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Pool and Spa News

KPIs for Sales  
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page 46



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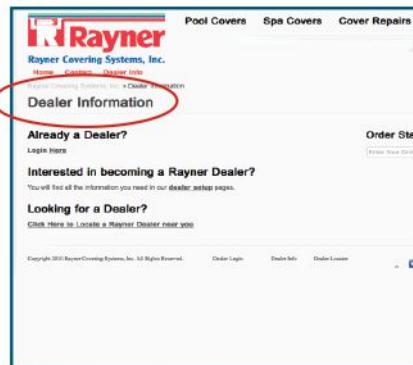


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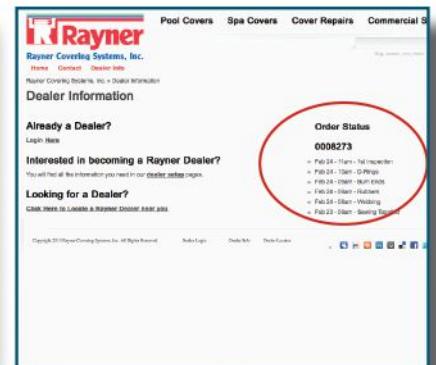
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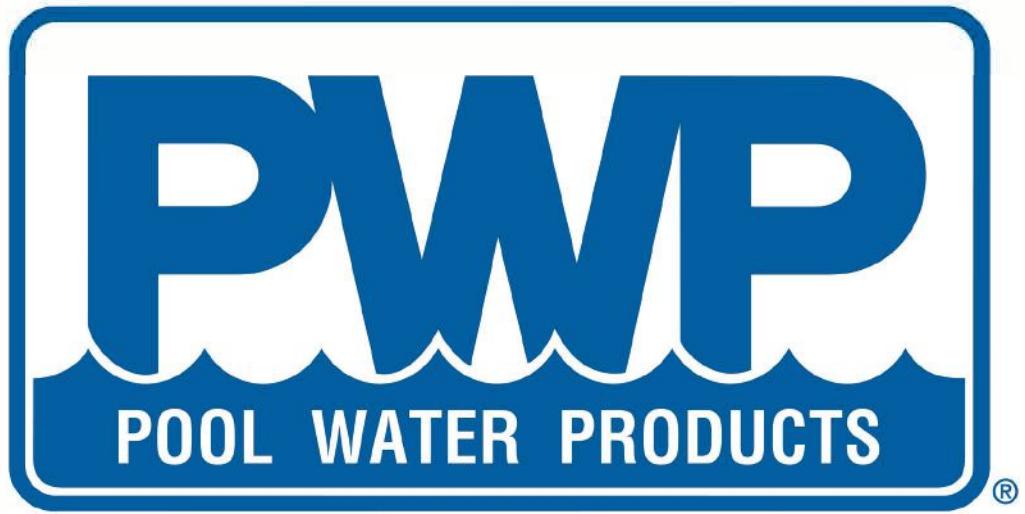
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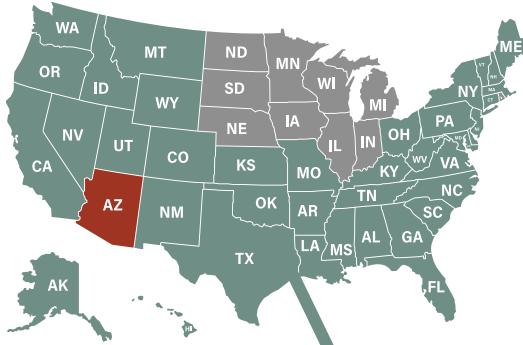
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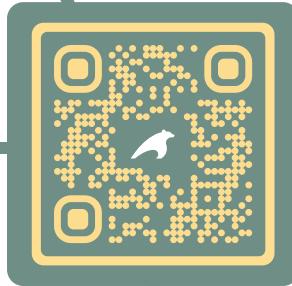
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# You've Got Personality



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

MY KID IS A BIG HISTORY BUFF, SO MUCH so that he's considering becoming a history teacher. His area of interest spans from the 19th to the first half of the 20th century, so he knows a lot about the two World Wars.

He's spent many a time regaling us with stories that are hard to believe but true. For example, Australia's Great Emu War of 1932 that comically pitted man against the crop-destroying emu. The military deployed two machine guns with 10,000 rounds of ammunition and used other "sophisticated" tactics learned from the first World War with the intention of quickly and easily culling the emu population. The results were laughable: Six days into the conflict, more than 2,500 rounds were fired with only 50 emus killed. The major in command noted in his official report that his "men had suffered no casualties, except for their dignity." (Feel free to Google the story for the farce-like details.)

Now anyone with a teenager knows that it's hard to impress them — by age 15, they think they know just about everything that's worth knowing. So I was pleased as punch to tell him something about World War I that he didn't know.

It has to do with one of the features in this issue: On page 38, in "The Right Fit," our Deputy Editor Rebecca Robledo examines the practice of using personality assessments in business applications.

"Did you know that personality tests were first developed during World War I?" I asked my teen. He looked surprised.

"No," he said.

I told him that one of the consequences of trench warfare was the phenomenon of "shell shock" — some soldiers returned from combat suffering from what's known today as post-trau-

matic stress disorder.

"Yeah, mom, I know," he said with an eye roll.

I ignored that eye roll and went on to explain that shell shock rendered these men useless in any further combat so, in an effort to preemptively weed out those predisposed to the condition, a psychologist named Robert Sessions Woodworth created the first personality test in 1917 — the Woodworth Personal Data Sheet. It was a series of yes or no questions designed to assess emotional stability in new draftees. Some of these questions included: Can you sit still without fidgeting? Do you often have the feeling of suffocating? Do you like outdoor life? Have you ever been afraid of going insane?

The widespread use of personality tests in the military began to draw attention from those outside of it, particularly in industry, and the implications for business use grew exponentially.

Now, more than a hundred years later, personality tests have become both silly and entertaining to nuanced and holistic in scope — you can learn everything from what Disney princess you are to how to navigate conflict and communicate better with others. The benefits for businesses abound but care should be used. We outline a few important guidelines to follow in this issue.

In the meantime, I suggested that my teen try out a personality test.

"Maybe," he said.

I'll take that as a win.

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## Eric Knight Tapped as WU Executive Director

The former educator with Orenda and Hasa will steer the organization as it delves deeper into the service sector.

by **REBECCA ROBLEDO**

**I**NDUSTRY EDUCATOR WATERSHAP UNIVERSITY has brought on a full-time executive director.

The San Diego-based organization, which began by providing design/construction instruction in 2019, hired Eric Knight, formerly vice president of education and training at HASA and Orenda Technologies.

Knight served with Orenda for nine years, including the two since HASA acquired it. As lead educator with the manufacturer, he contributed to Orenda Academy, as well as the company's blog, videos, and the Rule Your Pool Podcast.

While WU cofounders David Peterson and Bill Drakeley still own the company and will continue teaching, Knight will run the day-to-day operations and promote all WU programs

New Watershape  
University Executive  
Director Eric Knight

and products.

"We knew as soon as we started Watershape University that, at some point, we would need somebody to lead the company," Drakeley said. "We each have three businesses, so both our plates were full, and WU needs full attention on a daily basis."

Knight especially made a fitting choice for the group's next big initiative — offering a full program for service technicians, Drakeley said.

"Dave and I agreed that, to take WU to the next level and stay on top of all things education, we needed that high-motivation, intelligent person to not only improve all aspects but accelerate overall growth. Eric has definitely proven to be that person ..."

They expect the program to have a broad reach. "Our service program won't be discriminatory to concrete pools," Drakeley said. "We're going to address all pools. The vessel isn't as important as the water in and of itself."

## Florida Industry Faces HVAC Bill

**I**F A NEW BILL PASSES IN FLORIDA, HVAC professionals may expand their scope in working on pool heaters.

Currently HVAC workers can perform repairs on existing pool heaters. However, they cannot install or replace pool heaters, because they don't have the specialty needed to work within pool hydraulic systems, which can be affected by heaters. With a new bill, the HVAC industry hopes to change that.

The Florida Swimming Pool Association opposes the bill. "The idea of a like-for-like replacement of a pool heater is easier said than done," said Dallas Thiesen, FSPA's chief government relations officer. "HVAC contractors don't have the expertise to change the piping in a way that is beneficial for the consumer."

## IPSSA DONATES \$10K TO FIRE RELIEF

The Independent Pool and Spa Service Association has raised \$10,000 to help fellow pool professionals affected by the recent fires in California. "IPSSA knows the importance of supporting our fellow service professionals to ensure they get what they need to get through the effects of the California fires," says Mike Denham, president of IPSSA. IPSSA service pros affected by the fires can fill out a grant application at [form.jotform.com/250163953617156](http://form.jotform.com/250163953617156)

## HERITAGE ACQUIRES ARIZONA FIRM

National distributor Heritage Pool Supply Group has acquired Modern Edge Stone & Tile, a distributor of pool and spa products, tile, natural and manufactured stone, and other outdoor-living products, based in Lake Havasu City, Ariz.

