected. Ask them what part of the mission statement and core values they referenced when coming up with a solution and which employee in the company they ran their idea by before implementing it.

Celebrate publicly the decision(s) which were congruent with what the company is about. This is how you build a team and a culture that depends on you less and less.

Discuss privately the decision(s) which were off the mark and where better choices could have been made. Use these as teaching moments, not berating moments.

So you know, there was a time when early in me and Nina running

our business that I thought I was indispensable. And then I realized I was going to die because of all the stress I was putting on myself.

That prompted us setting dates by when we would travel. And to always be planning another getaway. And make each getaway a little longer.

We told people not to call us, even if the office burned down. Can you imagine that? At one time, I wasn't able to.

Don't be a prisoner of your business. The less your business depends on you being there, the more valuable it becomes.

Paul Winans, a veteran remodeler who worked as a consultant to remodeling business owners, is now enjoying retirement. Paul's book, "The Remodeling Life: A Journey from Laggard to Leader," is available on Amazon. This article previously appeared in sister publication Remodeling.



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WHERE HAVE THE WORKERS GONE?

Zonda's chief economist outlines four factors contributing to the 'fairly significant' labor shortage in the U.S.

BY ALI WOLF



As the pandemic struck the United States, unemployment soared with over 17 million people losing their jobs between February and April 2020. However, as the economy recovered, the U.S. moved from a labor surplus to a fairly significant shortage.

In fact, as we can see from the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) data beginning on page 26, there are 0.6 unemployed people per job opening, meaning there is roughly one person available for every two job postings. Notice, though, that there was a downward trend before the COVID recession, indicating that, even prior to the pandemic, the U.S. was moving from a surplus of labor to a shortage.

The civilian labor force participation rate, the percentage of the non-institutional population 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work per the BLS, emphasizes this point. Despite recently rising, it remains close to a level last observed in October 1977.

The prime age labor force participation rate, an important cut of the data only looking at those 25 to 54 years old, has returned to its pre-pandemic level at 83.1%. The current rate is down from its

peak of 84.6% in January 1999.

The change in the labor force is of particular interest to the construction industry. From the JOLTS data for the whole year of 2022, job openings in construction industries averaged 402,000 per month. This is up about 45% from 2018 when there were 277,000 openings per month on average for the year. There are signs that there's a better availability of workers since housing starts are down cyclically, but the lack of labor is a long-standing issue.

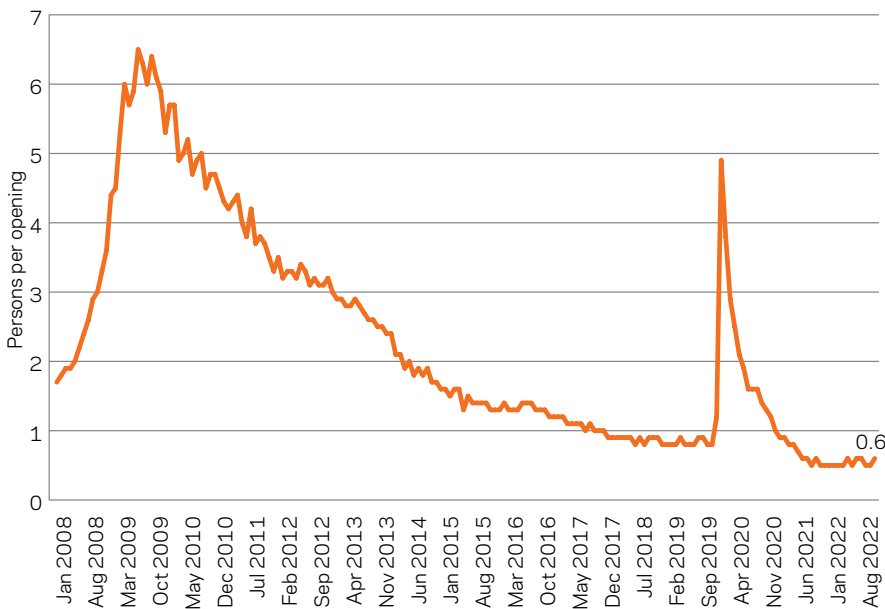
The obvious next question is "Where have the workers gone?" We attribute the change to four main things: the aging workforce, changes in immigration, drug abuse, and alternative employment opportunities.

1. Aging workforce. Prior to the pandemic, the 55+ labor force participation rate stood at 40.3%. Three years later, as of March, the participation rate has dropped to 38.6%. As the pandemic unfolded, many baby boomers retired early or took an opportunity to take an extended break. There is conjecture that these workers could "unretire," but this has not shown up strongly in the data yet.

More systemic, though, is the fact that by 2030,

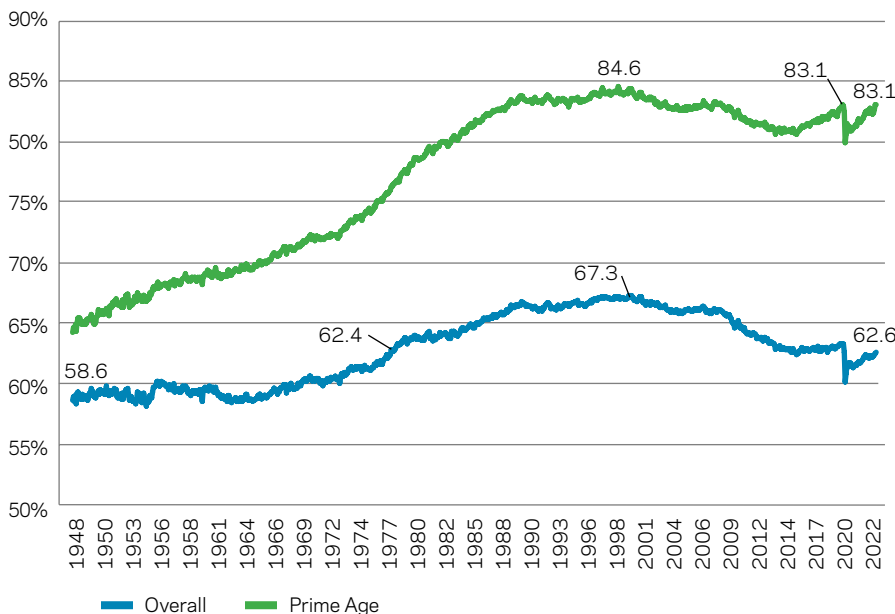


JOB OPENINGS PER UNEMPLOYED PERSON



Source: BLS JOLTS; Zonda

U.S. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE



Source: FRED; Zonda

all baby boomers will be of retirement age. This will lead to additional pressure on the labor force as the overall workforce ages and the generation behind them, the Gen Xers, are smaller in terms of sheer size.

The BLS forecasts that the total labor force will still grow through 2031, but with the growth primarily driven by workers aged 55+. This suggests that more people will be working longer and at older ages. Combined with generally falling fertility rates, the U.S. will face demographic pressure on both ends of the spectrum as the workforce ages.

2. Immigration. Immigration has traditionally been a way to help augment the domestic labor force. However, the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security indicates the number of people seeking permanent resident status has fallen 37% from its recent peak in 2016. Full year data from 2021 showed a slight increase over the pandemic trough, but immigration is still down substantially compared with pre-pandemic levels.

The shortage in labor is viewed as severe enough that immigration looks like the most prominent short-term solution. Goldman Sachs also argues that immigration is needed to get the labor market back in equilibrium but is pessimistic that the issues in immigration law will be resolved swiftly enough to alleviate the shortage, at least in the near term.

3. Drug abuse. The opioid epidemic is another contributor to the constrained labor pool. Opioids have been identified as a significant cause of death in the U.S. and, in turn, declines in labor force participation.

The Congressional Budget Office recently published a comprehensive report detailing the crisis as well as the federal government's response to the situation. The report found that, cumulatively since 2000, 556,000

people have died of opioid overdoses. Not only is this a terrible human tragedy, but this also has adversely affected the number of people available to work.

Additionally, other people that are facing addiction, but have not died, are also unavailable to work. Some studies have put this number as high as nearly 900,000 additional workers unable to work due to various addiction issues.

