

11. Hot Tub Pioneer Bernie Burba 16. Serene Staycation 18. Employee Committees Get the Job Done
24. Mental Health in Construction 30. Pool & Spa Show Planner 46. Implementing a Software Migration

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Tips for
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page 40

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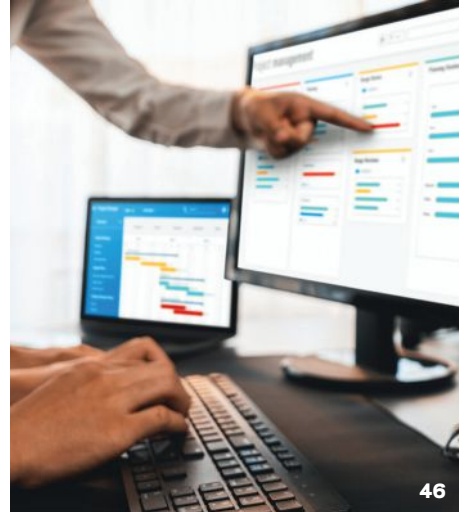
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Features

- 30 THE POOL & SPA SHOW PLANNER**
Here's what to expect from NESPA's annual event.
- 40 THE SPRAY'S THE THING**
Aquatics professionals share their tips for properly designing and building spray pads.
- 46 MAKING THE SHIFT**
The right software can spell added profit and productivity. But changing over requires planning, patience and flexibility.
- 51 THE HIGH WIRE ACT OF PODIUM POOLS**
The keys to designing and building a successful podium pool, and pitfalls to avoid.

Departments

- 9 REFLECTIONS**
The editor's take on issues and events
- 11 NEWS**
- 16 A ZEN PUZZLE**
A profile of a project in PebbleTec's book, "The World's Greatest Pools."
- 18 DESIGNED BY COMMITTEE**
The benefits of a committee structure
- 22 DON'T LET A LARGE JOB SINK YOUR COMPANY**
Avoiding the pitfalls of a large job.
- 24 MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**
How to overcome the barriers of mental health stigma.
- 58 NEW PRODUCTS**

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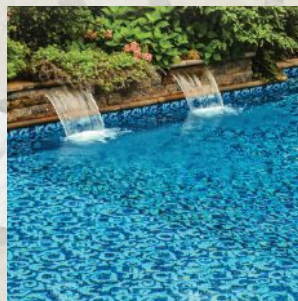
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You Are Not Alone



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

It happened during the Western Pool & Spa Show almost five years ago. Oftentimes, the memory of that morning plays like a broken, flickering film reel in my head, as if it's happened to someone else's family and I am a dispassionate viewer. Other times, I relive the moment with searing clarity, and the pain is enough to knock the breath from my lungs and bring me to knees.

My stepson, Aaron, who I had known since he was five years old — that bright, shining boy who had grown into a young man full of humor and promise — was found dead by apparent suicide.

Five years later, I can't write that sentence without crying. Five years later, my family is still irreparably broken. Five years later, I realize five years is ...nothing. They say time heals all wounds but I've found that, rather, it's just a pretty, dressed up way to say that over time, you'll learn to live with even the most unendurable pain.

Regret and guilt are the two invisible, relentless companions of those impacted by the suicide of a loved one. They are unbearably loud and dog your every step, cloud your every thought: *Why didn't you know he was feeling that way? What could you have done differently? Why weren't you there when he needed you?*

I would give anything to go back to five years ago, and do anything to undo what was done.

I hesitated to include something so personal in a business journal. But we included a piece in this issue from our sister publication *Builder*

about mental health and the construction industry (see page 24). Learning that the construction industry — *our* industry — is so deeply affected by disproportionately high rates of depression, substance abuse and suicide, and knowing that there might be people who may be — right now — in anguish the way my stepson was in the days leading to his death ... It's not something I can let by and stay silent.

If you're feeling this way, please know: *You are not alone*. Reach out to someone you trust and tell them how you're feeling. In the U.S., you can also call 988, a 24-hour suicide and crisis hotline.

For others, know that your support to your colleagues and friends is so, so important, and being open and supportive is the first step towards destigmatizing mental health issues. Be willing to listen without judgment, remind them that you care deeply, and make plans to meet or follow up. Above all, be patient and offer words of encouragement.

The greater the effort we make in removing the stigma of mental health issues, the more people will seek help, leading to a better understanding of these disorders and, ultimately, to acceptance. Please, let's all do our part to make this the new reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne McClain". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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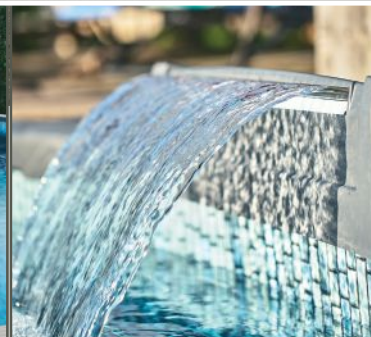
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Bernie Burba: 1932-2023

The hot tub pioneer and founder of Baja Industries and two other industry firms was 91.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

Bernie Burba, a pioneer in the production of hot tubs, passed away Nov. 18 in Tucson, Ariz. He was 91.

“He was a larger-than-life presence and one of the real pioneers of the pool and spa industry, as well as a great proponent of the trade association,” said Mike Hagerty, former president of Inter-Fab, who partnered with Burba on that company.

Bernard Thomas Burba was born August 16, 1932, in Waukegan, Ill.

According to his family, he was a natural-born salesman from childhood, when he sold newspapers at Great Lakes Naval Base. He later enlisted and served in the Navy from 1951 to 1954 and was an airship mechanic at Naval Air Station Weeksville in N.C.

Burba’s pool/spa industry career began in 1955, as he worked for a variety of manufacturers, including Sparkler Mfg. and Recreation Supply Co. In 1965, he cofounded the distributor Aqua-Gon with Ed Price.

In 1969, Burba and Price started Baja Industries. What began as a diving-board maker became a portable-spa pioneer in 1972, when it introduced the first acrylic spa.

In a previous issue of *Pool & Spa News*, Burba looked back at the development of the new product.

“When we were experimenting with acrylic, we didn’t know that it

would turn out to have as big an impact as it turned out to have,” he said. “We originally manufactured acrylic diving-board stands, but noticed all the problems people were having with the fiberglass spas — and knew we could solve some of those problems.

“We got our first acrylic sheets from Swedcast Acrylics ... Shortly after that, the company supplied us with acrylic sheets in blue, blue-and-white marble, and black-and-white marble — so the acrylic spas were available in only those colors.”

Burba moved his family to Tucson to focus on Baja in 1972. The company discontinued operations in 2015.

In 1989, Burba joined with Hagerty to establish Inter-Fab, maker of diving boards, stands, rail goods, slides and artificial rocks, among other products. It was acquired by S.R. Smith in 2018.

Burba served on the National Spa & Pool Institute (a predecessor of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance) in a variety of local, regional and national positions, including on the national Board of Directors, as well as committees and councils.

Burba retired in 1997.

He enjoyed golf, travel, Wildcat basketball, making turned-wood pens and summers at his home in Pinetop.

Burba is survived by his five children, 12 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.



Leslie's Announces 2023 Results

Publicly held pool/spa retail giant Leslie's has announced its year-end results for fiscal 2023, which ended in September.

Its sales decreased 9.1% to \$432.4 million compared with \$475.6 million in fiscal 2022. Gross profit decreased 26.3% to \$160.2 million from \$217.2 million in 2022. Gross margin was 37.0% compared to 45.7% the year before. “Following three years of unprecedented growth, the pool industry and Leslie's faced multiple transitory headwinds in 2023 that impacted our financial results through the fiscal fourth quarter,” said CEO Mike Egeck. “Despite these impacts, we continued to deliver exceptional service to our customers.”

Pool Troopers Acquires Florida Service Firm

Tampa, Fla.-based service consolidator Pool Troopers acquired Guardian Pool Services & Repairs of Palm Beach County, Fla. The female-owned pool maintenance and repair company expands Pool Troopers' service coverage in the Palm Beach market to include commercial and residential services. All Guardian employees are expected to remain.

Eva Longobardi, owner of Guardian Pool Services & Repairs, started the company in 1999.

This marks Pool Troopers' 22nd acquisition since gaining backing from the firm Shoreline Equity Partners. The company counts more than 20,000 customers in Florida, Texas, South Carolina, Georgia and Arizona.

PHTA Names 2023 Award Recipients

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

In November, PHTA announced the recipients of its annual awards.

Franceen Gonzales received the inaugural **PHTA Achievement Award**, given to an individual who has made exceptional contributions to PHTA and the industry. The 2020 PHTA Chair has 25 years of experience in the aquatics industry, and currently serves as chief experience officer of the Canadian waterpark-equipment manufacturer WhiteWater.

Gonzales is credited with playing a key role in reorganizing PHTA's technical governance structure, and helping streamline the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards development process for PHTA.

Ed Gibbs was named **Builder of the Year**. The president/CEO of Toronto-based Gib-San Pool and Landscape Creations, a *PSN* Top 50 Builder and Service Company, is past president of the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada, as well as past chairman of Master Pools

Guild. He currently serves as a member of MPG's Executive Committee.

Javier Payan is the **2023 Service Professional of the Year**. The president/CEO of *PSN* Top 50 Service Company Payan Pools of San Diego has more than 35 years of industry experience. He was instrumental in starting up PHTA's San Diego Chapter, of which he is currently president.

Travis Hogan has been designated **PHTA Retailer of the Year** for 2023. Hogan serves on the PHTA Retail Council, and his company, Fiesta Pools & Spas in Tulsa, Okla., previously received MPG's Leading EDGE Award.

Lance Irby of Sacramento, Calif.-based Premier Pools & Spas has been named PHTA's **Young Professional of the Year** for 2023. This honor goes to forward-thinking industry leaders less than 40 years old. He has earned his Certified Master Pool Builder & Design Professional designation from PHTA/Genesis.



LEFT TO RIGHT: PHTA CHAIR JOE LAURINO, PHTA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER FRANCEEN GONZALES, OUTGOING PHTA CHAIR CHARLIE CLAFFEY

PHTA's Volunteer of the Year Award went to Bob Blanda. The owner of Mill Bergen Pools in Brooklyn, N.Y. has served in several leadership roles with PHTA, including as chair of its Education Committee, and a member of its Board of Directors. He will serve as builder representative on the association's Technical Advisory Council.

