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POOL AND SPA NEWS

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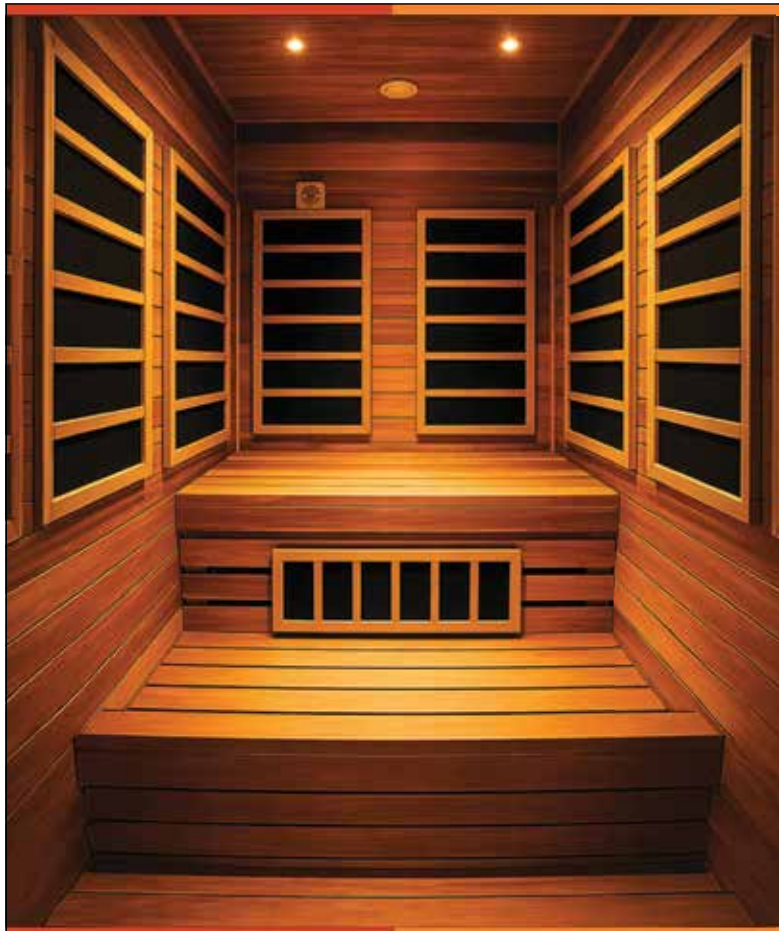
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Oh, How the Tables Have Turned



“A generation that thought to bring together avocado and toast can’t be all that bad. (I said what I said.)”

I remember 20 years ago, when all of us Gen Xers and Baby Boomers were up in arms about the Millennials.

The prevailing discourse said that their parents had coddled them. They were more interested in giving their money to Starbucks than saving up for a down payment on a home. And there was a lot of talk about entitlement. Some believed young adults entering the workforce didn’t expect to have to “pay their dues.”

On the flip side, kids of that generation had to pay more and compete harder than their parents for their spots in university and the workforce. So, yeah, some may have questioned the assumption that they needed to start at the bottom of the org chart.

And, controversial take here: A generation that thought to bring together avocado and toast can’t be all that bad. (I said what I said.)

Now, Millennials range in age from 30 to 45 years old. They find themselves as ensconced in adulthood as we are. And now they join us in puzzling over the next crop—Generation Z, also called zoomers. Like every generation, this one has been influenced by economic and societal factors of its youth, as well as the life stages we all go through. And, frankly, they’ve learned from previous generations, looking at their parents’ lives and actions and deciding what they liked and what they didn’t.

As a workforce, this generation has wholeheartedly rejected three of their predecessors’ patterns, which affects how they function as employees: they don’t want their jobs to define them or dominate their lives; they don’t want to work solely for the money; and they’re not interested in mindlessly taking orders, but want to know the reasoning behind management decisions. As we see in “Making Way for the Future,” page 14, these younger workers evaluate each position based on whether it offers a career path, the kind of connection they feel with coworkers, and whether their work serves a higher purpose.

In short, they expect more from their jobs and employers. And while this may add to a manager’s work and frustration in the short term, I take heart from it. I think a workforce focused on the long term will only benefit the industry. I expect a generation of curious employees to yield more and better leaders and self-starters. Those looking for a career path are exactly what the industry needs to carry it forward. And those who seek a sense of purpose on the job will show a commitment to making customers happy.

One thing that I loved hearing is that younger employees often want to know the reasoning behind a manager’s or company’s decision, whether it’s just going to a different site than originally planned for the day, or implementing a new major policy. While it may take longer to communicate the why along with the what, I believe it makes for a better employee in the end. Somebody who understands the internal logic of the company’s processes, procedures, and policies will find themselves better positioned to make decisions on their own when needed. And they’re more likely to do it in a way that aligns with your company’s needs, because all those mini lessons will reveal the full picture of your company’s values, priorities, and approaches to problem solving. They offer clues on how to respond appropriately to even brand-new situations.

As we look for individuals to carry on the legacy of those retiring soon, the priorities of the new generation suggest that more great prospective successors are just around the corner.

Given the direction the pool/spa industry is headed, that all spells good things. **PSN**

Rebecca Robledo

Deputy Editor, PSN • rrobledo@kenilworth.com

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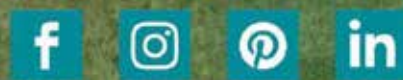
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THE FEE BLIND SPOT

Why Builders Overlook Financing Fees and Why They Shouldn't

Builders don't pay financing fees, so they often assume they don't affect their business. In reality, those fees influence project size, customer confidence, and whether sales move forward.



For every dollar spent on fees, you can subtract one dollar from the budget.



Jessie Wood

Sr. Business Development Manager,
Lyon Financial

Why Fees Cost Builders Sales

Borrower costs force buyers to rethink their budgets. Instead of adding a spa, outdoor kitchen, upgraded decking, or premium finishes, they begin looking for ways to offset those expenses. In the worst cases, they do this by reducing the scope of the project or delaying it indefinitely.

"For every dollar spent on financing fees, you can subtract one dollar from the backyard budget," says Jessie Wood, senior business development manager at Lyon Financial.

Those fees add up. Closing costs for traditional home equity products, such as HELOCs, can total as much as 5% of the loan amount, depending on the lender and the borrower's situation.

"On a \$100,000 project, a 5% borrower fee is \$5,000," Wood says. "Would you rather see that \$5,000 added to the project or paid in financing fees?"

How to Take Control of the Financing Conversation

Builders don't need to become financing experts, but they shouldn't leave financing to chance. By staying informed, recommending a financing partner they trust, and encouraging customers to ask the right questions, they can protect both the customer experience and the sale.

Questions That Protect Buying Power

These questions help identify financing that keeps the customer's budget focused where it belongs: on the project, not fees:

- **Borrower fees:** What would my customers pay?
- **Repayment terms:** How would they affect monthly payments?
- **Industry expertise:** Is the loan designed for outdoor living projects?
- **Customer experience:** Are all fees and costs clearly explained upfront?

"It's important to know what financing really costs your customers," Wood says. "If you don't, it could end up costing you the sale."

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Cabana Acquires H&H Pool Services

The transaction marks a new chapter for both companies

By Rebecca Robledo

H&H Pool Services, the Dublin, Calif.-based company founded by industry veteran David Hawes, has been acquired by Cabana as the San Diego-area company continues its expansion across California.

The acquisition marks a significant transition for both companies, bringing the 55-year-old H&H under Cabana's ownership while helping the consolidator complete its expansion into California's major metropolitan markets and, eventually, grow nationally.

Hawes founded H&H as a teenager and grew it into one of the industry's larger service and maintenance companies. Over the years, he gained a reputation for his business acumen while becoming an active industry educator and advocate for stronger business practices among pool service professionals.

A longtime member of the Independent Pool and Spa Service Association (IPSSA), Hawes has served as its president and chief financial officer and regularly teaches business classes for service professionals. He also founded California's Pool & Spa Apprenticeship and Training Committee, where he continues to serve as president and chairman, and has served as a director of Pool Industry Expo.

According to Cabana, H&H fits its strategy of partnering with established, owner-led pool companies while providing them with additional operational resources and support.

"David has spent decades proving that exceptional quality and attention to detail work, and his team reflects that," said Cabana founder Jeremy Yamaguchi. "Bringing H&H aboard is exactly the kind of partnership we're built for. Our job now is to support the team and give them room to keep growing."

Hawes and his staff will remain with H&H following the acquisition, Yamaguchi said. The company will also retain its existing brand, although the Cabana name could eventually be incorporated into it.

H&H, which operates from a single location, is expected to serve as the primary hub for Cabana's San Francisco-area operations, Yamaguchi said.

Cabana looks beyond state borders

With the transaction, Cabana reaches a milestone of its own and looks toward its next phase of expansion.

The H&H acquisition followed Cabana's purchase of another Bay Area service firm, 34-year-old Aqua Pool Company in Concord, Calif., formerly owned by Todd Ferro. Together, the acquisitions brought Cabana into the San Francisco market, giving the consolidator a presence in every major metropolitan area in the Golden State, Yamaguchi said.

