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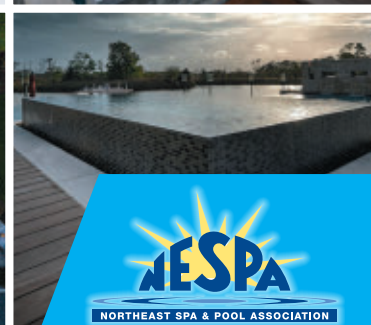
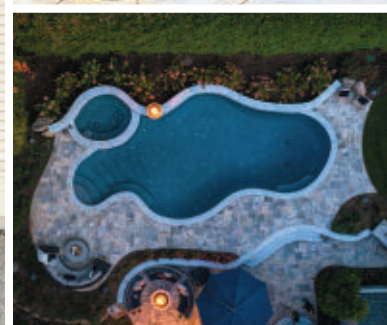
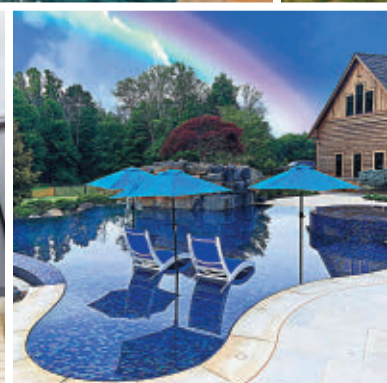
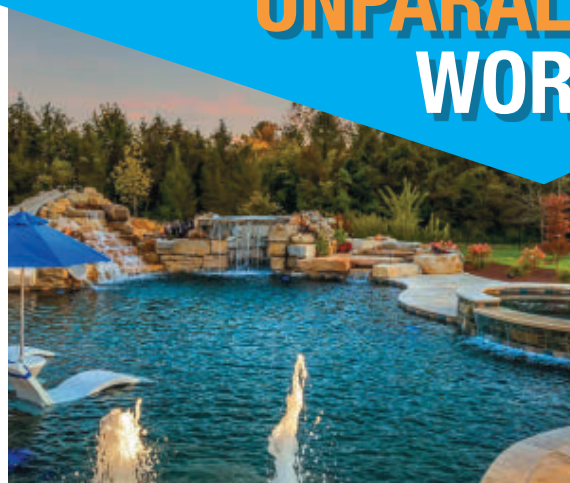
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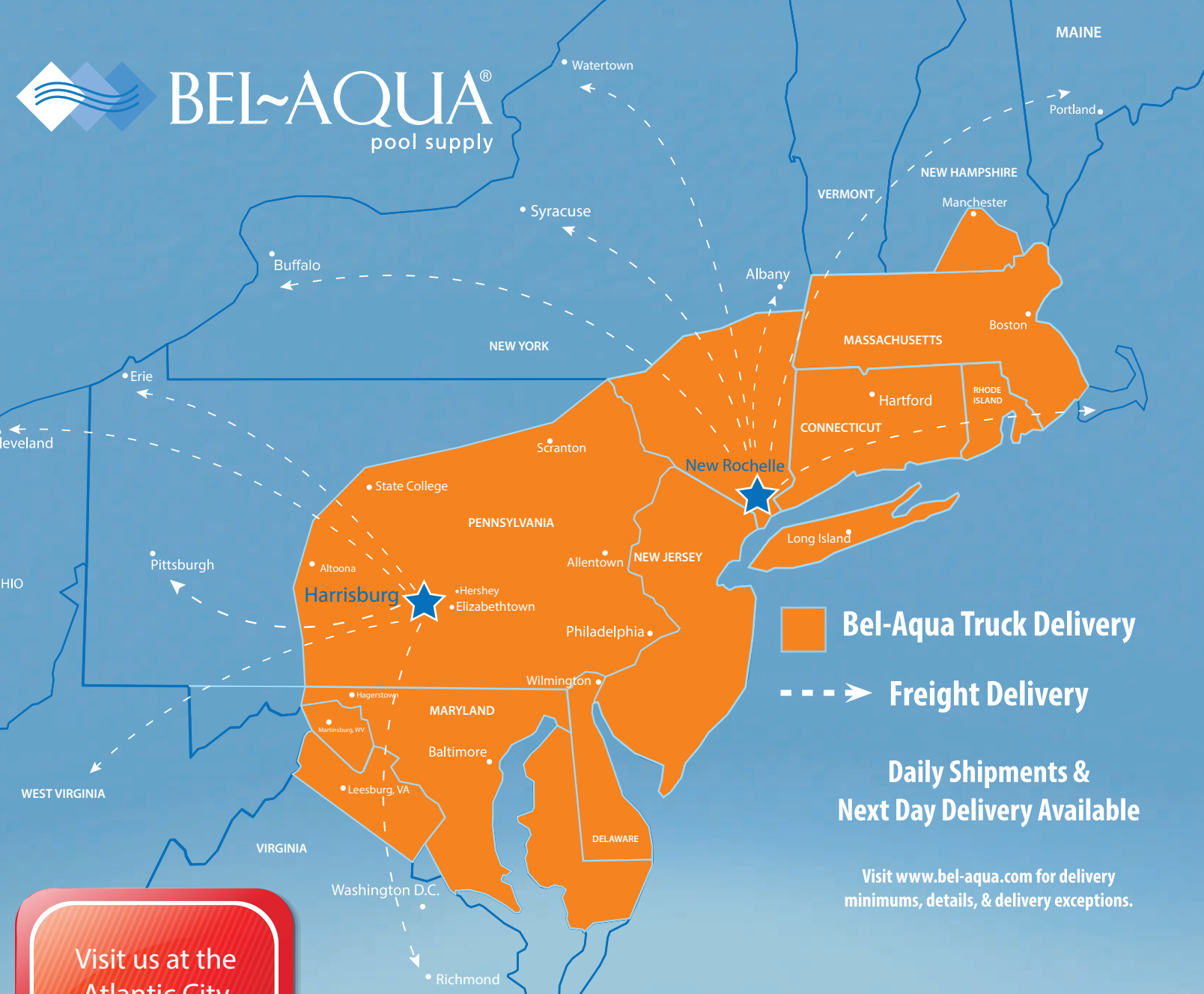
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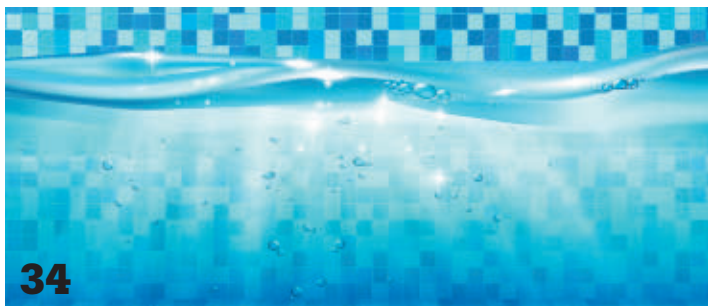
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The President's Message



