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# PSN

POOL AND SPA NEWS

Service Tech  
Training: Keeping  
the Momentum

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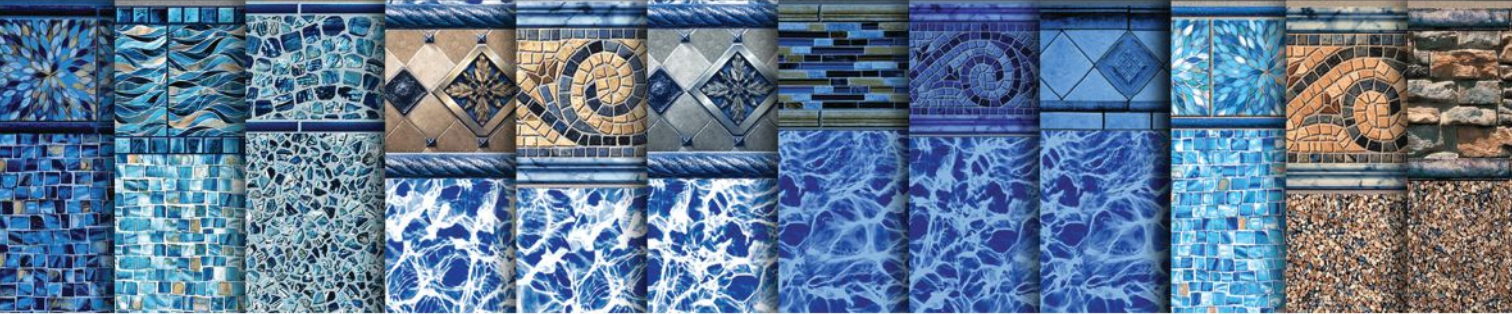
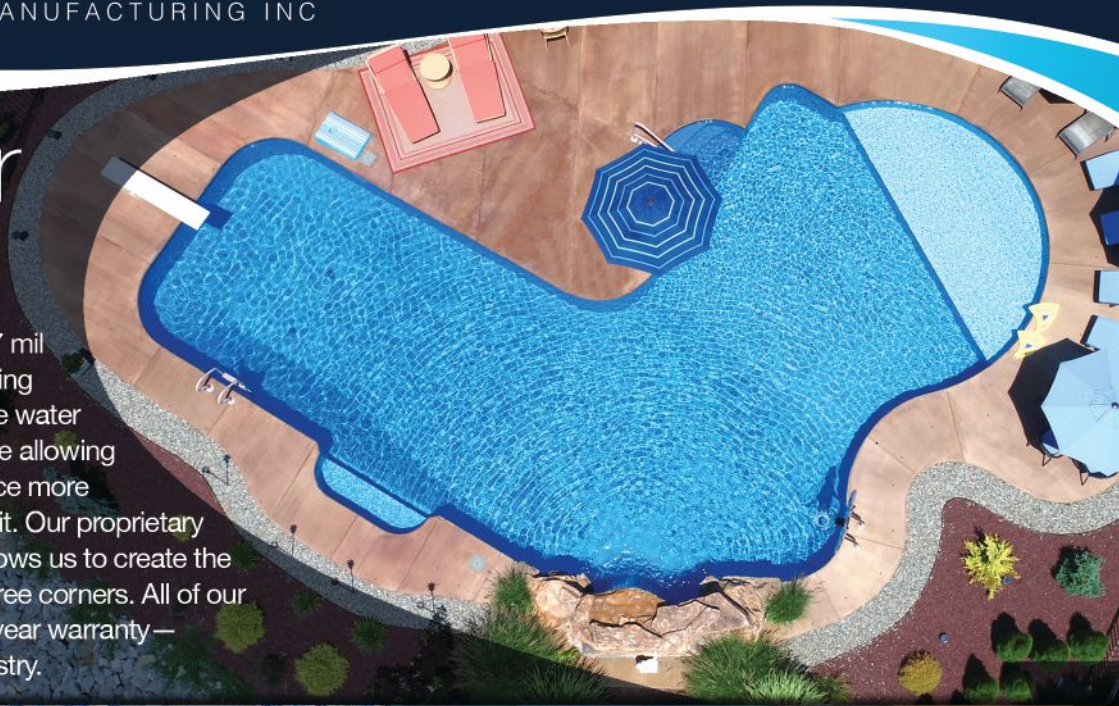
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# It's Funny 'Cause It's True



**Joanne McClain**  
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

**There's a funny meme** spreading like wildfire on social media that caught my attention. It goes something like this: "I just had a colonoscopy this week," one X user wrote. "Here's what it taught me about B2B sales." Or, "My wife filed for divorce this weekend," another person posted. "Here's what it taught me about unexpected market corrections." And, "My wife asked if she could have a boyfriend," they continued. "Here's what it taught me about mergers and acquisitions." In each instance, the formula is to reveal something uncomfortably personal and then use it for blatant self-promotion in the form of schmaltzy business advice.

While I found them weirdly hilarious, I wasn't sure where this was coming from. A little internet sleuthing revealed that the original inspiration was a post on LinkedIn by Bryan Shankman:

"I proposed to my girlfriend this weekend. Here's what it taught me about B2B sales."

He goes on to outline seven "milestones ... to ensure a Closed Won status at the end," including prospecting, discovery, demo, pricing, negotiations, handling objections and closing. It seems Bryan was being entirely sincere in turning the experience of his proposal into a lesson on sales, even comparing his relationship to a "deal."

The internet's collective reaction was unanimous: This was quite possibly the cringiest move ever. Shankman was thoroughly roasted by nearly everyone, and much parodying ensued, giving birth to a meme.

The thing is, as a B2B writer myself, I get it. The poor guy was pursu-

ing engagement and trying to make his mark in a noisy landscape. This is particularly challenging on a platform like LinkedIn, where yawn-inducing business content is a dime a dozen. Over the years, social media has inured us to oversharing, so it's become normal to pepper posts with very personal details in an effort to reach your audience, and nowhere is this more noticeable (or cringier) than on a dry site like LinkedIn.

That audience engagement is not only important for business purposes, but it's personally a big affirmation. For a writer, there is no greater compliment than when someone takes the time to let you know how your work has touched them in some way. I've been lucky enough to experience this a few times, and most interactions leave me feeling grateful that people have taken the time to read what I've written and energized to continue doing the work.

However, I did have one person approach me at a pool and spa show a few years ago who said, "I see what you do there — you start off with some story time, then talk business and at the end circle back to the story! Sounds pretty easy!"

Hmph. Easy, huh? Well, let me tell you something: I just wrote 475 words in the middle of the night. Here's what it taught me about B2B sales...

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

[jmcclain@zondahome.com](mailto:jmcclain@zondahome.com)

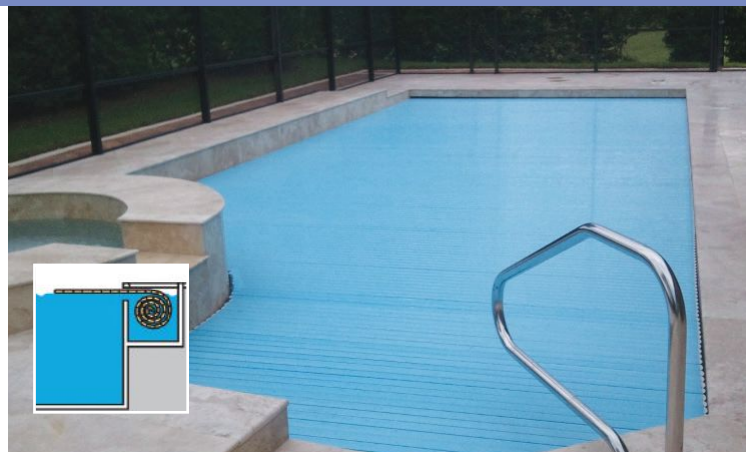
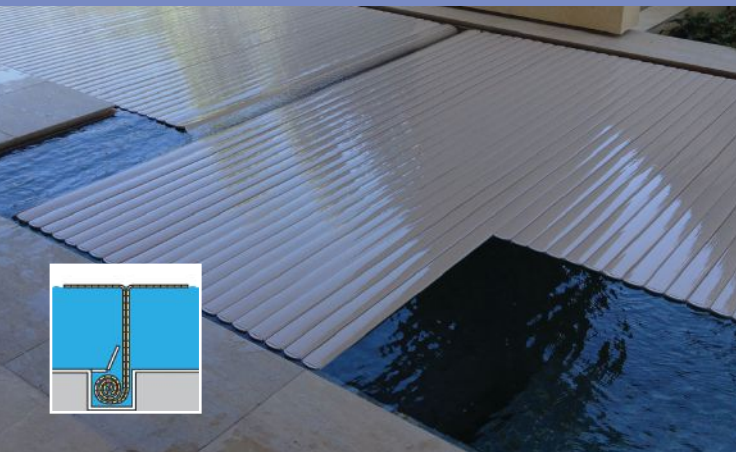


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# Water-Safety Bills Promote Lessons and Education

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



**Water-safety legislation** is popping up in states across the country. But rather than physical layers of protection, it focuses on water-safety education, especially for the disadvantaged.

“We’ve always focused on devices like gates and alarms and things that protect you from falling in the pool,” said Florida Senator Travis Hutson, author of a recently passed water-safety bill. “But we never thought about it from a swimming standpoint. ... Those who need some help from the state [affording lessons] should be offered that help.”

The new Florida law, which had bipartisan support, allocates \$500,000 toward vouchers to provide swim lessons for children under four years of age whose family’s income falls below twice the poverty level as defined by the state’s Medicaid program.