Cabana plans to expand further in some California markets, including the South San Francisco Bay/San Jose area and eastern



David Hawes



Jeremy Yamaguchi

Los Angeles. Its larger growth ambitions, however, extend beyond the state.

"We're not here to build California's pool cleaning company—we're here to build the first national branded pool [service company] that is a household name," Yamaguchi said.

Cabana is currently focused primarily on Arizona and Texas, with Nevada and Georgia also among its targets. However, Yamaguchi said the company is willing to consider companies regardless of location.

Over the next five years, Cabana aims to partner with more than 70 firms, Yamaguchi added.

While other consolidators also have national ambitions, Cabana aims to distinguish itself by highlighting its backing by individual investors rather than private equity, and by developing proprietary software to support all aspects of the business.

"You can't buy [these companies] and flip them all in five years," Yamaguchi said. "You have to commit for decades and bring real capital and real technology to run that company."

Founded in 2024, Cabana has pursued an aggressive acquisition strategy, acquiring 12 companies in its first two years. After starting in San Diego, the company has expanded into Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, and San Francisco Counties.

While some consolidators have steadfastly avoided entering California, Yamaguchi chose to launch Cabana near where he lived. He now views building the company in the state as valuable preparation for national expansion.

"California has a lot of operating challenges—labor markets are tough, the regulatory environment is tough," Yamaguchi said. "We might be crazy, but I think there's also just something to [the notion] that, if we can do it here, we can do it anywhere." **PSN**

Natalie Hood Takes on Open-water Challenge for Swim Lessons

Natalie Hood, director of education and events for manufacturers rep firm The Grit Game, will compete in three open-water endurance races to raise funds and awareness for Every Child a Swimmer.

Through her campaign, "She Swims So They Can," Hood plans to complete three open-water races across Tennessee and Alabama over three weeks, with events in Knoxville, Tenn.; Huntsville, Ala.; and Chattanooga, Tenn. All proceeds will benefit Every Child a Swimmer, an International Swimming Hall of Fame (ISHOF)-affiliated organization that works to expand children's access to swimming lessons.

"If the miles I swim can help give more children access to swim lessons and the skills that could one day save their lives, then every mile is worth it," Hood said.

Supporters can contribute directly to the campaign, purchase campaign apparel, or participate as an industry partner. Additional information is available on the "She Swims So They Can" campaign page on givebutter.com.



Natalie Hood will take to the open water to raise funds for Every Child a Swimmer.

Hood has more than 25 years of experience in the pool and spa industry, including positions with the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) and the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), before joining The Grit Game. She was also a competitive swimmer through college. **PSN**



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Eric Knight Joins Pool Brain

Watershape U executive takes new education technology role

By Rebecca Robledo



Eric Knight teaching a course for Watershape University (WU).

Eric Knight has left his role as executive director of Watershape University (WU) to join pool service software company Pool Brain as head of educational technology.

In the newly created role, Knight will lead the development of educational tools and technology, including automated water chemistry dosing, guided training workflows, and interactive educational modules designed to provide pool professionals with information as they need it in the field.

"I've spent the majority of my career developing tools, courses, videos, and podcasts designed to help pool professionals achieve greater success in the field," Knight said. "Joining Pool Brain perfectly aligns with that mission..."

Pool Brain CEO Adam Beech said Knight's background in both technology and education made him a natural fit for the company.

"He's well known for thinking outside the box to push our industry forward through technology and education, which is a perfect fit for what we do at Pool Brain," Beech said.

Knight became WU's first executive director in 2025. During his tenure, he oversaw the expansion of accredited courses,

the development of a comprehensive service track, and several new courses.

Before joining WU, Knight served as vice president at chemical company Orenda and later at its acquirer, HASA. While at Orenda, he created the Rule Your Pool podcast and led the development of the Orenda Calculator,® which is now integrated into many pool service software platforms.

WU co-founder Bill Drakeley said the organization also expects to benefit from Knight's move to Pool Brain, with Knight incorporating WU educational content into the model he is developing in his new role.

"We're very excited about it—it's a win-win," Drakeley said. "Eric is going to ... take the WU educational platform with him and insert that into the educational model that he's building."

Knight will also continue to participate in WU events occasionally, Drakeley said. "He's still part of the family," he said.

WU has no immediate plans to name another executive director. Instead, the organization will distribute Knight's responsibilities among its existing staff, which Drakeley said has grown significantly over the past two years. **PSN**

Pentair Opens Annual Pool Pro Awards

Pentair Pool will open nominations September 1 for its 2026 Pool Pro Awards, recognizing pool industry professionals for their service, expertise, safety awareness, and leadership.

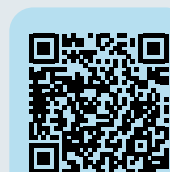
This year's program, themed "Backyard Legends," will recognize seven industry professionals across five categories, including the new Wave Maker Award for individuals considered influential or inspirational within the pool and spa industry.

Formerly known as the Perfect Pool Guy and Perfect Pool Gal contest, the annual program recognizes professionals who help keep pools in their communities swim-ready.

Awards will be presented to two winners in the Premiere Pool Pro and Lifetime Achievement categories, and one recipient each in the Unsung Hero, Safety Advocate, and Wave Maker categories. Unlike the other categories, the new Wave Maker Award is open to professionals from across the pool and spa industry, not only pool service professionals.

Nominations will be accepted from September 1 through October 19, with pool professionals able to nominate themselves or their peers. Voting will take place from October 23 through November 1.

Winners will be announced during a private awards ceremony on January 25, 2027, at The Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City, N.J. Additional information is available on the Pentair Pool Pro Awards website at pentair.com/en-us/pool-spa/pool-pro-awards. **PSN**



'Big 3' Manufacturers Report Mixed Q2 Results

By Rebecca Robledo

Pool and spa equipment manufacturers Fluidra, Hayward, and Pentair reported mixed results for the second quarter of 2026, with the first two posting single-digit gains and the latter recording a double-digit decline.

Fluidra

Fluidra reported first-half 2026 sales of €1.258 billion (\$1.457 billion USD), up 5% year over year. North American sales increased by approximately 3% in the second quarter and 4% in the first half.

The company credited internal efficiency measures and continued strength in the aftermarket for its performance. As part of efforts to offset inflationary pressures, Fluidra also plans to close a research and development facility in France.

Fluidra maintained its full-year forecast, projecting sales growth between 3% and 7% for 2026.

Hayward

Hayward reported second-quarter net sales of \$318.4 million, up 6% year over year, while North American sales increased 9% to \$277.7 million. The company attributed the gains in part to its pricing strategy, sales volume, and favorable exchange rates.

The company continues to expect sales growth of approximately 5% for fiscal 2026 compared with 2025.

"We remain confident in our ability to execute our strategic growth plans, deliver profitable growth, and create long-term stockholder value," said Hayward president and CEO Kevin Holleran.

Pentair

Pentair reported second-quarter sales of \$933 million, down 17%, compared with its previous expectation for a 1% increase. Sales declined by approximately \$170 million, which the company attributed to reduced stocking of its products further down the supply chain.

Following the decline, the company lowered its full-year sales outlook and now

expects a decrease of 4% to 7% from 2025 levels. The company previously forecast growth of 2% to 4%.

"We believe these headwinds are temporary," said Pentair president and

CEO John L. Stauch, "and we are taking decisive actions to adapt the business to current demand levels while positioning it to return to normalized performance in 2027." **PSN**

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Making Way for the FUTURE

Managers adapt to Gen Z's evolving workplace expectations

By Rebecca Robledo

T

wenty years ago, many hands were wrung by those born before 1981, all trying to understand the Millennial generation.

Now, the tables have somewhat turned. Millennials such as Josh Henderson feel as if they are trying to solve a puzzle, while workers from the younger generation—Gen Z—are becoming a larger part of the workforce. They are also critical to the industry's long-term health, and they are beginning to impact work environments and management strategies across the U.S.

"We definitely have to rethink the way we manage employees," says Henderson, president of Adcock Pool and Spa, based in Ellisville, Miss.

"It's not that one generation is better or worse than the others. It's just that this is the expectation that this particular person is coming with, so how do we meet those expectations?"



For Gen Xer Nicole Bailey Ashton, the transition has not felt as abrupt.

"The Millennials came to us as sort of a shock," says the vice president of Lewes, Del.-based Ashton Pools by Design. "I think Gen X to the Millennial was such a drastic change. You had the Gen Xers who were raised in the divorce generation, the MTV generation. We were the 'Be home before it gets dark' [generation]. Our parents didn't know where we were, let alone the helicopter parents of the Millennials. The Gen Zs aren't as drastic [a change] after the Millennials."

That does not mean the up-and-coming workers lack distinguishing characteristics. They do. In many ways, they expect more from their jobs and employers than previous generations. And many company

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Gen Z employees' desire to understand the reasons behind decisions can leave companies with a more informed workforce.