Founded in 2021, Modern Edge was owned and operated by Shane Fry and Danny Shevitski. The company employs a team of seven. Fry and Shevitski will continue to run the location.

"Shane, Danny, and their loyal team have built an outstanding business in just a few short years, which is a strong testament to their talent and hard work," said Heritage President Matt McDermott. "Heritage plans to invest in additional resources to support the Company's expansion ..."

With this acquisition, Heritage's network includes more than 140 locations in 36 states.

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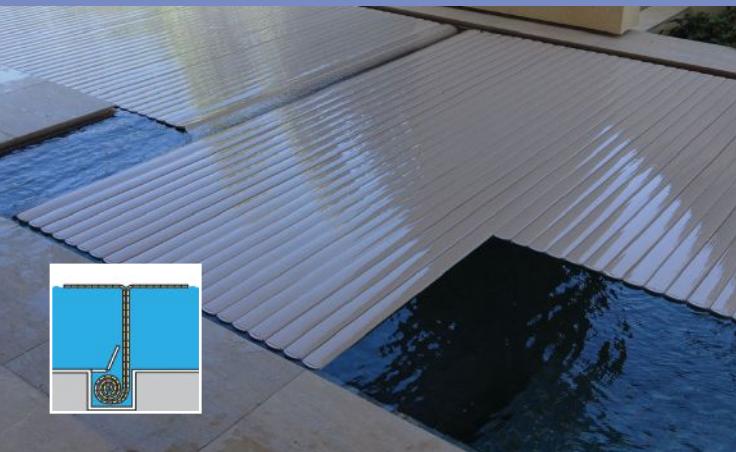


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# Florida Show Boasts Largest Floor

Organizers report a record-setting Everything Under the Sun Show

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

**T**HE EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN SHOW, organized by the Florida Swimming Pool Association, broke exhibitor and floor-space records, organizers reported.

Taking place March 14 and 15 in Orlando's Orange County Convention Center, the show played host to 264 exhibitors showing their wares across more than 50,500 square feet. Twenty exhibitors showed at the event for the first time.

"This is our third year in a row of year-over-year growth," said Dallas Thiesen, chief government relations officer for FSPA. "We have been consistently pushing the show floor and



growing it bigger."

While FSPA hasn't finished tabulating attendance, it knows this year's show surpassed last year's 5,500.

Highlights for attendees included a new, more automated registration system and a new venue for FSPA's awards presentation.

"We look forward to getting ready for next year's show and to continue making it a better experience," Thiesen said.

The next Everything Under the Sun Show takes place March 6 and 7, 2026 at the Orange County Convention Center Hall E.

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# Preparing for the Future of Cement

NPC finishes the first phase of its research on white limestone cement in pool plaster.

by **REBECCA ROBLEDO**

**L**IMESTONE HAS LONG BEEN A COMPONENT OF CEMENT. BUT until recently, cement makers would only add up to 5% limestone powder to the industry's most commonly used in the industry.

In a move to minimize its carbon footprint, the cement industry has increased the allowable limestone to 15%. This is meant to reduce the fossil-fuel consumption needed to form the base component of cement, called clinker, which involves temperatures high enough to melt minerals. More added limestone means less clinker — and less firing per batch. This also reduces the carbon dioxide released from heating the limestone during firing.

Those who produce the newer product, called portland limestone cement, say it can be treated like the traditional powder, with a bag of the newer product substituting a bag of the traditional product in the mix.

While some have dismissed added limestone as filler, it was

chosen for a couple important reasons, says Phil Greggs, research chair for the National Plasterers Council (NPC). First, it does not cause a chemical reaction that would affect performance. Secondly, it can decrease porosity and increase strength in the final product.

But while limestone cements are not new to the world at large, they are not new to pool plastering. Most data regarding the product comes from the gray cement used to cast structural components, not the white variety. "There's never really been research done specifically for our application as pool plasterers," says Greggs, who also serves as technical director for Southern Grouts and Mortars in Pompano Beach, Fla.

So NPC has begun a study to determine if the product will require changes in plaster application and, if so, what.

## EARLY STAGES

The team recently completed the study's first phase. Tests were performed in a third-party laboratory, so all variables could be strictly controlled, void of differences that result from environmental conditions or applicators. Samples of both ordinary and limestone cement were created following NPC guidelines for water and aggregate ratios. White cement producers are participating in the research and provided materials.

"We did 80 different individual tests on six cements," Greggs explains. "So we're really trying to do a deep dive into the cement plaster mixture and trying to determine at what point does limestone potentially become a problem."

They measured several performance characteristics between both types of cement, such as compressive strength, tensile strength, porosity, set time, flow, dry shrinkage and water demand.

In this round, the team sought to establish baseline data against which to compare results from testing in the field. In later stages, Greggs says, "We're going to repeat some of the tests [from the first round] with different variables to better mimic what happens in the field."



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They also will test to see how the materials react to the addition of pigments and admixtures, as well as how they hold up in chemically treated pool water.

**FUTURE OBJECTIVES**

In part, the group hopes to learn what percentage of limestone works best for pool plaster. But the team is confident

in the products themselves, which often surpass the standards governing them, says NPC Chairman Shaun Goldberg. Mostly the organization expects to learn what adjustments, if any, pool plasterers will need to make when working with limestone cement.

For instance, applicators may have to adapt how they add water. Portland limestone cement is ground finer than the traditional material. This increases the surface area that must be coated with water. "So it drives water demand up," Greggs said.

But you don't want to add enough water to weaken the final product. In its testing, NPC expects to learn the ideal water-to-cement ratio to ensure both workability and long-term strength. It may show that applicators need to more carefully measure the water they add, Greggs and Goldberg say.

The group plans to look at other avenues as well. "There are admixtures used in the concrete industry that we don't use in the pool industry that we may start to look at — water reducers being one of them," Greggs explains.

NPC expects limestone levels to continue increasing in the future, partly based on how quickly the cement industry has adopted the new ratio. So the testing also is meant to provide guidance if levels go beyond 15%.

"This testing is to try to get ahead of the curve," Greggs says.

To that end, the next round will involve cements with more than 15% limestone. It also will take place in a lab, comparing the performance of higher-limestone cements with those tested in the first round.



The advertisement features a blue background with a white grid pattern. At the top, the 'jack's magic' logo is displayed in a stylized, bubbly font. Below it, the slogan 'CRYSTAL CLEAR, EFFORTLESSLY CLEAN!' is written in blue, uppercase letters, with a green swoosh underline. The product name 'The Filter Fiber Stuff™' is prominently displayed in blue. A green horizontal band contains the text: 'Use as a non-toxic DE replacement or as a top dress for Sand & Cartridge filters during stain removals for better filtration of metals & contaminants!'. Below this, three bags of 'filter fiber stuff' are shown in various sizes. The bags are white with blue and green accents and feature the product name and 'SUPER CONCENTRATED' text. At the bottom, a green band contains the contact information: 'Jack's Magic ©2025 | (800) 348-1656 | JacksMagic.com'. A bulleted list of benefits is positioned to the left of the bags.

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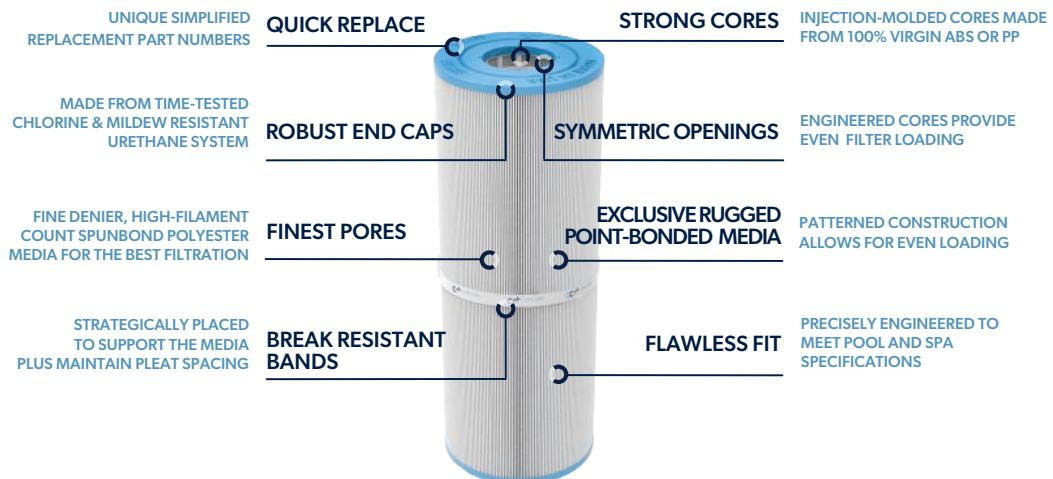


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# Distributor Progress Report

The industry's two national distributors continue on their growth tracks. Here's how they expanded in 2024.

by **REBECCA ROBLEDO**

THE DISTRIBUTION SECTOR NOW HAS TWO MAJOR NATIONAL players, and they continue to occupy more of the U.S. map.