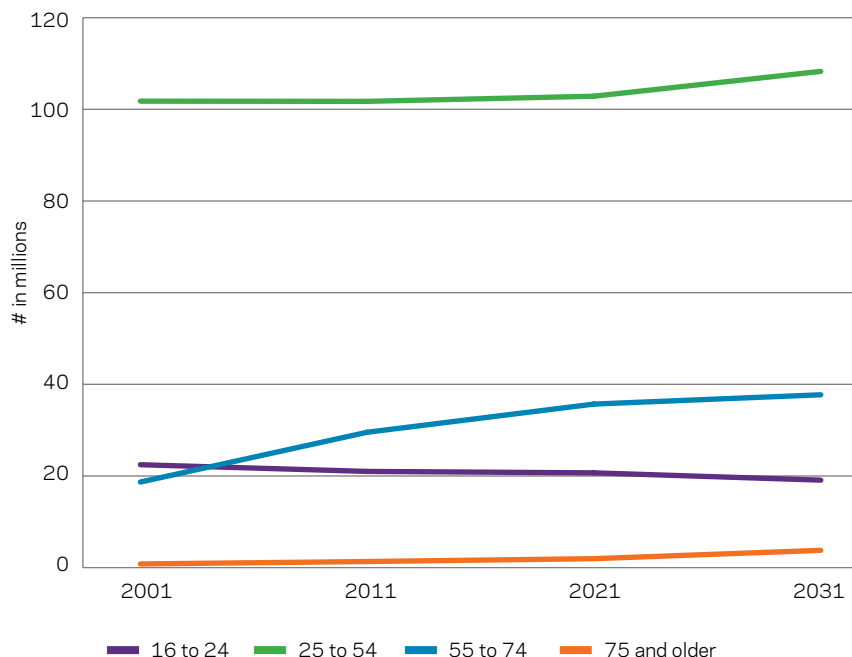
4. Alternatives to traditional work. Lastly, with the rise of TikTok and older platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, there has been a segment of the workforce that is making money online. Based on available data, there appears to be a small portion of the potential workforce that may have dropped out to try to earn income on various social media sites.

According to the Small Business Blog, there are 20,000 to 40,000 influencers on Instagram with more than 1 million followers and 300,000 to 2 million that have more than 100,000 followers. It is unclear how many of these influencers are based in the U.S. and how many of them would solely rely on social media channels for their income. However, the existence of these alternative career paths may be enticing some younger workers to not seek out formal employment.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, we explored the role of military service and college enrollment in the declining labor force. Right now, the military isn't a main culprit. The military has recently had a difficult time meeting its recruitment goals, which makes sense as enrollment normally ticks up during slower economic times.

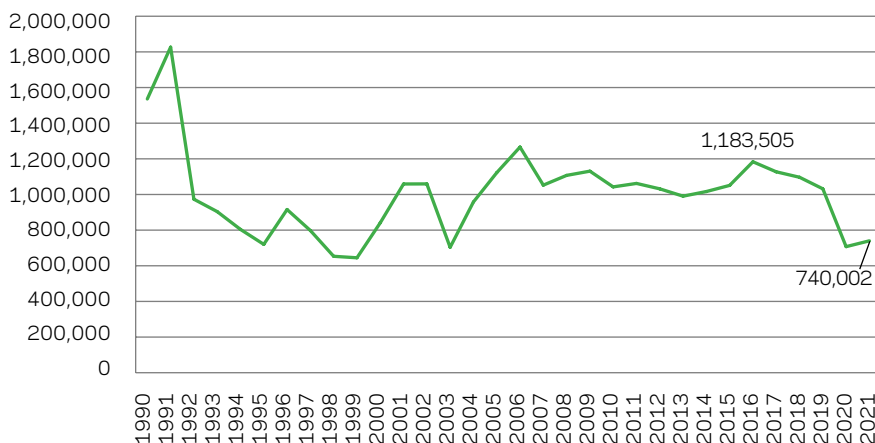
College enrollment isn't a clear reason either. The Census Bureau's latest data shows that college enrollment is still below pre-pandemic levels. Notice that undergraduate

LABOR FORCE BY AGE



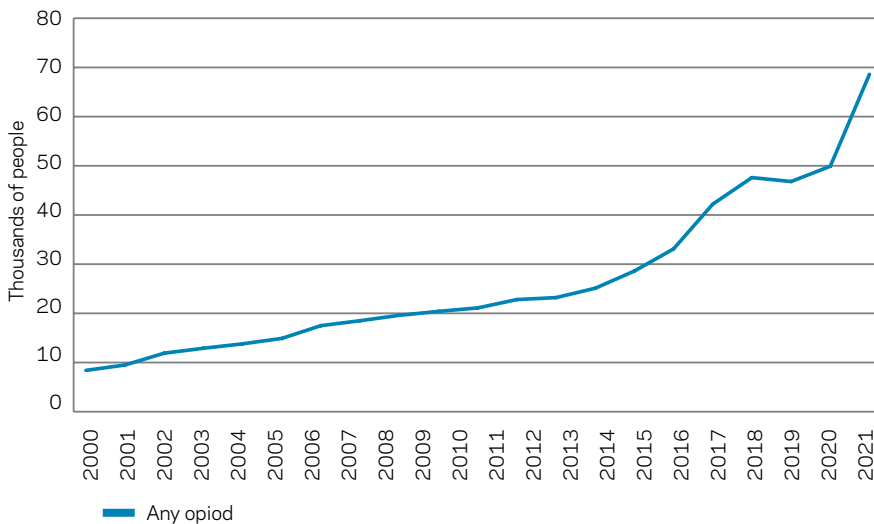
Source: BLS; Zonda

PERSONS OBTAINING LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT STATUS: 1990-2021



Source: DHS; Zonda

DEATHS FROM OPIOIDS IN THE UNITED STATES



Source: CBO; CDC; Zonda

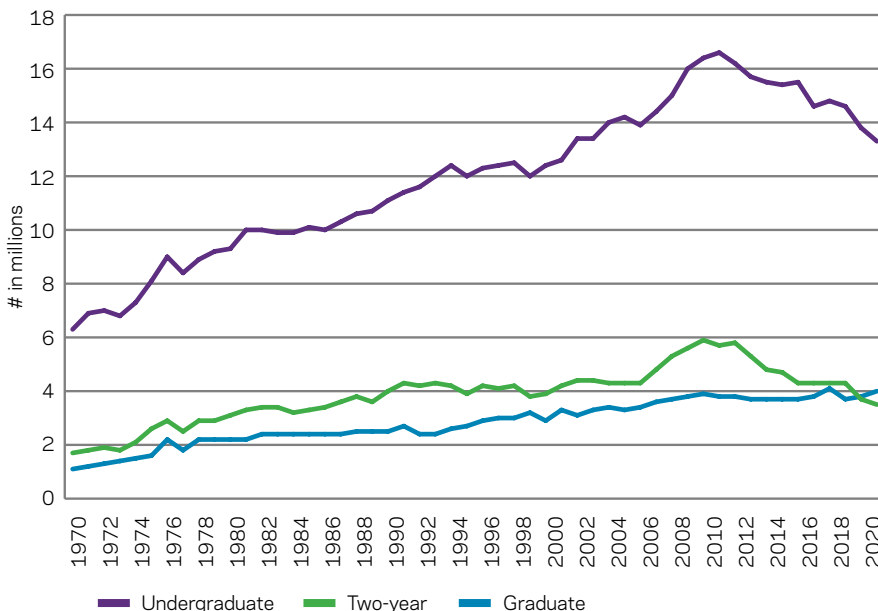
and two-year college enrollments are down significantly from their respective peaks in the 2010s, although graduate enrollments have been steady and even increased slightly.

Taken all together, many factors are contributing to the problems with the U.S. labor force. A big part of this is the aging of one of the largest segments: the baby boomers. As more boomers retire, further pressure will be put on the younger segments to increase workforce participation and economic output.

Other factors also putting downward pressure on labor force participation, including slow domestic population growth, lower levels of immigration, drug addiction, and alternative career paths. We also know that those suffering from long COVID symptoms may be contributing as well as those dropping out to take care of family needs.

In addition to the general strain on the workforce and economy, the labor shortage is strongly affecting the construction industry. With an estimated shortage of over 500,000 workers, resolving the U.S. labor supply issue is of utmost importance to help keep home building costs down and to produce homes at a quick enough pace to keep up with demand.

U.S. COLLEGE ENROLLMENT



Source: Census Bureau; Zonda

Ali Wolf is the chief economist for Zonda, the largest home building prop tech company in North America and parent company to PSN. As head of the economics department, Ali manages and analyzes the content for Zonda, runs special research projects, acts as a go-to advisor for the nation's largest home builders, and presents nationwide covering topics across the housing market and wider economy. Ali holds a Bachelor's Degree from The Ohio State University in Economics and a Master's Degree from the London School of Economics in Real Estate Economics and Finance.