Better Together!

by Chas Bogardus, CPO, CSP, CBP

WELCOME TO THE 2022 Pool & Spa Show! We are excited to be back together in Atlantic City for more than three days of learning in our Education Conference and checking out the products you need for the upcoming season. More than that, this show gives us the chance to be back together, connect with old friends and make new ones.

My company always uses the Education Conference to kick-start our spring training program for the upcoming season, and this year is no different. Creating a customized program for each employee that will improve their skills, challenge them and build our team has been well worth the effort to plan things out for everyone. Attending the courses is just the first step in showing your team that you value education and their career development. When you get back to the office, make time for everyone to share what they learned. One key take-away can spark a conversation and benefit the whole company, not just one student.

Nothing beats the energy you feel when you walk through the entrance to our show floor. Being able to meet with current vendors and having the chance to check out new products all in one place is such a time-saver. We've all seen how essential vendor relationships were over the last two years, and that isn't going to change anytime soon. I encourage you to branch out and stop by booths you might not have visited before and expand your connections. You never know who you'll meet and what they might be able to offer to your business.

When you are on the show floor, check out the Training Wall (aisle 4100). Since its start in 2015, the Training Wall has grown to be a highlight of the show experience. By bringing together hands-on learning with the chance to connect with the best in the business on crucial technical topics like hydraulics, electricity and equipment troubleshooting, we all get a chance to learn from each other.

Next to the Training Wall, you'll find the NESPA Membership Suite. Whether you are a new member or a long-time member, put aside

some time to stop by and make sure you are making the most out of all of your member benefits.

This year, NESPA has partnered with new member benefit providers. Meridio Smarter Benefits gives you the chance to offer low-cost health and wellness plans. OMG Marketing offers digital marketing services that can transform your online presence and help you qualify and manage leads. Find out more about these and our other benefit programs so you can maximize your benefits this year.

The NESPA team can also update you on year-round programs offered by the association and the latest licensing news around our region.

If you are not a member, there is no better time to learn more about the association that has powered The Pool & Spa Show for more than 40 years. NESPA offers training, industry connections and business support all year long. Why limit yourself to just a few days of networking and learning when you can be part of the industry's leading trade association.

More than anything, as we think about the year ahead, we should take the time to enjoy ourselves at this year's show. Whether in the classroom or on the show floor, take advantage of the opportunities to connect with industry leaders, enjoy time with your team and celebrate your hard work.

Can't wait to see you in Atlantic City. |

Chas Bogardus is the 2021-2022 president of the Northeast Pool & Spa Association.

You can access information on every exhibitor on the floor by visiting the show website (www.ThePoolSpaShow.com), downloading the Show App (google play or app store by searching PSS22). Plus, get the full education schedule with classroom locations. All of these resources will be available after the Show ends, so you can go back and reference them as you make plans for the upcoming season.

Women in the Industry

Creating Connections, Building Community

by Sarah Garrahan



The Penn-Jersey Chapter's Women in the Industry group held its annual luncheon this November. At the meeting, the group discussed leadership, communication and navigating the new waters of the pool industry in the post-Covid world.

IN ANY INDUSTRY, people tend to get siloed within the company where they work. Despite getting involved with networking events or attending industry tradeshow, we spend most of our time with our colleagues at the office. Many wouldn't overthink this, but it can feel a little isolating for one out of five of us who happen to be women in the industry.

When you're the only woman in your workgroup, some of the simplest things can be pretty complicated: what to wear, where to use the bathroom, the time you need to prepare yourself for certain things, what you might need to pack for day trips or overnights while carpooling.

There are times a woman can say something 10 times, and as soon as a man steps in and says the same thing once, the conversation is over. People who do this don't even realize they're doing it. It's something we as women in this industry can unanimously say we experience.

For eight years I was the only female in my company. It took me a while to figure out a style that fit in with the rest of our reps' white collar shirts, button-ups, suits – a very masculine sort of style. I didn't have an example to follow internally. So, I would find inspiration from other women when I would see them at trade shows a few times a year. It was a short glimpse at what I wanted to learn.

Almost three years ago I had my son, Owen. I was attending trade shows around the Northeast at the time. As a new mother who chose to nurse, I pumped away from home (sometimes in public bathrooms or a vacant office here or there). I stashed milk for days on the go and went through all the changes as a pregnant woman to a new mother and beyond – “to be professional,” I thought, “I should act like none of this is happening and do what I have to do quietly when I can.” Not to mention trying to remember all the parts and equipment I needed

on top of my work material. You should have seen the amount of bags I lugged around for a year.

Lucky for me, I work with a fantastic boss who was extremely accommodating and allowed me to “do my thing” without question. The other men I work with somewhat understood what it was like because their wives had gone through this, so they were also very understanding.

As much freedom as I had to take care of myself at work, I always felt added relief when my boss's wife, Joyce, would simply check on me because she understood what these changes meant. That feeling of understanding is calming and freeing. At times, I believe we all need to be nurtured at work, both professionally and emotionally, which isn't exactly easy to find in a male-dominated industry. Let's face it, men are from Mars and women are from Venus. We're just different.