PHTA's **Chapter of the Year** honor went to the Midwest Chapter. "The PHTA Midwest Chapter serves as a model for other chapters through its strong leadership, increased activity, and creative member engagement programs," the organization said.

Natare Pool, RENOLIT Form Partnership

With a new agreement in place, Natare Pools now will handle marketing, sales and distribution in North America for RENOLIT, a manufacturer of PVC membranes for the public and semi-public swimming pool industry.

RENOLIT's products will be integrated into Natare's existing portfolio. "This will enable customers to choose from a broader selection of membrane products to meet their diverse needs, all while maintaining the same high-quality products and customer service they have come to expect," Natare said.

"This partnership will leverage the strengths and expertise of both companies, combining Natare's extensive installation experience, product knowledge, and product offerings with RENOLIT's superb quality and consistency," said Natare President/CEO Troy Yoder.

IPSSA Selects 2023/24 Honorees

The **Independent Pool and Spa Service Association** has added two new awards and named this year's winners. The **IPSSA Chapter of the Year award** will be given to the Region 7 San Diego Metro Chapter. It raised over \$21,000 through auctions and a regional picnic with funds going to the San Diego Drowning Prevention Foundation, two swim schools, several local charities and individuals in need. All its members completed compliant water chemistry courses, provided sick route coverage for their members and members in nearby chapters and was one of two IPSSA chapter to increase their membership. The **Pool Professional of Tomorrow Award** will be given to Aden Dunne of Classic Pools & Spas in Encinitas, Calif. "Having been raised in the industry, Aden exemplifies the IPSSA core values of community, education and support while working constantly to ensure the IPSSA association members are kept up to speed on the latest technology and invests in helping members get the education and support they need to be successful," the organization said.



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A Zen Puzzle

Efficient design helped fit a lot into a tight space, while muted materials and clean forms create a sense of calm.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



This property didn't provide much space, so pool designer and builder Nick Buchholz had to design to maximize.

"They wanted to see the biggest pool they possibly could in that space," says the owner of Basin Pool Designs in Franklin, Tenn. "We didn't have a lot of room to play with, but they were okay with bringing the pool right up to the edge of the back porch."

Fortunately, the clients had relatively few requests — they wanted a waterfeature and spa included as part of a poolscape that looked sleek, clean and timeless.

The results speak for themselves, and earned this project a spot in Pebble-Tec's book, "The World's Greatest Pools."

EFFICIENT DESIGN

With the space so tight, Buchholz needed to provide access from the patio to the back of the property. Floating stepping stones would accomplish this.

But Buchholz didn't want a monolithic piece of concrete under each of the pads. "I wanted them to have an appearance of floating," he says. "I wanted light to be able to pass under the step pads,

and not have big voids or shadows."

To achieve that look, he had the bases for the pads custom fabricated. The 10-inch stainless steel tubes project out of the pool floor and support the stone. Buchholz wanted the pads to appear as a continuation of the white limestone deck so, rather than making each pad from a single piece of stone, they mortared the pieces together in a similar pattern as the deck.

The designer used his own step cadence to help map out the floating pads. "I always try to walk something out rather than saying it's on a 12-by-

PHOTOS: JIMMIE SMITH

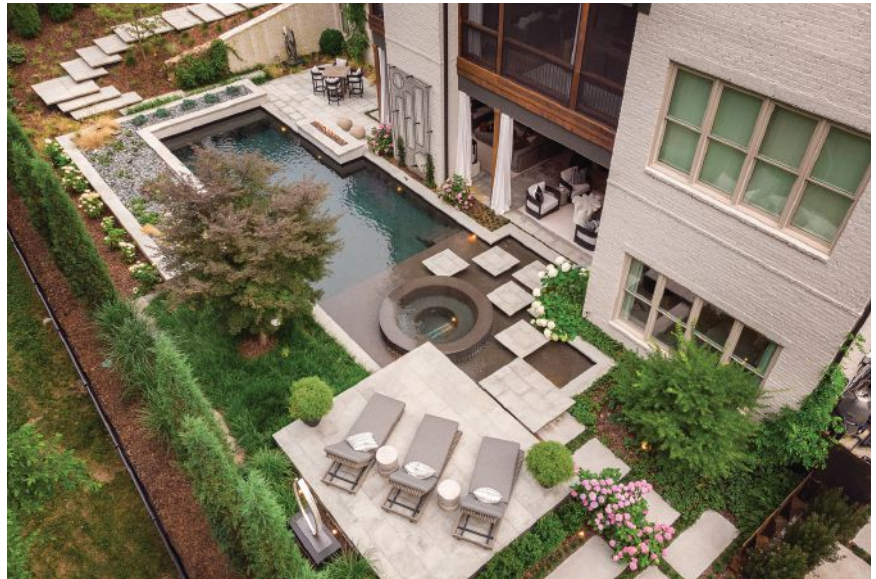
12-inch grid with 4 inches between,” Buchholz says. “There’s nothing worse than stutter-stepping or not having those consistent steps.”

ZEN SPACE

The floating step pads also added to the feeling of calm that Buchholz was trying to create in the space, which needed to fit in with an existing lush courtyard.

Low-lying plants were used around to open up the space as much as possible, while sculptures enhanced the garden feel.

The perfect circle of the raised perimeter-overflow spa softens the harder lines of the rectilinear pool, deck and step pads. Buchholz chose the spa’s exterior finish to enhance the tranquil garden. The perimeter features a striated basalt. “I used that because it can aerate the water a little bit, and



you hear it trickling down the spa,” he says. “It’s consistently textured, so it just sounds really consistent, and you can see those little ripples.”

The pool and spa interior are finished with black PebbleSheen.

The scene is rounded out with a 12-foot scupper, covered patio and firepit.



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Designed by Committee

For this company looking to cover gaps in oversight, it turns out a committee structure was the most efficient

BY MATT GOHLKE



As you can imagine, Gohlke Pools has grown substantially since Gene Gohlke and Bert Moore decided to start building pools in Denton, Texas in 1958.

Although the growth has mostly had a positive impact, there have been some downsides. One of the most glaring: As we have become a larger company with more business, staff, facilities, etc., it has become very difficult, if not impossible, to keep up with everything behind the scenes that needs to be done in order to operate the business.

In particular, we experienced trouble

keeping up in three areas in which we have always felt that we excel: community involvement, workplace culture, and property maintenance/updating.

We have just reached a point where management is too busy to do all of the background work and make all of the decisions that need to be made. In addition, we have found that oftentimes management is not the most qualified to make the best decision due to someone else in the company having more knowledge in a particular area.

Nick Day, our general manager,

recognized this and came up with a plan: He believed that by setting up a structure of committees, we could solve the two biggest roadblocks to getting things accomplished — lack of time and lack of knowledge. This would, in effect, delegate the issue to a group that has more time and qualifications, freeing management to work on other matters. It seemed like a win/win situation.

Being a Methodist, I was very familiar with committees and the downsides of them — it takes too long to get anything done, it's hard to get everyone

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to agree on a meeting time, etc. Therefore, I was a bit resistant initially. But I decided to give it a chance.

Here's a breakdown of how.

IDENTIFYING PROJECTS

We started by asking for volunteers and encouraging department managers to participate. We staff each committee with five to 10 people, typically all ages and experience levels. Most committees meet monthly or quarterly, usually first thing in the morning, as it is the easiest time for most staff members to get together.

In most cases, the committee is empowered to make final decisions. If they need to spend money on a project, management would need to approve it. But it would be rare to reject a recommendation from a committee.

We found five areas that we believed would be better served by employee committees:

Community Involvement: We have always believed that giving back to the community is very important. Although we had good intentions, time would pass without us doing as much as we felt we should. Sure, we would write a check, but oftentimes providing manpower is what is really needed. Through our Community Involvement Committee, we reached a number of goals:

- Built a bridge for a charitable organization that has a creek running thru its property in order to allow those being housed to access the other side.
- Provided free pool care for two charitable organizations.
- Deliver weekend/holiday meals to elementary school children regularly.
- Organize our quarterly trash pick-up at our adopt-a-spot.
- Organize our Salvation Army bell ringing events.
- In addition, we now have a Charity of the Month that we

highlight and promote at our Monthly Meeting.

Workplace Culture: Workplace culture has become so important, and we have certainly seen the positive impact of having a well-established one. It seems that the younger workforce is much more aware of its importance. Therefore, we figured putting one of our younger people in charge of this committee would be beneficial, and it certainly has been.

This committee has been responsible for setting up quarterly social events for the team, expanding the breakroom, and starting to provide continental breakfast each morning to our entire team.

Legal: We have a key staff member who seems to thrive in the area of legal matters. The fact that his son is a well-respected lawyer made him the perfect person to lead this committee. This group's job is to help us stay out of legal trouble and, if we do get into a situation that threatens to go to court, they take the lead to find a solution. In one case, for example, the committee chair took over when a client refused to make final payment. We were at a standstill — they claimed a defect; we did not agree and thought the monies were owed. He found a resolution by working with the installer and manufacturer of that particular product to assure the client there was no defect so they made the payment.

So far, this group has been proactive in looking through our contracts in order to tighten up the language and has also provided input and coaching on potential legal issues.

Duncan Street — Warehouse: We found that our warehouse was in need of maintenance and a property design update, so we formed this committee to navigate that project. The group redid the parking configuration, planned for sand/gravel/topsoil pits, changed out all of the office lighting to energy efficient lights, planned and

implemented the installation of a gas tank for onsite fuel; and performed an overall organization of the property to improve efficiency.

Dallas Drive — Store/Sales Office: Our retail store and new pool sales office had become dated. This location is truly the front door/window to our business and needs to present a favorable image. We knew that we needed input from some of our younger staff members to help us stay relevant.

This group arranged for repainting and remodeling of the building and had the parking lot resurfaced and restriped.

Race Car: Several years ago we entered a car in a large local event, the "Day of the Dead Festival" coffin races. We were successful in the race, and our staff believed it was worthwhile for us. Several wanted to enter again, but we had given our car away to a high school shop class. So an ad-hoc committee was formed to build a new car and put together a race day team.