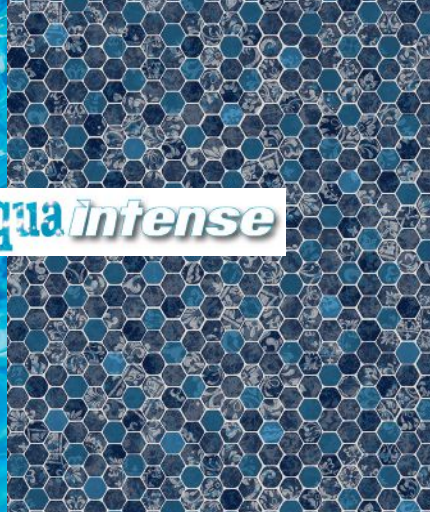


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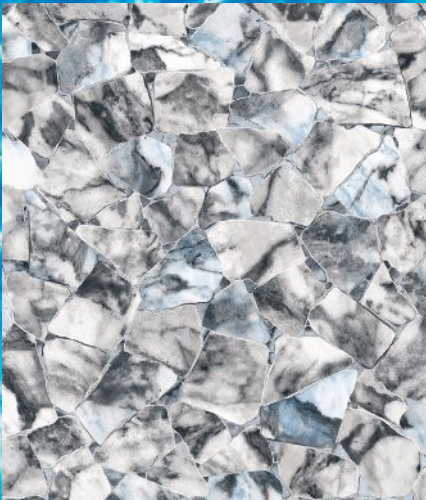
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Mastering the Process

Tips for a successful fiberglass-pool installation

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

There's no doubt that fiberglass pools have a stronger presence than just a decade ago.

For example, one PSN Top 50 Builder, Pools of Fun, has been installing fiberglass pools for 17 years, adding it to their vinyl-liner offerings well before it became the hot item it is today. In that time, they've seen fiberglass gradually increase to about 50% of the pools it builds annually, says Tyler Hermon, vice president of sales and marketing for the Plainfield, Ind.-based builder.

Already increasing in market share, fiberglass pools became even more popular during the pandemic, as families looked for alternatives that would allow them to swim with a minimal wait.

But, while this product may go in the ground more quickly than other pool types, that doesn't mean they don't require attention and expertise.

This may be lost on some, especially those without a history of building pools. "We get this a lot from customers: 'Well, you just dig a hole and you put a pool in there,'" says Phil Copher, owner of Epic Escapes, in St. Charles, Ill. "Yeah, it is, but there's a lot more to it. A heart transplant may be just cutting out the old one and putting in a new one, but there's a lot more going on."

Here, Copher and other installers share advice for ensuring a solid fiberglass-pool installation.

- **Invest extra time in your vendor relationship.**

So much of a project's success rides on the shell. For this reason, Michael Durand recommends starting with a

JAKE PEEBLES/POOLS OF FUN



If the base isn't done correctly, there will be gaps, leaving hollow pockets underneath the pool floor. "So when you walk on the floor of that pool, it will actually flex underneath your feet," Hermon says. "The homeowner will feel that — the floor will feel like a hollow void underneath."

Of course, working with a solid base material is crucial. Builders used sand at one time, but they've moved away from it and now largely use gravel. "Sand can move around underneath and on the side of the pool," Hermon.

Many use pea gravel, known for its self-compacting characteristics. Others prefer a chip stone, which is known for interlocking and staying in place.

"Once it's all locked into place and compressed, the walls technically can relax, and it could almost stay in its exact same spot," Copher says.

After the pool's been set in place and is believed to be level, Hermon's team will walk around the pool and bounce, searching for any hollow areas that indicate a gap in the sub-base.

"If there is [a gap], that's when we would flip the pool back up and add gravel to those specific spots," he says. "And that's a dance that we do until we've really made sure that there are no voids underneath the pool."

• **Keep it on the level.**

Leveling the pool is arguably the most important step in the process. Poor execution of this step affects more than the pool's appearance.

"That, over time, can form cracks and deform the pool and be a larger issue down the road," says Rob Goodall, vice president of Goodall Pools in Camp Hill, Pa.

His team shoots the top of the pool with a laser and strives to keep the pools within ¼-inch of level.

"If it is more than that, we'll usually pull the pool back out and spend the extra hour or so to try and make

solid working relationship with your fiberglass pool vendors.

"It's not a *piece* of the pool — it is the pool," says the co-owner of J&M Pool Company in Senoia, Ga. "It's not only a product, but it's a very expensive product."

Establish a good relationship so that you're on the same page when questions, challenges or warranty issues spring up, he recommends. It'll make these issues smooth out more quickly.

• **Don't oversell installation speed.**

While the shell can be set in a day or two, that doesn't mean it'll be ready for swimming. Decking and other more complicated features will add at least a few days.

But customers often believe they can swim in a day or two.

Provide realistic time lines, and explain all that's involved in the pool and accompanying amenities.

• **Use in-house crews.**

If these builders install enough fiberglass pools to keep a crew busy full-time, they will train a dedicated group. Until they reach that volume, they'll cross-train crews to work in multiple formats. Some will cross train all crews just in case, but mostly

dedicate each to one specialty.

Whatever approach works best for your company and available staff, Durand highly recommends sticking with in-house workers. Fiberglass pools have their own rhythm — certain steps must move fast, or in quick succession one after the other; others require more time, patience and precision. It's hard to control those things with subcontractors.

• **Prevent voids in the base.**

Remember that a one-piece fiberglass pool is just that — a complete vessel that comes in one piece. And you will have to set that whole pool on top of a base that is made for it. It's not like concrete, which you will shoot or pour in place. Crews need to prepare the base so it meets right up to the pool shell, with no gaps.

It starts at excavation. Pools of Fun uses a laser transit to make sure the elevation and slopes are just so.

This requires close communication. "The guy in the excavator and the guy with the grade stick kind of work as a band," Hermon says. "He's telling the excavator whether we've reached the depth or whether we need another 1 or 2 inches down."

Even more precision is needed when setting down the gravel base.

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the base of the hole that we've dug work with the bottom of the pool, so that everything sits much more level," he adds.

Builders must backfill the pool at the same time as they fill with water. To equalize the pressure on both sides of the shell, they should be done at the same rate. Many recommend that the levels of the backfill material and the water remain within 12 inches of each other throughout the process.

This is especially important for straight-walled pools. "When the wall's long and has nothing connected to it, you can literally use your hand and move it a foot in either direction," Copher says. "If it's got a long, straight wall and it's 40 feet, you really have to almost balance it identically. If not, you're going to run into issues with it bowing one way or another."

This doesn't mean you have to fill and backfill in one day. You can start by filling with enough water and gravel to secure the pool in place overnight, then finish it the next day.

When performing this step, monitor the water and backfill levels closely. When he worked on the crews, Copher would drive the skid steer that brought and dropped the gravel into place. Before he left for another load, he'd quickly eyeball the levels, then check again when he came back to the pool with the gravel. That would tell him where to drop the gravel next, and help him ensure the levels fell within 12 inches of each other. Other times, his crews assign one person to watch and direct traffic.

"They're standing on the back and looking at what's in or out more than the other, and they'll point and say, 'Okay, let's work on the left side.' Then the next bucket is on the right side," he says.

When you see the walls bowing about 1 inch from level, it's time to make adjustments. If it falls 2 inches from level, the crews should stop the



process, assess and correct.

"I always tell my guys, 'You're going to work so much harder if you rush that process,'" Copher says.

This is especially important if you're using a water truck, which fills the pool much faster than a hose. With the water coming into the pool so quickly, things can go uneven in a flash.

Correction isn't easy or quick. "That can involve setting the pool and lifting it back up, and setting it back down and lifting it back up," Hermon says.

So whether you use a crane or an excavator, plan to have the equipment on hand until you're certain the pool is level.

- **Don't rush the plumbing.**

Once a cut is made in the fiberglass shell, there's no going back. So plan the cuts carefully and do them precisely. A misplaced hole can't be covered with vinyl.

"All your cuts must be extremely intentional, or you can cost yourself a lot of money or ruin a pool shell; if you make the wrong size or put it in the wrong place, there's really no reversing that," Hermon says.

His team indicates the placement and measurements of the fittings on the project's Autocad drawings for reference. These show all fittings, skimmers and lights that go in the pools.

And an extra bead of silicone around the fitting is always a wise move, he adds.

Flex pipe should not be used on swimming pools in general, and fiberglass is no exception. While some builders may be drawn to its ability to move where you like easily, it won't hold up as well as rigid plumbing.

"I think a lot of the failures in the fiberglass world come from using flex pipe, in trying to do one-day installations," Copher says.

The plumbing should sit near the top of the bond beam and be supported by straps.

"So we're giving our plumbing penetrations that go through the pool its best shot that it won't settle and crack," Copher says. "Because if there's no support on the plumbing itself and you're relying on just the fitting, then you're going to run into issues."