We women must plan for and protect ourselves from things men mostly don't

have to think about even for a second. We've got a lot on our plates; more than just the job. We could use some tips and encouragement from other women who walk in our shoes. Bringing those women together is important to me.

The first time we had a "Women's Workshop" hosted by Penn-Jersey, I had never seen so many women in one place since joining the pool and spa world. I thought, "Where did all these women come from?!" There were several small groups from the same company and some women who joined solo. A lot of them worked in the office or ran the water test stations in retail stores. A handful of them were the business owner's wife or the owners themselves, while few came from a service company and worked in the field. Despite the diverse backgrounds, many of them had the same challenges in the workplace, and all were looking for camaraderie; you could call it a "sound-ing board."

It was something I wanted to repeat right away. After serving on the Penn-Jersey board for about a year, I brought up the idea of launching a Women In the Industry Series and had the board's full support.

Pati Gritz (Gritz Pools) and Tracy Bond (Great Valley Pool Service) were two women who met for the first time at the workshop. They continued to stay in touch for quarterly lunches to compare notes on how they were running their businesses – sharing thoughts, ideas and learning from each other.

I started reaching out to them regularly, asking them for insight on this new idea, and a committee was born. Not only has Pati been extremely generous with her time, but she also recently contributed a significant donation to our WITI program because it means a lot to her and her family – she has three daughters in the industry.

From there, we had a specific logo designed for our Women in the Industry Series and held our first in-person luncheon in February 2020. We ordered custom apparel, started a Facebook group, and then started having regular events virtually in the 'off-season' called WITI (Women in the Industry) Wednesdays, the first Wednesday of the month December through March – and it has just taken off from there.

Without this network of strong women, we wouldn't be developing such strong roots so quickly. This is the power of women working together and sharing ideas. Growing, building and fortifying something together. We are nurturers by nature. We can help each other grow and heal.

Our committee, about eight of us now, is enthusiastic and always there to offer new ideas for our group and guest speakers. Our guest speakers have brought a lot to the table – some in positions of high responsibility with very limited time join us, like Deb Haas, president of Cardinal Steel and Donna Williams, VP of Pool Corp. Other great, inspiring speakers have included Alicia Stephens of Bio Lab, who gave a lesson on supporting other women that she called "Holding Someone's Ladder," which was truly inspirational. Jamie Novak, director of branding and communications at Aqua Star, was the speaker at our latest event. She led a discussion on leadership and communication.

The survey results we get back from these events have been so positive. It has been such a pleasure pioneering this program and watching it grow in the right direction.

A driving reason for our Women in the Industry series is to create a comfortable, non-threatening place, network or haven where women can find solutions and encouragement through other women. In WITI, our guest speakers will provide empowerment. Our group will provide support, ideas and the understanding that will make you feel like you're not just one in five.

We all come from different places in the industry. Still, as women, we share a lot of the same emotional, physical, occupational challenges – especially when our industry is male-dominated. We simply have more in our way to move through and around than an industry with a 1:1 ratio of women to men. Because of that, we have a slightly different learning curve on basic behaviors and practices than the men in our field. But we also have specific strengths and skills naturally as women: deep listening, empathy, intuition and finding common ground. Putting those skills to use in Women in the Industry is what makes our group successful.

This program is about support, empowerment and finding resources from people you don't always have access to every day: other women in the pool and spa industry.

Maybe you're looking for advice on marketing efforts or human resources, fleet services, best prices in town for company apparel, distributors for certain products, referral services, best software, child care, route planners, etc. Join our Facebook group, exchange phone numbers/emails, make a new friend at one of our events.

Our group meetings have grown outside of our chapter. We have incredible support from NESPA. In fact, NESPA is hosting a Women's Leadership Forum during the Northeast Pool and Spa Show in Atlantic City this year. It will feature four female panelists from different backgrounds in the pool and spa industry. I have been included in the panel, and I'm so excited to see new faces and make acquaintance with women in the industry I have yet to meet.

As we continue to grow WITI, we invite you to be a part of this community. Keep an eye out for more Penn-Jersey WITI programs and events. All are welcome, and we are excited to collaborate on how we can grow this networking throughout the NESPA region and beyond.

Find out more about the Penn Jersey Chapter's Women in the Industry by visiting penn-jersey.nespa.org |



Sarah Garrahan joined Blithe Sales in 2012 after graduating from Towson University with a double BS in e-business and marketing. In 2017, she joined the Penn Jersey Pool and Spa

Association Board of Directors and now serves as immediate past president. She is founder and chairman of the Penn-Jersey Women in the Industry Series. In September, Garrahan joined NESPA's Board of Directors and serves on their Education Committee.

Women in the Industry at The Pool & Spa Show:

Once again, The show will host a Women's Leadership Workshop. Taking place on Monday, January 24, *Women in the Industry-Leadership Development: One Size Does NOT Fit All*, will feature an interactive panel discussion with women in the pool and spa industry. This is your chance to get inspired, grow your network and develop as a leader. Register at ThePoolSpaShow.com

Who Has the Time?

by Landon Eafрати

EVERY BUSINESS OWNER knows the most important business asset is time; more specifically, *their* time. The question is; how does an owner find more of it?

Hiring managers and administrative staff, democratizing tasks and implementing processes are time-honored tactics owners have implemented to find more hours for themselves that they can use to focus on growth opportunities for the business. Although effective, those techniques are only as good as the company infrastructure on which they are built. Investing in business management software, a suite of digital marketing products and implementing an overall brand management service will establish a robust infrastructure. Properly established digital assets act as a force multiplier to empower employees and allow the business owner to find that ever-allusive asset – time.

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, HOW?

Ask yourself: What does your sales cycle look like now? Who takes calls? Where do notes from the call go? Where are estimates drafted and how are they sent? What's the approval process? How is a job invoiced? Where is all of your customer and job information logged? Can you access that information three months from now? How about six months or 12 months?

There are several options available for business software, and they all offer similar benefits. The example I'll use is iON Pool Care from Fluidra, which enables the entire sales cycle to go from an antiquated analog paper-based system, perhaps with some disjointed cell phone notes and an unintegrated calendar system, to one single platform accessible to owners, administrative staff, field technicians, salespeople and even customers.