The group had weekly meetings and put the work in to design and build a race car. The event took place over the Halloween weekend, and we had one of the fastest cars in the field, but mainly we had a great time at the event.

POSITIVE OUTCOME

Overall, the move to a committee structure has been a very good decision. Not only has more been accomplished, but it seems that the decisions have been much better and more timely than management could have accomplished on its own. It's helped us perform to our potential and truly live out our values.

In addition, it has provided leadership opportunities and built morale by involving our team members in the decision-making process.

Matt Gohlke is president of Gohlke Pools, a PSN Top 50 pool builder, retailer and service company based in Denton, Texas.



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Don't Let a Large Job Sink Your Company

A veteran offers tips to avoid digging a bigger financial hole, from sister publication *Remodeler*.

BY PAUL WINANS



Larger jobs are great. Fewer sales are needed to meet the company's volume goal. These projects take longer, so the production staff stays busy without having to run all over the place.

But larger jobs also come with challenges. Here are some potential roadblocks and how to deal with them.

A LONGER BAKING TIME

Larger projects take longer to move through the sales, design and estimating phase. More decisions are required of the client. More research

is needed by design. Estimating and pricing often have to be revised to meet shifting goals.

Sometimes during all this baking, projects fall apart and go away. The appraisal comes in lower than expected. Life situations change, making the project inappropriate, not needed or not affordable.

With larger projects, it is good to pursue more than the company can handle, because you likely will not get all of them. The juggling of desire on the part of potential clients and the needed follow-through to get to the

ground-breaking is challenging.

MORE COMPLICATIONS

Doing a typical kitchen-plus remodel is pretty straight forward. Your company may have done a lot of them, and along the way you've created a process for taking the project from initial call to job completion.

Larger projects often complicate that process. Maybe there are unanticipated structural issues that have to be addressed while the project is under way. It could be that the scope of work is so broad that, if the project

is going to get done on time, it needs to be broken into several smaller projects, each handled by a different project manager. Possibly the client brings change after change, some of which involve increasing the scope on the fly.

The company's management capabilities need to mature — quickly — so the project doesn't get out of hand. More time is needed for meetings and follow-up. Build the cost and time for that into the estimate and the schedule.

A BIGGER HOLE

There is a lot to like about a whale, a jumbo project larger than any the company has ever done. It enables you to take a huge leap toward meeting the company's annual sales goal. You also are assured of keeping production busy for a long time, and having a healthy backlog.

However, there is a downside: When a large project goes away, it leaves a big hole. The absence of that project creates significant stress for the entire company. Will there be layoffs? How do we meet payroll? How quickly can other work be signed up? What do we tell the trade contractors and vendors who have worked with us to get this project ready to be built?

When making choices about which jobs to pursue, keep all this in mind.

Increasing the company's average job size incrementally and deliberately is the best way to make more money doing basically the same amount of work.

Going after significantly larger projects will come with some, to put it delicately, "learning opportunities." The lessons learned will help the company when it does similar projects. Just make sure that the learning opportunities are not repeated so the consequent tuition (lost profits) are not needed over and over.

Remember to pay attention to your best past clients. You will need them when the market cools. Let them know you haven't forgotten them so they will remember you when that big job goes away or gets finished.

Paul Winans is a retired remodeler and consultant to remodeling business owners. His wrote the book, "The Remodeling Life: A Journey from Laggard to Leader."

This article originally appeared on the website Remodeling.

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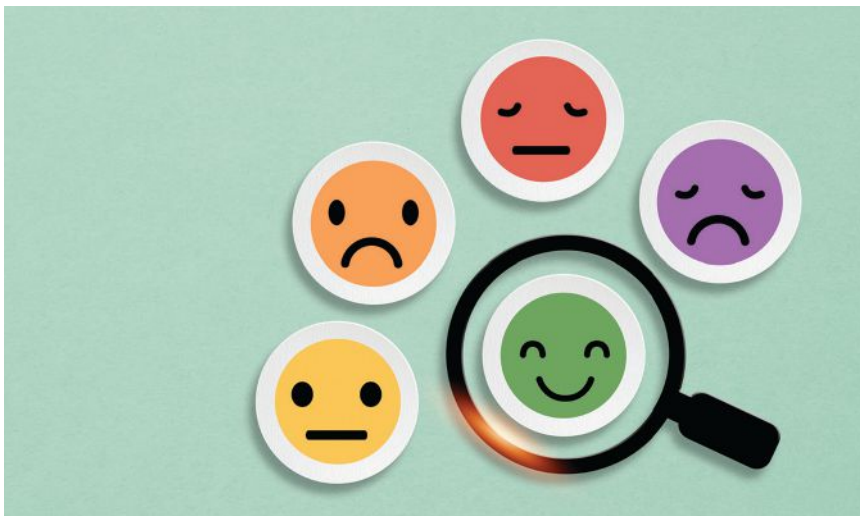
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Mental Health And The Construction Industry

A Q & A with Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas about this challenge and the importance of discussing mental health challenges.

BY LEAH DRAFFEN



External stressors have been on the rise at a time when employers are more concerned than ever about staff wellbeing and retention. At the same time, traditional stigmas attached with mental health issues have been on the decline.

In combination, these factors have placed mental health squarely in the spotlight in the workplace.

To learn more about startling statistics surrounding mental health and suicide in the construction industry, BUILDER turned to Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas for insight.

Spencer-Thomas is a clinical psychologist, mental health advocate and researcher who is focused on this subject due to the suicide death of her brother. With a goal of giving a voice to those who have lived through depression, addiction and the impact of suicide, she aims to leverage their

wisdom to develop programs and strategies that empower cultural and systemic changes in workplaces, education and communities.

An accomplished speaker who has presented a TEDx talk and a White House address, Spencer-Thomas also is the lead author on the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention. She has worked hand-in-hand with high-profile construction clients — including JE Dunn, Hensel Phelps, Sundt and others — to overcome the barriers of mental health stigma that are especially prevalent in the building industry.

Spencer-Thomas also has partnered with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) to conduct a pilot program, “Blueprint for Worker Well-Being,” with the North Carolina Home Builders Association. She shares more on the program below.

BUILDER: How can discussions about mental health and well-being be normalized in the residential construction industry?

Spencer-Thomas: The best way to normalize conversations about mental health and well-being is to do so in small groups with trusted facilitators.

The first step is to bring awareness to the issues through data. We need to give concrete data about how different trades are impacted by things like suicide, addiction and overdose. It’s best when we do live polling in large groups, and we can see in real time that everyone in the room has been touched in some way — either they’ve experienced it, or they’ve lost a loved one to suicide, overdose or the consequences of addiction, or they’ve been a primary caregiver for someone who has been fighting through these issues.

Once we have the data, and we break them up into small groups and create a safe space, almost everybody has a story to share. And that’s when we start to shift culture. That’s when they start to realize this is a human issue — not an “us” versus “them” issue. That’s when they start to wonder, “What can I do to help?”

BUILDER: Why is there a mental health stigma when it comes to construction workers?

Spencer-Thomas: Mental health bias exists because of misinformation and myths about what causes mental



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health challenges, and what types of “troubled people” (the “others”) have mental health challenges.

When it comes to a community that is valued for its tough-mindedness, its stoicism, and its ability to solve problems, this bias is particularly strong. It’s strong because people have been valued for their ability to deal with high levels of stress and to solve difficult challenges. They have been valued for their ability to make difficult decisions and be the one that people turn to, not the one who leans on others for support.

So, due to all of these factors, construction workers are the least likely to reach out for support even when the situation can be catastrophic. They’re more likely to “white-knuckle it” through very difficult situations until the situations become life threatening.

We break this bias by getting construction workers to talk openly about their experiences with depression, anxiety, addiction and trauma. Once they know they’re not alone, once they know that others like them have similar experiences, the bias is reduced. People see others in their community who have suffered and have the courage to reach out and get support and find a pathway into recovery. This sense of community gives others a sense of safety to disclose as well.

BUILDER: What are some of the stats surrounding mental health and suicide for the industry?

Spencer-Thomas: The main data that people refer to comes from a series of reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For three reports, they ranked industries by rates of suicide. Construction has been No. 1 or No. 2 on that list ever since they started publishing it in 2016.

These reports got the attention of a lot of people. Within that list, there is a ranking of the different trades as well. We can see that there is great variability between the high-

est-ranking trades, which include roofers, iron workers, and millwrights, and some of the lower-ranking trades, but all of them are above the general population.

The other statistic that gets people’s attention is when you compare the number of suicide deaths in construction with the number of jobsite fatalities. There are about 1,000 people who die in the construction industry on jobsites each year from slips, falls, electrocution and so on. In the same year, there will be well over 5,000 construction workers who die by suicide, and well over 14,000 construction workers who die from an overdose.

Given that the construction industry puts a high priority on worker safety, these data are alarming and have really galvanized companies and unions to be proactive.

BUILDER: What prompted the program with the NAHB and the North Carolina Home Builders Association?

Spencer-Thomas: United Suicide Survivors International, a Colorado-based nonprofit has partnered with our company to develop a program called Construction Working Minds.

The forward-leaning leaders of the NAHB learned of the statistics and started taking action steps to inform their chapters of this significant health crisis among construction workers and discovered that they wanted to do more than just share death data.

Over the years we have done general awareness sessions and created some videos about mental health in the construction industry. In 2021, the leaders decided to do a deeper dive with a Needs and Strengths Assessment effort to understand why home builders might have increased risk and what they might need to help support their mental health. In addition, we also implemented a toolbox talk program, as well as a storyteller program.

BUILDER: What can builders do to begin developing a mental health and suicide prevention awareness program?

Spencer-Thomas: Our suggestion is that they start by listening to their people. Understand where the gaps are and create awareness and opportunities for small group conversations. Once you’ve identified a problem, people want to solve it. People want to know what to do if they’re worried about themselves or somebody else.

Leaders should get to know the mental health resources — whether it’s an employee assistance program, crisis resources like 988, or your local mental health county center. It’s best to proactively get familiarity, so that, when there is a crisis moment, leaders know what to do. They know what to expect from the mental health support services, and they have built relationships with these organizations so that there’s a smooth transition into support.

One of the biggest things that employers and builders can do is really start to drive a culture of care. Make it normal that people reach out to one another, check in with each other, offer peer support, and be knowledgeable and open to understanding what people need when they face tough times.