AI-GENERATED IMAGE

owners and managers believe that, if they want to keep their businesses staffed, they need to learn and adapt.

"It's not that one generation is better or worse than the others," Bailey Ashton says. "It really is that this is the expectation that this particular person is coming with, so how do we meet those expectations?"

Changing of the guard

The good news is that Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, shares many similarities with Millennials. Being younger, they are, of course, less financially stable, but they share many of the same values and priorities. This means that companies that have adjusted to Millennials are well-positioned to welcome Gen Z employees.

In an annual survey conducted by the business consulting firm Deloitte, only 6% of Gen Z respondents consider achieving a leadership position a primary goal, but not at the expense of work-life balance or at the risk of forgoing time to learn new marketable skills in favor of putting out fires. As for the former, this generation views its parents as having sacrificed too much of their personal lives to career ambition, and it does not want to take the same path.

When it comes to managerial ambition, this younger generation takes a longer-term view. They see that the pace of change has quickened over time, so they place the ability to adapt high on the priority list. This means they seek continuous training not only to expand their knowledge base but also to pivot when needed.



Top: Younger workers seek more training and a clearly defined route toward supervisory roles.

AI-GENERATED IMAGES

Bottom: Clear boundaries can help crews manage smartphone use on the job, with phones reserved for breaks.

As a result, these professionals are less likely to accept an immediate pay and title hike in favor of learning new skills that will help them further down the road. Their version of ambition differs from that of previous generations in one crucial way: they are willing to wait. Among Gen Z respondents, only 25% said they seek quick promotions and title changes.

This does not mean Gen Z lacks ambition. Indeed, a full 76% plan to pursue senior or executive leadership roles throughout their careers. They just might take the scenic route to get there.

Part of this trend may stem from the fact that many Gen Zs do not see a management title as the only way to make a difference at work.

This generation is also looking for a stronger sense of purpose. Nearly 100% of those surveyed said this

is very important to their happiness at work and overall well-being. Nearly 40% said they have turned down work with employers whose ethics or values they disagree with.

Like Millennials, this generation values personal connection in the workplace, and respondents are 15% more likely to stay in a job for more than five years if they have formed close personal friendships at work.

Bridging the gap

Gen Z is also the first to be born into a world where the internet already existed. They have been immersed in tech, which has affected how they work.

Bailey Ashton finds herself revisiting a specific discussion with her husband from time to time.

"My husband's come over and asked, 'Why are there TVs in everybody's offices? Why am I paying people to watch TV?' she says. "But that's how they work. They have a TV streaming in the background, and they have something else going on on their phones. They're so used to tech."

She has come to believe that these employees process information differently from earlier generations. If they are getting their work done, she figures, she does not need to worry about it.

"Their brain can work and watch TV and have a phone conversation or text all at the same time," Ashton says. "Our generation didn't learn that immediately. Some of us can do that, but it isn't as natural to us."



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Top: Although younger employees may instinctively use texts and email, some customers require staff to learn how to communicate by phone.

AI-GENERATED IMAGES

Above: Gen Z candidates often ask detailed questions about the work, their potential coworkers, and where they would be working.

Employees from the upcoming generation, raised on technology, are more likely to turn to these avenues first, almost reflexively.

Given their exposure to electronic communication, such as text and email, she also finds that her younger employees automatically turn to these media to communicate with customers. But in the retirement community she serves, that will not cut it. So she might have to walk these staffers through the process of making a phone call—not so much the mechanics as what to say and what not to say.

In some cases, Henderson finds himself discussing with employees when they should not use technology as a first resort.

For instance, some employees have been known to order lunch delivered via Uber Eats and other app-based services—not only at the store but also in

the field. That has to be curtailed, especially on job sites, where liability becomes an issue when other parties show up. In one case, a delivery person stepped into the backyard just as an excavator was heading in their direction. Plus, it does not look good if the client is home.

So that must be curtailed when it happens. “We’ve had to have those conversations,” Henderson says. “It caused a minor issue, but once we explained to them why, they seemed to understand.”

Watching YouTube videos to learn skills can also cause problems if the presentation does not align with your own procedures and methods. Explain this to employees as well.

And, of course, the use of cell phones can become a bone of contention if workers are checking texts and social media on the job. Henderson and his team have solved this problem by setting clear boundaries on when staffers can use their smartphones. This depends somewhat on their work. Retail staff should only look at their phones when the store is really slow, and only for a glance. For crews, phone use is restricted to breaks.

“I think it’s almost foolish to fight it,” he says.

Inquisitive generation

Not only does the ever-present nature of technology make these employees more inclined to turn to it as a first resort, Henderson says. They grew up in the Information Age, so they expect quick access to everything they want to know. And they want to know plenty.

For instance, when training, Gen Z often wants to know more about policies and procedures than their predecessors did. If they are asked to do something unusual or even if plans change on a given day, they tend to ask for the reason.

“They seem to want to know the whys before putting an action into motion,” Henderson says. “I remember when I was younger, it was just, ‘Tell me what you want me to do and when you want it done by,’ and I would knock it out. It doesn’t seem to be like that anymore. If I say, ‘I have to send you over here today instead of there, I get asked. ‘Why do we have to do that?’”

It requires a little more time when training or giving directives, Henderson adds. Still, he sees the change as an overall positive, leaving him with a more well-informed workforce that can hopefully avoid some of the mistakes older generations made.



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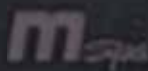
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Top: Letting employees see their clients enjoy a finished pool project can connect their work to a sense of purpose.

AI-GENERATED IMAGES

Bottom: Training that maps skills to future responsibilities can show younger workers how they can advance in their careers.

"[Gen Zs] are thirsty for knowledge, and that can be a definite benefit to the company if you embrace it," he says.

At first, though, the questions felt to him as if they were doubting his expertise or authority. But once he learned a little about the younger workers, he saw that was not the case.

"It's hard not to get defensive at first," he says. "It feels like they're questioning your authority and decision-making. But the more I talk to them about it, the more it makes sense. I might ask why they need to know when they're getting paid either way. They might just say, 'I just wanted to know. If I'm going to be late, I want to let my girlfriend know.'"

Bailey Ashton sees this inquisitiveness at work during Gen Z interviews. They tend to have a long list of questions, she says. They might even want to know specifics such as where they would be working,

a little bit about their potential coworkers, and maybe even to tour the property. To accommodate this, she will set aside more time than before to field questions. She might also walk them through the office. However, any such changes she makes apply to everyone, not just Gen Z.

The search for fulfillment

Ashton has seen ample evidence supporting Deloitte's survey findings on what Gen Z employees want from a job.

"Younger workers in construction are asking us for more training than older people ever asked for—they're asking us for a career path," she says. "They want to know, 'If I come to work for you, and I'm laying pavers, how do I eventually get to be the person running the job?'" she explains.

This has prompted her company to offer more training than before and to define career pathways clearly. "[The training] is not only 'Here's how you lay your pavers,' but more like 'If you learn to do this, you can do this. And if you learn how to do this, you can do that. And here's how you can move into a more supervisory role, and here are the steps to get you there.'"

Finally, she sees that her younger workers want to feel like they are contributing to something bigger. So she reminds them of the service they provide.

"We go back after a photo shoot and show them, 'Look at this family making these memories that they're going to remember for the rest of their lives. You built this,'" she explains. "If they want their work to have value, you have to be able to relate that back to a value that they appreciate." **PSN**





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The Growing Appeal of Saunas

Wellness interest drives demand for diverse options

By Anna Vetta

Saunas have gained unprecedented popularity, prompting some to ponder the reasons behind their surge, while others question why it took so long for them to gain widespread recognition.

Saunas have been a growing wellness commodity for spas, gyms, yoga studios, hotels, resorts, and many more commercial locations for years. Residential saunas have also been increasing in demand, especially over the past two years, which has been a whirlwind.

Amid the global pandemic, saunas emerged as a highly sought-after wellness product, and these demand trends appear to be enduring. Before delving into this transformative shift, it is important to understand some essential elements about saunas. The following explores these various areas.

History of saunas

The origins of the sauna can be traced back more than 2,000 years to Finland. A sauna was simply a wooden room or a stone

temple with a hole in the dirt (referred to as a “pit”), and it was filled with a wood fire. Finns would use the sauna for many daily activities—from eating meals and social gatherings to relaxation. The birthing ritual would also take place in the sauna, and new mothers would use the space for rest.

Sauna rooms were made of stone, brick, and most commonly wood. A wood structure, whether for interior or exterior use, is the perfect material choice for any sauna design. Later, heat sources evolved, and many options became available. As awareness of the benefits of saunas grew, they became the “must-have” item for almost every home in Finland.

From the author’s standpoint, the use of saunas is deeply ingrained in Finnish culture. In this nation of 5.5 million, the number of saunas is comparable to the number of television sets, totaling approximately 3.3 million. About two

decades ago, during a trip to Finland for business and leisure, the author made the fascinating observation that households there might have more saunas than cars.