Florida’s Department of Health has until July 1 to roll out the program. As the agency irons out logistics for implementation, the Florida Swimming Pool Association will bid to help

administer the program through its nonprofit Florida Swims Foundation. The group is equipped to vet learn-to-swim providers, as it already provides funding for childhood swim lessons, said Dallas Thiesen, the FSPA’s Chief Government Relations Officer.

The International Swimming Hall of Fame’s Every Child a Swimmer campaign has actively promoted such legislation to state governments for the past few years. “Most middle-class parents, if they know how to swim, will automatically give their kids swim lessons,” said Bill Kent, chair of ISHOF’s board and founder of Every Child a Swimmer. “But only 45% of Americans know how to swim, so there’s a massive segment that is [uneducated] about water.”

Some states in the Northeast are seeing a similar interest, said Dominick Mondì, executive director for the Northeast Spa and Pool Association. His organization has received calls from interested legislators in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. In the Garden

State, one legislator plans to introduce a bill that would mandate schools to provide water-safety information to the parents of children of a specified age. Another would allow and aquatics staff to test public-pool visitors whom they fear don’t have the ability to swim safely in the deep end of a pool.

Current water-safety legislation generally takes two directions. First are the learn-to-swim bills such as Florida’s. Others have been introduced in New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Michigan.

Other states are opting instead for informational laws. These would require that children or their parents be informed of drowning hazards and the importance of water-safety education. Bills in Pennsylvania and Michigan, for instance, would require their Departments of Education to develop water-safety or swimming curricula for students. A recently introduced Mississippi bill would mandate that schools educate students or their parents on the importance of water-safety education courses and swim lessons.

New York recently passed a law that requires hospitals to make available a water-safety video to the parents of newborn children.

Kent especially sees hope in bills such as New York’s: “It hits the parents at the right time.”

Regardless of the type of bill, these industry associations are working with legislators in crafting the language and figuring out the implementation. “We’re happy to be in a position where we’ve been staying closely involved ... and that they’re reaching out to us so these bills are written correctly,” Mondì said.

# Master Pools Guild Undertakes Growth Plan

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

**In March**, the Master Pools Guild held its spring meeting in Nashville, where it introduced its newest members. The four companies were part of the organization's recent growth initiative.

While MPG has long had a global presence, it has purposely remained on the smaller side. A year ago, it had 92 member companies in the U.S., Canada and six countries around the world. Since then, the group has admitted four more firms instead of the typical three per year, with the goal of adding another 12 by next spring.

"That is aggressive for us," said MPG Executive Director Teri Wiltshire. "Historically we haven't been about grow-

ing membership."

The group is looking for companies in Hawaii, as well as parts of Virginia, Texas, the Northeast and Canada.

"There are a lot of spaces in North America where we lack a member, and there are a lot of locations around the globe where we would love representation," Wiltshire said.

Younger members have shown an interest in growing the group, she explained. MPG is on track to have the youngest chairman in its history, current Vice Chairman Josh Buzzell of Houston-based Regal Pools.

"He is very excited about the pos-



sibility of adding members, not from a financial standpoint ... but to add to the expertise and knowledge of the group as a whole," Wiltshire explained.

The spring meeting saw attendance by 70% of the group's membership, with highlights including case-study presentations by members of challenging and innovative projects and a tour of Hayward's Nashville heater plant.

MPG's next meeting takes place Oct. 9-12 in San Antonio.

## Genesis Names Design & Wellness Faculty Advisor

### Maria Moscato

has taken the newly created position of design and wellness faculty advisor with Genesis.

Based in

Bologna, Italy,

Moscato will develop a new design and wellness curriculum and teach several Genesis courses. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Visual Arts, as well as two Master of Arts degrees in Architecture and Industrial Arts. She served as a translator and editor for the Italian pool/spa publication *Piscine Oggi* for more than 14 years.



## New President Takes Helm at IPSSA

### Mike Denham

was selected as president of the Independent Pool and Spa Service Association for the 2024-2025 term.

He has been an IPSSA member for more than 35 years and served as its CFO for the last two. He plans to focus on continuing the significant growth it reports from the last year and overseeing the adjustment to the expansion: "The vision we have is to continue to increase the level of professionalism for our members."



## PHTA Water Quality Standard Up for Rewrite

**The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance** will begin reviewing and revising ANSI/APSP/ICC-11 2019 American National Standard for Water Quality in Public Pools and Spas.

It is calling for change request submissions from stakeholders, including manufacturers, builders, designers, retailers, U.S. public health and code officials, local municipalities, pool/spa operators, and service companies.

The revised standard, to be called PHTA-11, will provide water-quality parameters for public pools, spas, and hot tubs, including a range of values relating to chemicals.

Proposals will be accepted through May 31. Go to <https://www.phta.org/standards/>

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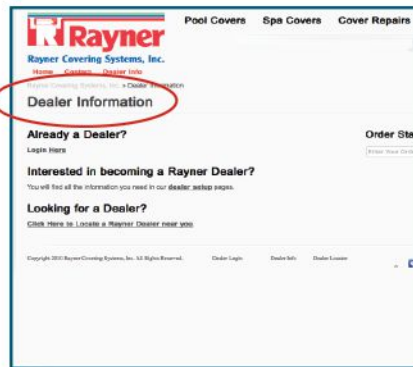


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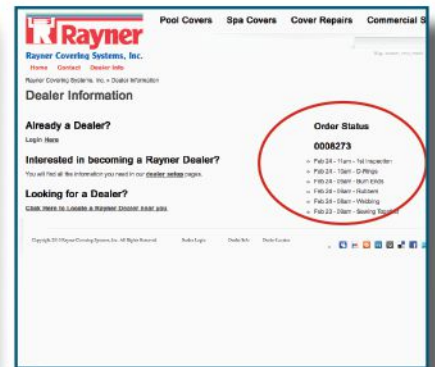
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# Hot Tub or Boat?

A company ramps up production of this hot-tub boat, selling to ultra high-earning homeowners and rental firms.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



**While an anomaly,** combining hot tubs with a mode of transportation isn't new. There have been hot tub limos, for instance, as well as hot tub boats.

But these have been one-off, customized, novelty products fabricated for one company to rent out. Now, a manufacturer has decided to take the idea on the production line.

The Spacruzzi doesn't move fast, but it's not meant to. "It's a hot tub that changes scenery," says Alexey Kanwetz, CEO/chairman of Spacruzzi Luxury Experience Hot Tub boats, based in Polson, Mont.

To create the boat, Kanwetz brought in a maritime architectural designer. The product is made in the company's

manufacturing facilities in Polson, with testing of the boats conducted in Montana's Flathead Lake and at Lake Tahoe, Nev.

While ultra-high-income homeowners provided an automatic target audience from the start, the producer now also sees increased interest among rental companies looking to add it to their menu of luxury products and services.

"I think it's indicative of a real trend toward an experience-based recreational product," Kanwetz says.

The boat measures approximately 15½ feet long by 8 feet wide and weighs about 1,200 pounds before filling up with its 400-gallon capacity.

The hot tub makes up the main portion of the boat, which runs on a battery whose charge keeps it going approximately 16 hours per day. Buyers have a choice of sanitation systems, including chlorine options and ControlMatic saltwater chlorine generation systems. The sanitation systems work while plugged in when the boat is docked. A propane heater keeps the water warm while the boat travels.

Additional amenities include an interactive multimedia screen, Bluetooth speaker and additional seating on the deck.

The company fulfilled its goal of selling 100 units last year. Now it is gearing up for more intensive production, with equipment being built to speed up production. The new factory is expected to be running sometime in June.

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# 10 Ways to Take Control of Cash Flow

Too many companies go belly up not because they aren't profitable, but because they have poor cash flow.

BY MELANIE HODGDON



**If your business** has unhealthy cash flow, you constantly need to delay payments — antagonizing your subs and suppliers — and you typically end up paying interest on cash (by drawing on your line of credit or, far worse, your credit card). On the other hand, a healthy cash flow means you can keep up with your bills and stay on good terms with your subs and suppliers, as well as take advantage

of date-driven discounts.

Here are 10 ways to keep your business in the black:

## **FUND PROJECTS WITH CUSTOMER'S MONEY**

This seems so obvious, but at least once a week I discover yet another contractor funding his customer's projects. The strategies are somewhat different depending on whether the

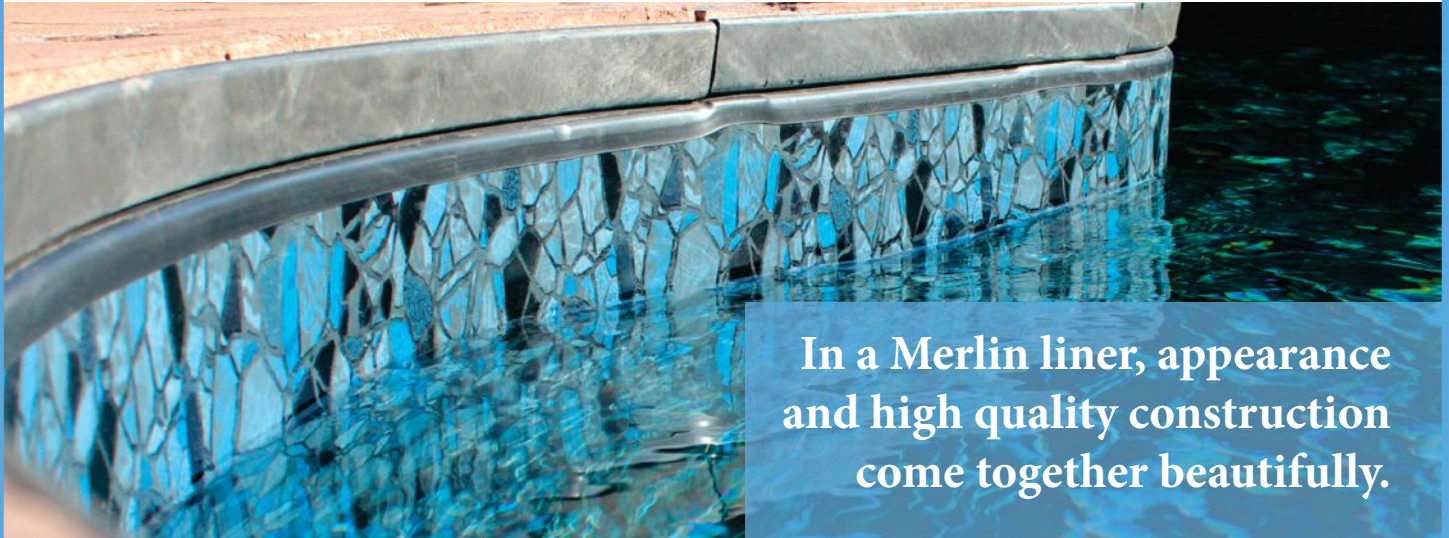
job is a contract price or T&M; the first three tips relate to contract pricing, while the fourth applies to T&M.