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Create Backyard Bliss With These 2023 Outdoor Living Trends

Unfussy landscaping, climate-responsible yards, and wellness elements rank highly among homeowners and designers this year.

BY LEAH DRAFFEN

As the arrival of summer welcomes longer days and more time outdoors, homeowners are looking for ways to indulge in their outdoor living spaces. A popular space to gather for the past few years, the backyard is emerging as a haven for unfussy landscaping, climate-conscious ground coverings, and amenities designated for relaxation and wellness.

Combining data from homeowners' needs and wants with expert insights from over 200 designers, Yardzen has released the Outdoor Living Trends Report for 2023 that details trending styles, functionalities, and exterior design.

Below, find eight trends that have settled into the outdoor living scene for 2023.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY YARDZEN / PHOTO BY SHARA MATLIN



▲ **Organic-style landscaping.** The opposite of previous years' clean lines and rigidity, homeowners and designers agree that loose and organic landscaping not only creates a natural haven but is also low maintenance. Found through Yardzen's proprietary style quiz, there was a 100% increase in requests for "cottage gardens." Full and lush plantings, garden benches, and flowers and blooming plants are also highly requested.

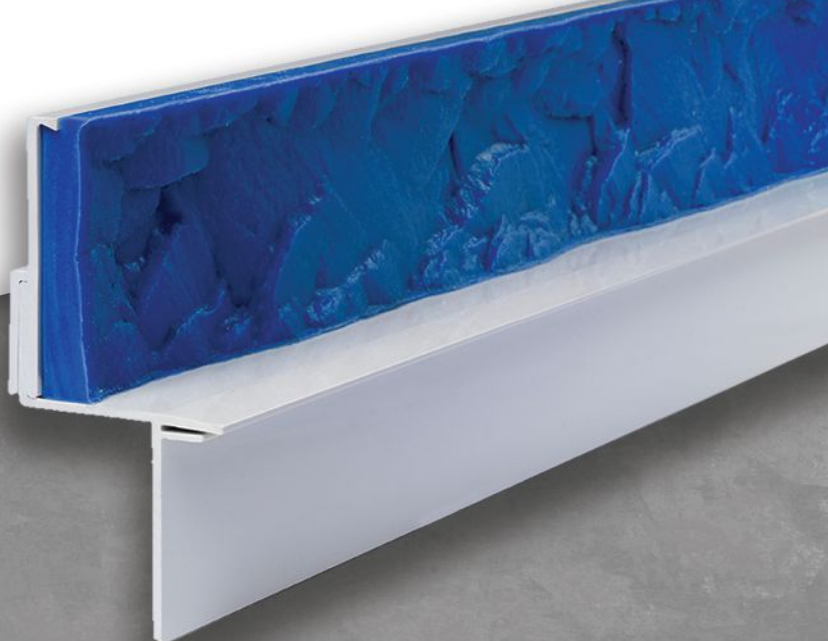
▼ **Climate-friendly lawns.** As homeowners aim to lower their environmental impact, 24% more clients opted for artificial turf over sod grass compared with last year, and 13% more requested to remove the lawn altogether. A happy medium is a balance between lawn and plantings — with an emphasis on drought-tolerant plants.



TOP: LANDSCAPE DESIGN & BUILD BY YARDZEN / PHOTO BY EBBE YOYINO SMITH; BOTTOM: LANDSCAPE DESIGN & BUILD BY YARDZEN / PHOTO BY SASHA REIKO



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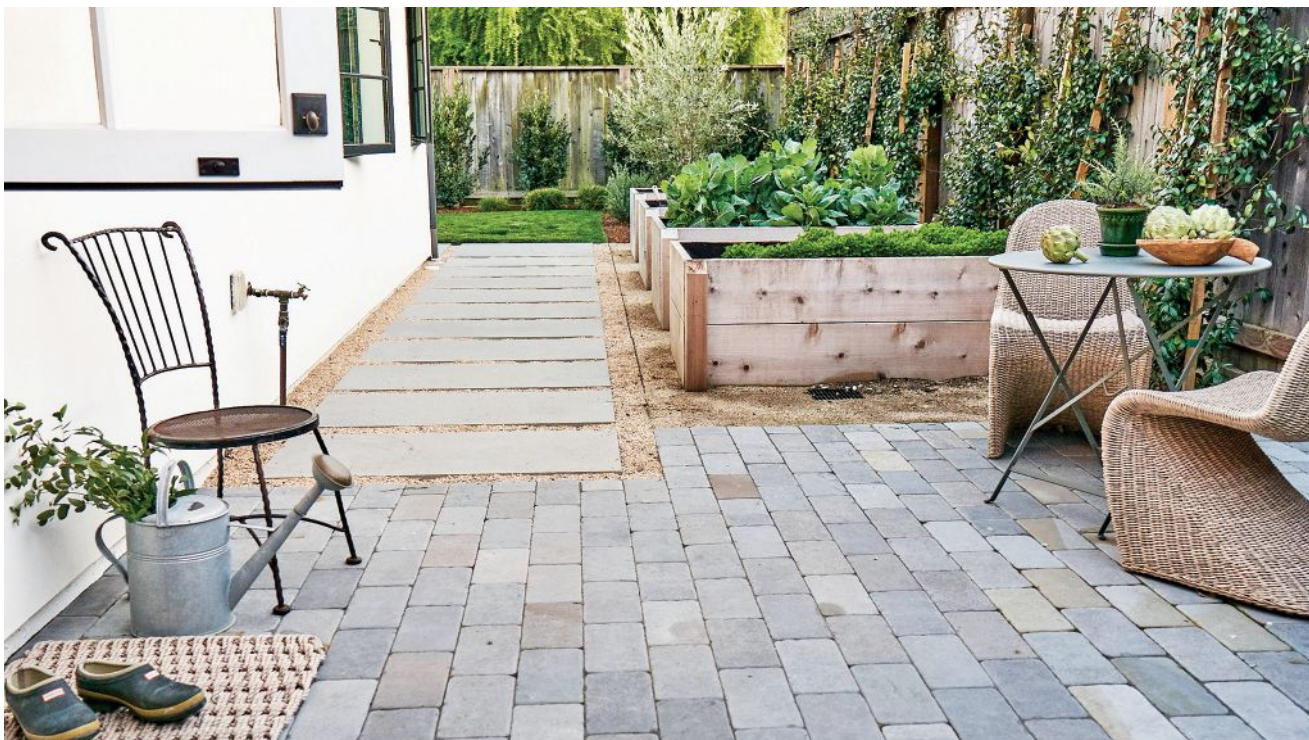


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▲ **Day-to-night entertaining.** Amenities that transition outdoor spaces from day to night are highly sought after for 2023. Over 60% request outdoor lighting and 56% request firepits. Compared with last year, there was a 65% increase in pizza ovens, 68% increase in large outdoor dining tables for eight-plus seats, and a 69% increase in outdoor bars. Elements of heat like outdoor fireplaces and heaters also saw increases of roughly 40%.

▼ **Yard to table.** The pandemic-driven hobby of growing fruits and vegetables at home is a trend that seems to be here to stay. Since 2020, requests for edible gardens and raised beds have increased each year with 30% of clients requesting raised beds, and a 43% increase in greenhouses since 2022. Staying on theme with organic styles, gardening is another connection to naturalism as homeowners are willing to get their hands dirty.



TOP: CHANTAL LAMERS; COURTESY OF YARDZEN; BOTTOM: YARD DESIGN BY YARDZEN/PHOTO BY EBBE YOVINO-SMITH

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▲ Pergolas and pathways.

Drawing the eye throughout the entire outdoor living space, elements of height were common trends for 2023. To design on both a horizontal and vertical plane, pergolas (40%), trellises (23%), arbors (16%), and gazebos (16%) became popular requests as well as designs with pathways at 47%.

◀ **Here for play.** In the same vein as kid spaces via sheds and ADUs, over 70% of clients who are parents request designs for backyard play. For 2023, there was an 85% increase in slides, a 28% increase in play structures, and a 14% increase in treehouses.

TOP: LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY YARDZEN/PHOTO BY ERICA SCHROEDER; BOTTOM: YARD DESIGN BY YARDZEN/PHOTO BY THOMAS J. STORY

▼ **A sanctuary for wellness.** In terms of functionality, homeowners desire designated spaces for wellness this year. Cedar tubs, cold plunges, yoga platforms, and outdoor showers are growing wants. Year over year, there was a 45% increase in requests for saunas. Continuing a top trend from 2022, plunge pools increased 15% year over year as a less expensive, less maintenance option compared with traditional swimming pools.