When builders and employers are serious about this, they develop a comprehensive and sustainable strategy, based on the nine practices of the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention.

In 2022, a certification process called H.O.P.E. Certification was developed for coaching and recognition to organizations who successfully implement these best practices over the course of a year. Just like we certify organizations for being environmentally friendly through LEED certification, we certify them for being mentally healthy. This is the future of health and safety in construction.

This article was originally published in sister publication BUILDER.



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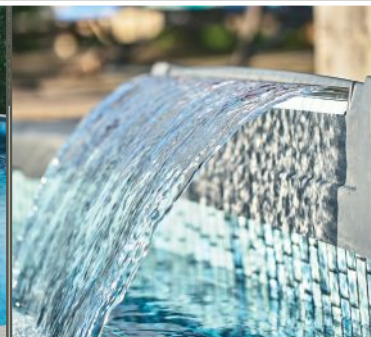
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Atlantic City



Showtime Nears

The January event offers 'perfect opportunity' to pool/spa professionals

BY LINDA G. GREEN



ADOBE STOCK



The enthusiasm is impossible to miss when talking with organizers of the 2024 Pool & Spa Show, coming to Atlantic City, N.J., on Jan. 23-25. “My team and I have been thinking about 2024 since last January,” says Trish McCormick, show manager. “After four decades of hosting this show, we continue to reinvent ourselves, uncovering new and exciting opportunities to provide our attendees with transformative experiences.”

The Atlantic City Show is expected to attract approximately 15,000 attendees from across the country. They will find cutting-edge pool and spa technologies as well as the latest

design trends and accessories, say organizers.

But the event goes beyond showcasing products and services. It’s also a professional development and learning opportunity, McCormick says. It offers more than 100 courses covering a wide range of topics, from basic to advanced technical skills to the latest business trends. For attendees, it’s an opportunity to refine their expertise and stay ahead of the curve.

Indeed, show-goers will get exclusive access to educational opportunities at the event with the VIP Experience Pass. It includes the 4-day pass and 4-day Technical

Pass. They’ll be able to access the VIP Lounges on the show floor and at the educational conference. Pass holders also get a ticket to the Welcome Party.

The Welcome Party will be held in the Avalon Room at Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City. “We are excited to offer an expanded and reimagined Welcome Party at the 2024 Show,” McCormick says. “We’re bringing together all your party favorites with a few new surprises. Our new location at Harrah’s will give us room to offer more entertainment, extra space to connect, and even more food and drinks. The party will include live music, yummy treats, and time

PHOTOS: AL GUZMAN, NESPA



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with friends.”

She adds an important reminder: “Tickets for this event go fast, and even with our expanded space, this event will sell out!” Note: Tickets for the party can be added to any existing registration if you forgot to select this option when first registering.

Another key aspect of the show is education. The Education Conference will offer morning, afternoon and all-day courses starting on Sunday, Jan. 21, and ending on Thursday, Jan. 25.

Industry professionals can attend in-depth workshops and certification courses presented by GENESIS/PHTA and Watershape University. Also, nine technical courses in Spanish are being offered — including a business course titled “Stop Servicing Pools, Start Servicing Customers.”

Show planners also recognized the need for many companies to strike a balance between strategic planning and adaptability in their preparations for the 2024 season. So a new full-day workshop called “Pivoting for Success: How to Prepare Your People & Business for Change” was included in the curriculum.

One of the new hands-on workshops offered at the show is “Pump It Up!” It’s an interactive session designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to successfully navigate the intricacies of pump system design and replacement for various applications, including pools and hot tubs. Other workshops cover aboveground pool assembly and liner installation, and workshops covering tile and coping, and heaters.

Also, the “Women in the Industry Workshop: A Personal Deep Dive” is set for Monday, Jan. 22, running from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This workshop was



created by women working in the pool and spa industry for women in the industry. Topics will include networking, interactive presentations and, say organizers, a lot of fun. The workshop was made possible with the support of industry partners Solenis, AquaCal/AutoPilot, Baystate

Pool Supplies, BioLab, Hayward, and PoolCorp.

A fitting final thought came from Trish McCormick: “True to our roots, we remain committed to delivering on our promise of being the show created for the industry by the industry.”



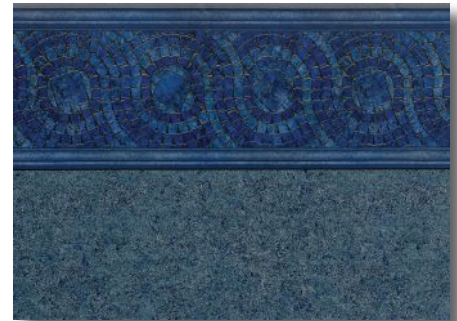
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Conference Schedule

Sunday, January 21, 8:00 AM

GENESIS C201: Construction School: Concrete Pools, (3 Days) — Day 1

GENESIS D231: Color Theory & Its Application (2 Days) — Day 1
Room Number TBC

PHTA ! Certified Hot Tub Technician (3 Days) — Day 1

PHTA ! Certified Maintenance Specialist (3 Days) — Day 1

PHTA | Certified Service Technician (3 Days) — Day 1

Watershape University: Construction 2711: Essential Major Renovation Workshop (2 Days) — Day 1

Watershape University: Construction 3511: Essential Plaster Workshop (2 Days) — Day 1

Watershape University: Engineering 4411: Essential Electrical Workshop (2 Days) — Day 1

Sunday, January 21, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

PHTA | Certified Pool Operator 2 Days — (Day 1)

Monday, January 22, 8:00 AM

Comprehensive Water Chemistry for Residential Pools

GENESIS C201: Construction School: Concrete Pools 3 Days — (Day 2)

GENESIS D231: Color Theory & Its Application (2 Days) — Day 2

GENESIS D250: How to Convert Design and Style into Sales

National Plasterers Council (NPC) Pool Start-Up Certification

PHTA | Certified Hot Tub Technician 3 Days — (Day 2)

PHTA | Certified Maintenance Specialist 3 Days — (Day 2)
PHTA | Certified Service Technician 3 Days — (Day 2)

Watershape University: Construction 2711: Essential Major Renovation Workshop (2 Days) — Day 2

Watershape University: Construction 3511: Essential Plaster Workshop (2 Days) — Day 2

Watershape University: Construction 4271: Vanishing & Slot-Edge Design, Engineering and Construction

Watershape University: Engineering 4411: Essential Electrical Workshop (2 Days) — Day 2

Monday, January 22, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

PHTA | Certified Pool Operator 2 Days — (Day 2)

Pivoting for Success: How to Prepare Your People & Business for Change

Women in the Industry Leadership Workshop: A Personal Deep Dive

Monday, January 22, 12:30 AM

Pool Opening Essentials

Rookie to All-Star: The Fundamentals of Pool Service

Monday, January 22, 1:30 PM

Basic Hydraulics 101

Introduction to PVC Membrane

Job Site and Employee Safety Training

Sanitation Control Systems

SPANISH Understanding Hydraulics

Understanding & Troubleshooting Automation

Using Finance to Grow Your Business in 2024 and Beyond

Watershape University: Business 1121: Operating Philosophies & Policies

Your Guide to New Jersey Pool and Spa Licensing Requirements

Monday, January 22, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

PHTA WAVE Event: Success Stories from the Young Pool & Hot Tub Professionals

Tuesday, January 23, 8:00 AM

PHTA | Certified Maintenance Specialists 3 Days — (Day 3)

PHTA Certified Hot Tub Technician 3 Days — (Day 3)

Tuesday, January 23, 8:00 AM

GENESIS C201: Construction School: Concrete Pools Day 3

PHTA | Certified Service Technician 3 Days — (Day 3)

Tuesday, January 23, 8:30 AM

Atmospheric and Induced Draft Gas Heater Installation & Troubleshooting: Comprehensive Intro to Gas Burning Pool Heaters

Basic Water Chemistry for Service Techs

SPANISH Electricity for Pool and Spa Professionals Intermediate

Tuesday, January 23, 8:30 AM - 1:00 PM

A Pro's Guide to Above Ground Pool Assembly & Liner Installation (Hands-on workshop)

Tuesday, January 23, 9:00 AM

Automate Your Service Department

CODE BROWN: When Wildlife Invades the Swimming Pool— Snakes, Rats and Bears, Oh My! Finding Leaks - Turn Headaches into Profits

Fluidra Variable Speed Pumps

GENESIS C406: Pool Shell Cracking in Shotcrete/Gunite Construction

GENESIS D131: Identifying New Business & Design Trends

Liner Measurements: From Tech to Pro

Make Your Customer Service Contagious! 6 Steps to Training Superstars!

Plaster and Fill Water: How to Prevent a Disaster

Resilient Pool Service: How to Make More and Do Less

Salt Chlorine Generators — Do's and Don'ts to Make Saltwater Pools Easier to

Maintain and Operate Secrets — and Impact — of Successful Job Costing

SPANISH Practical Water Chemistry

The Future of Technology and AI for a Complete Pool Management

Understanding Hydraulics (Intermediate)

Tuesday, January 23, 11:00 AM-1:00 PM

Tile & Coping Hands-on Workshop

Tuesday, January 23, 1:00 PM

Electricity for Pool and Spa Professionals (Intermediate)

Excavation & Competent Person Training

You Don't Have to Be Exceptional. You Do Have to Be Effective

Tuesday, January 23, 1:30 PM

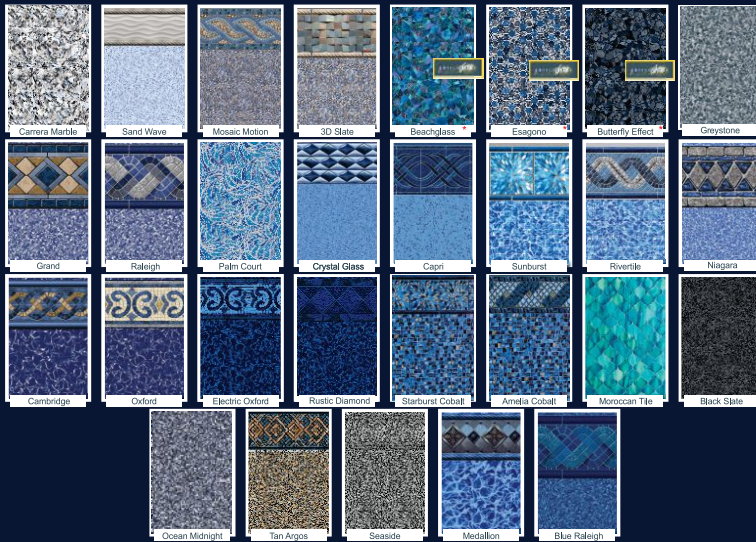
GENESIS B246: Top Tips on Using Design to Close the Sale
GENESIS C424: Damp-Proofing Solution and Best Practices

Hayward Variable Speed Pumps

How to Use Google AI Driven Tools to Grow and Manage Your Business

Keeping Up with the Rapidly Changing Employment Landscape Under Federal & Northeast State Laws

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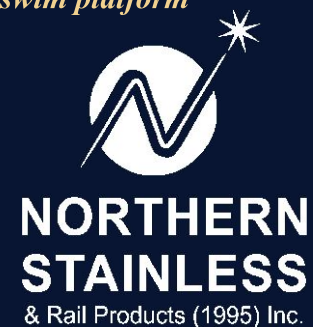
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Conference Schedule

Pool Stains & Discoloration:
What's THAT on the Pool Surface?