Relative newcomer Heritage Pool and Spa Supply, based in McKinney, Texas, has reached more than 140 locations across 36 states, compared with 115 locations and 32 states this time last year.

Meanwhile, Covington, La.-based POOLCORP boasted 448 locations in 42 states and U.S. territories and 11 other countries as of Dec. 31, 2024. This compares with 439 locations in the same number of states, territories and countries in 2023.

Here, we look at how the two largest distributors in the U.S. pool/spa industry expanded in 2024, based on available information.

## HERITAGE POOL SUPPLY GROUP

### February 2024

#### *Custom Distribution, Inc. (CDI)*

**Headquarters:** New Hope, Minn.

**Other locations:** Two upcoming in Brooklyn Park and Rogers, Minn.

**Founded:** 1967

**Most recent owners:** Michelle and Doug Thayer

**Founders:** Harold Grotte and Red Mulvaney

**Manager moving forward:** Bill Gutzwiller, General Manager

**Special note:** Following this acquisition, all Sun Country locations in Minneapolis were rebranded to CDI.

### June 2024

#### *Heritage is acquired by Home Depot*

### August 2024

#### *Nucci Brothers Pool Supplies*

**Headquarters:** Islandia, N.Y.

**Founded:** 1946

**Most recent owner:** Co-Owner and vice president Rob DeMeo

**Manager moving forward:** DeMeo

**Special note:** This operation has a second location in Bridgeport, Conn.

### October 2024

#### *Island Pool & Spa Supply*

**Headquarters:** Honolulu

**Founded:** More than 40 years ago

**Most recent owner:** Owner/President Jim Frierson

**Manager moving forward:** General Manager Robert Edge

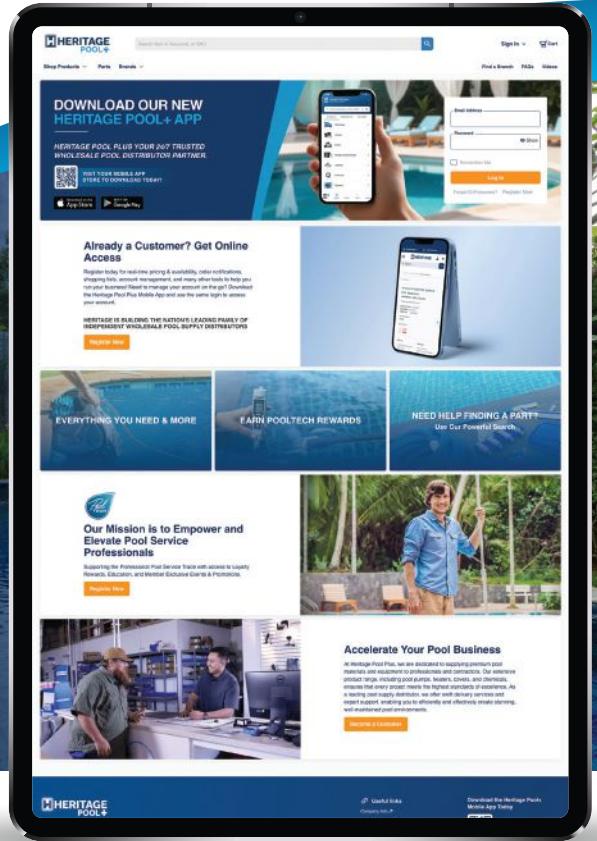
**Special note:** Three additional branches in Maui, Kona, and Kauai. Frierson remained through transition. This transaction brought Heritage into its 36th state.

### New Locations in 2024

In addition to its acquisitions, Heritage opened 22 new greenfield locations in 2024.



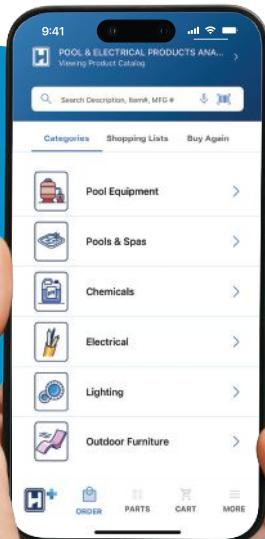
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## DISTRIBUTORS

### POOLCORP

#### January 2024

##### *Shoreline Pool Distribution*

**Headquarters:** Jackson, Miss.

**Other locations:** Hattiesburg, Miss.

**Founded:** More than 40 years ago

**Most recent owner:** Tommy and Shane Draughn

**Special note:** The retail outlet CPS Pools and Spas was not included in the sale to POOLCORP.

#### May 2024

##### *Swimline Distributors*

**Headquarters:** Atlanta

**Founded:** 1976

**Most recent owner:** Kelly and Scott McCoy

**Special note:** Other centers in Alpharetta and Kennesaw, Ga.

#### New Locations in 2024

10 total, listed by brand:

- 7 SCP
- 1 Horizon
- 1 NPT
- 1 SCP International

### DISTRIBUTORS A-Z



#### APPATEK INDUSTRIES INC.

(855) 225-0539

[www.appatek.com](http://www.appatek.com)

**Founded:** 1986

**Headquarters:** Concord, N.C.

**Employees:** 13+

**SKUs:** 1,500+

**Key products:**

▪ Many national brands of chemicals, replacement cartridge filters and water testing for the pool and spa.



#### AQUATIC PARTS COMPANY

(800) 234-6700

[www.baystatepools.com](http://www.baystatepools.com)

**Founded:** 1999

**Headquarters:** Bloomfield, Conn.

**Employees:** 65+

**SKUs:** 120,000+

**Key products:** Specializing in swimming pool and spa parts, including technical guidance.



Baystate Pool Supplies, Inc.

#### BAYSTATE POOL SUPPLIES INC.

(617) 547-9145

[www.baystatepools.com](http://www.baystatepools.com)

**Founded:** 1965

**Headquarters:** North Billerica, Mass.

**Employees:** 265+

**Distribution centers:** 12+

**SKUs:** 80,000+

**Key products:**

▪ Whole goods, such as above- and inground pools, spas, pool construction products, filters, pumps, heaters, automatic cleaners, chemicals and deck equipment.



#### HERITAGE POOL SUPPLY GROUP

All Iowa Pool, American Pool Supply, Aqua-Gon, Bel-Aqua Pool Supply Inc., Cinderella, Classic Tile Designs, Conely Company, Custom Distribution Inc., Davis Supply, Emsco, Florida Water Products, Hachik Distributors, Island Pool & Spa Supply, Noble Tile Supply, Nucci Brothers Pool Supplies, Pool Builders Supply, Pool Contractors Supply, Pool & Electrical Products, Quality Pool Supply, Recreonics, Sun Country Distributing, Texas Pool Supply

(214) 491-4149

[www.heritagepoolsupplygroup.com](http://www.heritagepoolsupplygroup.com)

**Founded:** 2021

**Headquarters:** McKinney, Texas

**Employees:** Approx. 1,250+

**Distribution centers:** 140

**SKUs:** 50,000+



#### HORIZON SPA & POOL PARTS

(800) 874-7727

[www.horizonparts.com](http://www.horizonparts.com)

**Founded:** 1992

**Headquarters:** Tucson, Ariz.

**Employees:** 49+

**Distribution centers:** 2+

**SKUs:** over 70,000

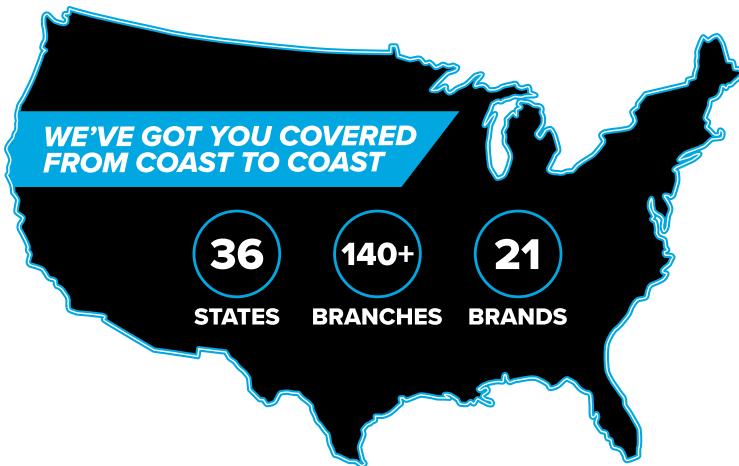
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[www.hornerxpress.com](http://www.hornerxpress.com)

**Founded:** 1969

**Headquarters:** Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

**Employees:** 600+

**Distribution centers:** 18+

**SKUs:** 10,000+

**Key products:**

- Key brands carried include AquaCal,

AutoPilot, StoneHardscapes, Lo-Chlor, TropiClear, Pentair, Hayward, Century, Bluffton and Fluidra.