GOING FROM PAPER TO DIGITAL

Analog paper processes are slow, lack visibility throughout the company and physically occupy a tremendous amount of office space. Moving those processes to a digital platform will make scheduling, routing, job costing, quoting and invoicing quick and straightforward. Also, since all business processes and corresponding data are logged and cataloged in a single cloud-based location, the information can be accessed by any authorized employee or owner from any location with the Internet, connecting the entire workforce from the field to the office. Physically getting rid of boxes and piles of files frees up valuable office square footage. The benefits of a cleaner, quicker, simpler office are wonderful and worth the price of admission on their own.



EMPOWERED FOR GROWTH

But the most powerful aspect of the software is its growth capabilities. Having a comprehensive individual profile on every customer, their pool, equipment and service logs, allows a company to specifically target each customer (or groups of customers) for growth initiatives. For example, Totally Awesome Pool Service has 400 service accounts. One hundred fifty of them are currently using traditional chlorine sanitization methods. With a program like iON Pool Care, those identified customers can be captured into a subgroup and targeted with custom email campaigns showing different sanitization methods: chlorine generators, minerals, UV, ozone, etc. Perhaps another 100 pools are owned by second homeowners who will not be near their pool for months during the winter. Set up another subgroup and target them with estimates for a winter watch program. The possibilities are only limited by an owner's imagination.

MANAGING GROWTH

A significant component to growing any business is keeping up with the increased volume. While planning and scheduling help, no business owner can plan for unpredictable predicaments that wreak havoc on a schedule. This is where using a business management software program to manage

service crews really shines once the software is integrated into the business.

Let's imagine a few classic scenarios. Totally Awesome Pool Service's "Truck 1" shows up to its third job of the day and suddenly realizes the job is not an easy one and it probably won't be able to get to its other two scheduled jobs that day. Without business management software in place, this will typically set off a series of panicked phone calls to find out what crews are in which location, followed by more phone calls to customers to see what jobs can be postponed or moved to accommodate the sudden change of plans. Instead of calling all five or six of the other crews to see where they are, postponing jobs or reaching out to customers, just open the program from the office, tablet or cell phone. From there, the progress of each of the crews can be seen, you can decide which team can handle an extra job and then reassign the task – all without making a phone call or having to recreate a handwritten schedule.

FINDING THE TIME

Eliminating paper and clutter in an office, developing target marketing campaigns and managing difficult service situations are incredible benefits of integrating a software system. However, they don't really allow the owner of a business to find more time. That's where job costing, billing and payment collection modules come into play. These business areas are usually jobs reserved for the owner and typically get done late at night after a full day's work. With a correctly set up software system, those tasks can be partially automated and/or handled by administrative staff. Breaking these areas out, and starting with job costing, is where the setup process becomes essential. Business software systems allow for the creation of templates. These templates empower employees to quote/cost out jobs quickly without necessarily knowing specific vendor costs on items or operating costs. The templates are set up in advance, with those costs accounted for in the system.

A great example would be a filter pump replacement. Imagine a homeowner calls Totally Awesome Pool Service and a receptionist/administrative person answers the phone. The homeowner tells them that their filter pump is no longer working and would like a new one installed. The person taking the call can quickly set up a new customer account for the homeowner and send a quote via the system in an email with a link for the homeowner to approve the job. Once approved, the administrator can schedule the job for a technician by viewing each crew's upcoming schedule and choosing the technician with the first availability. The administrator can send another notification to the homeowner to let them know the job is scheduled and enroll them to receive the company's pool closing package email promotion when the season ends (*Empowered for Growth!*). The best part of that whole situation is the owner never had to be contacted because their "endorsement" of the job was built into the template the administrator used; this is where initial investments buy back time for an owner.

After the pump replacement is complete, billing the job can also be complicated when relying on paper systems because it depends on the physical paperwork order and job notes making it to the owner's hands in one piece. Also, the owner can't

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receive the paperwork until the job is complete at the end of the day, forcing that task to be completed after hours or collected and taken care of periodically. Both ways take away valuable time from the owner and slow the billing process down, starving the company of valuable capital. With business management software integrated with accounting software, each task, job and work order can be linked to the accounting software and programmed to generate an invoice when each job is complete. Those invoices can be automatically sent electronically with an option to pay the invoice built into the notification. Imagine having just 10 percent of your customers receive, review and pay their invoices without writing an email, packing an envelope or making a phone call. Would that have a significant impact on your time? What if it was 90 percent of your customers?

ONLINE IMAGE

Putting aside the business management aspects of the software, a properly maintained internet branding campaign will also open doors to business growth. More and more consumers are turning toward doing their own online research before choosing a company for a product or service. Although the owner of our fantastic fictional company, Totally Awesome Pool Service, is an honest and charismatic individual whom every customer loves, he may never get a chance to interact with prospective customer Jane Doe. The reason is that Totally Awesome Pool Service has a 15-year-old website that isn't mobile-optimized, and the address on Google Maps is incorrect. The sale to Jane Doe was lost without Totally Awesome Pool Service knowing they lost it. Now, more than ever, it's crucial to have an up-to-date website that is mobile-optimized, a strong social media presence, and protect online brand information on Google and other platforms. A company's "Internet image" needs to be as professional and groomed as its physical image to reflect the company and the owner's personality and knowledge.

DIGITAL ASSETS EARN TIME

Investing in any digital asset can be intimidating; however, the payoffs far outweigh the initial investment of time and money. I hope this short overview has given you a glimpse into those benefits. Finding time to reinvest into business growth is a clear path to success. ■

Landon Eafrazi has nearly 10 years of experience in the pool industry with an additional background in finance and a bachelor's degree in accounting. He started in the industry working for a distributor and filling multiple roles, including inside support, outside sales and operations. Eafrazi is currently a territory sales manager for Fluidra in the New Jersey market.