Recreational Water Balance

Service Touch Points — 9
Critical Points of Contact that
Affect Customer Loyalty

Spa Water Chemistry: It's Not
Just A Little Pool

SPANISH Pentair Variable
Speed Pumps

Stop Servicing Pools. Start
Servicing Customers

The Art of Communication
— How to Have Impossible,
Fierce and Difficult
Conversations

The Yellow Cake Principle:
Your Recipe for Influence and
Success

Vinylology 101: The More You
Know, The More You Sell

Watershape University:
Construction 1711: Pool
Renovation

Inspection Checklist:
Considerations for a
Successful Project

What Got You Here Won't Move
You Forward: How to Lead in
Today's Workplace

Tuesday, January 23,
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Heaters Hands-On Workshop

Tuesday, January 23,
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

PUMP It Up! Hands-On
Workshop

Wednesday, January 24,
8:30 AM

Diving into Digital Success:
Digital Marketing Playbook for
Pool Companies

SPANISH Introduction to
Advanced Hydraulics

Watershape University:
Construction 2252: Concrete
Defect Identification and
Prevention

Wednesday, January 24,
9:00 AM

Coaching, Cheering &
Challenging: How to Activate
Performance in Today's
Employees

De-Mystifying Pool/Spa Heat
Pumps

GENESIS D227: Collaboration
Between a Designer and a
Technical Adviser
Importance of an Employee
Handbook & Job Descriptions

Laws, Codes and Standards
that Affect the Pool Industry

Leak Detection & Non-
Destructive Pipe Repair
Methods

Measuring for Safety Covers

Natural Swimming Pool Basics:
What They Are and How They
Work

Pentair Variable Speed Pumps

Practical Water Chemistry

Present with Impact

**Proximity Matters in the
Service Industry:** Grow
Your Business in Your Local
Community

SPANISH Hayward Variable
Speed Pumps

Stains are Not Normal

Troubleshooting Pools: Solving
the Top 4 Issues That Plague
Pools

Watershape University:
Business 3421: Financial
Planning for the Next
Economic Slowdown

Watershape University:
Service 3121: Electricity,
Bonding and Controls for
Service Professionals

What Are You Lighting?

Wednesday, January 24,
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

PHTA Certification Exam Day

Wednesday, January 24,
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Tile & Coping Hands-On
Workshop

Wednesday, January 24,
12:30 PM

Pool Opening Essentials

Rookie to All-Star: The
Fundamentals of Pool Service

Wednesday, January 24,
1:00 PM

In-Ground Pool Vinyl Liners:
Installation & Troubleshooting
for that Perfect Fit

Principles of Pool Plumbing

Team Leadership and Personal
Growth

Wednesday, January 24,
1:30 PM

Advanced Leak Detection for
the Seasonal Professional

Algae: Causes & Prevention

Effective Employee Discipline
& Termination

Every Day is A (Sales)
Presentation

Filtration and Circulation

GENESIS C103: Shotcrete

GENESIS E312:
Understanding Water Current

Hot Tub Controls: When to
Repair or Replace

Maintaining Water in Sale-
Chlorine Pools: The Case for
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THE SPRAY'S THE THING



Aquatics professionals share their tips for properly designing and building spray pads. **BY REBECCA ROBLEDO**



PHOTOS: JIEO CONSULTING GROUP

Spray pads seem to be on the rise.

When these largely commercial features became more regulated a few years ago, with many states and municipalities requiring secondary sani-

tation systems, they had seemed to fall a bit out of favor, with people turning away at the cost, says Justin Caron, principal/CEO of San Diego-based Aquatic Design Group.

But now, with the current lifeguard shortage and rising wages for those who do choose the job, splash pads are showing up in more plans because they require few to no guards. People



also are attracted by the fun factor, Caron says. And today's vibrantly colored safety surfaces have amped their design.

Spray pads, also called splash pads, make great community builders, as they can bring people together and even create educational experiences.

"I see them as potential to create additional common spaces within a community for neighbors and families of a variety of backgrounds to come together and engage in a variety of social aspects," says Amber Wyatt, a creative project manager for JEO Consulting Group in Overland Park, Kan. "They can also be a beacon for visitors from other cities or towns to travel in and explore a new place, which can support economic development."

Here, commercial and aquatics designers share their tips for designing and installing these features, whichever term you use for them.

1. DON'T BE LULLED INTO THIS POPULAR FALSE IMPRESSION.

It's true that splash pads have little to no depth and, in many cases, are

smaller than pools. But don't confuse that to mean they're simpler than pools. These systems are as complex, if not more so, and they require meticulous design and construction.

"[People] look at a splash pad and say, 'It's just this shallow thing with these neat little toys,'" says Matthew Freeby, a project director with Water Technology Inc. (WTI), an aquatics and waterpark designer/builder in Beaver Dam, Wisc. "In actuality they can be more complex than a pool. Where a pool has a body of water and then filtration, perhaps heating and chemical treatment on a very basic level, a splash pad can have all that, plus controls activating toys and misting sprays, timers and lights and other features. So they can get complex very quickly."

Additionally, these features are considered more at risk for carrying waterborne pathogens, because of their relatively low volumes and potential exposure to human waste, as young children are often the primary users. So, in many jurisdictions, they require secondary sanitation and controllers to maintain proper water quality.

This complexity translates to their

operation, as well, lest any clients believe they will be simpler to care for than a pool, adds Ryan Nachreiner, another WTI project director. The chemistry needs to be pristine.

"So you need an operator who is aware and understands the complexities of the chemistry and water balance of a pool and splash pad system," he says.

For the designer, this means that emphasis should be placed on ease of operation and maintenance when choosing, sizing and placing equipment and features.

In approaching the design of spray pads, some professionals overlook something integral to many pools — a geotechnical report and structural engineering, Wyatt says.

While these structures don't reach several feet into the ground, they still will be impacted if built on improper fill, plus holding tanks can be affected by such things as high groundwater and expansive soil. Foundations also should be properly engineered for spray pads, as surely as they would be for pools.

Wyatt finds that some clients also overlook the needed support amenities that should accompany spray pads. These are similar to those built with many commercial pools. At the very least, this should include adjacent seating areas — preferably shaded — for parents and guardians to watch their charges. But for larger-scale projects, things such as restrooms, parking and pedestrian connection points should be included.

When dealing with clients and potential clients, you may run into a related misperception: That spray pads are much less expensive than they are. But, given rising costs, the intricacy of these features, and the increasingly stringent codes being applied to them, the price tag is steeper than expected.

People may believe they should be able to have a commercial spray pad

for \$150,000, when the structure, sanitation and hydraulic systems can add up to twice that amount, before the sprays and toys are included, Caron says.

2. HONOR THE CONTOURS

Several aspects of splash pads add to their complexity. One part especially needs meticulous attention — the contours of the floor.

Because the features have little to no water depth, the drainage and hydraulics system relies heavily on the floor's sloping and contouring to capture and channel the splash and runoff.

This must be accomplished while simultaneously complying with accessibility laws and codes.

"All pool decks — splash pads included — need slopes of 1% and no greater than 2%," Caron says. "One percent is required to facilitate water to move toward the drains. Two percent is the maximum you can have for the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Walking this particular tightrope requires carefully planned flooring contours.

"Because they're not intended to hold water, you don't have any forgiveness in the contours," Freeby says. "You have to exercise much more care in the contouring design of the pad than you'd be used to in a pool. One-quarter inch can make a huge difference. I've seen where contours aren't done property, then water runs off and you're not capturing it."

Besides trying to direct the water toward the drains, sometimes the floors are meant to channel the splash and falling water to form a stream that kids can follow. This requires very intentional engineering.

"You're trying to do conflicting things," Freeby says. "From a slope perspective for drainage, the steeper you make the slope the better it will drain. But from a practical standpoint for a user, if it's steeper it's more difficult to use, plus it might exceed

requirements from an accessibility standpoint. You have conflicting requirements and so it's a balance — and that balance is very tight."

3. INCLUDE A WIND GAUGE

With most or all the water in a splash pad system going airborne at some point, the systems should be set up to turn off in the case of high winds.

"If the wind gets too high and you have water in the air, it can be moved off the deck and it can't be captured," Freeby says.

Be sure to include a wind gauge, known as an anemometer, into the

system.

More sophisticated systems can turn certain features off at one threshold, then shut everything off at a higher wind speed. Simpler ones will just shut everything off when winds reach a certain point.

"If it's windy, there aren't many people at a spray pad anyway," Freeby says.

There's no hard and fast rule for what speeds should prompt the system to shut down. A popular threshold is 20 miles per hour, but that's not always most appropriate.

It depends on the environmental conditions. If the spray pad is heavily



shielded by trees, it may be immune to winds that the anemometer will detect. “But if you’re in the open prairie, you want it to shut off sooner,” Freeby says.

The design of the spray pad also can factor into the maximum wind speed to which it should be exposed, Nachreiner says. If it generates high volumes of water — say the pad is particularly expansive or features a high-volume dumping bucket or especially high sprays — then the splashout can reach farther than milder sprays, potentially saturating everything in the near vicinity, including innocent bystanders. In these cases, the shut-down should occur at lower wind speeds.