**Education:** Trainings on heat pumps and salt chlorine generators, CPO Certification classes and other continuing education classes periodically throughout the year



### POOL WATER PRODUCTS

(949)756-1666

[www.poolwaterproducts.com](http://www.poolwaterproducts.com)

**Founded:** 1964

**Headquarters:** Irvine, Calif.

**Employees:** 300+

**Distribution centers:** 20+

**SKUs:** 100,000

### Key products:

- All Clear Pool & Spa Chemicals, Accessories, Cartridges and Grids
- Heaters, Filters, Pumps, Automatic Pool Cleaners, Chlorine Generators
- Electronic Controls, Lights, Motors and parts for all of the above.



### POOLCORP

**NPT; SCP Distributors, LLC; Shoreline**

**Pool Distribution, Superior Pool**

**Products, LLC, Swimline Distributors**

(888) 476-7665

[www.poolcorp.com](http://www.poolcorp.com)

**Founded:** 1993

**Headquarters:** Covington, La.

**Employees:** 4,000+

**Distribution centers:** 448

**SKUs:** 160,000+

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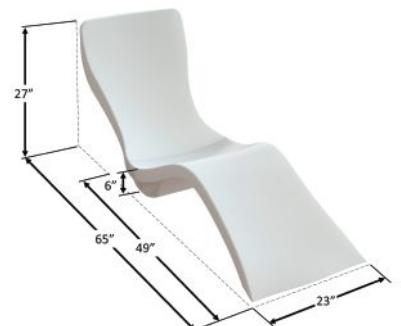
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# Making Bigger Better: The Pros, Cons and Hows of Large-Format Tile in Pools and Spas

Industry specialists offer tips for working with the material that has gained popularity for its clean appearance.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

MICHAEL WOODALL



**S**EVERAL FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE POPULARITY of large-format tiles.

First comes their availability and improvements. More large tiles are suitable for immersed applications. In addition, porcelain products meant to imitate stone or wood have vastly improved in authenticity, with more realistic details and patterns that don't repeat. This coincides with the ever-increasing popularity of contemporary and modern styles, which benefit from a cleaner material that shows fewer grout joints.

Design and installation with these materials does require some attention to assure their optimal beauty and long-term performance. Consider these tips from industry professionals.

### DESIGN AND PREPARATION

When it comes to including large-format tile in a pool installation, it's best to know well in advance that you want to move forward with this material so you can undertake proper planning.

#### ► Choose a through-body tile.

Porcelain tile has come a long way over the decades, with one of the biggest advancements being the availability of pieces that are colored all the way through. This contrasts with glazed tiles, which often are white, gray or tan underneath the glazed surface.

The consistent color makes it easier to surface a pool or

When finishing a whole pool or spa in larger tiles, installers should prepare a thorough layout plan before beginning to set the tile. Consider how you want to address corners and transitions.

spa with this material, says builder/designer Rick Chafey, co-owner of Phoenix-area firm Red Rock Pools & Spas.

"We have the ability to machine, to bullnose, to ease edges — all those things," he says. "And if you chip or damage it somehow, which is hard to do because the material is so hard, you don't have this white chipped-out piece of tile."

That can significantly ease the process of installing this material on vanishing-edge weir walls. If the edge isn't exactly level, it can be ground to the right elevation without losing the color.

#### ► Think about slip resistance.

Some designers like to work with more expansive tiles for a cleaner look, free of that tighter grid formed by more frequent grout joints.

However, this can pose a safety hazard if not considered. Those grout joints help provide slip resistance on horizontal surfaces that see foot traffic. When laying larger-format tiles on floors, steps or other areas where people will walk or climb, choose a material that has slip-resistance built in.

For one PSN Masters of Design Award-winning poolscape, Chafey worked with a large black tile that comes in a variety of surfaces — glossy, matte or textured. For the vertical surfaces, the builder went with the glossy finish. But he chose matte for the horizontal planes.

Some porcelain manufacturers may offer smaller tiles in the same family as your large-format material. If so, you could consider using these in areas where you'd want added slip resistance, for the traction provided by the extra grout joints, suggests Luke Denny, co-owner of tile installation firm Alpentile in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

#### ► Plan well in advance.

Because you'll have to fit larger rect-

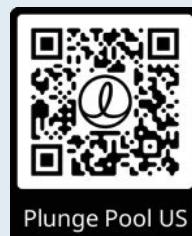


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angles or squares onto your surface, it helps to plan the dimensions of the pool or feature to accommodate the material, particularly if you plan to use it on the whole interior.

“If you’re dealing with a 2-foot piece of tile, you want to start designing on 2-foot modules instead of having a 1-foot module, so you’re not cutting slivers and slices,” Chafey says. “So layout becomes a little more critical.”

Think about such things as how the larger tile will transition to other materials, about other plans, and how you want to handle corners and edges, Denny says. If children will be playing in the area, you may not want sharp corners. In those cases, Denny may chamfer or miter the corners.

► **Consider the material’s convertibility.**

Some designers and builders will choose a larger tile and set it full-sized in certain spots, but cut it to fit various other applications.

Chafey, for instance, often uses 12-by-24-inch material. He and his team will snap it into 6-by-24-inch pieces for the waterline. In larger expanses, such as the back of a raised vanishing-edge wall, the material can be used in full.

► **Combine large-format with mosaic for visual impact.**

In some instances, Luke and Amy Denny, also co-owner of Alpentile, have combined iridescent glass mosaic tiles with large-format porcelain on the same project. The mosaic is used to showcase more visible or attractive areas.

“It’s also a way to balance the budget out,” Amy Denny says. “If you have 100 linear feet of waterline and you’re choosing 6-by-24-inch, that may cost [relatively few] dollars per square foot. So you get some economy in your tile selection that can be balanced out with the more expen-



On these stone-tile installations that National Tile and Stone Authority inspected, latex has re-emulsified through the grout, likely due to inadequate curing times for the thinset.

sive product that might go on those more high-impact areas like a baja shelf.”

**INSTALLATION**

While much of the installation process for large-format tile mirrors that of more traditional sizes, tilesetters should take certain precautions.

And whether a designer, project manager or setter, professionals should get past one particular (and understandable) assumption about the process with the larger pieces.

“I would caution installers and end users or specifiers that just because it’s a larger tile doesn’t mean it’s going to take less time to install,” says Greg Andrews, co-founder of National Tile and Stone Authority in Winnetka, Calif.

► **Allow for proper curing.**

The very size that makes large-format tiles appealing to some projects can also cause complications. When it comes to installation, the first and foremost challenge comes from the need to properly cure the thinset.

While cementitious thinset materials have evolved such that they provide significantly higher bond strengths than they did when Andrews first started, these products still require air to set. No matter the tile size, the thinset nearest the grout lines will harden first, as they interface with the air. It takes longer for the material behind the tile’s center to cure out. This becomes especially problematic with larger pieces.

“The material left along the back of the tile, especially toward the center, doesn’t have a chance to cure,” Andrews says. “Probably if it’s given enough time — and I’m talk-

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The original installers tried spot bonding these large-format tiles, placing dollops of extra thinset on the back in the hopes of promoting better adhesion. The high points on the thinset layer indicate where they placed the dollops. The spots with missing material show where the tiles came loose from the dollops.

ing about months — then ultimately it may cure out. But it's rarely given that much time."

After water is reintroduced to the thinset, it will re-emulsify and either compromise the bond and/or leach out. The latter is especially likely on vanishing-edge spillways and other surfaces that undergo wet/dry and hot/cold cycles. The warmth will draw latexes or acrylics out of the thinset, through the grout joint and deposit them on the tile surface. "It looks like calcium, but it's usually not," Andrews says.

For him, the solution comes in a relatively simple, but pricey, switch of materials. Here, he relies on synthetic thinsets that contain their own catalyst, such as epoxy-based products. These systems are generally applied in two parts, which react to each other and initiate the set.

"They will set up because they have a catalyst — part A is mixed with a part B," Andrews says. "So you can sandwich it between two impervious materials — the backside of a porcelain tile and the front side of a waterproof membrane — and it will set up just fine without air."