The author found this phenomenon intriguing yet did not fully understand why Finns believed households should have at least one sauna, with many opting for two. Was it a necessity or a preference? The author sought an answer, only to receive the response, “Us Finns love our saunas!” Despite the vague reply, the author considered this a valuable piece of information for sauna enthusiasts. Twenty years later, the question lingered: would the author and the rest of the world come to understand it, too?

Types of saunas

There are many heat source options available for saunas, from hot rock to infrared and to steam.



A wood structure for either interior or exterior is the perfect material choice for any sauna design.



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Due to the pandemic, saunas experienced a notable rise in popularity not only in commercial settings but also among individuals seeking to turn their homes into personal retreats and wellness sanctuaries.

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A dual sauna is both an infrared and a traditional sauna (e.g. a hot stone heater) in one room.

Wood-burning saunas

As mentioned, saunas began as fire pits, but this is no longer common, as a wood-burning stove has now replaced the traditional fire pit. Wood-burning saunas are great options for any outdoor sauna and cottage living. There are options to have the wood stove stoked from the interior or exterior.

Interior stoke will allow the user to bring wood inside the sauna and feed it. Exterior stoke will allow filling the wood chimney from outside the sauna, reducing mess inside the sauna, but the user will still have to step outside to refill each time. The choice becomes a matter of client preference, as both options offer distinct benefits.

Some wood stoves also have optional add-ons of a water tank or a rock cage for a more industrial feel, which is a popular style for camps. Wood-stove-fired saunas are popular in areas where electricity is remote or expensive.

Traditional electric saunas

Electric sauna stoves, often referred to as a “traditional sauna with rocks,” are quite popular and perhaps the most popular for many commercial spaces. Gyms and hotels have had traditional saunas for many years, as this service allows users to enjoy the benefits of a sauna in a large communal setting.

Sauna electric heaters are both convenient and offer a wide range of kilowatt sizes, voltage options, and control upgrades, making them among the most popular sauna styles, past and present. These traditional electric saunas require minimal maintenance, as there is no need to cut and fill wood or clean up soot. These saunas include a safety feature: the electric stove/heater controls have an automatic shut-off. The automatic shut-off feature is an added benefit, since with a wood-burning sauna, it is important to ensure the fire is put out first.

This convenience has now opened many doors for sauna enthusiasts, as the sauna is no longer just an exterior structure, leading to increased demand for indoor saunas. Now, these traditional saunas (available indoors or outdoors) also allow users to pour water onto the rocks to increase humidity. During colder months, adding sauna essences to the water-filled bucket can provide benefits for colds and flu-like symptoms. It was a win-win for

anyone wanting to improve their wellness: a sauna that can be used year-round, indoors or outdoors.

Infrared saunas

An infrared sauna is not a “hot sauna” (although some may argue otherwise). It is more of a soothing, warm sauna with no water. One may wonder, why is it called a sauna? This is primarily because the benefits of heat in a wood room may be compared to the same benefits of infrared saunas. Moreover, infrared saunas provide a more comfortable heat and penetrate the body directly, whereas traditional saunas heat the room, and users perspire when the room is hot.

Infrared saunas offer enjoyment for individuals who prefer a milder experience and find traditional saunas too hot. With an infrared sauna, they can still reap the benefits without enduring intense heat. When communicating with clients, one can draw a comparison between saunas and a hot summer day. Traditional saunas represent the scorching heat of 2 p.m. sunlight, while infrared saunas provide a sensation akin to sitting in the shade under a large willow tree. The comforting warmth characterizes the experience of an infrared sauna. With three sauna options now available, there is a choice to meet everyone's needs.

Dual saunas

Dual saunas are the best of both worlds in one room. A dual sauna combines an infrared sauna and a traditional sauna (e.g. a hot stone heater) in one room. With these, users may enjoy the metaphor of both the intense 2 p.m. sun and an escape to the shade. This sauna is one of the most popular on the market, helping clients who are unsure which sauna to purchase make an easy choice.

Steam rooms

Steam rooms, unlike sauna rooms finished in wood, are finished in tile, glass, marble, etc. (i.e. non-porous materials similar to a shower.) The steam room is also called a “hammam spa,” a room with high humidity and steam. Some people also refer to this as a “wet sauna.”

Some steam rooms are standalone, while others combine a steam room and a shower. This is a great option for using an existing shower space and converting it into a steam room for added ambiance and benefits.

The versatility of saunas

The variety of saunas to choose from is plentiful. With a sauna manufacturer, a sauna enthusiast can achieve design and size possibilities. If there is no space outside for a sauna, then inquire about an indoor sauna. No space is too small, and no space is too large for a sauna.

If there is no space inside a house, consider an outdoor sauna. Is electricity an issue for an outdoor sauna? Outdoor saunas have a wood-burning option for remote cottage life or for use near the lake, where electricity is not available. Some models also come in plug-and-play forms. An ideal spot for a sauna room is the basement, bedroom, or bathroom.

What if standard sauna models just do not fit the space? Inquire with a North American sauna manufacturer to customize a sauna made just for the user. They can be made to the exact size to fit any space, be it a commercial gym, yoga studio, hotel, or a house. Does the client require a specific

wood type? This is possible, too. With countless possibilities, a sauna manufacturer can make a vision come to life.

The benefits of saunas

The benefits of saunas vary widely. Bathing in saunas is not just for relaxation and pleasure, but may also be linked to several

health benefits. From relaxation and improving heart conditions to ridding flu-like symptoms, the sauna has been a go-to for aiding many ailments for years.

Sauna benefits include reductions in the risk of vascular diseases such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and neurocognitive disease; nonvascular

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Bathing in saunas is not just for relaxation and pleasure, but may also be linked to several health benefits.

conditions such as pulmonary diseases; and arthritis, headache, and flu.

Sauna users also enjoy the conditioning of the body's muscles from aches and pains. Increased endorphins during sauna bathing allow one to reduce stress and pain. (Endorphins are polypeptides made by the pituitary gland and the central nervous system.)

While endorphins are doing their job of increasing in a sauna, serotonin also increases. Low levels of serotonin allow for depression. Serotonin is the "happy hormone," and it positively affects mood and behavior. Increased levels of serotonin and lowered levels of cortisol (stress hormone) are among the many benefits of saunas.¹

Another benefit is burning calories. According to the U.S. Army medical research (Ward Dean, M.D.), "A moderately conditioned person can easily sweat off 500 grams [17.6 oz] in a sauna in a single session, consuming nearly 300 calories in the process."

Other positives from sauna bathing include sharpening one's senses, beautifying the skin, revitalizing the mind and body, and an overall escape from the realities of daily life it offers. However, one is still recommended to consult their physician before any sauna use, particularly for health use.

Exploring the history, types, options, and benefits of saunas, the narrative now

transitions to an examination of why saunas have become one of the hottest commodities on the worldwide market.

Becoming a hot commodity

During the pandemic, saunas became one of the most in-demand wellness products by consumers, a trend that appears here to stay.

Saunas witnessed a surge in popularity within various commercial spaces, but the pandemic prompted individuals to transform their homes into personal retreats and wellness sanctuaries. With travel on the decline, staycations gained traction. And what better staycation than having a sauna conveniently at home, ready for use at any time of the day?

The popularity of home saunas rose notably, surprising the author, who had initially doubted that the Finnish lifestyle of households having more saunas than cars would translate to North America. However, clients began ordering two or three saunas—one for the home interior, another for the backyard by the pond, and yet another for the cottage. The author was impressed to witness individuals who had never contemplated saunas now purchasing multiple units at a time.

With more time at home, individuals researched online, particularly exploring the benefits of saunas. The author explained to one client, "Heat lifts, it lifts dirt from a

counter, just as heat from a sauna lifts toxins from the body." People engaged in frequent research, realizing that saunas not only eliminate toxins but also elevate one's spirits. During the pandemic, activating one's spirit, or the "happy hormone" (serotonin), became essential for many.

Individuals found the concept of customizable saunas to meet their design preferences intriguing, marking a significant shift in perspective. The revelation that saunas are energy-efficient captivated them. Additionally, discovering the availability of sauna types catering to both those who prefer higher temperatures and those who prefer milder ones left them amazed.

Saunas have evolved into a personal indulgence or a thoughtful gift for others—a symbol of relaxation, an at-home spa experience, a gesture of wellness, or even as a way to shed some extra pounds. Regardless of the specific purpose, saunas have undeniably secured a spot on people's priority lists today and in the days to come.

Heightened awareness led people to comprehend what the Finns had known all along: saunas hold more significance than TVs and cars. Saunas become integral to one's way of life, and when individuals incorporate saunas into their lifestyle, the benefits become exponential. **PSN**

Notes

¹Jari A. Laukkanen, Tanjaniina Laukkanen, and Setor K. Kunutsor, "Cardiovascular and Other Health Benefits of Sauna Bathing: A Review of the Evidence," Mayo Clinic Proceedings 93, no. 8 (2018): 1111–1121.

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Close-up: maintenance and cleaning

The macro and micro of training

By Rebecca Robledo



Thanks to a combination of conditions inside and outside the pool/spa industry, training and education have become more crucial than ever for service, maintenance, and repair technicians.