Once the system is set, operators should observe the splash pads during wind events, see if the shut-down speed makes sense, then make any

adjustments if necessary, whether up or down.

4. DESIGN FOR THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE.

Start by identifying your audience. If you want the pad to attract people at various stages of their lives, it’s best to create zones aimed at different age groups and abilities. Lower, gentler sprays go in areas for smaller children or those who experience sensory issues. Larger features pushing higher volumes will appeal to larger kids. This way, toddlers still gaining their footing can stay out of the way of older, more rambunctious kids.

Also think about the path you want it take, and the traffic flow. Is the spray pad meant to tell a story or impart a lesson that would help dictate the sequence by which the sprays should be experienced? Do you

want an orderly path and traffic flow, or should children be able to randomly pinball between features?

“Are you designing it so it’s more of a circuit so there are different areas that they’re walking around and rotating?” Nachreiner asks. “Do you want it more chaotic where they’re going all over the place, or is there a central activity tower?”

5. PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE SURFACES.

The surfaces on spray pads become very important, as these features largely serve children, some of them still learning to walk, on a wet surface.

The surface should not be chosen based on cost alone. But those costs should be clear — not only the upfront price tag.

The market has seen the introduc-



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tion of several surfaces made specifically for this market. Not only are they available in vibrant colors, but they're generally very slip-resistant. These will cost more than concrete, not only upfront, but also in terms of maintenance and replacement. It's hard to beat the durability of concrete.

But clients shouldn't completely rule out using these surfaces. "Be strategic on where you use the different surfaces," says Andrew Pennekamp, another creative project manager for JEO Consulting Group. "I can think of a few projects where there was a toddler area that received more of the safety [flooring], then the main body of the splash pad was concrete. That was one way of providing that protection without the expense of covering the whole splash pad [with the safety flooring]."

However, if using concrete, make sure the contractor installing it knows

how to create a surface appropriate to this kind of application. They should understand how to place a strong concrete mix, and install things such as expansion joints to manage expansion and contraction.

Properly brooming the surface for an adequate slip coefficient is crucial. "We want to make sure it's not so abrasive that it's cutting feet but is textured enough to be slip-resistant," Pennekamp says. To ensure proper slip resistance, his company will have contractors put together a sample of the finished product.

They also should know better than to top it with sealers that will make the surface slick, Caron says.

6. PLACE FEATURES TO CONTROL SPLASH AND SPRAY.

Place each element to avoid spray going outside the perimeter of the

splash pad.

Anything close to the edge should spray toward the center, so it doesn't wet a surrounding deck or create muddy conditions. High-flow features such as buckets should stand toward the center of the splash pad. This way, when the higher volumes of water hit the ground, there's plenty of room to capture it before it can flood perimeter drains.

Cannons and other elements that can be controlled by users to spray each other should be far enough away that they can't hit passersby or adults watching their charges from the perimeter.

"You want to protect the innocent," Caron says.

If the area has high winds, or winds that tend to blow in one direction, also keep this in mind when placing spray features.

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MAKING THE SHIFT

A person's hands are shown typing on a laptop keyboard. The image is overlaid with several semi-transparent icons: a lightbulb, a magnifying glass, a person silhouette, and several interlocking gears. The background is a blurred office setting with warm lighting.

No doubt, the right software can spell added profit and productivity. But changing over requires planning, patience and flexibility.

BY RENA GOLDMAN

The right software can be a boon to any business, minimizing manual data entry, managing finances, and ensuring that sales and inventory are tracked properly. So, it makes sense that some pool/spa business owners are thinking about making a switch.

Whether your business has outgrown its current business software or you're looking to make the transition away from manual recordkeeping, finding the right software system and making the change can feel daunting. The options are vast, with both programs specific to the pool/spa industry and more general business softwares available.

Selecting a new software isn't something a business should rush. In fact, pool/spa retail veteran and industry consultant Mallory Bjekich-Wachowski recommends spending a year to a year-and-a-half just looking for the software.

Then it takes time to implement the new program and train staff, emphasizes the co-owner of Toolbox for Excellence, a company that provides pool/spa dealer training aimed at keeping clients updated on industry best practices and changes. This conversion isn't something you would want to redo because a software doesn't work out.

IDENTIFY CURRENT NEEDS OR PAIN POINTS

To start the selection process, you want to take a deep dive into how the business is currently functioning. What's



PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK



working well, and what needs to be adjusted?

Bjekich-Wachowski encourages managers to ask if anything is costing the company money or time, or if customers and employees complain about recurring issues that a different software might fix.

She suggests companies work with an upper management team or the entire company (depending on the company's size) to get feedback on existing problem areas. Consult those who work on the ground and are most familiar with problems that arise. One question she recommends asking: Can you tell me one thing about our current software or lack of software that makes your job harder?

"In our experience, the transition to a routing software was driven by the need to manage increasing workloads more effectively, replacing inefficient paper-based route sheets," says Marshal Davis, president and founder at Ascendly Marketing and former owner of Beyond Blue Pools.

For Dallas-area company Gohlke Pools, it was time to make a change, as it had outgrown the pool-industry software it used for nearly 20 years. The team needed software that was more comprehensive and could move them away from what General Manager Nick Day describes as a piecemeal solution combining industry-specific software with general business systems to fill the

gaps. The team needed to remove one major pain point — the firm still had to crunch numbers manually and send them to an accountant each month, so it took much longer than necessary to find out each month's performance.

After looking for several years, they decided to choose a mid-sized business software with a more general accounting-based platform that they could "tie on construction modules and service modules to make it all cohesive," Day explains.

SHOP AROUND

Cost is also a factor. Software programs generally require a monthly or annual fee. Of course, that regular cost is worth it if the program helps optimize your business. So weigh the potential savings against the costs.

When it comes to inventory management, for instance, "some of these softwares can really alleviate major issues, which absolutely does save money," Bjekich-Wachowski says.

When assessing the costs, don't just look at monthly fees. Also examine the credit card fees charged by the software company. This can present a savings opportunity or added costs. Gohlke Pools management believed it was overpaying in this area. Shopping around provided the opportunity to negotiate with potential new vendors for lower rates.

Shop around for the best rates as-

sociated with the systems. Even when software providers don't advertise it, many are willing to negotiate here, notes Gaby Hermes, operations manager at public relations and marketing firm KNB Communications.

To avoid disappointment and make sure you get what you pay for, Davis recommends doing a small-scale test of the software before full implementation.

"Many software options may promise extensive capabilities but fall short in practice," he says.

Some software companies provide a free trial period. And, if a consultant is helping your company with the changeover, they may be able to arrange for a trial with providers that normally don't provide them.

PREPARE FOR CHANGES

Even with all the software options to choose from, you likely won't find something that matches your current processes and procedures exactly. But this shouldn't be a deterrent, Bjekich-Wachowski says.

Instead, she recommends going into the process with an open mind, knowing you will probably need to make some changes to better your business.

"I've seen companies that have adopted a software but didn't dedicate the time to change processes, and they're really not maximizing all of the things those softwares can do," she says.

While you should be willing to make some adjustments to adapt, the software still should work in service to your company, not the other way around. Assess any changes to your company that would be required to maximize a software, and make sure they align with your business's needs.

Hermes, who oversaw a software transition for KNB Communications, says her team analyzed the limitations and strengths of their current system before choosing something new. The firm reviewed about 10 software options, making a list of pros and cons



for each.

“We involved our team in the decision-making process to ensure that those impacted would find the tool valuable,” she says.

PLAN FOR THE TRANSITION

Adopting a new software system doesn’t happen overnight. In fact, the whole process can take several months. Some businesses and industries can make quicker transitions than others, but failing to thoroughly plan the shift will drag out the process.

Some key areas to think about are employee training, transition timeline, and what to do with existing data. Employees who will be using the software should have an opportunity to get instruction, and that can come from other employees who have been part of the selection and testing process or from a representative at the software company. Some employees may be better with tech than others, so Day recommends budgeting time for training and understanding that not everyone will pick it up on the first day.

Bjekich-Wachowski points to data as a key factor in how long it takes to switch software. For instance, a retail store can transition fairly quickly if it doesn’t have a lot of data to move over, whereas a service business that needs

to transfer more data would take longer.

If you have data to transfer, she says, it should be “clean.” To ensure that, she recommends going through the data that’s in your current system to make sure it’s complete and correct. For example, verify that customer names and addresses are accurate and not duplicated.

In some cases, you can export data from one system into a spreadsheet, then use that to load it into the new software. However, since software systems have different ways of loading data, you’ll likely need to go through the old data and make sure the spreadsheet is formatted to the new system’s import process. Programs that allow you to export the data from the software will sometimes export it as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Once data is in the spreadsheet, you can use Excel’s features to reorganize it for upload into the new software program.

When she switched software programs for a water testing software, Bjekich-Wachowski opted to reformat the exported data and give it to the new software company to load into its system.

Once you’ve done enough training sessions and data prep to feel comfortable starting the software transition, plan how the process will start. Decide how and when the company

will begin moving things from one software to the other. Some questions to ask yourself: Who will serve as the project lead or leads? When is the best time to do something that may disrupt your business?

Looking back, Day can see ways his company could have done better with the planning portion. The company signed with a new software company just before Thanksgiving, with a plan to start the five to six-month implementation period after the holidays in early January. However, a busy pool season in April and May led the company to put the transition on hold until after peak season.

“My best piece of advice is just make sure you budget enough time for it,” he says.

The time needed will vary from company to company. Bjekich-Wachowski has transitioned some dealers fairly quickly, while others can take weeks or even months. When determining how much time you need, consider things such as the amount of data you have to transfer; whether you must reformat and upload the data; whether you’ll need to change any procedures or other aspects of your operations to optimize the software; how much time staff can dedicate to the transfer if taking place during the busy season; and how much training

Consider paying the added cost to enlist the help of a consultant with the new software company to help with the transition. This can especially make sense for those who are short on time and/or aren't as tech-savvy.

your staff will need. Always set aside more time than you think you'll need, Day suggests.

Also consider paying the added cost to enlist the help of a consultant with the new software company to help with the transition. This can especially make sense for those who are short on time and/or aren't as tech-savvy.