Landon Eafrazi will be a presenter at the 2022 Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City. To view the conference schedule and register, visit www.ThePoolSpaShow.com

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Kill the Chaos with Automation

in 2022

by Brett Lloyd Abbott

WHEN WE LOOK back at the last 22 months, we see a world turned upside down due to workforce shortages, materials and supply shortages and overwhelming demand.

Most pool companies in the Northeast might accurately describe these past two seasons as “crazy,” “frenetic” and “overwhelming.”

Sure, it was a tremendous blessing to have so much pent-up demand suddenly released on the industry. While restaurants, schools and most other businesses were suffering, every pool company in America was getting more calls than they could handle.

It was simply unmanageable.

I’m sure for most of you, the boost in cash flow was nice. But it took a toll on your people and your operations. When people are pushed to do more than they can handle, you get stress, frustration, mistakes and, ultimately, attrition.

Are you ready for two more years of this?

Under normal conditions, you would probably advertise for more help and grow your business by throwing warm bodies at the problem. But who can find experienced help nowadays? With every pool company in town pushed to the limits, experienced talent looking for a job is pretty much nonexistent.

So, if you can’t find more people to hire, then it’s time to start working smarter, not harder.

When I first got into this industry 15 years ago, I quickly figured out that “drip marketing” would be a vital part of any pool industry marketing strategy. For big decisions like buying a swimming pool, you would need a great-looking website, a tempting low-risk offer and then a series of compelling marketing messages that would drip-drip-drip on the prospects until they buy or until they die.

That was great pre-pandemic. But now that you’re backlogged and too busy to handle all the inquiries, sending “buy now” messages to people already waiting in line is like throwing gasoline on a fire.

Enter marketing automation: use a sales/marketing Client Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage and monitor all your leads.

A CRM system can help the business manager or sales manager keep tabs on all the prospects, clients, and sales activities and make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

The problem is you will now see all the work and requests you can’t handle because you’re still too busy, and that only makes you feel worse.

One way to alleviate this problem is to implement sales and marketing automation: automate every possible repetitive task at every stage of the buyer’s journey so they get exactly the right message at precisely the right time, without direct human involvement.

Instead of yelling at salespeople and sales administrators to call more people, send more emails, send more text messages and do more follow-up, you can let your automation system do all that for you. From welcome emails, reminder text messages, assigning internal tasks, and sending proposals and invoices to the client, just about every repetitive communication with prospects can be triggered automatically, based on where they are in the pipeline.

For example, if I were a pool builder, here are just a few pieces of automation I would put in place:

- Send an auto-reply “thank you” email to every inquiry, letting them know how soon we’ll get back to them (especially if our ability to respond will be delayed because of overwhelming demand).
- Follow up with a second email with a video to introduce them to their

...if you can’t find more people to hire, then it’s time to start working smarter, not harder.

designer. It would include a link to the designer's calendar so that the prospect can schedule an appointment based on the salesperson's availability.

- Automation will add the appointment to the prospect's calendar and the designer's calendar to confirm the upcoming meeting.
- Another email (or text message) will go out the day before the meeting, reminding them of the meeting and telling them what to bring and how to be prepared.
- Another text message would go out 45 minutes before the meeting, once again to confirm the time and location and eliminate "no-shows."
- The salesman could even be notified if and when a prospect watches a video, clicks a link or views a proposal.
- Conversely, not watching a video within X number of days could trigger actions as well, such as a reminder message to the prospect to check out the video or take other appropriate actions.
- Further lack of action will re-categorize the prospect as a "cool lead" so the designer doesn't waste precious time with prospects who aren't ready to buy right now.
- After the first meeting, an automatic "thank you" email or text message would be sent.
- If the "#2" meeting (to show the design and proposal) has not yet been scheduled, the prospect and designer are both reminded.
- Automation will also remind the designer when specific tasks are due, such as making a phone call, creating a design, attending a meeting, etc.

I would set up other internal automations to remind key people of tasks that need to occur exactly when they need to be reminded. For example:

- A designer would be reminded when a particular design is due for a particular prospect.
- A salesman would be reminded precisely "X" days after a meeting or proposal to solicit a decision from the prospect.
- The office staff would be notified two hours before any in-office meetings with a prospect, so everyone (and the

conference room or design room) is prepared for their arrival.

Once a project is sold, there is still more automation that could be put in place. For example:

- The prospect would receive a "Welcome to the Family" email, and a "What to Expect during Construction" document, so the homeowner has no surprises or worries about what's next.
- The accounting department and construction department would be notified of the sale, including the

homeowner's name, address, phone number, email, and sale amount. (and anything else you need to capture and share with the team).

- Your subs could be automatically notified in advance when you have an upcoming excavation, or steel or plaster job, for instance.
- The system could also automatically send invoices for various draws whenever a particular stage is completed.
- You could also automatically send out a "How Did We Do This Week?" message

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every Friday to proactively and preemptively uncover and resolve any possible homeowner concerns before they fester into genuine aggravations.

- When the project is completed, another "Thank You" email and/or text could be sent, with a link for them to give you a five-star review.
- Another email/text could take the client to a "Send us a video testimonial" module that allows them to easily and instantly record and upload a video testimonial for you using their mobile phone.
- Another email would remind them how much you would like to meet more people like them (i.e., "Thank you in advance for sending us referrals....")
- "Thank you again"/"We're just checking in" emails would continue every year on the anniversary of the completion of their pool (and maybe every six months, if you want to remind them it's time for their semi-annual filter clean).

- You can also automatically send various holiday greetings or birthday wishes every year.

That's more than two dozen easy-to-implement steps of automation, which is two dozen things none of your people will have ever have to do again. All you have to do is set it up once and then let it run automatically forever.

With maintenance clients, hot tub prospects, repair requests, renovation projects and more, you can take this same approach. Remove the monotony of daily emails, phone calls and text messages, and automate every single thing you can think of. Now your people will be more productive and your customers will be happier.

You can also sell more projects, make more money and maybe even retire early. Although who knows – maybe with all this automation in place, you'll be having so much fun growing your business, you won't want to quit!