- **Get an initial payment at contract signing.** Even though it may feel like you haven't spent any money yet, you will certainly be spending it before the job starts. You will be planning and perhaps preordering, and even if these tasks are treated as overhead in your company, you're still investing money in the project. It's easy to sell this deposit as a good-faith payment to hold the customer's place in your schedule. Be aware that some states regulate the amount that can be requested for a deposit.

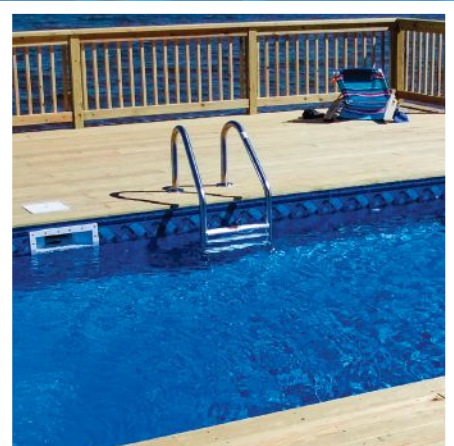
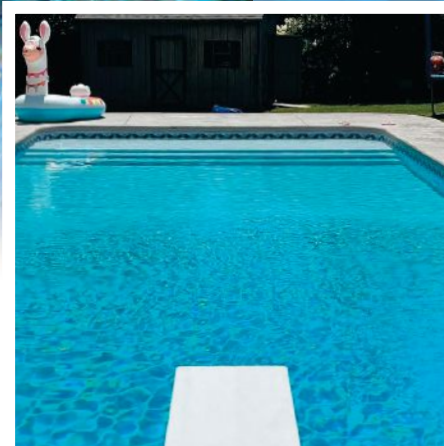
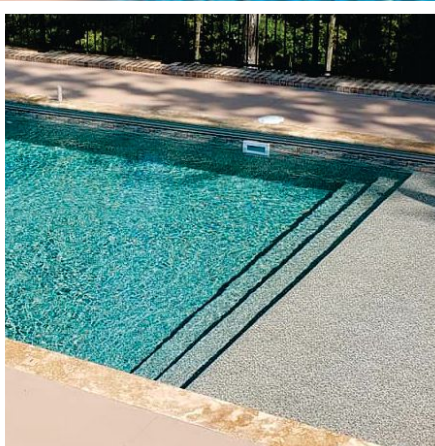
- **Base milestones on the start, rather than the completion of a task.** If you have tied a 25% payment to "completion of drywall" and there's one piece of drywall sitting uninstalled next to a wall because of a last-minute change to the electrical, you'll be stuck. It's far better to have the payment tied to "delivery of drywall" or "ready for drywall installation." This also protects you from delays created by unexpected back orders. If those imported Italian tiles get hung up somewhere (or arrive broken), you'll still get your money.

- **Get payment for change orders at time of signing.** Hopefully, you have already trained your customer to know that contracts are associated with a financial obligation. Get payment up front to cover not

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only the actual cost of the change order, but also the additional time and effort (think overhead) required to estimate and write up the change order, order materials, connect with subcontractors, adjust schedules, and so on. Waiting until the end of the job means the company will subsidize the change work and present the customers with an unpleasant surprise at the end of the project — just before you ask them to write you a nice testimonial.

• **Avoid subsidizing T&M jobs.** By definition, T&M jobs are based on actual costs (and hours of labor) invested in the project. However, this also means that the company can end up subsidizing the project during the gap between the accrual of the cost and the payment by the customer. The more time between payments, the larger this gap is.

The best way around the problem is to request a deposit to cover costs incurred between the signing of the contract and the presentation of the first T&M invoice.

Companies handle deposits in a variety of ways. Here are some options:

• *Credit the entire deposit to the first T&M invoice.* This is not recommended, because you lose the advantage of having a significant new influx of funds.

• *Credit the entire deposit to the final invoice.* This works well as long as the deposit doesn't exceed the amount of the final invoice. If that happens, you'll be sending your customer a refund check, which sends a message to the customer that you really didn't need the amount you charged them.

• *Credit percentages of the deposit to subsequent invoices.* For example, if you have estimated a job will take six weeks and your contract states that you will invoice every week, then credit back one-sixth of the deposit

For many contractors, the challenge isn't paying, it's paying now. Controlling when bills are due is one step toward being able to meet your payment obligations.

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amount to each of the six invoices.

### USE TIMING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

For many contractors, the challenge isn't paying, it's paying now. Given another two weeks, they'd have the cash. Controlling when bills are due is one step toward being able to meet your payment obligations. Here are some suggestions.

• **Work with big-ticket vendors (such as insurance companies) to position your payments away from other large payments.** For example, if you are making estimated income tax payments out of your company in January, April, June, and September, see if you can shift due dates for your workers' comp premium away from those months.

• **Get two credit cards, with statement periods a half-month apart.** For example, if Card A's cycle ends on the 15th and Card B's cycle ends on the 30th, then you can split payments into two parts two weeks apart, to give you additional time to accumulate cash.

• **Control withdrawals.** If the owner/partner/officer of the company takes a regular draw, schedule it so it doesn't coincide with payroll.

• **Schedule sub payments to your advantage.** Create a subcontractor agreement that controls when you will pay bills. For example, your agreement may state that any bills received between the 1st and the 15th of the month will be paid on the 18th of the month; bills received between the 16th and the last day of

the month will be paid on the 3rd of the following month. Engineer the schedule so that sub payments don't align with other large payouts.

• **Watch discount dates.** Always take advantage of discounts; if it means saving \$2,000 on a materials bill, it may even be worth it to draw on your line of credit for a few days — although in theory you should already have your customer's cash in hand in time to make the payment.

### SPEND LESS

Ben Franklin said, "a penny saved is a penny earned." Obviously, if you spend less, you'll have more on hand to reduce potential cash-flow crunches.

• **Do comparison pricing regularly.** Can you negotiate a lower cellphone bill? What about health insurance? When was the last time you discussed discounts with a supplier? The marketplace is constantly changing, with new plans and options. Check them out.

Life is filled with enough uncertainties—the ability to pay bills on time shouldn't be one of them. If you enact some of the strategies listed above, you may discover that you can exercise more control over cash flow than you realize.

*Melanie Hodgdon, president of Business Systems Management, provides management consulting and coaching for contractors. She co-authored A Simple Guide to Turning a Profit as a Contractor, with Leslie Shiner. This article originally appeared in sister publication Remodeling.*



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*Before:* On this extensive renovation, Burkett's Pool Plastering of Ripon, Calif. demolished the artificial-rock waterfall.



**After:** The final product required extensive gunite and natural rock additions, as well as a tile waterfall, spa addition, cascade pools, new deck and natural rock accents.

# BECOMING A RENOVATION SPECIALIST

**For a plaster subcontractor,** it is completely natural to evolve into a company that offers renovations. But if you're looking to perform major renovations, natural doesn't necessarily equal quick.

When significantly changing the existing structure's shape or adding new features, the scope of work and expertise increase exponentially.

"If you're going to be pulling out decks, replumbing and adding new equipment, you've got to be as educated as a pool builder, and also know what they're doing in the demolition stage," says Rob Burkett, president of Burkett's Pool Plastering in Ripon, Calif.

So it will take a while to master all the trades and new business responsibilities.

Here, plastering, renovation and building contractors offer the keys to success when taking on this venture.

## DON'T ACCEPT EVERY JOB

To succeed at major renovations, contractors must accumulate a depth and breadth of knowledge and skill that can seem overwhelming at first. Knowing when to walk away from a job may top that list.

"I would say most of the problems we've had were pools that we took on that we shouldn't have," Burkett says.

The reasons for turning down a job vary. Your company may not be ready for the scope of work. For instance, it

is probably too much of a leap to go from plaster and tile work to changing the pool or spa dimensions.

"We never took on new phases without having the personnel, equipment and everything in place," says Shawn Goldberg, plaster division head at Burkett's.

Other times, it could be the client who won't accept how much work and investment are required. Make sure your estimates include work needed to make the job safe — say, to replace noncompliant drain covers or fix electrical issues.

If the homeowner won't agree, it is probably time to decline the job.

This also would be appropriate if the client wants to perform "Band-aid" repairs that won't solve the problem long-term. For instance, if you find plumbing issues that you expect to cause problems in the future — say, if a staining hazard from old copper pipes — explain that replumbing is needed.