USE GOALS TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Throughout the process of changing software, set goals for making the most of it. These can be used to keep you on track and to measure success.

For example, a company that manually tracks sales and inventory may prioritize handling inventory management through the new software system. To achieve this goal, the company would need to set a date to begin tracking inventory with the new software, then conduct any necessary changes

to its operations, as well as train staff before that date. Then track the results.

Some of Day's goals included automating the manual spreadsheet work the company was doing and reducing the number of software programs they were using down to one. He also wanted Gohlke Pools to have software the company could use and build on for the next generation.

When evaluating a new software after the switch, Bjekich-Wachowski recommends giving it a year, then measuring your performance, especially regarding your top goals from the new system. You don't have to stop at the initial goals, she says. Challenge yourself to dig into unused software features in the off-season or slow time.

"I find that the dealers who are most successful truly understand how small changes in their daily operations can change their bottom line significantly," she says.



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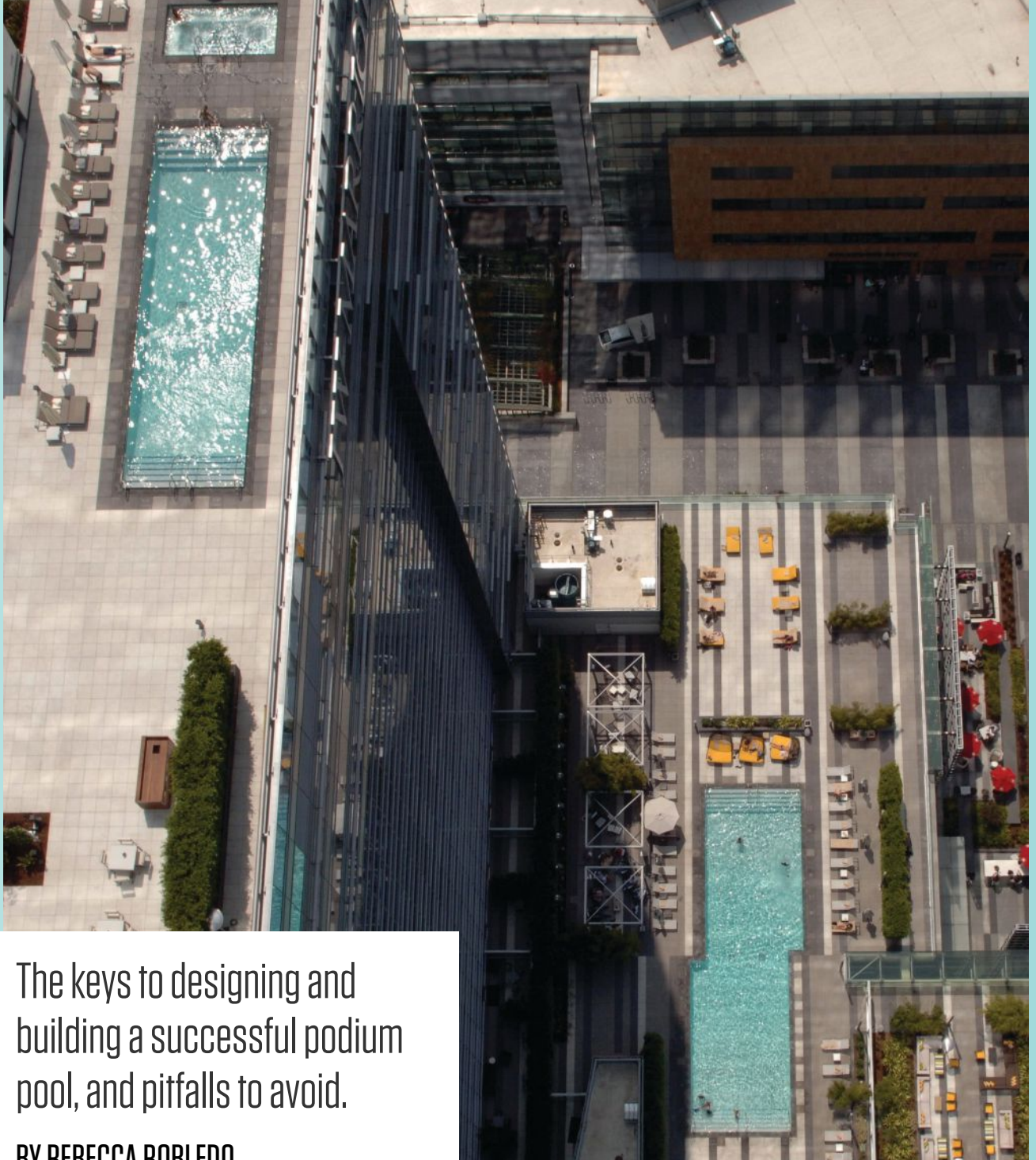


PHOTO COURTESY TERRACON

The keys to designing and building a successful podium pool, and pitfalls to avoid.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

They dazzle perched atop a high-rise hotel or apartment complex. They provide fun and exercise in enclosed spaces both residential and commercial. Or they can hover in multi-level subterranean spaces.

While these installations often are shorthanded as “rooftop pools,” the correct term is podium pools — because they will be supported by structural members on the building such as beams, pillars and vaults. And they can sit at any level, as long as it’s not in the ground.

While these installations have always been prevalent in commercial buildings, they are becoming more common in residential settings — particularly in urban areas — as space continually tightens.

But these installations represent risk exposure at least as dramatic as their aesthetic. Without exaggeration, this construction may represent the highest liability out there. If something goes wrong, the best a contractor can hope is that water drips or concrete chips fall on a car parked in the garage below. But even then, many vehicles parked in these settings bear names such as Porsche or Mercedes, so you don’t even want that.

Then there’s the worst-case scenario.

“Imagine the sort of damage you can do to that building if 15,000 gallons were to drain out of that swimming pool, and then the cost to tear it out and rebuild it — which I’ve seen,” says Rob Holmer, an engineer who specializes in pools and has worked for national engineering firm Terracon and Neil O. Anderson and Associates.

Even with minimal collateral damage, that pool will need to be fixed. Such repairs can prove difficult because of access issues.

Podium pools also require intense construction measures. If concrete, the shell will have heavier than normal reinforcement. When weight or space is a concern, jobs

may call for stainless steel pools, with their approximately ¾-inch-thick shells. (And these are becoming more price-competitive than before, landing them on more drawing tables.)

Regardless of the shell type, it will require proper drainage and waterproofing.

Follow these tips to help you graduate to this level of construction.

1. ACCEPT THAT YOU WILL NEED HELP

When the most renowned builders in the country installed their first few podium pools, they started by finding somebody to offer guidance.

These pools involve more than following provided specifications. Building engineers will spec the support structure; however, they often rely on the pool contractor as an expert to fill in the knowledge gaps. There likely are hundreds of details that they haven’t considered — and that most backyard pool builders don’t have to deal with.

For instance, contractors see one mistake made by architects and engineers repeatedly — underestimating the necessary dimensions, especially the depth, of the vaults that often contain these pools and spas. These professionals frequently take the pool’s depth, add the expected thickness of the pool shell and leave it at that. For a 4-foot-deep pool, for instance, they may specify a 4½-foot-deep vault. But this doesn’t account for plumbing and other elements that reach outside the pool.

Paolo Benedetti addressed that issue on a project he advised on.

“They already had the vault poured, and I had to explain, ‘This isn’t deep enough. By the time I add plumbing, drain sumps, our steel and all the clearances, you’re going to lose a foot of depth, maybe 18 inches,’” says the president of Aquatic Technology Pool and Spa in Morgan Hill, Calif.

Architects and engineers also

may not know about the extra bonding requirements for these pools or where penetrations are needed in the vault.

To step in and provide this level of expertise, first-timers should seek guidance.

2. EXPECT EACH PROJECT TO BE DIFFERENT

It may sound cliché, but when it comes to support systems for podium pools, no two are alike.

“There’s no bag of tricks you can use,” says Rick Chafey, co-owner of Red Rock Pools & Spas in Mesa, Ariz. “I have yet to work on two that were the same.... Especially in the residential world, you can get in all kinds of different situations.”

Many engineers support these vessels in a vault, but other podium pools rest on beams or pillars.

“In other cases, the pool might ... just be freestanding on top of a concrete slab,” says Terry Brannon, Founder Emeritus of The Brannon Corporation, an engineering and consulting firm based in Tyler, Texas. “Then pedestals hold up the deck and landscape.”

In vault pools, many engineers add a separation layer between the pool and vault. This helps shield the inner vessel from building movement and prevent cracks in the vault from reflecting through the pool or spa shell.

Some companies use geofoam, a structural-grade polystyrene product, for this purpose.

3. MASTER WATERPROOFING AND DRAINAGE

Approach any professional with experience in podium pools, and they will start with waterproofing. These pools require multi-pronged systems that likely incorporate most every type of waterproofing available — admixtures in the shotcrete, a membrane of some type inside the shell, sealants in and around the

penetrations, and maybe even a waterproofing agent on the back of the shell, if it's exposed.

In the latter case, though, make sure the product is suitable for the negative face. If it isn't, Brannon says, then water migrating through the wall can cause a membrane to peel off or otherwise become compromised. And, as with any product, make sure it is appropriate for the application and compatible with the other waterproofing products and pool finishes.

But pools leak, and condensation occurs, so designers also must devise a way to channel runoff away from the pool and building.

"You want a drain that daylight somewhere, whether it dumps into a floor sink in the equipment room or goes all the way down to the ground floor, with a pipe coming out of a wall and daylighting somewhere," Benedetti says. This gives a visual sign of a leak.

Vaults must contain drains running water away from the area. If the pool is built without a vault, then some type of containment must be installed underneath the shell.

To help with drainage, Brannon likes to place a ½-inch-thick drainage mesh or mat between the pool and vault. This also provides separation between the pool and vault.

4. WORK TO HIGHER STANDARDS AND CODES

For the shotcrete or gunite, a 2,500-to-3,000-psi mix likely will not suffice. Experienced builders typically start at about 5,000 psi, then the compressive strength increases from admixtures.

In these applications, some have designed to a different code from the American Concrete Institute (ACI). In everyday situations, shotcrete shells should be designed to comply with ACI 318. However, some design podium pools to meet ACI 350, which is meant for concrete tanks such as

those used in municipal applications.