Yes, I'm a huge fan of advanced sales and marketing automation. It's exactly what we need in times like these. |



Brett Lloyd Abbott is the founder and CEO of Pool Builder Marketing LLC. This marketing consulting agency works exclusively with swimming pool builders, pool service companies and high-end landscape professionals worldwide. Pool Builder Marketing's goal is to help pool industry business owners sell more while spending less on marketing and advertising, regardless of the economy. Abbott is a frequent keynote speaker and leader of workshops and seminars throughout the world.

Brett Lloyd Abbott will be a presenter at the 2022 Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City. To view the conference schedule and register, visit www.ThePoolSpaShow.com.

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Solving the Puzzle of Digital Marketing

by Jennifer Barker

email strategists, social media strategists, content writers, designers, developers and account managers.

THE FIVE BIG CATEGORIES OF DIGITAL MARKETING:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Pay-per-click Advertising (PPC)
- Social Media Marketing
- Content & Video Marketing
- Email Marketing

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL STRATEGY?

- Gives your business digital marketing direction for today and the future.
- Outlines your value proposition clearly to your employees and customers.
- Provides insight into your target audiences so you are marketing to engaged buyers.
- Integrates your digital marketing to set your business up for success.
- Allocates the right budget for your marketing efforts.
- Improves ROI so you don't waste your money.
- Allows you to monitor what's working and what is not so you can adjust accordingly.

SET YOUR BUSINESS UP FOR SUCCESS

The key to a successful plan is first to know your customer. These customers, prospects and partners are the lifeblood of your business. You need to build your marketing strategy around them, which will allow you to create a growth

THE PHRASE “DIGITAL STRATEGY” gets thrown around a lot, but people have a different understanding of various meanings they associate with it, and many people aren't even sure exactly what it means. So, what is it, and why is it something that your business needs?

In simplest terms, digital marketing means marketing your products and services using the Internet and digital media as the medium. Digital marketing is an umbrella term that includes all the modern marketing strategies. Businesses leverage digital channels such as search engines, social media, email, and other websites to connect with current and prospective customers.

WHY IS DIGITAL STRATEGY SO IMPORTANT?

A marketing strategy helps your business keep up with emerging customer

demands and therefore survive in the face of the future. It allows your company to compete better in an economic environment that constantly changes in response to technology evolutions.

WHAT WORKS FOR ONE, DOESN'T WORK FOR ALL

The thing about digital strategies is that they are not one size fits all. Each company is different, has different processes and infrastructures and has different short- and long-term goals. Therefore, a digital strategy that works for one business is not guaranteed to work for another. It is not a cookie-cutter formula, and it requires research, education and nurturing. Some situations require a multilayered or holistic strategy, which means a team of experts may be required. These can include Pay-Per-Click (PPC) strategists, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategists,

framework. Next, you need to tell your company story. Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools your company can wield to build customer connections and drive traffic. You can have the most amazing web storefront, blog or product in the world, but if you're not getting traffic, no one will see it. Next, turn your attention to conversions or sales. Web traffic is only half the marketing equation. You need to invest the time in building a strategy for driving sales. Finally, expand your audience and share your message. Content marketing is more than just blogging. You need to cross-pollinate this content to other channels and groups to increase leads.

In simpler terms, when building a successful digital strategy, look at each service as a piece that adds to the whole picture. Consider it to be like putting together a puzzle. To achieve this and set your business up for success, remember these four key components: tell your story/share information; gain an organic presence; increase visibility; re-engage.

CHANGE IS CONSTANT

The tech and digital marketing world are constantly changing. It's important to stay abreast of not only these trends, but what is in the pipeline for the next five years and what your competitors are doing. Taking a 360-degree marketing approach is all about taking a broad and all-encompassing view of your entire customer journey, from discovery to purchase, across multiple devices and touchpoints. Gone are the days of only using one service or tactic. A multi-channel or 360-degree strategy approach closes potential gaps and spreads a wider net. Without a 360-degree view of your potential customer, you may miss an opportunity or sale.

DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR THE POOL & SPA INDUSTRY

Digital strategies are unique to each industry and each company. During my presentation at the upcoming Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City, I will walk you through the steps of setting up a successful strategy. Discover a new way to think about presenting your business

to gain more customers and leads. Digital marketing can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be if you allocate the correct efforts and budget. ■

With a career spanning more than 17 years in the digital marketing space, Jennifer Barker has become a digital strategy leader, business development professional, thought leader, educator, mentor and solutions expert. Barker is a big picture thinker. She visualizes the puzzle and puts together the pieces

to create a strategy that creates results via holistic digital marketing, branding, design and web development tactics.

Jennifer Barker will speak at the 2022 Pool & Spa Show January 24-27, 2022, at the Atlantic City Convention Center. Get all the details and register to attendee at www.thepoolspashow.com.

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Unprecedented Demand Creates Unparalleled Work

Join us in celebrating the 2021 Outstanding Achievement Award Winners

THIS YEAR'S COMPETITION honors all aspects of our industry. For the first time, retail stores join our service companies and builders in the winner's circle. We are excited to recognize how our industry delivered for our customers this year, whether constructing a gravity-defying swimming pool, delivering world-class service week after week or handling customers with ease during a supply chain crunch.

The following pages feature just some of the Gold Medalists from the 2021 Builders Competition. At the Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City, we will announce all the winners in each competition during the Welcome Party at the Saloon Bar in Bally's (January 24 at 7 p.m.). This is a limited ticket event. Be sure to visit www.ThePoolSpaShow.com to get all the details.

GET A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR 2021 RETAIL COMPETITION GOLD WINNERS!

Over the last two years, the retail side of our industry has been asked to reimagine how they deliver nearly every aspect of their day-to-day operations. As an association, we recognize that our retail companies often cross over with service and construction. We are excited to spotlight the work done each day in our retail stores by each store's dedicated team of associates.

BEST IN BACKYARDS CARMEL, NY

Rolf Zimmerman, vice president of sales and marketing at Best in Backyards, shared how his company had to introduce new technology to the shopping experience to meet the changing needs of their customers.