"Sometimes we'd rather see them spend money taking care of the plumbing rather than on plaster, knowing that the condition of the surface material is going to discolor very quickly with copper lines or bad equipment," Burkett says.

If you perceive problems down the line, it's best to require the long-term fix and leave the job if they don't agree, Burkett says.

Taking on major renovations can prove to be a major step for pool/spa plasterers. Follow these tips to help with the transition.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



*During:* When plasterers take on a major renovation, they become the general contractor for the job. Make sure you have proper staffing to handle that responsibility.

## GIVE YOUR CONTRACTS AN OVERHAUL

While the earning opportunities per job increase significantly when a company offers major renovations, so can the potential for unexpected problems.

For this reason, contracts need to contain a healthy amount of disclaimers. Burkett always makes sure to include disclaimers that prepare customers for the various surprises that can be unveiled during a renovation.

This includes broad strokes, such as making it clear that anytime you go underneath the surface of the pool, you may unveil problems you didn't know existed. For instance, when you remove the deck, you may find plumbing issues, or it may not be possible to perform all the demolition without some damage to the pipes.

But Burkett's disclaimers also include very specific clauses, such as one stating that the company doesn't guarantee that an old light will function properly after it's been removed and replaced to make way for the renovation work.

Company owners may worry that such warnings will scare off customers, but it can actually have the oppo-

site effect, Goldberg says.

"A customer [recently] said, 'I'm going with you guys even if you're [priced] higher, because you obviously know what you're doing, and you know what can happen. You're prepared, and you're preparing me for that, so you come across as the professional.'"

## DON'T MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO UPGRADE

Sometimes when you change one thing, it presents the opportunity to add or alter something else in a way that will improve the overall look, function or safety.

For instance, if you're pulling up the deck anyway, you can easily replumb. Bringing in larger pipe would help increase system efficiency, reduce noise, and optimize newer features such as variable-speed pumps or waterfeatures that require certain volumes.

Even more importantly, it generally increases safety at suction outlets.

And, of course, check to make sure the pool has dual drains and that the velocities are safe to avoid entrapment.

"We know most pools are plumbed incorrectly to begin with, so this is an opportunity to replumb the pool and bring it up to the current hydraulic,

safety and energy standards," says Paolo Benedetti, principal and designer of Aquatic Technology Pool & Spa in Morgan Hill, Calif.

"The odds that the client will do it again in their lifetime is slim to none, so it's almost like you have a responsibility to bring everything up to code — and not be the mow-blow-and-go guy."

Check the site to make sure everything is safe and updated. "We also look at the equipment and try to upgrade to more energy-efficiency with pumps and lights," says Lee Valenzuela, president of New Image Pool Interiors in Clovis, Calif., and chairman of the National Plasterers Council. "And we are making sure that the lights are bonded properly."

You could also propose replacing high-voltage lights with low-voltage.

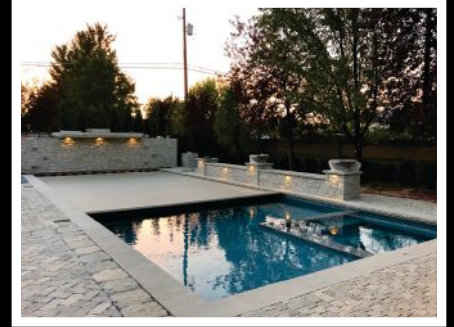
Valenzuela checks each pool to make sure it has an auto-fill device. If not, he recommends adding one to keep the pool at the proper level when homeowners are gone for a long time, and to reduce calcium along the tile line. And if vanishing edges or perimeter overflow features are involved, these autofills become crucial.

Also go over the shell with a rebar scanner to make sure the steel has proper shotcrete or gunite coverage, Benedetti says. If not, you may need to provide more concrete. (If you have to add shotcrete to the inside of the pool, remember that it will affect various dimensions, such as the width of coping and elevation of fittings.)

Check for problems early on so you can include it in the initial price, Valenzuela says. Otherwise, the customer will suspect you of price baiting.

## BE QUICK TO CALL IN OUTSIDE EXPERTS

If you see any signs of distress to the pool shell, such as cracks, you should probably call in a geotechnical engineer. If you're not quite sure that the electrical system is completely safe and it's outside your expertise,



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bring in an electrician. If you suspect the diving board may be unsafe for the pool dimensions, ask for help.

"If there are issues that you don't address, and something happens down the road, you're the last professional who was in there, and you're going to be held responsible," Benedetti says.

### TAKE THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR CONTRACTORS

If you're a plastering subcontractor on new pools and spas, the builders you work for may not be too crazy about your venture into renovation.

Get a sense of what the local industry environment tolerates. In some

particularly competitive parts of the country, builders will not hire subs who also do renovation work, because they're perceived as competition. In other areas it's not a problem.

If you suspect you'll lose work, you have a decision to make.

Even in tolerant areas, avoid certain moves that could be considered unfair play. For instance, if you do end up bidding on the same job as your general contractor, they likely will take offense if you quote the homeowner a lower price than you do for the GC. In some cases, you may want to bow out to preserve goodwill.

Additionally, don't use your pool builders to provide leads for potential customers, Benedetti says. While rare and extreme, it has happened where a plasterer might receive plans from the pool builder for a bid, then approach the homeowner directly to undercut the builder. "That is kind of an underhanded thing," Benedetti says.

### PROVIDE FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ADMIN FUNCTIONS

If you take on renovations, you become the general contractor on the job. That includes plenty of tasks beyond overseeing a wider range of trades.

"When you're the subcontractor on new construction, you drive up, plaster a pool in a few hours, drive away and send out an invoice," Goldberg says. "Here, you're the general contractor, so you're the one who's pulling permits, communicating with the homeowner and collecting."

Eventually, you may have to hire people specifically to manage customer service and run to the permit office.

At Burkett's, somebody must coordinate which salesperson goes with which lead. A customer service representative is assigned to a job, to work in collaboration with the job superintendent. This way, the customer deals with one or two people during the potentially months-long job process.

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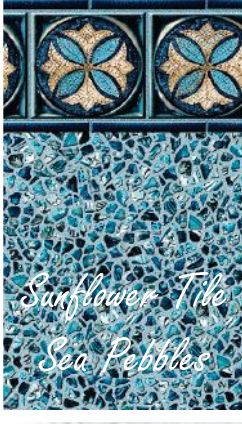
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# Millennials Juggle Income Gains and Savings Challenges

Zonda's chief economist examines the latest millennial dynamics and what that means for housing.

BY ALI WOLF



*Editor's note: This article was pulled from the Zonda National Outlook (ZNO) and is part one of a three-part series. The ZNO is Zonda's subscription report focused on the economy and housing market nationally and locally.*

**Zonda recently completed** its seventh annual millennial survey. The results provide detailed insight into the minds of the largest living generation as they think about buying,

renting, and all things housing.

Millennials — born between 1980 and 2000 — are a critical demographic for the housing market and wider economy. The cohort has the second-highest after-tax income among generations, and the group represented 28% of home sales in 2023 per the National Association of Realtors. For both statistics, millennials were second to baby boomers.

Understanding millennial dynamics

is crucial for home builders, given their large influence on the housing market's performance. Here's what we learned about income and savings from the survey.

## MILLENNIALS EARNED MORE IN 2023

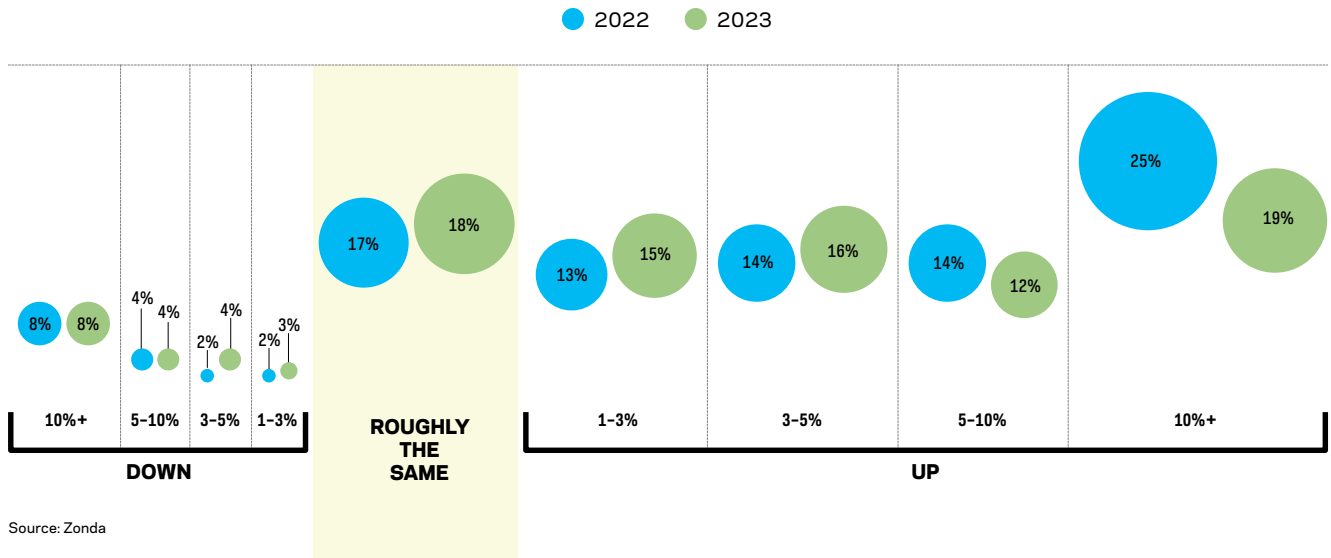
Sixty-two percent of millennials reported higher incomes in 2023 compared with 2022. This aligns with federal data for the wider economy that shows wages and salaries for private workers rose 4.3% year over year at the end of 2023. From our survey:

- 19% reported their incomes grew 10% or more in 2023. This was a decline from 2022, when 25% reported income growth of over 10%. The 10%-plus income change was the only category with a material deceleration compared with the prior year. This might seem concerning, but double-digit income growth was a significant contributor to inflation. A slowdown in these wage increases can be seen as a positive step toward price stabilization.