"Though it's impossible to design concrete so it won't crack, you can design [it so] the cracks are so small that they remain watertight," Holmer says, describing the purpose of ACI 350.

These pools will have more reinforcement than normal. Some of

Holmer's past projects have been built with No. 5 bars at 5 inches on center each way.

5. EXPECT EXPONENTIAL PLANNING TIME

These pools require meticulous planning by the pool contractor and





its subs. On the design/engineering side, plumbing schemes will have to be drawn out, with penetrations planned in advance. The method of supporting the pipe to prevent vibration and wear, such as using struts and clamps, must be figured out.

Contractors must know what they're building around. Air-conditioning ducts, gas lines, computer and electrical conduit become factors.

"When we're working in a ... building structure, we have to dodge everybody else," Brannon says.

For this reason, Chafey adds, pool builders must be able to understand the plans and drawings for other trades.

On the construction end, access and scheduling must be choreographed. All trades may share a construction elevator or crane, so their use will have to be arranged.

"There's a schedule coordinator who will give you a time to use that crane," Chafey says. "Sometimes you have to pay for it; sometimes you just have to block out the time. And then you have to make sure your stuff is on site when they're ready."

Those shooting concrete or applying finishes must assess whether their pumps can work from ground level or if equipment must be lifted to the site. When pumping from ground level, they also must devise a way to ensure the hoses don't cause any damage.

"When you're running hoses down the side of the building, you have to protect the buckles on the hoses with foam so, if the hoses bounce, you don't have an issue with it smacking into the wall," says Dave Schilli, president of St. Louis-based Schilli Plastering Co. "A lot of times they'll tie the hose off at the top [and bottom] of the wall to [reduce] vibrating."

When they take on especially tricky or large podium-pool jobs, plasterers Dave Cooke and Rob Romano visit the site, devise a plan, then go back to the site another one or two times to make sure they've covered all the bases. As the work draws closer, they'll do at least another mental run-through in the office.

"We're not just going to show up and go, 'Okay, here we go,'" says Romano, general manager of David Cooke Plaster Co. in South Windsor, Conn.,

of which Cooke is president. "It's all planned out well in advance."

6. ACCOUNT FOR THE ELEMENTS

Many of these pools straddle indoors and out. A rooftop pool may sit outside while its structural support and plumbing rests in the ceiling of the floor below. The underpinnings of an indoor pool may hover over a parking garage. This can cause issues with freezing and condensation.

In areas prone to freezing, always insulate pipes exposed to the outdoors, Brannon says. This also applies to main drains that are exposed.

Insulation also may be needed to minimize condensation, which can form around pipes and leak through ceilings.

Stainless steel pools often are insulated with foam for this purpose. It also helps eliminate hollow sounds. "When you're inside the pool and you stomp around, you don't want it to sound like you're inside a barrel," Brannon says.

Also consider condensation if a pool sits next to steel I-beam structures from the building, Benedetti advises.

Product Profiles: Package Pools & Vinyl Liners



CIRALI BEACH Pool Liner Design

The new Cirali Beach liner design is inspired by the appearance of soft natural stone.

It's printed on medium blue vinyl liner material with rich blue and shimmering gold inks. The blue stone print is enhanced by a galaxy of metallic gold pebbles using the company's exclusive aquashimmer feature to give the design a luxurious sparkling effect.

"This unique combination of blue stone and gold pebbles creates the look of a mystical hidden beach with gold dancing across medium blue water," says David Sones, design manager, industrial markets for Poolside by CGT. "The aquashimmer effect is particularly outstanding in this design providing a dramatic, unmatched gemstone sparkle to this premium pool liner material."

Cirali Beach is finished with a smooth surface on 28mil residential liner material.

Contact: Poolside by CGT | poolsidebycgt.com



Vanishing Pool Covers

Explore Industries is rolling out Vanishing Pool Covers for select pools within its Leisure Pools brand in 2024.

The covers provide a level of protection for the pool, making it easier to keep the pool clean and ready for a swim. Additionally, the covers reduce water loss due to evaporation and extend the swimming season by keeping the pool warmer during the cool nights of spring and fall. Lastly, if there are water features, they can be used while the cover is closed or open. It operates with the flip of a switch to automatically open and close the pool.

"This is an amazing line of pools that will be the talk of the town this coming pool season," says Clint McClain, Explore Industries' chief commercial officer. "Dealer feedback has been that the product is absolutely beautiful, they love how easy it is to install, and that it works seamlessly with water features."

Contact: Explore Industries | exploreindustries.com



Imperial Pools' Nexus Double Feature

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

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

Contact: Imperial Pools | imperialpools.com



Mirage Pool Visualizer

Mirage Pool Visualizer, offered exclusively from Loop-Loc, is designed to provide users with an easy way to visualize Loop-Loc's luxury designer in-ground pool liners and safety pool covers. It gives a detailed preview of what any given pool liner or cover would look like.

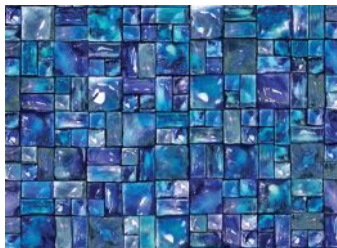
Users can choose the shape, paver color, liner pattern or cover colors in as many variations as they like. Mirage also allows users to share their project images on social media.

Loop-Loc's luxury liners are available in exclusive designer patterns, with new Backyard Accents products to match many of the company's designs.

Aqua-Xtreme safety covers are built to be durable and long lasting. The light-blocking fabric not only deters algae growth but drains quickly — up to 80 gallons per minute without clogging, according to company officials.

For support or sales, email sales@looploc.com, or call 800-562-5667

Contact: Loop-Loc | looploc.com/mirage



Lennox Liner Pattern by McEwan Industries

McEwan Industries' newest exclusive in-ground liner pattern, Lennox, is a 27 mil pattern showcasing a play of light with shimmering hues.

Contact: McEwan Industries | mcewenindustries.com



Inground Vinyl Liners

Megna Pools swimming pool liners are made from the finest vinyl available world-wide, says Dave Gartner, Megna's vice president sales.

"The vinyl is specifically formulated for long term use in swimming pools," says Gartner. "It features excellent physical properties to resist tearing and puncture, cracking at low temperatures, UV degradation, fungus growth, algae growth and chemical bleaching."

Megna Pools uses computer aided design (CAD) to custom design each pool liner to the exact specifications of the pool. Then a patented rotary cutting machine is used to cut the pool vinyl for each swimming pool.

Megna Pools employs high-frequency molecular welding machines to bond the vinyl into the shape of the swimming pool.

"This is the strongest and best method to create long lasting swimming pool liners," says Gartner.

Contact: Megna Pools | megnapools.com



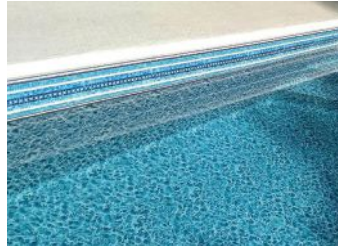
Aqua-Max Vinyl Liners

Aqua-Max vinyl liners are exclusive to Merlin Industries. Aqua-Max liners are specifically formulated of a high molecular weight polymer to provide greater ultraviolet resistance, says Susanna McGrogan, Merlin Industries' senior marketing manager.

"They also offer far greater resistance to today's pool chemical systems and chemical misuse," she says. "Aqua-Max vinyl also contains over twice as much anti-fungal and anti-bacterial protection than standard liners."

McGrogan adds that Aqua-Max liners offer 50% more topcoat to help prevent scuffs and stains, 25% better resistance to chlorine bleaching and 25% longer life expectancy than standard liners. Finally, they offer 20% more UV resistance for longer lasting color.

Contact: Merlin Industries | merlinindustries.com



Pegasus Inground and Aboveground Vinyl Liners

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

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

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

Contact: Pegasus Products | pegasus-products.com



Envision AR App

The Envision AR app brings the power of augmented reality to the pool design process. A phone or tablet can be used as a sales tool when showing customers how a pool will look in their own backyard. Envision AR has a horizontal format which gives a wider angle view of the pool and the yard.

"Envision AR allows you to customize the liner in amazing new ways," says Thomas Kennedy, Tara's marketing director. "You can now add a pattern to the walls of the pools and a different pattern to the stairs, benches, and sundeck for incredible design freedom."

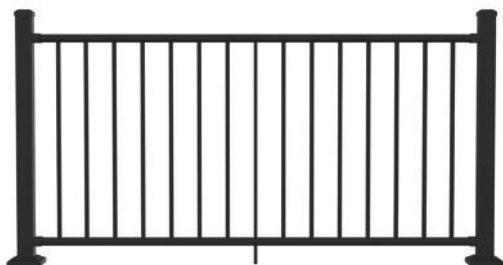
Envision AR also allows customers to see how a shade can enhance their backyard with Tara's exclusive Mod Shade kits. Users can add a safety cover to the pool design as well as customizing the pool deck with a wide range of colors and materials.

For questions or support, email admin@tarafg.com.

Contact: Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com

New Products

BY PSN STAFF



Deckorators

Deckorators' Aluminum Rapid Rail features a contemporary design with square balusters and simple installation. This code-compliant product feature a graspable profile available in 6- and 8-foot on-center lengths when installing with 2½-inch posts.

Contact: deckorators.com



Raypak

The Crosswind V is a vertical discharge heat pump pool heater designed with a smaller footprint and lighter weight. This reduces install time and labor costs to the homeowner. It fits on standard equipment pads and industry standard 2-inch water connections are conveniently accessible.

Contact: raypak.com



Tubtek

The ChemBag is specifically designed to hold hot tub chemicals and supplies. It has five adjustable, internal compartments to fit any chemical brand bottle, including large 5-pound bottles. It is made from heavy-duty, marine-grade materials and features a magnet-hold carrying handle for easy transport.

Contact: tubtek.co



The Vacdaddy

The VacDaddy is a powerful, portable pool vacuum with a continuous power supply. Now with a new and improved IP67 dimmable transformer with the capability to work internationally. In addition, it now features larger filter bags with a 60% larger surface area and 108% bigger volume.

Contact: thevacdaddy.com



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www.pegasus-products.com



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