YARD DESIGNED BY YARDZEN / PHOTOS BY EBBE YOVINO-SMITH



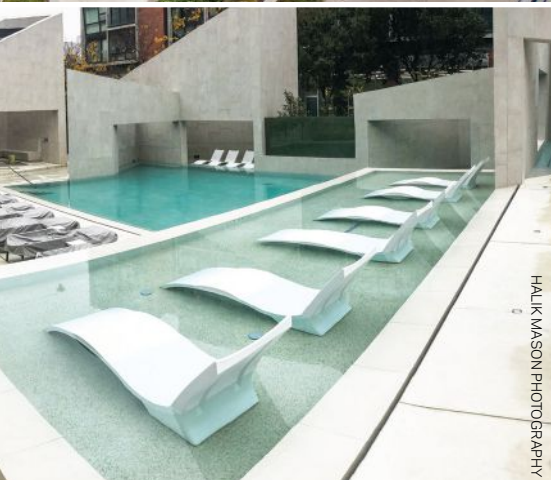
▲ **Creative sheds and ADUs.** Looking for creative solutions to expand square footage, there's a 33% increase in requests for designs with ADUs, sheds, and storage. Yardzen recommends a Tuff Shed as a less expensive option for storage, gardening, a home office, or kid space. Nestled in a nook or featured as an inviting retreat, the additional "square footage" is valuable for homeowners who are choosing to stay put in their homes.

AQUATIC DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Enjoy these honorees from sister magazine *Aquatics International's* Dream Designs showcase, recognizing all varieties of commercial aquatics venues.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO





HALIK MASON PHOTOGRAPHY

The Cove at The Piazza Pool

PHILADELPHIA

ARCHITECT: DIGSAU

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Roofmeadow

AQUATIC DESIGNER/CONSULTANT: Counsilman-Hunsaker

BUILDER: Post Brothers

Sculpted light

The Cove is part of The Piazza, an 80,000-square-foot open-air plaza that includes restaurants, markets and boutiques, in addition to the pools.

The triangular garden pavilions and pools were laid out to divide the larger plaza into several peaceful destination points. Unique geometric structures not only to parcel the area into several more intimate spaces, but also work with the sunlight, creating interesting shadows in some spots while warming others, with the water reflecting rippled light back onto some of the forms.

The Cove itself features three pools. Anchoring the space, the south leisure pool measures 2,474 square feet and includes a large, shallow sunshelf for tanning, along with several smaller, more secluded shelves in the alcoves. One seating area, tucked between vertical structures, forms a quiet spot for a larger group. A shallow infinity-edge pool is elevated and outfitted with several chaise lounges, providing sun worshippers a prime view of the space and adding another layer to its geometry.

The 228-square-foot spa features an underwater bench and hydrotherapy jets to help up to 22 visitors relax.

Opposite the large pool, at the north side of the complex, sits a smaller, 618-square-foot leisure pool. This provides a more quiet space for those looking to get away from the crowd.

Sun decks feature heat lamps and fire pits so visitors have plenty of space to spread out and can use the space year-round.

The pools were built on poor soils, requiring a mat slab for stable construction. As some of the architectural feature walls were built from a pool and spa, special engineering was required.

Thrive Recreation Center

LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

ARCHITECT: Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Studio Outside

AQUATIC DESIGNER: Water Technology Inc.

BUILDER: Byrne Construction Services

Nature and light

Two public facilities were on their last legs in Lewisville, Texas. The recreation center and senior center were 20 years old and relatively small, allowing limited programming offerings.

In their place, local authorities invested in a single center that draws more residents. Three times the size of the older centers combined and featuring the city's first indoor aquatics center, it offers diverse elements in an aesthetic that showcases nearby nature.

Nearby Lake Lewisville primarily inspired the center's look. While very clean and modern, the facility offers touches that harken back to the natural water body. A zero-depth entry resembles the boat marina, while a tiled lifeguard viewing platform looks like one of the piers.

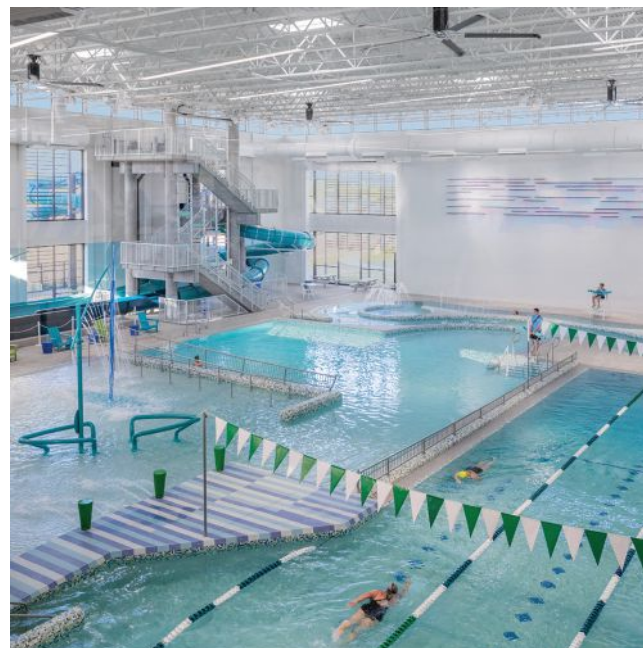
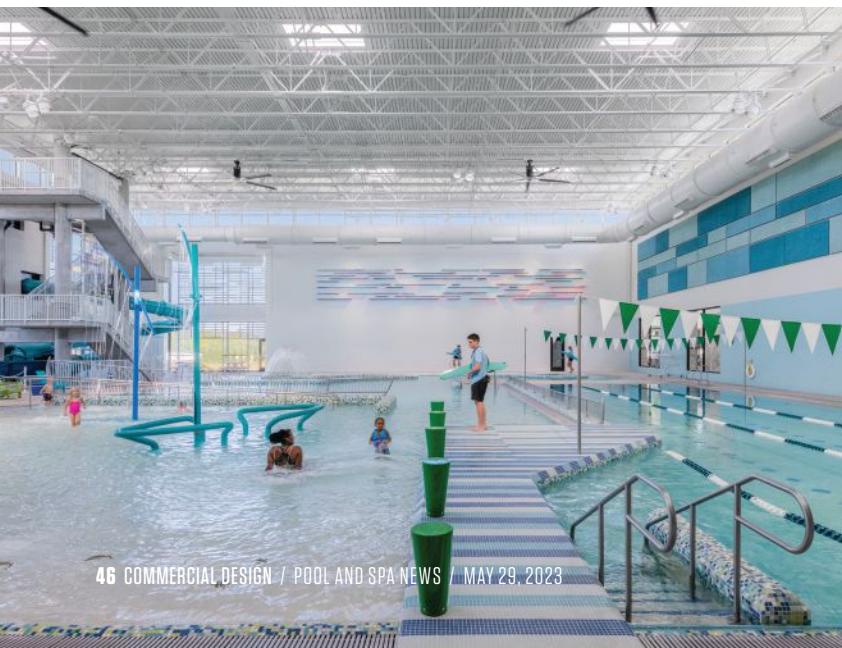
The design team also sought to mimic the light found in nature. A sculptural art piece made of color-shifting dichroic glass echos how light changes when it reflects off the lake. For more unique lighting effects, the team hid small pieces of colored acrylic in the exterior window screens.

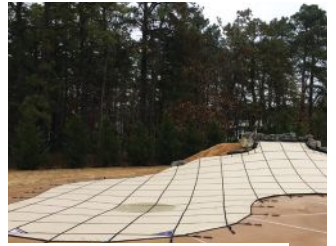
Pops of color appear around the natatorium as the sun shines through the screens, themselves designed to abstractly represent trees. Natural light floods through a skylight and oversized clerestory windows, providing a connection with the natural elements outdoors, and enhancing sustainability.

Two pools accommodate all varieties of programming, with one kept at cooler temperatures for lap swimmers, and the other warmer for leisure users. A zero-depth entry with spray features appeals to small children, while the rectangular pool accommodates water aerobics, learn-to-swim classes and private lessons. The facility also features a lazy river with current vortex, hydrotherapy bench and other spray features. This last area tends to draw the most diverse set of users.

For sustainability, the team specified bioswales for outside the building and the parking area. These long, channeled depressions collect rainwater runoff from the parking lot and have vegetation to slow water infiltration and filter pollutants before it reaches the watershed.

PHOTOS: MADE GRIFFITH PHOTOGRAPHY





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Linwood Park Spray Ground

WICHITA, KAN.