Technology alone has exponentially complicated the job. Computerization requires more sophisticated knowledge and well-honed skills in caring for and repairing equipment. At the same time, the Internet of Things (IoT) means techs must deal with Wi-Fi and router issues in addition to pool/spa equipment itself.

In addition, this industry suffers from a chronic staffing shortage, prompting many companies to hire inexperienced candidates and train them from scratch. This requires a solid foundation of training, as well as ongoing schooling to help them hone their craft.

As consolidation accelerates across the industry, acquiring firms must ensure that standardized information and training are provided to both new employees and those transitioning from acquired companies.

All these factors lead to an increased need for a detailed, standardized training plan that applies to everyone.

But younger workers are less content with simply having a summer job and a decent paycheck. More than ever, they are looking at how today's job can lead to a career and improve their future and that of their family. And, on top of that, they prioritize personal gratification on the job more than ever. These facts require companies to take a greater interest in employees' personal goals and to offer more customized training.

PHOTO COURTESY GOODALL POOLS



As more service technicians enter from outside the industry, standardized training plans become increasingly important.

PHOTO COURTESY GIB-SAN POOL & LANDSCAPE CREATIONS

In other words, proper training and career path culture should be viewed from both the macro and micro levels—creating standardization across the company while fine-tuning to each individual's needs.

The following tips can help individuals cover all the bases as they develop their own approach to training and education.

The 10,000-foot view

Here are some ways executives at pool/spa service firms develop effective, comprehensive company-wide, standardized training programs.

- 1 **Set goals and expectations for each position.** Executives should take a realistic look at what each technician does—and not just the maintenance and repair tasks.

Some companies want their technicians to take advantage of any upselling opportunity that comes along. If that is the case, technicians need information about the company's products, including their benefits and drawbacks.

Companies may want service professionals to detect when a pool falls out of compliance with laws, codes, and industry standards, both to safeguard

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Top: Even during the swim season, companies should hold regular training sessions to help maintain a culture of learning.

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Left: The off-season provides an ideal opportunity for companies to offer intensive staff training.

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customers and to propose repairs. In that case, technicians need to know local and state codes, as well as industry standards.

Executives should also consider how in-depth technicians' knowledge needs to be, especially when they start with the company. While a tech ideally can answer any question, that level of knowledge may not be necessary. Stephen Little, CEO of Claro Pool Services in Palm Desert, Calif., for instance, wants his entry-level techs to know the routine process inside and out, but he doesn't need them to know the whys of every part of it.

Overwhelming newer technicians with too much information can set them up for failure, he says.

For his company, "the goal is not to have a pool cleaner who can explain the potential of hydrogen or what the best method to sanitize the pool may be," says Little. "The goal and result of our training is that the pool cleaning employee can clearly explain what tests they are performing, what the expected result is, and how to have an impact on any test."

Companies should make these expectations clear to employees through job descriptions, followed by occasional goal-setting sessions.

2 Develop a clear training and promotion structure.

Companies should establish a structured plan outlining what education takes place, as well as the incentives and promotions employees receive as they complete each stage. Not only does this help the company solidify its training program, but it also motivates employees to evolve continually.

If a company has a tiered system based on experience, skill, and/or training, it should name those tiers and explain what employees must achieve to advance to the next level, as well as what incentives, raises, or rewards accompany that advancement.

The plan should also specify how long new technicians must work in their current positions before they are considered for promotion.

3 Schedule training at regular intervals, even during the busy season.

Companies should make training an integral part of their operations by conducting it regularly. If a company has an off-season, it should ramp up training to take advantage of the slower pace of work.

Even during the busy season, companies should make education a routine by scheduling regular meetings or one-on-one sessions with managers. This way, technicians not only continue learning but also make training a regular part of their jobs and professional development.

Many PSN Top 50 pool/spa service companies hold weekly department meetings where technicians can raise challenges and brainstorm solutions, or where managers and supervisors update them on new procedures, codes, or products.

For example, Gohlke Pools holds weekly meetings. While the maintenance and repair departments usually meet separately, they come together every few weeks.

"It's important, first, for company culture, so they can know each other and know who's available for help," explains Nick Day, general manager of the

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When sending technicians to trade shows, companies should work with them to determine which seminars best support their training and career goals.

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THE POOL BUTLER

Denton, Texas-based company. "But it also allows them to, if the repair techs are seeing specific issues or nuisance calls from the maintenance technicians, to discuss those and try to make everybody's time more efficient."

Whenever training occurs, companies should treat it as sacred, with nothing else taking priority, including putting out fires, no matter how urgent. This helps develop a culture of learning.

4 Build company culture into training.

Just as company owners and managers incorporate training into their culture, they also use it to reinforce that culture.

For instance, when Rich Gallo, CEO of Los Angeles-based Pure Swim, trains new staff, he works to set their minds at ease while also making it clear that they are expected to contribute to the team. He begins by explaining the Law of Reciprocity.

"When you do good, it's going to come back in its simplest form," he says.

He explains that everyone is there to help new employees, but they are also expected to assist when needed.

"I explain, 'Imagine the person to your left and to your right has your back, because you have theirs,'" he says. "The 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 person to your left and right has your back and you know you'll get through this, then your sense of empowerment is as high as it can be."



The personal touch

To maximize each employee's potential and reinforce a sense of career progression, executives and managers use the following methods.

1 Begin discussing a job candidate's future before they are hired.

When interviewing job candidates, Little already considers their potential long-term future with the company.

"One of the first questions I ask is, 'Where do you see yourself in five years?'" he says. "Then I take away that information and ask, 'Is there any overlap between where this person wants to be in five years and where [my company] is going to be?'"



Little also recommends documenting that information so managers can refer to it later as a new hire's strengths become apparent, during performance reviews, or when developing a specific career plan for the employee.

2 Use technology to create an environment of continuous training.

Cell phones, texting, and video calls allow technicians to contact colleagues and managers when problems arise easily. 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 Day. "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."

3 Provide incentives to learn.

Learning may be a reward in itself, but added commission earnings or even an out-of-town trip can provide technicians with greater incentive to succeed.

Gohlke Pools makes it clear to its pool professionals that greater knowledge generally leads to higher commissions by enabling them to complete calls more efficiently and recommend appropriate products to customers.

The company also financially rewards route supervisors when their direct reports perform well, and the pool owners they serve are satisfied. "Our route

As pool systems become more complex, training becomes increasingly vital.

PHOTO COURTESY
HAUK CUSTOM POOLS



A great training program not only sets up pool techs to perform their core responsibilities well, but also to master soft skills and make appropriate suggestions for add-on products or services.

PHOTO COURTESY
THE POOL BUTLER

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 to make sure they're doing a good job. And they're heavily involved in training."

4 Meet with employees periodically to establish new goals and training needs.

Mentorship should continue beyond new-employee training and the initial ride-along period.

Gohlke Pools, for instance, requires technicians to clean pools for at least one summer before they are assessed as potential repair trainees.

"That gives us enough time to evaluate their work ethic, communication skills, and mechanical prowess," says Day. "That could be as little as six months, but probably more likely a year."

At the end of that period, the company conducts an evaluation. These assessments typically take place as winter approaches, allowing employees to receive intensive training to fill knowledge gaps during the off-season. If a technician is not ready for promotion, they continue in their maintenance role for the next season.

Yearly assessments also provide an opportunity to evaluate ongoing development. Some companies even have seasoned veterans take managers on ride-alongs to assess their performance.

5 Take an active role in choosing employees' outside education.

Some companies want technicians to earn industry certifications quickly, so they require employees to obtain them within a specified timeframe.

Gohlke Pools has a Certified Pool Operator (CPO) instructor on staff who teaches monthly courses for employees, commercial customers, and others in the local pool, spa, and aquatics industries. New service professionals at the company take the first course offered after their start date and then complete the certification exam.

Pure Swim outlines a sequence of industry certifications employees must complete within their first six months. These include the CPO and certifications from the National Plasterers Council (NPC), Independent Pool and Spa Service Association (IPSSA), OSHA, and the Pool Chemistry Training Institute (PCTI).

As part of their ongoing education, employees also attend two weeks of outside instruction each year, paid for by Pure Swim, Gallo says.