- 19% of millennials also noted some level of pay decreases over the past year. While this is similar to the 16% captured in 2022, it is worth understanding why. A softening job market with rising layoffs and/or cut hours could be partly to blame. However, some decreases might be voluntary.

Millennials may be prioritizing work-life balance, potentially taking lower-paying jobs that offer more

## What happened to your income over the past year?



Source: Zonda

flexibility. Further, some may have relocated to more affordable parts of the country and took a top-line pay cut as a result.

While there are some millennials who moved and switched jobs, our survey captures that nearly 1 in 5 are working remotely in a different state. If they moved, this cohort likely retained their annual salary while changing where and how they work.

In general, though, two-thirds of

millennials we spoke to work from home at least a portion of the time.

This trend holds particular significance for the home building industry. Instead of being focused on living near employment hubs, many millennials may have opted to reside farther from their employers to capitalize on reduced living expenses and better housing options. This can, in effect, increase their relative annual earnings as they put less of their monthly budget toward housing and commuting expenses.

mute expenses, relocations impacting housing costs, and a growing focus on saving.

We asked millennials what they did with their savings. While some used the money for home-related expenses, a significant portion is set to fuel housing demand in the future. We capture this future tailwind through three of the responses:

**1. Buy stocks/investments.** This can translate to future down payments as their wealth grows;

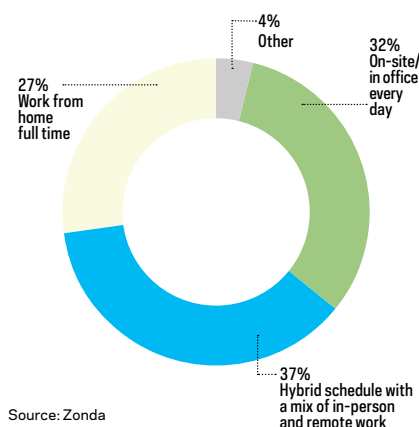
**2. Keep saving as much as I can.** This builds their financial cushion for a future home purchase; and

**3. Pay down debt.** This improves their debt-to-income ratio, making them more attractive borrowers.

Millennial savings show a divided picture, though. While many have increased their nest eggs, nearly half haven't seen a rise or even experienced a decrease. The restart of student loan payments is partly to blame.

From 2020 to 2023, student loan forbearance provided a reprieve to nearly 43.4 million borrowers. According to the Federal Reserve, the average monthly student loan payment is between \$200

## What is your work schedule like?



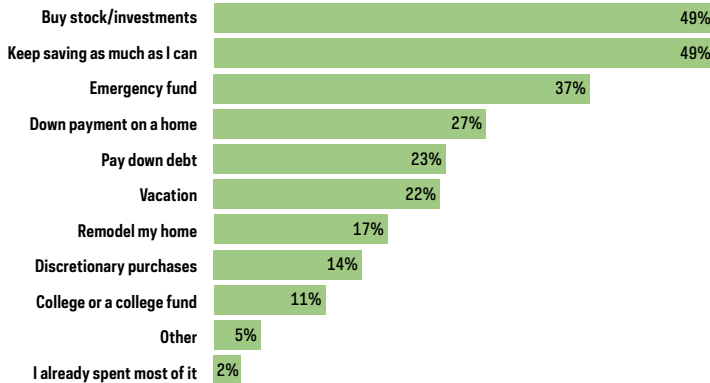
Source: Zonda

## MILLENNIALS ARE SAVING MONEY AT A DECELERATED RATE

While nearly half of millennials saved more in 2023 than 2022, it's a decrease from the previous year's impressive 66%. This mirrors a national trend of declining personal savings rates due to the resumption of student loan payments and higher cost of living across the economy.

For the 47% of respondents who saved more money, a mix of factors is likely at play: rising incomes, flexible work arrangements lowering com-

## What did you do with your savings?



Source: Zonda

and \$299. This translated to significant savings for many. For instance, a couple where both partners have student loans could have saved an average of \$600 per month during the forbearance period.

The forbearance period ended in October. We asked our respondents what they were doing in response. A significant portion planned to adjust their spending habits. Over a quarter, 26%, aimed to cut back on nonessential

spending, while others planned to reduce dining out, 16%, and vacations, 11%.

With the return of student loan payments, the housing market faces a renewed headwind. Prospective home buyers may struggle to save money toward a down payment or meet mortgage qualifications. The end of forbearance may further delay homeownership dreams and dampen consumer spending for millennials, putting a potential strain not only on home buying activity but also on the overall U.S. economy.

*Ali Wolf is the chief economist for Zonda, the largest home building prop tech company in North America. She 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.*

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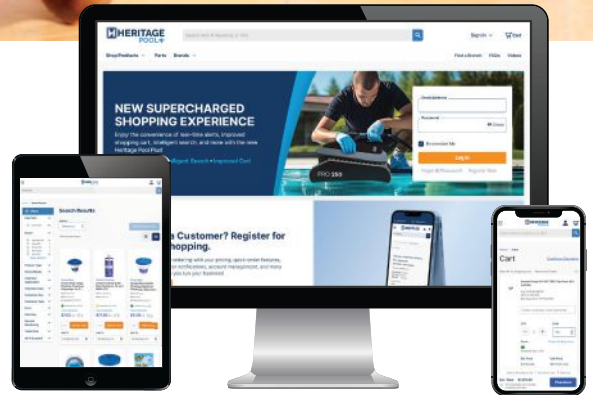
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The background of the page is a photograph of a swimming pool. In the foreground, there is a clear blue pool of water with ripples. In the middle ground, a series of large, dark rocks form a waterfall that cascades into the pool. The background shows a lush landscape with several palm trees and a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a warm, outdoor environment.

# KEEPING THE MOMENTUM

Service company owners and managers share tips for creating a culture that fosters continual training and learning.

**BY REBECCA ROBLEDO**

**At a time when** it's challenging to find trained service technicians — and when some companies prefer to hire those with no previous experience — training has become more important than ever.

But once a new hire has passed the initial training and become a full-fledged service technician, the learning shouldn't stop. It should continue, no matter the level of expertise. That becomes easier and more routine if they're surrounded by a culture that continues the momentum of education and training.

In the second part of our series on training service technicians, industry veterans share ways to create a culture of learning.

## **START WITH THE LAW OF RECIPROCITY**

When Rich Gallo trains new staff, he works to set their minds at ease, but he also wants them to understand that they need to contribute to the team. So he begins by explaining the Law of Reciprocity.

"When you do good, it's going to come back in its simplest form," says Gallo, CEO of Los Angeles-based Pure Swim.

He explains that everybody is there to help them, but they also are expected to provide assistance when needed.

"I explain, 'Imagine the guy to the left and your right has your back, because you have their backs,'" he says. "The



PHOTOS COURTESY CLAROPPOOL



biggest thing about any new job is going to be the fear factor of ‘I’m going to let someone down,’ ‘I’m going to get hurt,’ or ‘I’m not going to be able to do it.’ But if you know the guy to your left and right have your back and you know you’ll get through this, then your sense of empowerment is as high as it can possibly be.”

### USE TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF CONSTANT TRAINING.

Thanks to cell phones, texting and video chat, your technicians can easily contact each other and management with problems that come up. And everyone connected to the conversation can learn in the process.

“We have the entire company on Microsoft Teams, so they can contact each other or do a video call very easily,” says Nick Day, general manager

of Denton, Texas-based Gohlke Pools. “They can easily take a picture and send it to the group, and they’ll have multiple responses in seconds. So they can get lots of help.”

### PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE TO LEARN.

Learning is a reward in itself, but if it comes with more commission earnings or even a trip out of town, it could provide even more incentive for techs to succeed.

Gohlke Pools makes clear to its pool pros that increased knowledge generally results in added commissions, by them completing calls more quickly and recommending appropriate products for their customers to purchase.

The company also financially rewards route supervisors when their direct reports do a good job and the owners of the pools they supervise

are happy. “Our route supervisor is responsible for keeping those pools perfect,” Day explains. “So part of their job is making sure the techs are up to speed. They’re going behind those maintenance techs, making sure they’re doing a good job. And they’re heavily involved in training.”

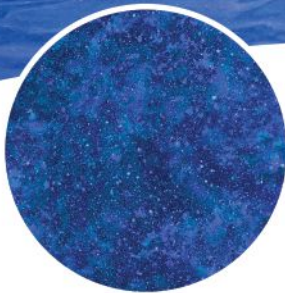
All Seasons Pools, Spas & Outdoor Living even uses the education itself as an incentive. About five years ago, the company launched a program where employees earn trips to national trade shows and educational events. They can earn points by selling product, receiving five-star reviews on the various platforms, and by attending training events.

“In January 2023, we had 15 employees make the trip from Chicago to Atlantic City to attend the Northeast Spa and Pool Association’s Pool and Spa Show, continuing their education on a national stage through

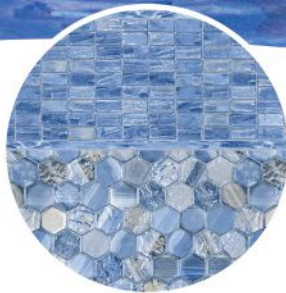
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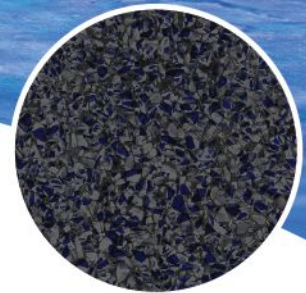
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seminars and floor sessions, as well as networking,” reports Dan Lenz, vice president of the Orland Park, Ill.-based company.