ARCHITECT/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Landworks Studio

AQUATIC DESIGNER/CONSULTANT: Waters Edge Aquatic Design

BUILDER: Dondlinger Construction

Rich tradition

The Linwood Park Spray Ground is part of a citywide effort under which Wichita is converting a number of existing pools throughout the city into spray parks, each unique to reflect the neighborhood's character. This way, local citizens can travel from one to the other and remain engaged.

This particular neighborhood, near a waterway, at one time housed a large mill. To honor that, the design team transformed an old, poorly attended pool into a spray park that adopts a river motif with a weathered-looking water wheel as the central feature. The wheel was fabricated of glass-fiber-reinforced concrete, a material often used to fashion artificial rock. It is outfitted with a set of sprays that converge in the middle,

representing the wheel's spokes.

A blue deck material is used to represent the winding river, with water features placed at the two ends. Logs provide a path across the "water" and look like they're headed for the mill. Toward the middle of the river, turf-covered landforms on either side create the feeling of a valley. The mounds of grass are dotted with brightly colored spheres to represent the wildflowers that cover the rolling hills nearby. They also provide play features for the children to climb.

Natural limestone blocks around the edge provide seating for supervising adults and walkers taking a break. The team used landscape beds where they could, focusing on more resilient and hardy plants that require little upkeep.

PHOTOS: WATERS EDGE AQUATIC DESIGN

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spaguard.com

Deaconess Aquatic Center

EVANSVILLE, IND.

ARCHITECT/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Hafer

AQUATIC DESIGN: Hafer, Counsilman-Hunsaker

AQUATIC CONSULTANT: Counsilman-Hunsaker

BUILDER: Garmon Construction Services

Hometown tribute

Made to replace the community's existing older pool, this center features three major pools and spaces.

Anchoring the facility is the Lilly King Competition Pool, named after the Olympic gold-medalist swimmer and town native. Built to accommodate local high-school and collegiate swim meets, the stretch 50-meter pool allows swimming and diving to occur simultaneously, with 10 lap lanes and two bulkheads to divide it into multiple configurations. A separate diving well has 1- and 3-meter springboards and practice entry harnesses. A state-of-the-art timing system and two large monitors and on-deck showers support the meets. A custom mural depicts the pool's namesake.

A 4,000-square-foot recreational pool draws leisure swimmers and those seeking instruction. It features four 25-yard lap lanes, stair entry, zero-depth area with play features and a basketball goal. A built-in shelf provides a place for children to wait their turn during swim lessons.

Outside, a 1,750-square-foot splash park provides another fun space.

To motivate visitors and competitors, the facili-

ty showcases tributes to famous athletes, some of whom hail from Evansville. In addition to the mural of Lilly King, an entire wall display chronicles the life and accomplishments of Mikaela Jenkins, a Paralympic gold medalist and Evansville native. The Wall of Champions shows King and Michael Phelps, and it features interactive monitors to teach about the town's swimming history.

Glass doors between the spaces can be opened or closed, allowing operators to connect or separate them and control traffic. Everything is designed on a single axis so staff in the front desk can see all areas.

Each pool and the recreational area have dedicated locker rooms. The universal locker room in the rec area has private changing areas for individuals or families.

For the aesthetic, the team established a visual connection with the surrounding park. Large windows provide natural light and park views. Various materials veneer the exterior, such as translucent panels, glass and metals, with the latter meant to reflect the neighborhood's industrial history. Wood tones add warmth.



PHOTOS: GLENN TANG/BLACK PIXEL STUDIOS

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POOL AND SPA NEWS



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Atlantis Dubai Aquaventure

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

ARCHITECT: DSA Architects

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: EDSA

AQUATIC DESIGNER/CONSULTANT: Water Technology Inc.

BUILDER: Khansaheb Civil Engineering

Mythological proportions

With its latest expansion, Atlantis Dubai Aquaventure has become the largest in the world.

Set in the United Arab Emirates, this waterpark was created to enhance the experience of the high-end clientele at the Atlantis resorts.

The design and theming are meant to reflect the environs, with the structures crafted to look as if they had risen from the seafloor and onto the palm-shaped, man-made island. Corals and aquas combine the aquatic with desert. On the stone work in Immortal Falls Cliff Jump and Trident Tower, visitors see what appear to be etchings from a lost, ancient civilization. Splasher's Cove includes aquatic flooring that looks like ocean waves approaching the children's slides. Medusa's Lair, with its racing tube slides, features imagery of the mythological figure to add to the overall theme.

Of the now 55½-acre waterpark, the expansion itself occupies 13½ acres.

As a major part of the addition, the team transformed a lazy river into the high-intensity Raging Rapids, a fast-moving, high-pressured action river that sends users throughout the park. The Trident Tower Complex includes water slides and water coasters such as the Odyssey of Terror and the Shockwave.

Splasher's Cove and Lagoon appeals to smaller children with gentler slides and sprays.

For more adventurous youngsters, the new expansion also includes the world's first kid's rally racer and tornado slide.

Other features include Vortex with its two drop slides; Black Out speed slides; and a four-lane mat racer called Hydra Racer.



PHOTOS: KERZNER INTERNATIONAL



Baha Bay Waterpark

NASSAU, BAHAMAS

ARCHITECT: SB Architects

AQUATIC DESIGNER: DTJ Design, SB Architects

BUILDER: Bahamas Environmental Group

Bahamian paradise

This waterpark is the newest destination at Baha Mar, a resort/casino/residential development on Nassau's Cable beach. It caters to guests from three local hotel brands as well as visitors from around the island. This means it had to appeal to people of all stripes.

For patrons, the experience begins as soon as they reach the entry, where they're met by a blowhole water feature with a timed water spout.

Kids Island has a play structure with more than 10 features, five toddler slides and a waterfall for splashing.

Several thrill rides appeal to the more adventurous. The Dueling Riptide Coaster provides the first-of-its-kind racing water coaster. Pirates Plunge offers two drop slides, while the Thunderball & Devil's Backbone has two speed slides that drop 60 feet.

Family rides include the Cyclone Rush, a five-person tube ride with 40-foot bowl and a two-story wave wall, along with the Hammerhead, another five-person tube ride, this one with three open-air saucer turns.

Three-lane surf simulators attract aspiring board-

ers. A 20,000-square-foot wave pool creates waves up to 5 feet, while Baha Bay Beach Club has several rivers terminate into infinity-edge pools. An action river with two wave generators and several waterfalls provides many different experiences.

The island has only limited water and power, so features were designed for efficiency. With physical space also in short supply, the team devised several underground buildings to support the massive infrastructure.

The aesthetic reflects the traditional architecture and landscape design from the area, with its European and African influences. The team identified three styles to focus on: clapboard cottages, colonial homes and straw markets. This is seen in such features as Beach Club's white and wooden buildings, the colorful architecture on Kids Island, and the combination of color and wood details at the burger bar and restaurant.

Natural stone textures and shell patterns also show the local influence.

A Deeper Look at Overhead and Profit

How to handle capacity variations when using the capacity/duration method and why it matters.

BY DAVID GERSTEL



ADOBESTOCK



In the first two articles of this series (*PSN* April 17 and May 15, 2023), we examined common ways of calculating what to charge for overhead and profit — the fixed percentage and gross profit margin formulas — and why they don't work. We learned the fundamentals of the capacity/duration method (CDM), a more accurate way to assess overhead and profit for both small and large companies.

Here, we'll talk about how to handle variations in capacity, ways to present these charges in your estimate and bid, and the long-term benefits of using CDM to your company's bottom line.

CAPACITY VARIATIONS

Capacity/duration is not a one-size-fits-all method. Some builders who prefer a capacity-based method to the formulaic percentage methods do not equate capacity with the number of projects they can handle simultaneously. They see capacity as the total number of hours their employees can log at their jobsites each week. To charge for overhead, they figure the amount they need to recapture weekly on average. They then divide that amount by the number of hours they expect their employees to log weekly and charge accordingly.

For example, say a builder has overhead of \$8,500 per week. On the basis of payroll records, they know that their 10-person crew averages 380 hours per week at their jobsites. After doing the math, you will see that overhead works out to \$22.36 per person hour. To recapture that overhead, the builder adds \$22.36 per hour to the other costs — wages, benefits, and other labor burden — for each

ARE CDM BIDS REALISTIC AND COMPETITIVE?

Even if you find merit in Capacity Duration Method (CDM), you may be wondering whether it will contribute to business-like bids. A good way to run a check is to compare the bids that you create using CDM to the general level of construction pricing in your market. And a path to accomplishing that is to take a look at the square-foot charges you arrived at using CDM versus the prevailing square-foot charges of contractors in your area and at your level.