When sending employees to trade shows, some companies require them to attend a minimum number of classes or hours of instruction each day. Managers may also work with employees to map out which classes best support their development and career progression. **PSN**

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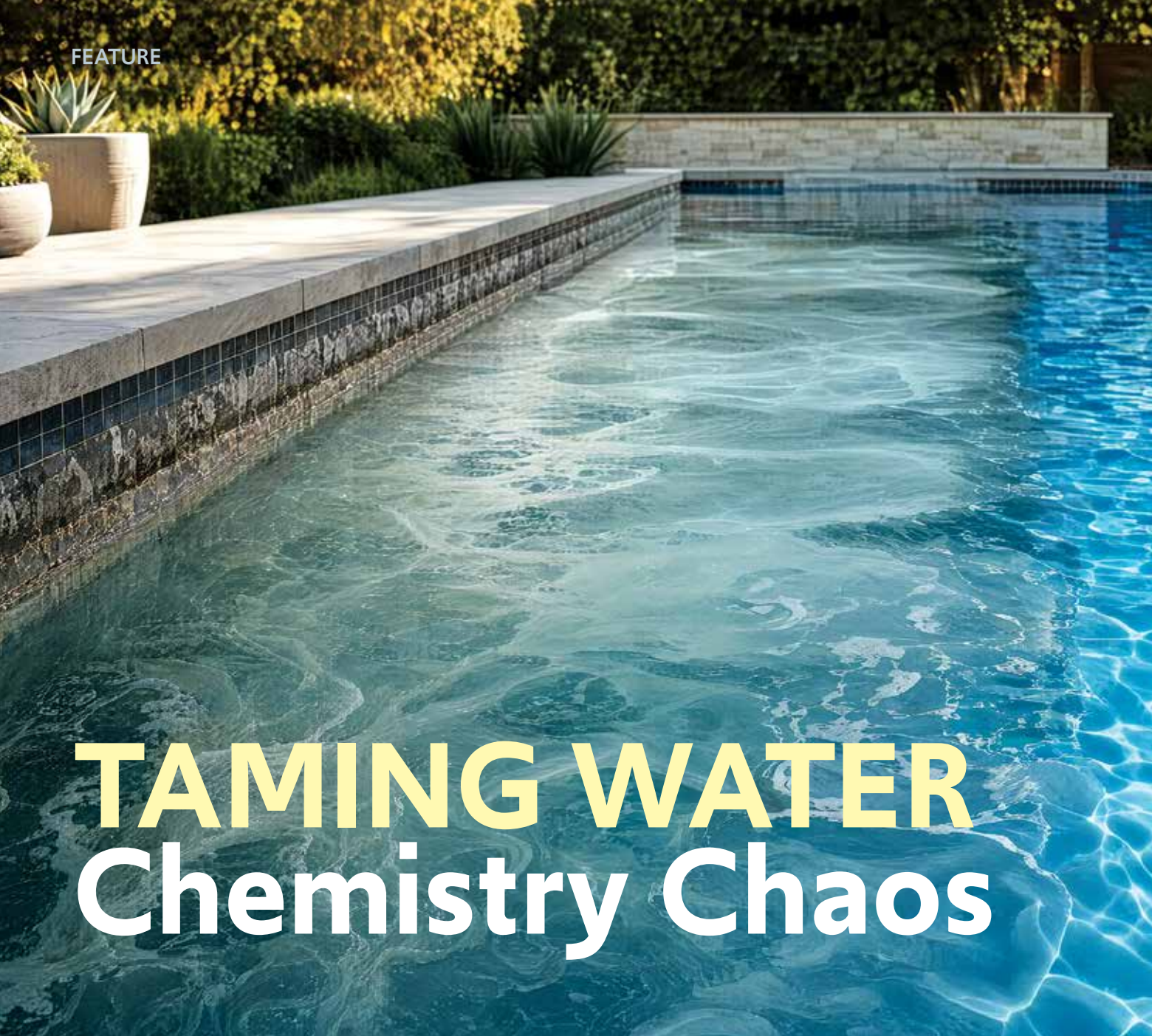


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TAMING WATER Chemistry Chaos

Practical guidance for backyard pools

By Terry Arko

The water in backyard pools is as unruly, chaotic, and unpredictable as a tempest in the open sea. In fact, it is the very nature of water itself to be outlandish and destructive. If water does not have enough food, it will eat through solid materials to get what it wants. The two favorite foods for hungry water are calcium and magnesium. These are also two of the ingredients found in pool plaster.

Hungry water is “soft water.” Soft water needs minerals, and it will eat through cementitious surfaces,

such as plaster, to get what it craves. When water has absorbed enough minerals, it will deposit its contents in the form of hard, crystallized calcium carbonate onto any available surface. This over-mineralized water is generally described as “hard water.” Hard water will leave its damaging contents on pool walls, floors, and especially on heat exchangers.

Water can do other unpredictable things, such as invisibly carrying metals into the pool, only to have them later revealed as stains on the surface. Water is called a “universal solvent,” and while that may sound



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Hydronium ions are formed when H^+ combines with H_2O and forms H_3O^+ . In pure water, this occurs because of the constant dissociation of water molecules, allowing H^+ to be available to attach to the strong pull of the negative oxygen charge of the H_2O molecule.

This reaction also produces OH^- ions. These ions are basic or alkaline, whereas H_3O^+ is acidic. Water molecules (H_2O) are considered neutral in pure water and act as a buffer against the acidity of H_3O^+ . The OH^- ions also help maintain the balanced pH of pure water at 7.0. In pool water, H_3O^+ is formed when acid is added. The reactivity of pool water concerns the immediate reactions that occur when chemicals come into contact with water.

When water and compounds meet

The most prevalent reaction involving water is hydrolysis. When chemicals meet water, an immediate reaction occurs, during which water breaks down the bonds present in certain compounds or substances.

The best example of this process can be observed when chlorine is added to water. The immediate reaction of $Cl_2 + H_2O$ results in the formation of $HOCl$ and HCl , both of which are acids. HCl is a strong acid, while $HOCl$ is a weak but strong oxidizing acid. Subsequent hydrolysis leads to the formation of OH^- ions, hypochlorite ions, and a chlorine byproduct. For example, adding calcium hypochlorite to water initiates hydrolysis, yielding $HOCl$, HCl , and OH^- . The byproduct of calcium hypochlorite is calcium.

All these reactions are the result of hydrolysis, or water's ability to break down compounds chemically. Water is also breaking down any substance it comes into continual contact with, such as plaster or other cementitious surfaces, contributing to the gradual erosion of solid materials.

Here are five steps that can help to ensure pools are more predictable and less chaotic:

1 Know the source water

It is important to be aware of the water composition from the source that will enter the pool. Every test done on the pool should also be performed seasonally on the tap water. Both free and total chlorine levels should be tested in the source water. This is important because many water facilities now use a disinfection method called "chloramination." In short, this means every time water is added to the



Water molecules (H_2O) are considered neutral in pure water and act as a buffer against the acidity of H_3O^+ .

like a benign title, it means water is tirelessly working 24 hours a day, breaking down and eroding any surface. The challenge of every pool professional is to efficiently manage one of the most reactive and unpredictable elements on earth.

Reactive water

While water is classified as an inorganic element, it behaves in many ways like a living organism. Water is termed amphoteric, meaning it can act as both an acid and a base. Pure water self-ionizes, maintaining a pH of 7.0 through a process in which water molecules dissociate and recombine to form hydronium and hydroxide ions.



Top: Inspecting pumps, filters, and plumbing is critical when assessing a pool's ability to circulate water properly. Undersized, aging, or poorly located equipment can lead to inadequate turnover and recurring water problems.

AI-GENERATED IMAGES

Above: Effective circulation and filtration are essential to healthy pool water; specialty chemicals cannot replace them. Clean filters and good flow help remove fine particulate matter from the system.

pool, the concentration of chloramines also increases. Without regular oxidation of the pool, these chloramines from the source water, along with others in the pool, can overwhelm the free chlorine, making pool sanitation more difficult.

Test pH, total alkalinity (TA), calcium hardness, and total dissolved solids (TDS). Knowing these values is important for adjusting the pool water as needed when adding makeup water or performing a drain-and-refill. Two important readings from the source water are calcium hardness and TDS. When filling a new pool, the calcium hardness must be at least 150 parts per million (ppm). Failure to meet this requirement may lead to issues, such as etched plaster, unless steps are taken to increase the calcium level. To illustrate, consider the tap water in Seattle, which has a calcium hardness level of 40 ppm. Using this water without testing and knowing the calcium hardness level could damage the plaster.

Calcium levels can be increased by using calcium chloride as directed. The next vital test of source

water is TDS. This is essential to know because when TDS in the pool water exceeds that of the source water by 1,500 ppm, it results in a 50-percent reduction in chlorine effectiveness.

Further, testing for phosphates and nitrates in the source water is recommended. If the source is from wells, it is advisable to test for metals such as iron, copper, and manganese. If any level of these metals is present, adding a good metal-sequestering product to the pool immediately upon filling is recommended.

2 | Understand what chlorine is doing in the pool
Two main tests should be done every week: total chlorine and free chlorine. While the focus for pools is often free chlorine, it is important to understand why testing total chlorine is necessary. When testing for total chlorine, one measures the total quantity of chlorine species in the pool—this includes both free and combined chlorine. So, what is combined chlorine, and does it offer benefits or pose harm to the water? Another term for combined chlorine is a bit more nefarious—"chloramines" because they can cause a lot of chaos in the pool.

Chloramine in pools forms when free chlorine reacts with waste materials in the water, such as nitrogen compounds from perspiration, urine, and body oils. This reaction leads to poor disinfection, strong, irritating chlorine odors, and eye and skin irritation in swimmers. So, it is not enough to know only the free chlorine level without also understanding the total chlorine level. Testing total chlorine and understanding both combined and free chlorine levels are essential. If the combined chlorine level exceeds the free chlorine level, it can cause chaos in the pool water.