### **SCHEDULE TRAINING AT REGULAR INTERVALS, EVEN IN THE BUSY SEASON.**

Make training an integral part of your company’s operations by conducting it regularly.

If you have an off-season, certainly ramp up training to take advantage of the slower work pace.

Even those off-season trainings should be treated like a routine occurrence during the slower months. For instance, Lenz’ company holds day-long sessions every Thursday in winter. Each day includes six hour-long sessions on varying topics. It becomes embedded in the routine, and managers are accountable for using that time to its maximum.

But even during the busy season, try to routinize education by at least scheduling regular meetings or one-on-one sessions with managers. This way, techs not only learn but they make it a regular part of

their jobs and lives.

Many PSN Top 50 pool/spa service companies hold weekly department meetings where techs can bring up challenges and brainstorm for solutions, or where managers and supervisors update them on a new procedure, code or product.

Gohlke Pools also holds weekly meetings. While the maintenance department and the repair departments usually meet separately, they’ll come together every few weeks.

“It’s important, first, for company culture, so they can know each other and know who’s available out there for help,” Day explains. “But it allows them to, if the repair techs are seeing specific issues or maybe nuisance calls coming from the maintenance technicians, then they can discuss those and try to make everybody’s time more efficient.”

Whenever the training occurs, treat it as sacred, Lenz advises. Before, his employees could step out of a training if they had a pressing matter to address, such as receiving a delivery. “Now, we literally don’t accept deliveries on Thursday during winter,

because we don’t allow anything to take people away from training.”

### **DEVELOP A SYSTEM FOR COMBATING MISINFORMATION.**

Hopefully your technicians will seek out education on their own. This often will take the form of scouring social media such as Facebook groups, along with online video channels.

While the hunt for knowledge should be applauded, this sometimes can yield poor information. Then the technician may pass that on to his or her coworkers.

All Seasons has seen this problem on the rise over the past five or six years. “One of the hurdles or obstacles that we’ve had to overcome is ... identifying when employees see, read or hear something that they believe is proper but is counter to what we’ve been teaching,” Lenz says. “[We need] to have a platform for them to expose that so we can talk through and determine if it is good, valuable information or more internet nonsense,” Lenz says.

The company encourages its techs



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to share with them any new techniques they've picked up from the internet.

"We tell them we want to hear about it so we can evaluate if it is truly better," Lenz says. "If it's good, we're all going to get better because of it. If not, we can explain why, so we don't have things being done poorly and improperly."

During trainings, after the leader has explained how the company performs a certain task, they'll remind the team to share any new techniques they've come across.

"We'll explain, 'Please, if you think you've found a better way, share it, get someone else's input. Then we'll have a conversation about it,'" Lenz says. "You can't see everything that's going on, so having that very open-door kind of policy in our training is how that comes out."

## **BUILD YOUR CULTURE INTO YOUR TRAINING.**

Just as surely as these company owners and managers incorporate training into the culture, they use training as an opportunity to reinforce their culture.

Lenz' company does this in a couple ways. At the beginning of its winter training each year, staff reviews the company's 15 core values, or the attributes that the company and, by extension, its employees should have. Then throughout the year, trainers often will briefly discuss how certain elements of their presentations or discussions reflect back on the core values.

Additionally, the company devotes time in many of its sessions to help build one voice among its staff.

"You can get individuals who have differing opinions or, if they don't know, sometimes just throw some-

thing out there," Lenz explains.

The company works to prevent this problem, especially during winter training, which often serves as an introduction for new and seasonal employees. "We try to identify at least three pieces of information that we feel are important for everyone from All Seasons to present the same if anybody asks," he says. "For instance, if somebody asks what is the best free chlorine level in an inground swimming pool, everybody should respond 2-4 parts per million."

They want everybody to be on the same page — and this goes across departments: "We try to drill into people that it doesn't matter whether it's the warehouse person who has a customer stop them as they carry garbage out to the dumpster, or if it's me, that we're all speaking the same language and give the same answer."



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### Aqua-Rex

Aqua-Rex is an electronic water conditioner that uses radio transmissions, not a magnet, to make scale form in suspension in the water and removes existing scale off the tile wall. In salt water pools, it can stop the salt cell from scaling, reducing the need for acid cleaning.

Contact: [aqua-rex.com](http://aqua-rex.com)



### AquaTri

Manufactured for more than 50 years, the All Clear Professional Pool and Spa Chemicals line includes large and small stabilized chlorinating tablets, granulated stabilized chlorinating products, algaecide products, non-chlorine sanitizer and acid/PH decreasers.

Contact: [aquatri.com](http://aquatri.com)



### Clear Comfort

Clear Comfort's easy-to-install CCW100 AOP pool sanitation system is powered by a patented hydroxyl-based AOP full-flow water treatment technology, and only requires a 5-minute cartridge exchange for system maintenance each year.

Contact: [clearcomfort.com](http://clearcomfort.com)



### Hammerhead Patented Performance

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

Its run-time is approximately 50-75 minutes.

Contact: [hammerheadvac.com/remora](http://hammerheadvac.com/remora)



## Jack's Magic Products

The Filter Fiber Stuff is a safe filter media that can be used as an aid to cartridge and sand filters, and as a replacement to DE for DE filters. The Filter Fiber Stuff is non-toxic, biodegradable and can be backwashed safely. It can help extend filter runs and reduces clogging.

Contact: [jacksmagic.com](http://jacksmagic.com)



## King Technology

FROG @ease is a complete, self-regulating hot tub sanitizing system designed to use less chlorine. The system uses sanitizing minerals plus a low level of chlorine to kill bacteria two ways. In addition, only monthly nonchlorine shock is needed — not after every use.

Contact: [frogproducts.com](http://frogproducts.com)



## Merlin Industries

Merlin's Professional Safety Covers include Dura-Mesh II, which features a combination of sunlight shading, abrasion resistance, tear strength, and burst strength. The SmartMesh safety cover provides 100% shade from sunlight and offers 40 micron filtration of debris.

Contact: [merlinindustries.com](http://merlinindustries.com)



## Myron L Co.

The Ultrapen PT4 Free Chlorine Equivalent (FCe) Pocket Tester provides one-button, instantaneous, reagent-free pH, ORP and FCE testing in a rugged aluminum field tester. A quick-start guide, product data sheet/brochure and posters are available.

Contact: [myronl.com](http://myronl.com)



### Poolside Tech

The Attendant is designed to control and monitor any pool equipment from existing manufacturers in the industry. The cloud-based automation system continually monitors equipment, water quality and temperature to determine energy efficiency.

Contact: [poolside.tech](http://poolside.tech)



### Rayner Covering Systems

Rayner Covering Systems manufactures duplicate and custom pool covers. The covers come in 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.

Contact: [raynercovering.com](http://raynercovering.com)



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Vacless' VGB-compliant SVRSs feature an electrical pump shut-off system with an alarm or siren, which instantly turns the pump off upon entrapment. The SVRS is automatically resettable in 3 minutes, and features no non-sense programming, no false tripping, and more.  
**Contact:** [vacless.com](http://vacless.com)



### W.R. Meadows Deck-O-Seal

Deck-O-Seal HS-1 SL is a one-part, self-leveling hybrid sealant, developed with silyl-modified polymer technology. It cures under the influence of atmospheric moisture to form a medium modulus sealant with adhesive properties and resistance to ageing and weathering.  
**Contact:** [deckoseal.com](http://deckoseal.com)

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# KILLER CONTRACTS

A thorough and complete contract helps  
avoid hassles during and after the job.

BY DIANE KITTOWER

Sales contracts get no respect. They're signed every day. Sometimes with changes scribbled in that could cause trouble. Sometimes with prices that are flat out wrong. And sometimes with boilerplate language that doesn't say what you think it says.

Although no contract is bullet-proof, a good one protects both you and your customer — and that's not a contradiction.

Read on for a checklist of important items to include in your contract. However, laws mandating what absolutely must be in a contract vary from state to state, so make sure you're aware of what's required where you do business. "What you don't know can hurt you very, very badly," says attorney D.S. Berenson, managing partner of Berenson LLP in Midlothian, Va. who specializes in construction law and financing.

Also, if you're inclined to tweak your contract for some reason, first get legal advice. "You're not a lawyer. You're a contractor. If anything comes up, the customer will get a lawyer," says Ken Moeslein, CEO of Legacy Remodeling in Pittsburgh. "You should get a lawyer at the time of your contract design."

And, of course, no matter how good your contract is, make sure your work is even better. "If you do a good job," Berenson says, "you don't need me."

**Specify what's included.** Possibly one of the most important items you need is the most basic: a scope of work, or a detailed explanation of the goods and services provided. Don't just say, "We're going to apply Company X's siding to the entire house," Berenson says. "We in the industry know what that means. But after the job is done, the homeowner may ask why there isn't siding on the chimney. It's important to explain [the

scope of work] in enough detail to avoid that kind of misunderstanding."

**Specify what's not included.** Having boilerplate exclusions is critical, says Soquel, Calif., attorney and contractor Gary Ransone, author of "The Contractor's Legal Kit," a book many contractors swear by. "You can't remember every exclusion that could apply." If, for instance, you have a standard exclusion that says you don't replace landscaping if it's damaged when you're replacing windows, most homeowners will back down on that demand. Moeslein gives another example: "At times, we have to use wood products, and we don't do any painting. In the contract, it says we don't do any painting." That prevents customers from saying, "You never told me you weren't going to paint that."