One-person company. For example, let's say that you are operating a well-established one-person company and have bid on a 310-square-foot bed-and-bath addition, and that your numbers are as follows:

1. Direct construction costs at \$160,000.
2. Overhead at \$31,200.
3. Profit at \$26,000.
4. Total bid at \$217,200 ($\$160,000 + \$31,200 + \$26,000 = \$217,200$).

That pencils out to just over \$700 a square foot for the addition's 310 square feet ($\$217,200 / 310 = \700.64).

At the time I am writing this article in late 2022, \$700 a square foot is a moderate price or, in some markets, even toward the low side, for good-quality residential remodeling in major cities. So, CDM did deliver realistic charges for overhead and profit for the addition. If you wish, you can run the numbers to see how well the method would work for smaller or larger jobs by your one-person company.

Larger company. Will the CDM method produce a business-like bid for a larger operation? Here, I will leave the math to you. But again, the answer is yes. The bid produced by the larger, three-lead company described above comes in at \$777 a square foot. Though higher than for the one-person operation, that's in line with what larger established builders have been charging in major metro areas during the recent good years.

Comparing your numbers. To compare your figures to other companies, you need to learn about the typical construction charges in your area. You can find rough but useful approximations in the construction cost catalogs available at online and even brick-and-mortar bookstores. You can simply run a search on Google. Alternatively, and best, you can join or organize a local builder's association such as those described in my article "Your Best Opportunity for Business Education Might Be in Your Hometown" (JLC, Mar/19). Construction costs and pricing are frequently a subject of conversation at such groups. And, by the way, so are gross profit margins.

That conversation, too, can be of value to you. Knowing how your charges for overhead and profit as a percentage of your bids (selling price) stack up against other builders can be useful. Yes, to reemphasize, GPM is a crude, one-size-fits-all method of figuring overhead and profit. But it has some value as a way of comparing financial performance of companies in the same industry.

Thus, if you find that you are charging a relatively low percentage of selling price for overhead and profit, you have learned that you have room to bump up your overhead and profit charges.

On the other hand, a comparison of your GPM to that of similar builders might bring unpleasant news: that your overhead and profit charges are a low percentage of your selling price only because your construction costs are bloated. Whenever your costs are an unduly high percentage of your bids, they squeeze out room for overhead and profit.

hour of work by a crew member.

Likewise, for profit. These builders establish an annual and per-week goal. They then figure the amount of profit they need to take in for each hour of labor by a crew member to reach their goal. Finally, they add the hourly profit figure to labor and overhead charges to arrive at a total charge for an hour of crew labor.

Figuring overhead and profit charges on an hourly basis was initially favored by a builder whose operation I got to know well as their consultant. I recommended against it. I see capacity as the number of people in a company who are capable of running a project. After all, if you have 100 people on your crew, but none can run a project, your capacity is zero.

Focusing on leads as a basis for figuring overhead and profit can work as effectively for companies that rely

on trade partners (subcontractors) for on-site work as it does for companies deploying in-house crews. For example, a company has two project managers (PMs) who run all jobs. Production at the jobsites from foundations through finish, and even cleanup and punch-list work, is handled by trade partners and outside services. In that case, the company's capacity is two. It can't do more projects at a time than the PMs can handle. Using math similar to that used for our earlier examples in this series, overhead can be recaptured across each of the supervisors' projects.

Let's say that you do have two project managers and that your overhead is \$5,000 per week, or \$2,500 per week per PM. One is responsible for a single project, construction of a small apartment building. You have estimated that the project will take nine months,

which is 39 weeks. Therefore, to recapture your overhead, you will have to charge $\$2,500 \times 39$ weeks, or \$97,500, for overhead on that apartment project.

Meanwhile, the other PM handles three relatively small projects — repairs, renovations, remodels — at a time. To recapture overhead on those projects, you divide \$2,500 by three and see that you must charge \$833 ($\$2,500 / 3 = \833) per project each week to recapture the overhead. If the PM's responsibilities shift, and he moves to handling two larger projects or five very small ones rather than three projects at a time, you adjust the overhead charges accordingly.

Construction business consultant Jerrald Hayes raises another interesting case: using CDM for a company that has multiple divisions — design, general contracting, and home repairs. Hayes, whose take on CDM is close to

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In using CDM, you are recapturing the amount of overhead with which a project actually burdens you. You are aiming to take in profit that aligns with the amount of your company's capacity that a project is actually using and the risk it entails.

but not identical to my own, offers a solution at his thought-provoking website, *paradigmprojects.com*. My own inclination would be to separately account for overhead for the various divisions — and where overhead costs spread across several divisions, apportion it among them as accurately as practicable. Then the appropriate variation of CDM could be selected for each division. For the general contracting division, overhead could be recaptured and profit assigned on the basis of capacity and of the duration of each project. For design, and for the handyman division as well, it might be best to include overhead and profit in a charge for each hour billed. And so on.

PRESENTING THE BID

After figuring overhead and profit charges for a project using CDM, you must decide how to display the charges in your estimate and bid. Among the possibilities:

- Placing them on a separate line or lines at the end of an estimate.
- Providing for them as part of your charges for project delivery in the general conditions section of your estimates.
- Simply wrapping them up in a single figure to be submitted as a lump-sum bid.

Each choice has its pros and cons and its place. But in all cases, you are accomplishing the same vital tasks: You are recapturing the amount of overhead with which a project actually burdens you. You are aiming to take in profit that aligns with the amount of your company's capacity that a project is actually using and the risk it entails. That is quite different, and in my view better, than taking a stab at overhead and profit with a formulaic percentage divorced from the duration of a project, the portion of your company's capacity it absorbs, and the risks with which it burdens you.

DO YOU WANT IT EASY OR ACCURATE?

You may find yourself shying away from the capacity/duration method, especially if you have long used percentage formulas. After all, it is so easy to automatically apply 10% & 10% or 35% GPM. You can even have a spreadsheet do it for you with just the click of a key. You can readily come up with reasons for continuing on that path. For example, you may have found that using 35% GPM and confining yourself to a narrow niche like kitchen and bath remodeling has consistently recaptured your overhead including good pay for yourself as company manager and provided acceptable profits.

On the other hand, the decision to go that route may be an ill-advised shortcut. Construction expert Michael Anschel suggests that it is: "I'll argue that builders like a formulaic percentage-based system because it lets them avoid thinking about the real cost of overhead and how to assign it properly to a project."

I have to agree — and ditto for profit. I have encountered so many builders who wish that estimating and bidding would just go away. They want shortcuts. They want someone else, a cost book or a software package, to tell them what their costs for labor, material, and subs should be. They want plug-in formulas for overhead and profit. To be blunt, they want to avoid thinking about their single most important financial responsibility as owners of a business. They want to avoid thinking about and learning to nail down appropriate charges for their product.

I say "good luck" to those who want to go that route. I am concerned about their likely results over any longer term. The give-up-and-drop-out-rate in construction contracting, not to mention the sheer going-broke

rate, is hard to pin down. But it appears to be astronomical. And a major reason, along with leaky buildings and sloppy change-order procedures, is resistance to the work of learning to estimate skillfully and figure overhead and profit thoughtfully.

The resistance is understandable. The learning curve can be steep and the work painstaking for a time. It surely was for me when I began running my own company. But the learning is not nearly as painful as robotically calculating overhead and profit via an “industry standard” formula and, as a result, finding yourself deep in a hole. That was the experience of a friend who became habituated to the GPM method.

He built a respected company. He did OK financially for a couple of decades. Then a severe recession struck. His overhead, meanwhile, remained

about the same — same office, shop, office personnel, etc. But the average size (in dollars) of his projects and total revenue dropped by 75%. Since he was habituated to his 35% GPM, the dollars he was taking in for overhead also fell by 75%.

He was soon not collecting enough on his projects to recapture his ongoing overhead much less make a profit. That is, he was losing money on every job. Because he had overhead and profit jumbled together in his GPM, he did not clearly see what was happening. His company did survive. But only because he slashed his own pay, then burned through all his working capital and mortgaged his home to raise the cash needed to keep his company afloat.

Had he been using CDM, he could have seen that his new, smaller jobs required different charges for over-

head than his GPM method was providing. Now, just how he might have dealt with that hard truth is a matter for a whole other article on how you keep a company going when a severe downturn in the economy strikes and work shrinks radically. Whatever the case, you are better off starting with numbers that are clear and true — numbers CDM delivers.

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



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Product Profiles: Covers and Winterizing Products



Winter Duck Plugs

Winter Duck Plugs are an essential product for “no drain” pool closings — they allow plumbing lines to be blown out while the pool water level remains above returns, says Brad Madison, technical sales manager at Anderson Manufacturing Co.