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Over-mineralized, hard water can leave crystallized calcium carbonate on available surfaces, including pool walls and floors. Maintaining proper mineral balance helps prevent this damaging scale.

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Well water should be checked for metals such as iron, copper, and manganese before it enters the pool. If metals are present, a sequestering product should be added when filling begins.

According to the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), the maximum allowable level of chloramines or combined chlorine is 0.4 ppm, with the ideal target no higher than 0.2 ppm. Regular oxidation methods, such as proactive shocking, superchlorination, ozone, UV, or the advanced oxidation process (AOP), are effective ways to minimize the formation of combined chlorine and prevent chaos.

To determine combined chlorine, start by testing both total and free chlorine. Then, subtract free chlorine from the total, and the remainder represents the combined chlorine level, as seen in this equation:

$$\text{Total chlorine} - \text{free chlorine} = \text{Combined chlorine}$$

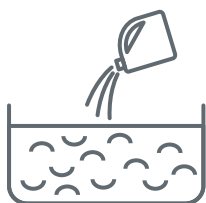
Another critical consideration with chlorine is understanding the byproducts associated with the type being used and their impact on the water. For instance, the byproduct of trichlor is cyanuric acid (CYA). While a target CYA level of 30 to 50 ppm is ideal in the pool, excessive levels can cause chaos, including increased chlorine demand and unexpected algae outbreaks. Every 1 lb of trichlor used in 10,000 gals. leaves 6 ppm of CYA in the water. Therefore, 50 lb of trichlor used over the course of a season would raise the CYA level by 300 ppm. To maintain an algae-free pool with a CYA of 300 ppm, the free chlorine residual needs to be 22.5 ppm. Further, trichlor increases TDS by 16 ppm for every 1 lb of trichlor used in 10,000 gals.

The byproduct of calcium hypochlorite (cal hypo) is calcium. For every 1 lb of 65% cal hypo used in 10,000 gal., there is an 8-ppm increase in calcium hardness. Therefore, using 50 lb of cal hypo seasonally would raise calcium hardness by 400 ppm. Each pound of cal hypo in 10,000 gal. also increases TDS by 12 ppm.



Borates can help buffer pool water against rising pH, a common issue in saltwater pools. At a target of 50 ppm, they can also support water clarity and reduce the chance of scale formation.

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Liquid chlorine does not contain CYA or calcium, so it does not contribute to increases in either. However, liquid chlorine contributes to TDS as sodium chloride. It is important to note that while liquid chlorine increases TDS, it is the least detrimental form of TDS buildup. According to ANSI/APSP/ICC-11-2019, high sodium chloride concentrations will not reduce sanitizer efficiency or cause cloudy water.

3 | Water balance is the secret

Balance is truly the key to life and water chemistry, yet achieving it can be a weekly challenge. There is often confusion about how and where to maintain water balance in pools. Firstly, there are industry standards, with PHTA providing published guidelines that include minimum, maximum, and ideal ranges. While aiming for the ideal is recommended, setting more specific targets within these standards is even better. Here are some suggested targets for water balance:

- pH 7.5
- TA 90 ppm
- Calcium hardness—350 ppm (plaster pools), 250 ppm (vinyl and fiberglass pools)
- CYA 50 ppm
- TDS—Maximum 1,500 ppm above the source water

One of the best ways to prevent water chaos is to strive to meet these targets as closely as possible. This

approach ensures pools become highly predictable in their treatment week in and week out. In other words, when this system becomes routine, there is a much lower chance of unpredictable occurrences, and that is the ultimate goal.

4 | Add borates

Both TA and CYA act as buffers for pH, primarily preventing it from going down. Even with the TA at the proper target, the pH can still drift up, a common occurrence, especially in saltwater pools.

Service professionals often add acid to lower the pH, which may also lower the TA. Consequently, they raise the alkalinity, and the pH drifts upwards, leading to a cycle of adjustments. Interestingly, borates also act as a buffer, helping prevent the pH from rising. This is one reason to add borates to the pool at a target rate of 50 ppm. Here are some additional ways in which borates can help prevent chaos in the pool:

- Prevents algae growth
- Extends the life of chlorine in the pool
- Softens the water, reducing the chance of scale formation
- Enhances sparkle and clarity in the pool

The most economical form of borate is boric acid, which requires less and eliminates the need for additional muriatic acid.



Top: Pool professionals should seasonally test the source water as well as the pool water. Free and total chlorine readings are especially important when tap water may be disinfected through chloramination.

AI-GENERATED IMAGES

Above: Consistent testing and specific water-balance targets make weekly pool treatment more predictable. Key readings include pH, total alkalinity, calcium hardness, cyanuric acid, and total dissolved solids.

5 | Keep the water moving Any water treatment expert will attest that moving water is healthy water. People do not drink from stagnant cesspools, but rather from water that flows swiftly. In a pool, the water's health is entirely dependent on proper circulation and filtration. Without these, the pool water will experience constant chaos. No specialty chemical can replace efficient, proper circulation and filtration. It is crucial to have good flow and clean filters capable of removing the greatest amount of micron-sized particulate matter.

Consider it this way: One could take all the vitamins in the world, but if their kidneys are failing and their blood is not circulating, they will not live very long.

A thorough understanding of filtration is necessary. If all the water in a pool passes through the filter once, this equals one turnover. Is the pool 100 percent filtered? The answer is no. In many cases, it takes four turnovers of the pool to achieve 98 percent filtered water. This is known as the pool's turnover rate. Many residential pools might not even get one complete turnover in 8 hours, posing a significant problem.

Determining the turnover rate of a pool involves taking the pool's water volume, dividing it by the pump's known flow rate in gallons per minute (gpm), and then dividing by 60, since turnover rates are measured in hours. For example, a 20,000-gal. pool with a pump flow rate of 25 gpm: $20,000/25/60 = 13.3$ hours for just one turnover.

Hydraulics is a complex subject that should be studied by any professional who services pools. Understanding turnover rates, flow rates, and proper filter sizing is necessary. Pools improperly built with substandard equipment, which hinders proper turnover and flow, will experience more chaos than those with good flow and properly sized equipment. When considering a new account, a thorough inspection of the equipment is essential. If the equipment is undersized, old, and located far from the pool, a pool professional may want to reconsider, as equipment inefficiencies can lead to chaos.

With these five steps in place, one can be better equipped to ensure the pools they maintain are more predictable and rational. This translates to less chaos at the pool and in their life. **PSN**



Terry Arko is a product training and content manager for HASA Pool Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of pool and spa water treatment products in Saugus, Calif. He has more than 40 years of experience in the pool and spa/hot tub industry, working in service, repair, retail sales, chemical manufacturing, technical service, commercial sales, and product development. He has written more than 100 published articles on water chemistry and has taught water chemistry courses for more than 25 years. Arko serves as a voting member on the board of the Recreational Water Quality Committee (RWQC). He is an instructor for the Commercial Pool Operator (CPO) course and for the Pool Chemistry Certified Residential course at the Pool Chemistry Training Institute (PCTI). Arko can be reached at terryarko@hasapool.com.

Spas and Accessories



PHOTO ©IRINA88W | DREAMSTIME.COM

DELTA STAR DS-10 SERIES



The Delta Star DS-10 Series is a compact chiller line for commercial cold plunge and hydrotherapy applications, available in air-cooled, water-cooled, and heat-pump configurations. A high-performance rotary compressor, microchannel condenser, and high-efficiency ECM condenser fan motor support heat transfer, reduced energy use, and quieter operation. Using R-454B refrigerant, the system provides up to 22,500 BTUH of cooling capacity. Its corrosion-resistant titanium heat exchanger supports use with saltwater, chlorinated, and ozonated water systems. Integrated digital controls and a built-in flow switch provide temperature management and no-flow protection while simplifying installation by eliminating the need for external control wiring. The DS-10 Series includes a one-year parts-and-labor warranty.

Aqua Logic Inc. | aqualogicinc.com



THE FILTER FIBER STUFF

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 for diatomaceous earth (DE) for DE filters. When used as a safe alternative/replacement for DE, The Filter Fiber Stuff requires less than half the amount of product (by weight) than needed when using DE. The Filter Fiber Stuff is nontoxic, biodegradable, and safe to backwash. It can help extend filter runs and reduce clogging.

"It combines high performance, outstanding value, and environmentally friendly features into one great product," says Jim Sturick, the company's regional sales manager. "Customers love that The Filter Fiber Stuff is a safer alternative to DE that is nontoxic, safe to handle, and can be backwashed safely."

Technical support is available by calling 800-348-1656 or visiting JacksMagic.com.

Jack's Magic Products | jacksmagic.com



VIBEPROOF LOCKING UNION

Magic Plastics' VibeProof Locking Union technology can prevent and avoid costly service calls, says Mark Coito, Magic Plastics' vice president of sales and marketing. The patented design incorporates the use of a series of strategically placed scallops on the pump union nut and tailpiece; hand-tightening the nut will engage the lock, preventing the union from loosening or backing out during vibration.