**Define deviation from scope of work.** Include wording that states that any change to the scope involving extra costs or labor or any changes required by inspectors or the owner additional work and an additional charge. That takes care of the homeowner who says, "This will only take you an extra hour."

**State that oral agreements are not binding.** Many homeowners will have conversations with a number of salespeople (and a number of companies) and will get confused about who told them what, says Bob Birner, president at The BORO Group - Renewal by Andersen of Houston, Kansas City, Central Missouri.

"If it's not in writing, it doesn't exist." Berenson recommends spelling that out above the line where homeowners sign the contract and including an acknowledgment stating that they've read the contract. Some states actually require that all homeowners (meaning husband and wife, usually) sign the contract. "The

Laws mandating what absolutely must be in a contract vary from state to state, so make sure you're aware of what's required where you do business.

vast majority of states do not,” Berenson says. The BORO Group - Renewal by Andersen goes one step further: It requires a company officer to accept the contract after the sales rep. That protects the company in case the rep errs badly (something Birner says hasn’t happened).

**Include a rescission clause.** Under federal and state law, homeowners have three days during which they may cancel a contract. These laws typically specify the language that must be in the contract and even the type font in which it has to be set. Often, the rescission clause must be not only in the contract but also on a separate piece of paper. “We make a big deal about giving [clients] that second piece of paper,” Moeslein says. “We make sure they clearly understand that it’s not buried in the contract. We use that as a sales benefit.”

Another note: Some states, such as California, also have an additional provision if the home improvement contract is with a homeowner age 65 or older. In these cases, the contract must include a “5-Day Right to Cancel.”

**Give beginning and completion dates.** But be conservative. “A lot of guys will say what the homeowner wants to hear,” Ransone says. Include language that says you’re not responsible for events beyond your control, such as the weather.

**Have owner authorization.** Get it in writing that the customer owns the home or is authorized to act on behalf of the owner. If you sign a contract with someone who doesn’t own the home, he has no obligation to pay you, and neither does the owner.

**Lay out a payment schedule.** A clear schedule lets homeowners know how much to pay and when, and should be based on work com-

pleted. “I don’t believe in billing in advance for work not done,” Ransone says. “It creates the impression that the contractor is a crook.” Indeed, in California it’s illegal to bill in advance.

Berenson, however, counsels that “the problem with not billing in advance (i.e., seeking a deposit) is that you put yourself in extreme danger of developing cash flow difficulties at some later stage.” At least a dozen states, he points out, restrict the amount of money that can be collected before work is actually performed. In California, for instance, down payment cannot be more than \$1,000 or 10% of the cost of the job, whichever is less. In Maryland, contractors can request as much as a third down. In Massachusetts, down payments or deposits are restricted to one third

of the contract price or the actual cost of any special order or custom made materials, whichever is greater. “The larger the down payment,” he says, the more committed the customer is to a job. You can also get burned badly if a customer cancels a job at some point, and you have all these fees and expenses with nothing to offset them.”

A tip: If you make the amount of the final payment less than the maximum allowable amount in small claims court, you may increase your chances of getting that payment. People don’t tend to fight over a small amount of money, Ransone notes, and you can always go to small claims court without incurring the cost of a lawyer.

**Define the warranty on product and installation.** People must know that if they damage a prod-

## CHECKING ALL THE BOXES

It’s important to not be ambiguous, says Ken Moeslein, CEO of Legacy Remodeling in Pittsburgh (formerly Swing Line Windows) and one-time owner of Basement Finishing Systems of America, an Owens Corning basement finishing franchise. Clear contracts, he says, minimize problems during and after the job. They also save you major legal hassles.

An example: To minimize confusion, Moeslein inserted a clause in the BFS contract stating, “Homeowner is responsible for all painting and staining. BFS is not responsible for painting or staining. Customer must have basement clean prior to installation. Electrical work will only be performed where Owens Corning system is being installed.” The latter is to prevent homeowners from monopolizing the electrical sub’s time.

Swing Line contracts contained a series of check boxes that specify exactly what was included in the job. Reps go through each. “They’re required to turn that contract upside down and read it once again,” Moeslein says. Since Pennsylvania law requires that contracts be easily read and understood — but doesn’t spell out in law exactly what that means — Moeslein had the state attorney general’s office sign off on the company’s contracts as clear and concise.

Maybe that’s why Swing Line Windows has had just six instances of nonpayment sticky enough to require resorting to the legal system. In each case, Swing Line prevailed.



uct, the contractor is not responsible. You can even say what a repair charge would be. On the flip side of that issue, Legacy Remodeling uses its warranty coverage in the contract as a sales tool. Salespeople show that clause to homeowners, pointing out that, contractually, there will be no service charge for warranty work as long as they own their home.

**Include a concealed-condition clause.** Contractors don't have X-ray vision, Ransone points out. They make their bids based on what they can see. If additional work is needed because of dry rot, for example, you need to state that there will be an additional cost. Without such a clause, Ransone says, when the owners find out they need \$1,800 of unforeseen work in order for windows to be installed, they think it's outrageous.

**List your right to terminate**

**the contract and stop work due to nonpayment.** Legacy Remodeling defines liquidation damages if the customer defaults, so homeowners know the ramifications if they don't pay. The BORO Group - Renewal by Andersen commits to binding arbitration with the Better Business Bureau.

**Discuss the buyer's responsibilities.** These may include providing access to the property, water, and electrical outlets. If you're doing any inside work and need to move plumbing or electrical outlets, provide details. Who will be responsible for permitting and zoning variances? Normally, by law, the contractor is responsible, but it's a good idea to put the information in the contract. "The difficulties crop up when these are not addressed in the agreement," Berenson says.

**Give a punch-out list.** Every contractor has run into the never-end-

ing job, where odds and ends keep coming up. You can minimize that problem by including language in the contract that explains how you're going to handle complaints about the job and its completion, or lack thereof. The contract should say that you will be paid the balance upon substantial completion — defining substantial completion as, say, passing inspections — while allowing the homeowner to hold back the cost of, say, one window. That way, you don't have payment for an entire job held up for a minor problem.

**Include any required additional legal notices.** Check with your state contractors license board or a lawyer familiar with construction law. Ignoring such requirements can result in disciplinary action or fines imposed by the board.

*This article previously appeared in sister publication Remodeling.*

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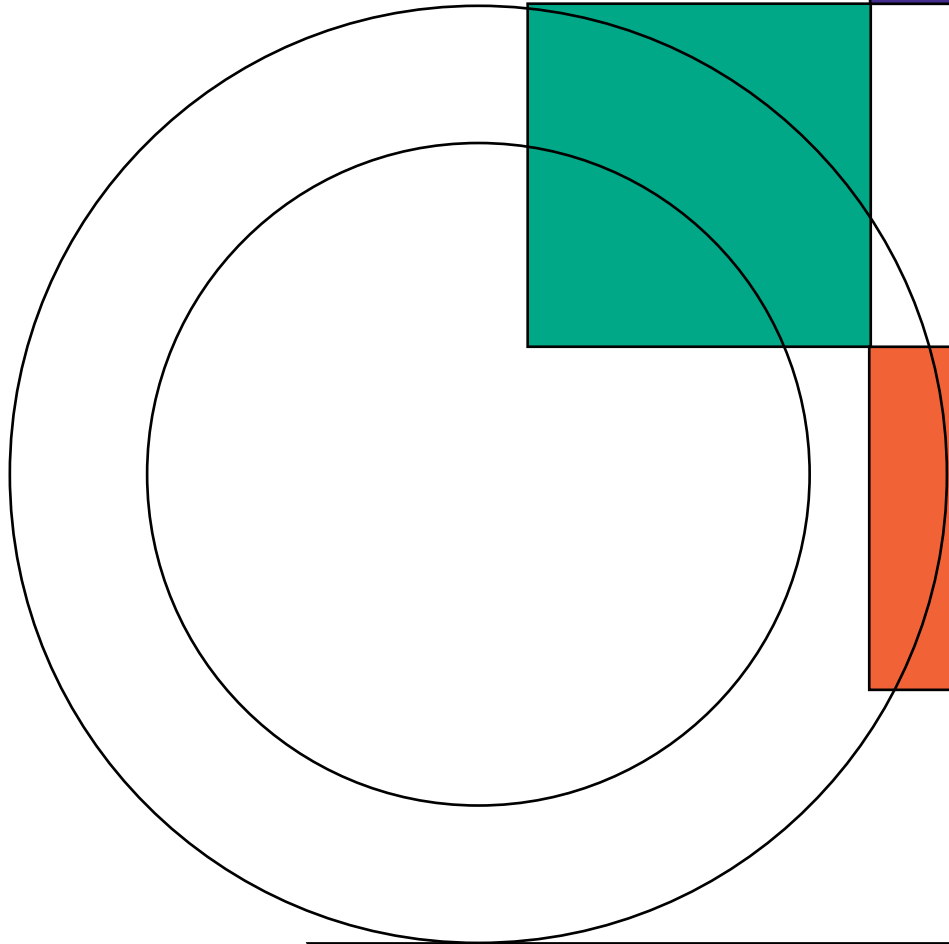


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# Product Profiles: Covers and Winterizing Products



## Cross Star Winter Safety Pool Cover

The Cross Star Winter Safety Pool Cover is a strong, solid vinyl replacement safety pool cover.

It is a modified version of the Anchor's 5 Star Cover and was designed to upgrade any "cross web" style or grid pattern solid vinyl and mesh covers to a solid vinyl safety cover. The Cross Star uses Anchor's unique vinyl material and features Solid Vinyl Tensioning Paddles (SVTP), which are welded into place. SVTP creates a 360° tensioning dynamic that pulls the cover taut from the center outward, eliminating the need for stitching the body of the cover. (Stitching causes stress points that can weaken a solid pool cover over time.)