The downside: Synthetic thinsets cost more, which doesn't square well with some clients.

When using an epoxy, be sure to avoid getting resin marks or fingerprints on the material, Andrews advises. This especially applies to stones or porcelain tiles with a honed or matte look.

If you decide a cementitious thinset is best for the situation, it is imperative to follow manufacturer directions and industry standards. This could mean allowing a few more weeks for proper curing to take place.

"Communicate with the pool owner so they understand they might have to wait another 21 to 28 days for the thinset to cure," Amy Denny says. "It's critical, that cure time."

To avoid lengthening the cure time even further, do not place a



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thick coat of thinset. Apply a mortar bed to make sure everything is level and plumb, flat and true. Don't rely on the thinset to make up for variations in the elevation.

And, above all, follow the directions for all materials used in the installation.

► **Avoid the voids.**

It can be easier to form voids behind larger tiles when applying the thinset.

In general, pay closer attention to troweling techniques, especially if there is any warpage in the tile. You also can make use of a long-standing technique of installing, then pulling back every few tiles to make sure there's adequate coverage of the material.

Tilesetters should avoid a method called spot bonding. Here, they comb out the thinset with a trowel, then apply the occasional dollop of material on top of the layer, say on the corners of the tile and in a couple spots toward the center. Unsure how the standard layer will hold with the larger pieces, some less experienced tilesetters try this as a back-up to ensure good adhesion. But it actually has the opposite effect.

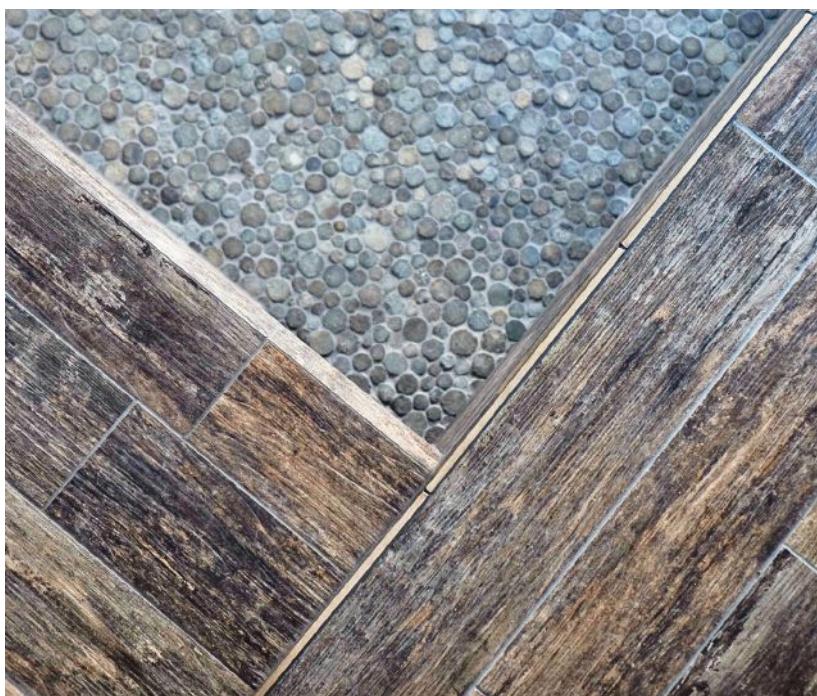
"What it does is create a lot of voids behind the material," Andrews explains. "And those voids are a perfect area for water to travel through and start to wreak havoc. So especially in submerged conditions, it's a big no-no."

► **Work with the warpage.**

Larger tiles generally will be somewhat warped, with the perimeter laying slightly lower than the middle.

The larger the piece, the more potential for warpage. This is more predominant in porcelains but can occasionally be found in stone material, too.

To help with this, use spacers or other type of system to control lippage — where one piece is higher than the other and may curve up



Large-format tiles especially enhance the clean, contemporary designs that continue to increase in popularity. They also can be subject to slight warping. Here, spacers placed between the tiles help control lippage where slightly warped or bowed pieces abut.

where they meet, suggests Jimmy Reed, president of Rock Solid Tile, in Calabasas, Calif. These spacers serve as something like small clamps between the tiles to help control their elevation.

If installing the pieces in an offset pattern, such as the bond pattern commonly used for bricks, you should make a slight change to the technique. Rather than offsetting them by half a tile, as is traditionally done, Andrews says, offset them by no more than one-third.

"You don't want the lowest point of the tile, which is the end of it, to interface with the highest point of the crown, which would be halfway across the tile," he explains.

UPPER PHOTO COURTESY ROCK SOLID TILE; PHOTO BELOW COURTESY ALPENTILE AND GROUPWORKS

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# THE RIGHT FIT





**Personality testing can provide guidance in building the team and the culture you want. Here's how.**

ADOBE STOCK

BY REBECCA ROBLEDI

**A**S BUSINESSES PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON COMPANY culture, they are turning away from hiring individuals solely based on skills and experience. In fact, some don't consider those factors at all.

More and more, we hear about companies gauging less-trainable characteristics such as work ethic and whether they would make a good fit with the rest of the staff.

To help with that objective, some firms turn to personality tests to learn about those things that likely won't show up on a resume or LinkedIn profile.

"That's really served us as a business," says Josh Buzzell, a managing partner with Houston-based Regal Pools. "Because we don't spend a lot of time looking for the wrong people."

Some company owners also use these assessments to help with team building among existing employees. By learning what makes coworkers and the boss tick, the thinking goes, the team as a whole can get along better and more productively, promoting a better company culture.

Used judiciously, personality assessments can help you assemble and develop the team you want, experts say. Here, various professionals share their experiences, while others offer tips for using the tests in a way that's safe for the company.

## EVOLVING TOOL

Personality assessments began their rise in the 1990s. And while experts offer cautions about relying too heavily on the tests, they have seen improvement over the decades.

"I think they're evolving," says Robyn Hopper, SHRM HR, a knowledge advisor for the Society for Human Resource Management, an industry organization headquartered in Alexandria, Va.

"It's quite shocking sometimes when you do these tests, and you don't know ... what it's going to say your personality is," she says. "Then you see the results, and they're shockingly accurate."

In her nearly 30 years in human resource management, Hopper has used personality tests often. "I think employers are using them more and more," she adds. "They are using them not just for pre-employment, but for current employees, to understand how people tick as well."

The statistics seem to bear that out. According to *Psychology Today*, approximately 80% of Fortune 500 companies use personality tests for a variety of purposes, including coaching, development and team building. According to the *New York Times*, approximately 100 million workers around the world take personality and aptitude tests.

"I found them very helpful, not just on a professional level, in being able to know how to handle people with personalities that are very different than my own," Hopper

says. "That's not always an easy task."

## TEAM BUILDING TOOL

Company owners will find there are plenty of different types of personality tests out there.

Buzzell and some of his colleagues with the group Master Pools Guild use the DISC Test, which categorizes people into one of four personality types, symbolized by the letters in the name. (See sidebar.) When applied to job candidates, Buzzell has found that D's (Dominance) make the best project managers, while I's (Influence) match up best with the demands of a salesperson/designer.

It's not a deal breaker if the assessment indicates the candidate falls under a different category, though. "I wouldn't be that hard but I'd definitely look into it more," says Buzzell, who also uses a local third-party company to administer a more thorough test for a more detailed profile. "You don't want to judge somebody off a piece of paper. That wouldn't be fair. But it helps."

Lewes, Del.-based company Ashton Pools by Design also uses the DISC. While the builder doesn't necessarily seek a specific personality type to fit a job description, Vice President Nicole Bailey Ashton does suggest that skilled service and repair technicians might fall under the C (Conscientiousness) category.

At Ashton Pools, the outcome alone generally won't decide whether or not the candidate gets the job. But it is taken into consideration as part of the big picture in terms of team building.

"I think about the makeup of my entire team," Bailey Ashton says. "I also look at how many of a certain personality type we already have. You don't want everybody to be a people person — you need some critical thinkers and some who are nurturers. You want to have a balance. If they're all one makeup, you're going to be

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missing some critical tasks.”

She not only looks to make sure that all tasks will be covered in the company, but also how the candidate would affect team harmony. “My husband and I are both strong D’s, but nobody else in my team are,” Bailey Ashton says. “They don’t like working with strong D’s — they don’t mind it in bosses, but they do mind it in a colleague.”

Personality assessments can help beyond the hiring decision, these professionals say. They also can be used to help a team work better together.

If a person communicates or acts in a way that differs from our style, we may make assumptions about their attitudes, motivations or character. For instance, somebody

could interpret a comment as condescending and assume that the co-worker looks down on others. But that may not be the case. They might experience anxiety, be in a hurry, or not understand social cues. Personality tests can sometimes help suss out this information, Hopper says.