Zoom video meetings served as a tool for sales presentations for bigger ticket items and a way to reimagine the in-store shopping experience when restrictions impacted in-person visits.

"We worked to replicate the shopping experience by having our sales

team offer a virtual tour of the showroom highlighting different products and options, which is something we've never done," Zimmerman shared. Even though some restrictions are lifted, "many people have really enjoyed the convenience," he said, "so we know we need to keep this option available to reach those people. Ultimately, there is nothing like the experience in the store."

Best in Backyards is focused on the complete backyard experience, and that extends to their in-store environment.

"We really try and give the customer the vision of what things are going to be in their backyard. So if you look at the pool display in the store, you can see we utilize wall art in the back, maybe a pool house on one side, maybe a pavilion on the other side so that it looks like it's in someone's backyard. The consumer can walk in and really envision what it will look like in their backyard. That is a big advantage for us since we offer more than just traditional pool products at our store."



GREAT VALLEY POOL SERVICE FRAZER, PA

“We seek to be a leader in the industry, and I think that entering and winning contests goes a long way in that regard both in the eyes of customers and industry peers. This competition was a great opportunity to get our name out there and get recognition for providing great service and a great overall experience,” said Tracy Bond, owner of Great Valley Pool Service.

Great Valley offers a 6,000 square foot retail location in Frazer, PA. Throughout the pandemic, Great Valley had to tackle a variety of challenges to meet customer demand. The most effective strategy has been to build upon their existing client relationships.

“With the chlorine shortage, we needed to make sure that our customers were able to get the product they needed when they needed it. This helped build customer loyalty and trust,” shared Bond. “We prioritized our existing clients, and they knew that they could count on us.”

Great Valley used all the communication tools in their toolbox to ensure their customers understood the store policies and kept customers calm in a chaotic time.

“We have probably close to 3,000 customer contacts on our Constant Contact list. From one-time customers to someone who comes in all the time, we make sure we capture them and get them in our database.

“When we decided to prioritize current customers, we made sure to get emails out to let everyone know, she said. “We also shared all the safety steps we took in the store, like sanitizing, online ordering and curbside pick-up.”

The store layout is crucial in any retail environment. Each year in the offseason, Great Valley evaluates what is working and where they’d like to make adjustments. A design element that works well for her store is creating color-coded walls that make it easier to direct customers to products they are looking for on any given visit. Having a product or equipment

visible and easily referenced helps when customers are unfamiliar with the proper terminology but can visually recognize what they want to purchase.

Bond has found a well-trained staff to be vital to providing top-level service to customers. Each employee who starts at the store spends time with their managers reviewing various transactions that they might have to handle each day. Training is continuous as they take the time to meet as a staff once a week to review any issues and keep everyone up to speed.

As Bond and her team look ahead to the 2022 season, they are being proactive so that they can stock the store with products that meet their customers’ needs despite anticipated shortages.

“We are pre-buying as much as we can so that we can be prepared and also minimize the impact of price increases. So we are stocking up, which is a change from how we’ve done it in the past,” added Bond.



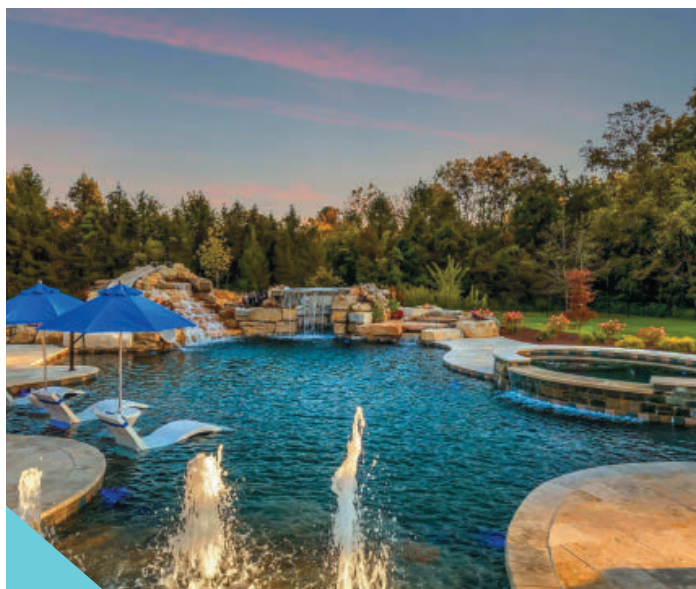
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 SERVICE COMPETITION GOLD WINNERS!

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Lipari Pools | Bridgewater, NJ

Swimming Pools by Jack Anthony | Patchogue, NY

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2021 BUILDERS COMPETITION GOLD WINNERS



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Residential Concrete Pools, Freeform



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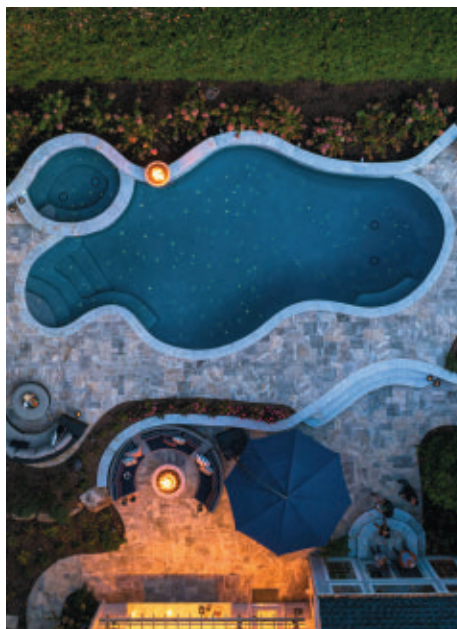
Residential Concrete Pools, Geometric



EVERCLEAR POOLS & SPAS

Paterson, NJ

Residential Vinyl-Lined Pools, Geometric



THOMAS FLINT LANDSCAPE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

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Pool/Spa Combination, Concrete



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Pool/Spa Combination, Concrete



STEELE'S SIGNATURE POOLS

Medford, NJ

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SWIMMING POOLS BY JACK ANTHONY, INC.