The cover is manufactured to meet ASTM F1346-91 Safety Standards.

The Cross Star Winter Safety Pool Cover comes with a limited 10-year warranty.

**Contact:** Anchor Industries | [anchorinc.com/products/pool-covers](http://anchorinc.com/products/pool-covers)



## 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](http://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, company vice president.

The Hydramatic's modular design 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](http://aquamatic.com)



### Cover Care LLC Professional Auto-Cover Installation and Service

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

Cover Care technicians are trained to install, service and repair all brands, makes and models of automatic pool covers.

The company has specialists in more than 50 major markets in the U.S., allowing any pool retailer, pool builder or pool service professional to partner with Cover Care in the installation and service of pools that include an automatic pool cover.

"We make it easy for pool professionals to subcontract out the installation and maintenance automatic pool covers, allowing pool pros to easily offer and profit from selling auto covers without having to train or have personnel on hand to maintain and install them," says Jacob Bloss, operation director of Cover Care LLC.

**Contact:** Cover Care LLC | cover-care.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

### Vanishing Pool Covers

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

These pools have high-water lines that pair perfectly with their integrated Vanishing Pool Covers. The covers provide protection for the pool, making it easier to keep the pool clean and ready for a swim.

Additionally, the covers reduce water and chemical loss due to evaporation while extending the swimming season by keeping the pool warmer during the cool nights of spring and fall.

Lastly, these covers are waterfeature friendly — enjoy fountains, waterfalls, sheer descents, and more with the cover open or closed. Just flip a switch to enjoy all these benefits.

Call 865-219-2880 for technical support or email [info@exploreindustries.com](mailto:info@exploreindustries.com).

The covers come with a 5-year Limited Warranty plus a 3-year motor limited warranty.

**Contact:** Explore Industries | [exploreindustries.com](http://exploreindustries.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



### Swim Check Fix Phosphate Tablets

Swim Check Fix Phosphate Tablets are formulated to remove phosphates in swimming pool water. They are simple and easy to use.

“Add the tablet directly to the pool skimmer for efficient phosphate removal,” says Mike McBride, marketing manager for Industrial Test Systems. “It’s more affordable and longer lasting than liquid removers. One tablet lowers phosphates by over 500 ppb for 10,000 gallons.”

The patent-pending, time-release tablets are individually wrapped.

Technical support is available by calling 803-329-9712, and marketing materials are available on request.

The product comes with a 1-year warranty.

**Contact:** Industrial Test Systems | sensafe.com



### Kayden Premium Safety Covers

Kayden Premium Safety Covers are offered in three types of materials: a standard mesh that blocks 90% of UV light, a SunBlocker mesh that blocks 99% of UV light and a solid material that blocks 100% of UV light.

The springs are made from ultra thick gauge steel with non-slip, attached keepers for easy adjustment, and feature stay-put spring covers that won’t slip off. The webbing and thread are the strongest available with specialized stitching in every corner for strength.

The raised wall treatment is designed for easy installation as well as ease of opening and closing the pool.

The Kayden No Drag Cover Bags are more than big enough to fit the cover, no matter how it gets folded, and feature handles so the cover can easily be moved without having to drag it.

The covers are available in green, blue, tan, gray and black.

**Contact:** Kayden Mfg. | KaydenMFG.com



### Latham Recovery Express Safety Cover Template Program

This easy, turnkey service allows customers to send in an old safety cover for Latham to measure, quote and remake.

Latham will process shipping for free to one of its regional cover measurement facilities.

Once the old cover arrives, it's measured using Latham's proprietary technology and a new cover is recreated.

If the old cover is a Latham cover, the process is even simpler. Send in the serial number and Latham will remake the cover from the original drawing. The serial number can be located on the back of the label sewn onto the safety cover.

"Customers enjoy the ease and convenience of the Latham template program, which allows them to get ahead of the safety cover season, proactively schedule installations and generate increased revenue," says Travis McChesney, Latham's liner and safety cover product manager.

**Contact:** Latham, The Pool Co. | lathampool.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 quickly 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

### SmartMesh Safety Covers

Merlin's patented SmartMesh safety pool cover allows water through while providing complete shade from the sun, which can significantly reduce algae growth.

Along with debris filtration down to 40 microns, this pool cover is engineered to keep pools protected through the winter and ready for spring.

"Pool owners have peace of mind during the winter knowing that the pool will be clean with algae-free water in the spring," says Rabia Danyaro, Merlin's marketing coordinator.

The SmartMesh also offers high abrasion resistance, tear and burst strength.

Each cover is custom designed to fit any pool shape and accommodate steps, angles, objects, and any other unique configurations for a safer fitting cover.

SmartMesh safety covers are currently available in green, blue, tan, and gray colors, and comes with a 15-year prorated limited warranty.

**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.

MeycoLite's generous weave eliminates the need to pump off surface water, allowing it to drain through the cover so leaves simply dry up and blow away.

Requiring minimal care over the winter, Meycolite is treated for colorfastness to minimize fading when exposed to sunlight. Meycolite also blocks 95% of the sun's rays, reducing UV damage to the pool area.

MeycoLite is lightweight at 4.4 ounces per square yard, which allows for faster installation.

White, polyester bonded, UV-resistant marine thread is used to sew every Meyco cover. All Meyco covers have thick straps and double-perimeter webbing for increased tensile (break) strength and are manufactured with stainless steel buckles and aluminum tips.

**Contact:** Meyco Pool Covers | [meycocovers.com](http://meycocovers.com)

### FIXX IT! Zip-It-Up Closing Kit

FIXX IT! Zip-It-Up Closing Kits include everything needed to winterize aboveground and inground pools, and are available in non-chlorine and granular chlorine in multiple sizes, treating 15,000 or 30,000 gallons of pool water. (Additional kits can be used for larger pools.)

"Our customers love the convenience of our closing kits, which offer a one-box solution containing all the necessary chemicals for the winter season," says Ed Price, vice president of sales and marketing at Phoenix Products Co. "This saves time by eliminating the need to buy products individually and comes complete with easy-to-follow instructions."

Marketing materials are available on demand. The kits are made in the USA.

**Contact:** Phoenix Products Co. | [phoenixproductscsco.com](http://phoenixproductscsco.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](http://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 | [simplpooltec.com](http://simplpooltec.com)



### Tara Envision AR

The Tara Envision AR app provides a highly accurate and realistic preview of the company's safety cover options, ensuring homeowners can make informed decisions.

With the power of augmented reality (AR) homeowners can visualize any Tara Regular Mesh, HD mesh, or Solid safety cover directly in their backyard. Homeowners can use the app to see how different safety cover options look next to their home, patio and outdoor setting to ensure an ideal match. This simplifies the decision-making process, which minimizes risks of miscommunication and enhances customer satisfaction.

For pool professionals, it streamlines the sales process, decreases returns and exchanges.

The Envision AR app also provides realistic visualization of vinyl liners and sun shades.

The app is available for both Apple and Android devices. For questions, customers can email [admin@taramfg.com](mailto:admin@taramfg.com).

**Contact:** Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | [tarapools.com/envision](http://tarapools.com/envision)

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# Product Profiles: Landscape and Design



## Summer Garden Inflation Pool

New for the 2022 season, the Summer Garden Inflation Pool is an adult-oriented pool specifically designed for patios, decks, lawns and other smooth surfaces, making it ideal for apartment or condo living.

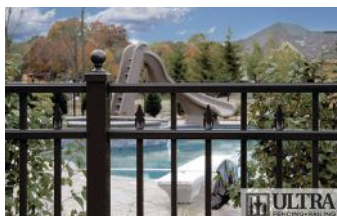
Its features include an inflatable pool bottom that provides comfort sitting, and four beverage holders integrated into the perimeter top of the pool.

"Customers like the concept of an adult-oriented pool with unique bells and whistles compared to other competitive adult-pool brands," says Lisa Goshgarian, Poolmaster's marketing manager.

A built-in drain plug is located on the bottom for easy water release, and easy inflation/ deflation valves are located on the sides.

The pool measures 5 feet in diameter with side walls measuring 18 inches. The pool is covered with a one-year warranty from manufacturer defects

**Contact:** Poolmaster | poolmaster.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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# New Products

BY PSN STAFF



## Aquatic Commercial Industries

Vaporshield-Pro is designed to eliminate acid fuming while allowing acid drums to be emptied with typical feed pumps and without having to handle and or mix acid with water. It is available with 3/4-, 3/8- or 1/2-inch tubing for most chemical feeders and can be used barrel after barrel. Available through most major pool distributors.

**Contact:** 408-741-5871



## Eeziblue

Eeziblue is a monthly pool additive that combines copper and zinc to eliminate and prevent algae growth. It can be used as a monthly treatment or a quick fix for green pools. It is designed to be used in chlorine or salt-water pools as an algicide, bactericide, phosphate remover and water clarifier.

**Contact:** eeziblue.com



## Fluidra

The FREEDOM Plus cordless robotic pool cleaner is equipped with Lifi remote control and uses light pulses to direct its movements so users can start or stop the cleaner at will, redirect the cleaner to target debris cleanup and call it up to the surface with the Easy Lift System for lightweight removal at any time.

**Contact:** polarispool.com



## Poolside by CGT

Lake Tahoe is a new vinyl pool liner design with a realistic high-definition waterscape floor and wall print on medium blue base film that gives pool water a deep blue color. Available in both 20- and 28-mil thickness.

**Contact:** poolsidebycgt.com



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