“Are they really condescending, or is it just the way it’s coming out?” she says. “It’s knowing how to talk to the person.”

For this reason, Bailey Ashton uses DISC as a tool to help staffers communicate with each other. Every six months, she brings the team together to revisit their personality types and what that means in terms of communication. For instance, the team knows that, as a D personality, Bailey Ashton likes to move through communication quickly and efficiently.

“You don’t need to come in my office and say good morning,” she explains. “You can come and say, ‘I need this, this and this. How do we do it?’ I like bullet points.”

This knowledge helps to ease the minds of people who otherwise might think she was mad at them.

As a fellow D personality, Buzzell also finds it helpful for his staff to know the whole story. “Everybody knows I’m a [D],” he says. “There’s not a lot of fluff with me, but I care a lot and will make sure you don’t fail.”

To help him remember where his employees fall on the scale, he keeps a list near his computer with everybody’s personality type. Staffers also know their coworkers’ types.

“We know what we’re working with, so we can all bend the way we think based on who we’re talking to sometimes,” Buzzell says.

Builder Mark Ragel also uses the DISC profile, with his sales staff specifically. He also finds that D’s and I’s perform best in this position. Learning their personality types sometimes prompts adjustments.

One time, a salesperson scored a

## POPULAR PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS

► **DiSC:** Initials from the four personality types identified in this test form its name. Test takers are categorized as D’s (for Dominance), who tend to be confident and focus on results; I’s (Influence), who generally are more open and prioritize relationships and influencing; S’s (Steadiness), the dependable types who emphasize cooperation and sincerity; and C’s (Conscientiousness), who tend to prioritize quality, accuracy, expertise, and competence.

► **Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator:** This classic assessment places people in one of 16 categories. Each category reflects a different combination of four preference pairs: Extraversion vs. Introversion (E-I), explaining the source of your energy; Sensing vs. Intuition (S-N), indicating what information the test taker tends to trust; Thinking vs. Feeling (T-F), showing the primary source of decision-making; and Judging vs. Perceiving (J-P), revealing how one deals with the world around them.

► **The Big Five Personality Test (OCEAN):** This assessment scores individuals on four attributes: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

► **The Enneagram:** Takers of this test are categorized as one of nine complex personality types: The Reformer, The Helper, The Achiever, The Individualist, The Investigator, The Loyalist, The Enthusiast, The Challenger, and The Peacemaker.

► **The CliftonStrengths Assessment:** This test shows one’s unique combination of 34 characteristics, which it calls CliftonStrengths themes. These characteristics fall under four umbrellas: strategic thinking, relationship building, influencing, and executing.



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high S (Steadiness), rather than the D or I. “He was the lowest producer, but everything he did was perfectly accurate, detailed, very conscientious of the customer,” Ragel says. “So shortly afterward, our best salesperson put him on his team and said, ‘I’ll sell, and you do the paperwork.’ They were the best team we had.”

### WORKING WITH CLIENTS

Once employees become familiar with different personality types, along with the motivations and most effective communication styles for them, the team can apply this when working with clients.

If initial communications lead Bailey Ashton’s team to believe a potential client is a C personality, for instance, they’ll expect the client to ask more detailed questions about technical matters such as pump horsepower, plumbing and shotcreting practices. In those cases, Bailey Ashton is more likely to bring one of the technical members of her team on a sales call.

“If I know they’re a C, I want to make sure we’re answering all those questions, or we won’t make that sale,” she says.

The same holds true as the project progresses. If, for instance, the crews find something underground that would necessitate an unexpected footing or other support, they will communicate that difficult message in a way suited to the client’s personality.

“If they’re a C, I’d better know the exact reason and have engineering [details],” Bailey Ashton says. “If it’s a type D, it’s all about the price.”

At Regal Pools, salespeople are trained to identify personality types based on conversations. Then they’ll pass on what they’ve learned to the project managers.

“We might say, ‘This guy likes to communicate a lot. Make sure you text him every morning,’” Buzzell relates. “Or you have somebody where you say, ‘This guy doesn’t

want to hear from you much. Just touch base with him once a week.’ They can edge on the [difficult] part of [D’s], and we have to prepare for that.”

### PROPER IMPLEMENTATION

With all the potential benefits, experts say the tool comes with some risks and offer advice for averting them.

Consult those who developed or administer the test to see how it is meant to be used. Some are not intended for selecting employees. The website for the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, for instance, says the assessment is not meant to tell employers whom to hire. Some tests may not provide a detailed enough picture of the person being screened. Some tests, for instance, employ multiple-choice questions, which force test takers to choose between a very limited set of options, which may not best reflect their first choices.

When using these assessments with existing staff, make sure not to allow the results to mask other problems. Sometimes, observers say, managers can place too much focus on employees’ personal traits when trying to figure out the root of a problem, rather than also considering the circumstances surrounding the issue. You wouldn’t want to miss a more systemic problem.

Understand that not all assessments are alike. Different tests evaluate different types of traits and present the information in their own way. Research the tests you’re considering to determine if the information being mined is what you need.

When doing your research, also make sure there’s no track record of cultural bias. You don’t want to set your company up for litigation.

When giving the test, especially to potential new hires, practice absolute transparency. Tell them what you’re using, why and how it’s being used, Hopper advises. Ensure them that

the findings will remain confidential, and keep your word. Always be consistent in how you use the information from one person to another.

Also prepare for the possibility of a complaint being filed. If that happens, you may need a well-thought-out explanation as to why you use the test. This is good practice whether you're talking about personality tests or other devices you apply, says attorney Steve Getzoff, who serves as outside national counsel for the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance.

"Generally when I talk to clients about discriminatory [issues] I say, whatever question you're asking, make sure you can explain how it's relevant to the position," says Getzoff, also a partner in New York-based Lester Schwab Katz & Dwyer.

Many companies wait to employ personality tests until they've chosen a candidate and made a job offer, Hopper says. This helps avoid the chance that a job candidate claims the test was discriminatory. Some state or local codes may require that.

"It's just like if we were going to do a background check," Hopper says.

Keep the issue of bias in mind if you're contracting with

a third party to administer the test or develop it for you, Getzoff says.

"Make sure they indemnify in the event that there's a claim that the test is noncompliant with applicable laws," he says. "Make sure they're prepared to stand behind the test that they're providing you."

Because they now are administered digitally, personality assessments present an area where the use of artificial intelligence may become a factor. Recently, a law was passed in New York City requiring that, anytime employers use AI as part of the screening process, a bias audit of that platform must be performed annually by a third party. These evaluations check algorithms for bias. Many HR experts believe more jurisdictions will impose similar laws. Find out if such a requirement applies in your area.

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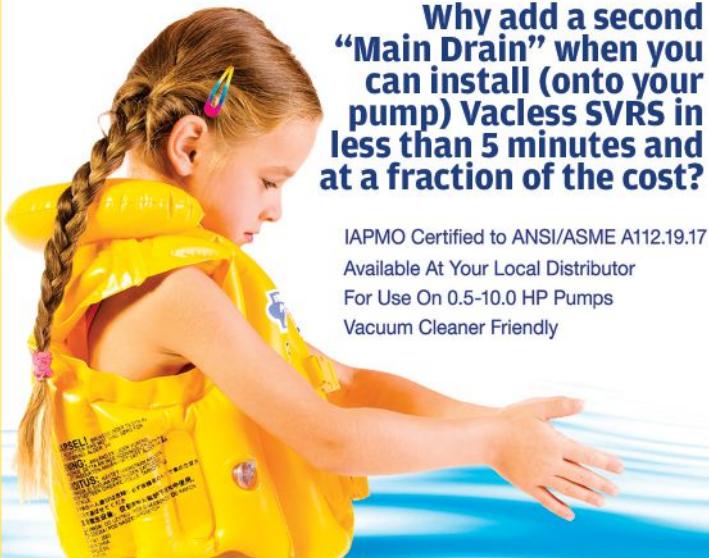
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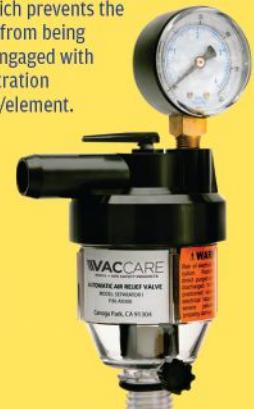
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# All About Data





# THESE INTERNET MARKETING EXPERTS PROVIDE TIPS ON WHAT DATA TO COLLECT AND TRACK SO YOU CAN LEARN WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T.

BY SCOTT AND ALI REYNOLDS

**I**N THE WORLD OF BUSINESS, LIFE is uncertain. Plans can be unraveled by politics, tariffs or by ever-shifting consumer behaviors. So it's important to know where to seek the knowledge and data you need to make the decisions that will keep money flowing into your business.