"This technology saves unnecessary service calls," says Coito.

The VibeProof locking feature is available in a variety of Magic Plastics' products, including pump unions, smart check valves, uni-body valves, unions, and high-heat union assemblies.

Technical support is available by calling 800-369-0303. Marketing materials are available upon request.

Magic Plastics | magicplastics.com

AQUA COMB CARTRIDGE FILTER CLEANING TOOL

Aqua Comb is a garden-hose attachment designed to clean pool and spa cartridge filters quickly and thoroughly. Available in two styles, the tool uses a new black nylon nut designed to be three times stronger. Its comb-like design opens filter pleats while directing water into the cartridge to dislodge built-up debris, including pet hair. Aqua Comb can clean a filter in approximately 3 to 5 minutes, helping reduce the time and water used for routine maintenance. Made in the USA, it can also be included in new pool or spa start-up packages.

Mi-Way Inc. | aquacomb.com



LIFE SPA CHEMICALS AND ESSENTIALS

Life Spa Chemicals and Essentials is a comprehensive line of water-care products, cleaning tools, and accessories for hot tub and spa owners. Its chemical offering includes sanitizers, balancers, cleaners, problem-solving treatments, and start-up kits designed to help maintain clean, clear, and comfortable water. The line also includes brushes, nets, dispensers, sponges, and cover wipes, plus steps, handrails, and pillows. Tray tables, floating glass holders, and waterproof playing cards provide additional convenience and entertainment options. Available through dealers across North America since the 1980s, Life accessories include a one-year warranty against defects in materials or workmanship.

"With premium products and expert guidance, Life Chemicals and Accessories deliver clean and clear water through reliable solutions that simplify spa ownership," says Brian Durant, senior director of retail, North America, at POOLCORP.

POOLCORP | hottubs.com



SERENA SPA® CLEAR BLUE

Serena Spa® Clear Blue is a made-in-the-USA cationic polymeric flocculant formulated to help clear cloudy spa water. It thickens and coagulates fine suspended solids, oils, lotions, and other contaminants that may be too small for standard filtration systems to capture. Treated particles can then be removed by filtration or by settling to the bottom of the spa for easy removal. The enhanced formula, introduced in 2024, is designed to clear cloudy water up to 25% faster than the previous formula while supporting filter performance. Customers report visible clarity improvements within one or two days of dosing. Suitable for spa start-up and once-weekly maintenance, it is dosed at 1 ounce per 250 gallons of water and is available in a 32-ounce bottle. The product has been on the market for 11 years and is designed to fit alongside standard sanitizers and balancing products.

"The once-weekly application fits naturally into routine spa care and provides service professionals with faster, visible water-clarity results," says Ed Price, vice president of sales and marketing for Phoenix Products Company.

Phoenix Products Company | phoenixproductsco.com





SAUNA MATERIALS KIT

SaunaFin's Sauna Materials Kit provides selected materials to create a custom-built sauna for residential or commercial spaces. Flexible sizing and layout options allow the sauna to be tailored to the available space and project vision. The kit is designed to help transform ordinary rooms into personalized wellness retreats, with an emphasis on quality, craftsmanship, and comfort. SaunaFin offers technical support resources online to assist with the planning and building process. Commercial and residential options are available, with typical shipping in four to six weeks. Sauna heaters include a five-year warranty.

SaunaFin | saunafin.com

PUMP SHUT-OFF SYSTEM / SVRS



Vacless' VGB-compliant SVRSs feature an electrical pump shut-off system with an alarm or siren that instantly shuts off the pump upon entrapment. The SVRS is automatically resettable in 3 minutes and features no-nonsense programming, no false tripping, choice of air or no-air induction, and no bypassing for pool vacuum cleaning. It installs in 5 minutes onto the pump in place of the suction-side drain plug without the use of tools and

is designed for use with pumps of up to 2.5 horsepower.

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

Marketing materials and technical support are available. The units are covered under a three-year warranty.

Vacless Systems | vacless.com

Aboveground and Onground Pools

PHOTO ©CRYSTAL ROCK | DREAMSTIME.COM



POMPEII ABOVEGROUND POOL

As the newest addition to Carvin's renowned collection of aboveground pools, the Pompeii pool is engineered with full-resin components for maximum durability and weather resistance, while its sleek, modern design and 3D wall effects bring a sophisticated, high-end aesthetic to any backyard, says Klaudia Parker, vice president of sales and marketing for Carvin.

"Featuring the latest technology and built for easy, efficient installation, Pompeii delivers a premium swimming experience with minimal hassle for both dealers and homeowners," says Parker. Technical support inquiries can be sent to info@carvinpool.com. The Pompeii comes with a 30-year warranty.

Carvin | carvinpool.com

DECK-LOC® NO-DRILL ANCHORING SYSTEM

The LOOP-LOC® DECK-LOC® No-Drill Anchoring System allows homeowners to secure their pool covers without the need to drill unsightly holes into the deck. By simply turning the clamps, the DECK-LOC anchors lock securely under the deck boards in seconds, ensuring a firm and reliable hold. The system is crafted from marine-grade stainless steel, providing exceptional durability and resistance to harsh weather conditions. Additionally, the patented design is engineered for composite decks with 3/8-in. board spacing, making it a specialized yet highly effective solution for preserving the pristine look of outdoor spaces. Removing the anchors for storage is just as simple, leaving the deck unmarred. The DECK-LOC system is ideal for pool owners seeking a secure, no-drill anchoring option that maintains the aesthetic integrity of the deck.

LOOP-LOC | looploc.com



COVINGTON TILE AND MARINO BOTTOM VINYL LINER PATTERNS

Merlin Industries' Covington Tile and Marino Bottom patterns are aboveground pool vinyl liners manufactured with North American vinyl. Computer-controlled cutting is designed to provide a consistent fit for aboveground pools. The patterns are available in overlap and beaded installation options, allowing dealers and pool owners to select an appropriate configuration. Design options range from subtle all-over patterns to tile-accented styles with added color, helping owners tailor the pool's appearance to their preferences. Merlin's aboveground liners have been available since 2009 and include a 15-year warranty.

Merlin Industries | merlinindustries.com



PEGASUS PRODUCTS' ABOVEGROUND LINERS

These aboveground pool liners provide a superior fit, and the material is "thicker and more flexible than others available on the market," says Frank Patel, vice president of operations. He adds that the liners are made of virgin vinyl with algacide and mildew/mold inhibitors. The firm offers five different beads plus a variety of patterns. Custom orders are accepted in season. Shown is the Westminster Tile, with a rich blue hue to make the water shimmer. Customers are welcome to call and speak with customer service or engineering, or visit the firm's website, to ensure a great-fitting liner after they submit a drawing of the pool. Marketing materials, samples and brochures are available on request. Noting that the company has made liners for 38 years, Patel says customer feedback has included comments on "the superior fit and quality of the liners."

Pegasus Pool Products | pegasus-products.com



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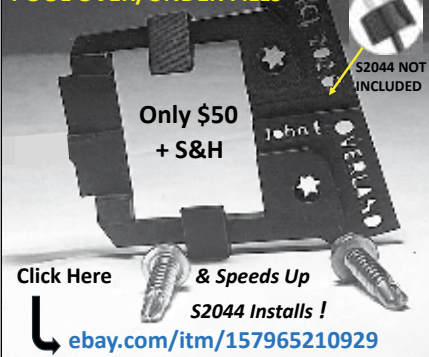
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Top Tier Entertainment

Backyard living across three levels

When developing this backyard waterscape, pool designer Amanda Miller of J&M Pool Company in Senoia, Ga., had very little wiggle room. The very steep slope away from the house, compounded by the addition of a large two-story deck with a spiral staircase, left little usable space.

Miller and her team made use of the grade change not only to create a more interesting three-tiered look, but also to simplify the development of specific zones. At the highest elevation near the house, a spa and lounging area were placed; at the middle level, the pool with a swim-up bar was situated; and at the spot where it would least intrude on the view from the two-story deck, a pavilion with its striking roofline housed the outdoor living room and kitchen amenities.

"The separate levels of the tiers allow the outdoor living spaces to flow naturally down the grade, perfectly [blending with] the landscape while establishing distinct zones for lounging, swimming and dining," J&M Pool Company explained.

The pool area descends toward the back of the property, starting with the upper-level lounging zones, then the active swimming tier, and finally the lower outdoor kitchen and swim-up bar. The bar, tanning shelves and fire bowls give the backyard an adult-playground feel.

The spa with spillover water feature sits at the highest tier, centered on the living room's ceiling-high glass wall. The base materials were chosen in white with sharp black trim accents to match the home's facade and create a modern, monochromatic foundation for more textured stone elements, such as the accent walls. Between the stone accents and the added vibrancy introduced by the fire bowls and water features, the aquatic landscape seamlessly transitions from the home's hard architecture to the native woodland. **PSN**

—Rebecca Robledo





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