The unique “duck bill” valve design of the Duck Plug allows for high amounts of water flow with minimal resistance so lines can be cleared fast and with less strain on the blower. The heavy-duty rubber seals tight when water back pressure is applied and will not allow water back into the plumbing. This design eliminates the need for “burping” lines and makes blowing out plumbing lines into a fast, one-man job.

“This method of winterizing pools supports automatic covers and walls and conserves water,” Madison says. “Winter Duck Plugs have been trusted to protect pools through the toughest winters for more than 10 years.”

Contact: Anderson Mfg Co. | leaktools.com



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



Cover Care Partners with Pool Builders

Cover Care, LLC, is a national, full service company that partners with pool builders to provide installation, replacement, and service of automatic pool covers to homeowners. Cover Care has local crews in over 45 cities in the U.S. making it easy for pool professionals to partner with Cover Care.

Cover Care LLC gives pool professionals the ability to subcontract out the installation and maintenance of new automatic pool covers, allowing pool pros to offer and profit from selling auto covers without having to train or have personnel on hand to maintain and install these covers.

Cover Care technicians are trained to install, replace, and maintain all makes and models of automatic pool covers including emergency service to ensure pools always remain safe.

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



Safety Cover

Garrett Safety Covers offers a double layer of triple-stitched webbing throughout the cover, using high performance hardware that is made in the USA.

“Every safety cover is custom made by our experienced designers to the exact specifications of the pool that we received from swimming pool professionals,” says Dawn Cular, Garrett’s sales and marketing manager. “Garrett is committed to providing the skilled craftsmanship and attention to detail required to make the best safety covers available.”

Garrett’s safety covers are available in 14 styles and colors.

For technical support, call 800-222-3650 to speak to a live person.

Solid covers have a 10-year limited warranty; Mesh and Ultra-Mesh have a 15-year limited warranty.

Contact: Garrett Liners | garrettliners.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

FIXX-IT! Shock Blast

FIXX IT! Shock Blast is a non-chlorine shock oxidizer perfect for winterizing, says Ed Price, vice president of sales and marketing for Phoenix Products Co.

This proprietary blend is pH neutral, fast dissolving, and "oxidizes" organic contamination. It will not increase calcium hardness, stabilizer, or chlorine levels or produce combined chlorine.

It does not require any pre-mixing and is broadcast directly across the pool's surface. The pump does not need to be operating to use this product. If lowering pool water is desired, this product can be applied after draining.

Being non-corrosive, it ships as a cleaning compound. Made in the USA and available in 1-, 5-, and 25-pound sizes.

"FIXX-IT Shock Blast is a more powerful, non-chlorine option than most other products on the market," says Price. "Shock Blast makes spring start-up very easy!"

Contact: Phoenix Products Co. | phoenixproductsco.com



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



Skimmer Plug

Using a Skimmer Plug to seal off the skimmer enables pool owners to save thousands of gallons of water that would otherwise be wasted each year by not having to lower the water level, says Linda Hodak, vice president of sales at Simple Pool Technology.

In season, the Skimmer Plug can be used to service pool equipment, or plumbing and perform leak detection without water loss and without the need to install a new faceplate.

"The Skimmer Plug is an incredible time saver when it comes to pool closings and an incredible tool for leak detection," Hodak says.

The Skimmer Plug fits "like a cork in a bottle" into the existing skimmer faceplate with no tools required.

"There is no easier way to seal off a skimmer, making it water-tight, than using the Skimmer Plug," Hodak adds. "Simply push it into the faceplate."

Models are available to fit various skimmers or specialty faceplate.

Contact: Simple Pool Technology | simplepooltec.com



A-B Measuring App

The Tara A-B pool measuring app takes the guesswork out of measuring a pool for a new safety cover or measuring the anchor locations for a replacement cover.

The Tara A-B App allows dealers to enter their measurements into the app and it plots the points. They see their points displayed in the app automatically. Dealers can verify the shape of the pool to ensure their measurements are correct. They can also confirm the measurements on-site by checking cross measurements, in full screen mode. Once they are done, they can order their safety cover directly from the app.

"The app saves dealers time by preventing measurement errors and expediting the order process," says Thomas Kennedy, Tara's marketing director.

"Dealers appreciate being able to verify their measurements before they leave the job site."

The Tara A-B App is a free download available on the Apple App Store.

Contact: Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com

Product Profiles: Landscape and Design



BRiO Pool Light

The BRiO LED pool light is designed to replace traditional incandescent pool lights.

BRiO delivers 2,400 lumens and, at 3 inches across, its small size has been specially designed to allow installation in small spaces. The BRiO fits into standard 1.5" wall conduits and offers a light beam angle of up to 160°.

The light is equipped with water tight installation, and is available in pure white or multicolor RGBW LEDs. It also has added colors and shows through CCEI's connected controller and app interface, giving users the ability to control colors and brightness through a smartphone.

"Thanks to a combination of many technologies, the BRiO Light offers an unrivaled power/light/size ratio in the swimming pool market," says Arthur Schutzberg, CCEI USA's head of U.S. sales. "It is the brightest nicheless light on the market."

BRiO comes with a 3-year warranty on parts.

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



Z Poolform

Z Poolform is a reusable PVC form used to create decorative concrete copings for pools.

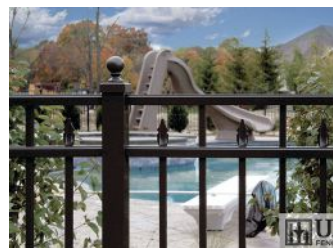
Interchangeable Form Liners will allow for a variety of different edge profiles and textures not previously possible with pool coping forms.

Z Poolforms can be used with vinyl liner, fiberglass, or concrete pools. It attaches to the pool wall without the need for tie wires.

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



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

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www.bluehaven.com

New Products

BY PSN STAFF



Aspen Spas

Aspen Spas' new 13-foot S.W.I.M. model is a swim spa that offers a 100" x 83" swim basin and a max depth of 52" (without benches). S.W.I.M. is an exercise-based unit with up to three pumps and four swim jets. It's now available in three series to meet any price point.

Contact: AspenSpas.com



JED Pool Tools

This 3-in-1 water testing kit is packaged in a clear, re-sealable vinyl bag for easy display, storage and sales. Users can check total chlorine, bromine and pH following the easy instructions printed on the bag. It's ideal to sell at the counter or for service techs to provide to their clients for use between calls.

Contact: JEDPoolTools.com



Pentair

The IntelliFlo3 Variable Speed and Flow Pool Pump has built-in patented sensorless flow control to maintain optimum flow. The 3.0 HP pump is ideal for new pool construction or renovations, and a smaller 1.5 HP model is also offered for pool pump replacement.

Contact: pentair.com



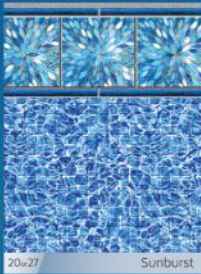
Poolside by CGT

Harlo Ocean Midnight is a new liner pattern with a modern, textured tile border design. Printed on a white liner material and using a wide range of blue hues, the tiles have a three-dimensional look that pairs perfectly with a floor design that imitates the looks of granite.

Contact: poolsidebycgt.com



PEGASUS
Vinyl Liners



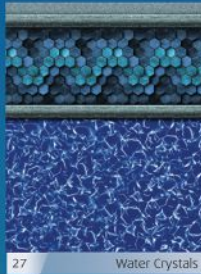
20x27 Sunburst



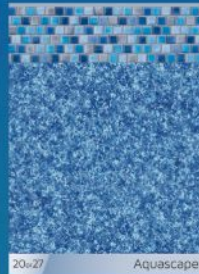
27 Seaglass



20x27 Harlequin



27 Water Crystals



20x27 Aquascape



20x27 Oxford



20x27 Waveburst



20x27 Lakeview



20x27 Bayview



27 Breaking Sea Wall



20 Marina



20x27 Stonebridge



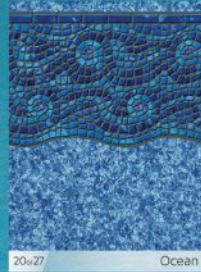
20x27 Rocklyn



27 Rustic



20x27 Mountain Top



20x27 Ocean



20 Luminous



20x27 Braid



20x27 Garden Gate



20 Wavecrest



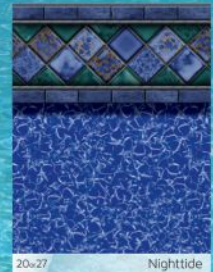
20x27 Brenton



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20x27 Argyle Slate



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