Whether you're a retailer, service provider, builder, or manufacturer, these shifts trickle down to impact each of our businesses in unique ways. We saw this during COVID, when we gratefully rode the wave, and watched our profits go down again the last two years as inflation rose.

After 17 years of working in this industry, we have ridden more than one roller coaster and now can often anticipate the dips and rises that occur — stomach drops and all. What comforts us more than anything, and what we have put into practice for ourselves and our clients, is a reliance on the sturdy earth of data beneath our feet.

Data is fact, driven by reporting on hard numbers that tell us far more than the media, customer behaviors, or even rising costs do. If you haven't incorporated metrics reporting on

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data for your organization no matter how small, you're missing out on a secret weapon that could potentially be a superpower for your longevity.

Data and reporting are especially critical for anyone dipping their toes into (or completely immersed in) marketing strategy. With all the options available in this ever-changing, technologically driven market, you have to search through the methodologies offered and find one that works for your business model, your customer demographics and your products. Doing that one bit of research alone is time-consuming and can be daunting. We are not all born marketing experts, we are not all technologically minded. No matter how skilled we are at building a pool from start to finish or balancing water chemistry, that doesn't necessarily mean we understand which platform, offer or follow-up process is going to move the needle.

In the next few issues of *Pool and Spa News*, we will present a host of topics on marketing meant to help you sort through the options, and empower you with actionable takeaways that can be applied towards business of any size in our niche industry. This installment focuses on data, metrics and reporting — What you need to have in place and where to start.

## DATA 101

Let's walk through a couple of foundational items, and then we'll get into the details of what to really focus on.

First, some definitions:

### ► KPI - Key Performance Indicator

As the name implies, these numbers indicate performance in any area of your business. They include straightforward data such as “number of new daily leads,” or something with combined data points such as “marketing cost of a new customer by product and lead source.”

KPIs also can be used to track certain employee metrics such as “average number of sick days per person,” or “number of phone calls to close a deal, by the sales person.”

### ► Qualified Leads

We see a lot of businesses get bogged down arguing over the quality of leads coming into their system. Leads are great, but if they don't (eventually) turn into customers, then you're doing something wrong. We usually count a lead as "qualified" if we get all of the following pieces of information:

- First name — full name is ideal
- Phone number, preferably with an opt-in to send them SMS messages
- Email address
- Zip code
- Some sort of buying intent. This generally means they've requested a brochure, pricing, or a phone call... something to show they're beyond the research phase of buying.

#### ► Google Ads vs. Google Analytics

People may confuse these terms, but they are two very different data sets and need to be treated differently.

Google Ads is how you spend money to get visitors to your website (and it has its own world of data/metrics). On the other hand, Google Analytics tells you not only how all visitors landed on your website, but what they did once they got there.

There are a lot of ways to advertise your business, but Google Ads is where 99% of businesses should start. You can add all of the social media platforms once Google Ads is running, but start there. When it comes to tracking what happens with your website, Google Analytics is really the only game in town.

#### SALES KPIS

It is no longer enough just to be aware that sales are happening and that your company shows a net profit.

You need to track every sale from the moment the customer enters your business as a lead, then all the way through the sale. Note every interaction, every objection.

“It is no longer enough just to be aware that sales are happening and your company shows a net profit. You need to track every sale.”

You can only really do this with a good Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software such as HubSpot.

Specific Sales KPIs that we like to watch include:

- Number of activities directed to leads (such as calls, emails, meetings, and texts) by salesperson
- Ratio of meetings booked to number of activities, by salesperson
- Total pipeline value, by month and quarter
- Raw number of leads by month, quarter, and product
- Average time from lead to customer, by source
- Close rate by product, by source

One other very important metric is your total ad spend to acquire a customer. To get this data point, take all monies spent on advertising, then divide by the number of customers you're gotten. (This should also be calculated against gross revenue).

However, there is a really critical thing to understand: You can't calculate this number over the past 30 days, or even the past 90. The typical life cycle of a lead can be six to 12 months for hot tubs and two to three years for pools.

When looking to understand your true cost of customer acquisition, you need to start your data 90-plus days ago, if not more. For example, you can expect money spent in January to bring in revenue during all 12 months of the year. If you only look at performance in the past 30 days, you're going to be very disappointed.

Once again, only a great CRM can pull these numbers together in an instant.

#### MARKETING KPIS

These KPIs let you gauge the effectiveness of your overall marketing plans and systems.

At the end of the day, marketing and advertising efforts should result in qualified leads for your business. That said, it's important to understand and track the different ways that a lead can come into your business.

In Google Ads, for example, you can break down the different types of pathways into your business, which Google calls "conversions." These could be form fill-outs,



phone calls, store visitors, etc.

Here are some marketing KPIs that we find useful. Note: When we use the term “lead,” we mean qualified lead as defined above.

- Cost per lead, by conversion type and by source (i.e. Google, Facebook, etc.)
- Website bounce rate by source
- Average number of pages visited by source
- Average time on the site by source
- Number of phone calls by source
- Number of new vs. repeat phone calls

Most of these metrics should be compared year-over-year.

We can't emphasize enough how all of these metrics need to be viewed through the lens of “what are these numbers telling me, and what decisions can I make based on these numbers?” For instance, website bounce rate by source can tell you that you're driving a bunch of useless traffic from Facebook, if you see that 95% leave immediately after arriving at your site. Spend less money there.

Or, you may find that a certain postcard campaign is converting into leads at twice the rate of any other campaign. Send more postcards.

You get the idea.

## GARBAGE METRICS AND KPIS

The most important thing to understand about business metrics is that you need to know what data points to focus

on that actually help you make a decision in your business. There are a ton of metrics that are neat or flattering, but these gained the name ‘vanity metrics’ years ago because that's what they are. They don't help you make a decision.

This is an area of particular passion for us. When we look at reports from other marketing firms, many are chock full of meaningless metrics. These numbers don't allow you to make informed decisions, and they almost always go up perpetually.

Examples would be:

- Total website visitors this year. It's just cumulative, so this number will always go up
- Total number of leads generated
- Basically anything cumulative
- “Fixes” or “Updates” made to a site with little-to-no substantiation.
- Social shares this year

Also, be aware of aggregate metrics such as “total website visitors” or “bounce rate” without attributing a source. The raw bounce-rate number for any website is completely mean-

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ingless without knowing how the bounce rate changes based on the source of the website traffic. But many reports will include this metric with no further explanation. We include it as a “gut check” number to make sure that analytics is installed properly, which is about all it’s good for on its own.

## FINAL WORD

Simply put, if you’re not tracking every aspect of your marketing and sales efforts through a capable CRM, then actually understanding what the metrics mean — and, finally, making decisions on that data — you’re never going to truly understand how to scale or maintain

your current revenue structure and your business.

If you want to stay in business in the coming years or you want to receive the full value of the business you have built when you sell, you must learn to rely on more than your gut instinct and referrals.

The world is changing, and more competitors are popping up every day in your community and showing themselves to be agile in using social media, the web, discounted pricing models and customer loyalty to their advantage. Most of these new companies are driven by metrics, and many are owned by groups who come from the investment sector.

If you want to compete and keep your advantage as a company of lasting stability and reputation in your community, you’ll need to continue to adapt and learn how to incorporate and rely on the data that is available to guide you into the next decade.

*Scott and Ali Reynolds are Co-CEOs and cofounders of The Get Smart Group, (Thegetsmartgroup.com) an Angels Camp, Calif.-based marketing agency specializing in the pool/spa industry.*

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

## QUICK FIXES

When your business gathers useful data, it can often reveal quick fixes that can be implemented almost immediately.

One example was a client of ours where we discovered that they were only answering 57% of their inbound phone calls before they went to voicemail. That’s an insane number. Simply hiring a person to answer the phone resulted in 100% of calls being answered and a 21% boost in hot tub unit sales after 90 days. That was well worth the low-cost employee to better capture those inbound leads.

You may also discover that certain salespeople are better at different things. It could be that some salespeople are excellent at booking appointments but terrible at closing. Or you may find your best closer lurking in the shadows.

# Automation and Systems



## 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)

## TILD Automation System

CCEI's TILD automation system provides a simple and affordable entry-level automation system that is easy for pool professionals to sell and install.

This smartphone-enabled pool automation system is perfect for pool owners who want to start using a simple automation to manage their pool. The TILD system can manage the pool's heater, lights and pump — all from CCEI's intuitive VigiPool app on any smart phone.

Ideal for existing pool owners who want to automate pump room equipment, regardless of the equipment brand or age. This UL and ULC certified system includes a temperature sensor and is compatible with lights and pumps of any brand. Users can manage temperature and schedule directly from a smart phone. Tild is equipped with a Wi-Fi/wireless connection for remote control.

**Contact:** CCEI USA | [ccei-pool.com/us](http://ccei-pool.com/us)

## Heritage Pool +

HeritagePool+ and the HeritagePool+ Mobile App gives users instant access to products, pricing, and tools.

The app makes repeat orders fast and frictionless — frequently purchased items are always front and center, making reordering simple.

Users can set up lists for full pool equipment pads, from pumps and filters to automation, fittings, and valves. These shopping lists also can be exported for fast and easy job quotes. When it's time to order, just add the items to the cart, enter a job site address for delivery, or choose an express pickup for grab-and-go convenience.

New for 2025: In-app push alerts keep users informed with real-time updates on order status, pickup readiness, and deliveries. Also new is Poseidon AI, a smart virtual assistant capable of providing product recommendations, tutorials, branch info, and more.

**Contact:** Heritage Pool Supply Group | [heritagepoolplus.com](http://heritagepoolplus.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](http://sensafe.com)



### Mobile WaterLink Spin Touch Lab

The Mobile WaterLink Spin Touch lab (Code 3581) is designed to perform 10 vital water tests in the field — in just 60 seconds — without time consuming tests, training or clean-up.

Properly balanced water chemistry in swimming pools can help keep swimmers safe and healthy, prevent damage to the equipment and surface, and maintain the beauty of crystal-clear water.

**Contact:** LaMotte Company | [lamotte.com](http://lamotte.com)



### The Attendant

The Attendant is a cloud-based pool automation system designed to monitor everything from water quality and temperature to equipment alerts.

The Attendant considers the pool’s historical performance and weather conditions to activate heating, chilling, and solar systems — ensuring the perfect water temperature at the right time. Reducing unnecessary temperature functions save homeowners energy costs.

Chemistry Management and Auto Dosing provide real-time water balance adjustments — preventing downtime. Smarter filtration cycles automatically adjust based on current water conditions and even forecasted weather.

The Attendant also controls lighting and music integration. Sync the pool and landscape lighting to create the perfect ambiance while playing Spotify playlists. Users can also customize colors and light intensity.

**Contact:** Latham, The Pool Co. | [lathampool.com](http://lathampool.com)



### IntelliCenter Pool Control System

The IntelliCenter Pool Control System is the most advanced, smart-connected control system in Pentair’s line up of pool automation solutions.

It features remote monitoring for increased efficiency, customer satisfaction and revenue opportunities. It also features an intuitive touchscreen with a setup wizard to get Pool professionals out of the backyard faster.

“Remote monitoring and control can be a game changer for pool pros,” says Tony Breland, Pentair’s senior product manager, automation. “It allows you to troubleshoot before going to the backyard, sometimes avoiding a trip, and it’s an opportunity for additional revenue streams and increases customer loyalty with more connection to the equipment pad.”

The IntelliCenter system comes with a 3-year extended warranty when bundled.

**Contact:** Pentair | pentair.com/automation



### RB Mobile Live Retail and Service

RB’s Mobile Live feature is specifically designed to help pool and spa retail and service businesses.

RB Mobile Live Retail provides better and faster service to customers with the retail Line Buster feature, mobile inventory look-ups and instant access to customer history and profiles. Retailers can use a tablet, integrated magnetic strip reader, and pocket barcode scanner to complete sales, process credit cards and email receipts.

Mobile Live Service allows service techs to easily view Scheduled Jobs along with the Customer’s Information including equipment profiles, job notes, directions and pictures. All updates are immediately accessible. It eliminates service forms, allows techs to record water test results, take payments at the job site, look up inventory and do physical inventory on their truck.

**Contact:** RB Retail & Service Solutions Software | rbretailandservicesolutions.com



### Envision AR

The Envision AR app is a tool that helps pool professionals show customers what a Tara Liner, safety cover, or Shade Escapes sun shade will look like in their backyard before they buy.

The app uses augmented reality, so homeowners can add a pool to their backyard then customize the liner pattern, safety cover or sun shade. This helps homeowners see different options and feel more confident in their choices. Pool dealers can use the app on a smartphone or tablet to show customers how their pool will look with different designs, making the decision process faster and easier, so dealers can spend less time going back and forth with customers.

The Envision AR app works on iOS and Android devices and is a helpful tool for selling liners, safety covers, and sun shades.

**Contact:** Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com

# Filters and Filter Media



## Nature Works NW40

Nature Works is a glass filter media that is not only NSF-50 certified for public pools but is the only glass filter media in the world that is NSF-61 certified safe for the filtration of drinking water, according to Jason Mart, North American business development director for NatureWorks-North America.

“The primary advantages over sand and other glass filter medias derive from a calibrated 7-grain formulation resulting in zero compaction, no channelization, and the elimination of biofilm clumping,” says Mart. “For the operator this means: reduced pump demand, fewer backwashes and a remarkably short ROI.”

The glass media never needs to be replaced. It is engineered to be installed without a pea gravel underbed allowing it to be reused after maintenance.

**Contact:** NatureWorks-North America | [natureworks-na.com](http://natureworks-na.com)



## OnCore Filtration

OnCore Filtration is a manufacturer of high-performance pool and spa filtration products, assembled in the USA.

“At OnCore Filtration, we deliver healthy, trusted solutions for clean, safe water,” says Battista Remati, representative for OnCore Filtration. “Our mission is to fuse innovation with dependability, enriching pool and spa experiences for healthier living, peace of mind, and the success of our partners. Backed by decades of industry expertise, we provide reliable, American-made filtration products built for superior performance.”

**Contact:** OnCore Filtration | [oncorefiltration.com](http://oncorefiltration.com)



## Automatic Air Relief Valve

Most filters equipped with manual air release valves run half air filled, says Hassan Hamza, president of Vacless Systems. “This is the only existing automatic air relief valve for pool filters.”

The Automatic Air Relief Valve is designed to force the filter elements to fully engage with the circulating water, and shorten the pump’s running time.

The valve provides immediate release of entrapped air inside pool filters. It helps guard against serious injuries caused by accidental blow-offs of pool filters.

It is easily installed onto any pool filter in place of old manual air release valves, and is designed with an innovative self cleaning mechanism.

Customers are invited to call directly for installation and trouble shooting support at 818-701-6200.

The valve comes with a 3-year warranty.

**Contact:** Vacless Systems | [Vacless.com](http://Vacless.com)

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rtomko@zondahome.com

# New Products

by PSN STAFF



## Magic Plastics

The new Smart Check Valve is designed to replace older Flo Control/NDS check valves in the field, allowing techs to swap out valve bodies without purchasing a complete unionized valve. The valve's swing/spring design fits perfectly into the same space as all Flo Control/NDS check valves.

**Contact:** [magicplastics.com](http://magicplastics.com)



## Pentair

The IntelliFlo3 Variable Speed and Flow Pump is a Wi-Fi-enabled automation pool pump designed to help make pool management effortless using an app. Users can stay on top of maintenance with remote monitoring, and pool owners can control pool lighting and more. Available in two sizes.

**Contact:** [pentair.com/intelliflo3hub](http://pentair.com/intelliflo3hub)



## RB Retail & Service Solutions

The new Sales Order Auto Batch feature simplifies operations by converting sales orders in bulk with just a few clicks for every customer with a tokenized payment method. This feature boosts accuracy with automated, seamless payment handling to reduce errors.

**Contact:** [rbretailandservicesolutions.com](http://rbretailandservicesolutions.com)



## Slipstream

Slipstream is a battery-powered, portable swimming machine with a swim range of 2.5 miles per battery charge. Its top swim speed is 1:20 hundred yard pace with a max flow of approximately 3,000 gpm. A 240-watt charger with a standard 120V outlet plug is included and fully charges in 4 hours.

**Contact:** [swimslipstream.com](http://swimslipstream.com)



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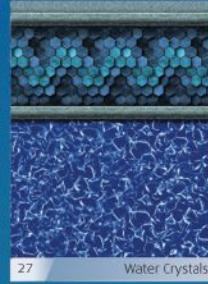
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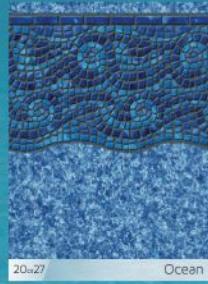
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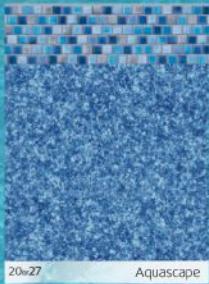
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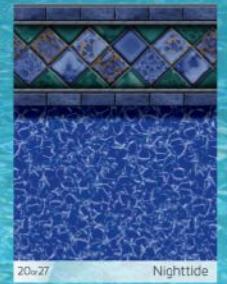
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