Patchogue, NY

Electric Cover With Tracks



STEELE'S SIGNATURE POOLS

Medford, NJ

Exceptional Builders Concrete



SWIMMING POOLS BY JACK ANTHONY, INC.

Patchogue, NY

Pool/Spa Combination, Concrete



CIPRIANO LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Mahway, NJ

Exceptional Builders Concrete



CRYSTAL CLEAR SIGNATURE POOLS, LLC

Southampton, PA

Electric Cover With Tracks



COVERTECH, LLC
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ULTIMATE IN POOL CARE/CHAIKIN ULTIMATE POOLS
Deer Park, NY
Specialty Pools, Negative Edge



CRYSTAL CLEAR SIGNATURE POOLS, LLC
Southampton, PA
Safety Cover



CIPRIANO LANDSCAPE DESIGN
Mahwah, NJ
Specialty Pools, Negative Edge



AQUAVISIONS, INC.
Carlisle, PA
Specialty Pools, Negative Edge



STEELE'S SIGNATURE POOLS
Medford, NJ
Specialty Pool, Negative Edge



SWIMMING POOLS BY JACK ANTHONY, INC.

Patchogue, NY
Specialty Pool, Cocktail



R.W. HAGGERTY POOL SERVICE, INC.

Norwalk, CT
Specialty Pools, Cocktail



CIPRIANO LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Mahwah, NJ
Specialty Pools Perimeter Overflow



ULTIMATE IN POOL CARE/CHAIKIN ULTIMATE POOLS

Deer Park, NY
Commercial Pool



AQUATIC ARTIST

Williamstown, NJ
Water Feature, Residential

Take Control of Your Building Schedule with Concrete Pool Forming Systems

by Frank Wall

THE SURGE IN demand for pools and the resulting shortage of materials has led many builders to re-evaluate how they build their pools so that they can have more control of their building schedule. As a result, there is renewed interest in aluminum forming systems to build pool walls for vinyl liner pools or even pivot to building all-concrete pools. To avoid waiting on steel and polymer wall kits, builders can invest in their own aluminum forming systems and use these forms to create concrete wall vinyl-liner pools in virtually any shape. And best of all, owning their aluminum forming system allows builders to have much better control of their building schedules.

WORKING WITH REUSABLE ALUMINUM FORMS

Vinyl-liner pools built with poured concrete walls have a long history of success in the Northeast and Southeast. Initially, the forms were constructed from steel, wood or fiberglass, but these were costly, hard to maintain and heavy. In contrast, today's aluminum forming systems are lighter weight, easier to maintain, and come in a variety of shapes and sizes so that builders can create geometric and freeform shapes. There are many different pool step styles (e.g., in-pool, corner, wedding cake, deep end steps, outside pool steps, full 'stadium steps') as well as benches, tanning ledges, raised walls, attached spillover spas, vanishing edges, automatic cover boxes and even beach entries. All these features can be attached to the pool wall forms with everything poured at the same time the pool wall is poured.

In addition to using aluminum concrete forming systems to build vinyl-lined pools, these forms can also construct all-concrete pools. They can be stacked to create raised walls for



water features and raised deck areas around the pool. They are quite versatile; builders can even use them to pour retaining walls and basement or other types of support walls.

HOW THEY WORK

Aluminum forming systems comprise an inside and outside panel form held together by wall ties that yield a minimum pull strength of 7,000 lbs. The ties are also notched for easy rebar placement. The forms fit together fast and easily using a pin-and-wedge system. These features keep labor costs to a minimum during the setting and stripping stages. Once the forms, plumbing and structural steel are in place, a special recommended design mix of 4000psi concrete with specified chemical add mixtures produces a stronger, faster setting and a more

workable and flowable mix of concrete to create faster strip time and smoother walls.

Typically, aluminum forming systems are 48 inches in height and, when using the wall's depth-pouring gauges, builders can pour either a 42-inch or 48-inch wall. The system does not require any footings and is set up directly on the ground. Before pouring concrete into the aluminum forms, a very light misting coat of release agent formulated especially for aluminum forms that makes cleaning the forms easier, is sprayed onto the surface. The forms are stripped after allowing the concrete to cure for 12 hours, leaving builders with 10-inch thick reinforced pool walls. The walls are then finished just like any other pool wall system, along with the vermiculite or concrete-grout floor.

After the forms are stripped, they can be cleaned and readied for the next project.

Once a builder buys a set of aluminum forms, the builder now becomes the manufacturer of their own pools. They are no longer dependent on other material suppliers to determine when they can start building their projects; and they also eliminate any material shipment delays and paying expensive freight costs. In fact, the cost of a concrete aluminum forming system becomes less expensive after every pool a builder installs. Further, with proper care, a forming system will last well over 3,500 pool pours.

COMPARING COSTS

When comparing the price of using an aluminum forming system versus a traditional vinyl-liner pool kit system, many builders see savings in many ways in the construction process, as every part of the pool is made of concrete. Concrete is reliable and readily available.

Most builders will pour 5-8 yards of concrete collar around the outside of a typical vinyl pool kit. To pour a concrete pool wall, it takes 11 yards for a 16'x32', 12.5 yards for an 18'x36, and 14' yards for a 20'x40' rectangle pool with 48" high walls.

Randy Budd of Budd's Pools in Deptford, N.J., started using reusable aluminum concrete forms when building his vinyl-liner pool projects in 2010. According to Budd, his company's cost per pool installation are lower mainly because of the difference in the price of the manufactured pool kit versus the pool walls he can pour. He also saves by pouring steps, benches, sundecks, auto cover boxes and other features with concrete in his reusable forms over the cost of the manufactured systems. Added savings also include not worrying about lost income because of shipping delays, missing pieces, or damaged freight like dented steel panels. Budd also says his company's per-pool profit has increased since they started building concrete wall vinyl-lined pools. "The reason our profits have increased is twofold," says Budd. "We can charge more for our unique designs, and our freight and labor costs are also lower per pool."

OFFERING UNIQUE DESIGNS

Even before the pandemic, reusable concrete forms were growing in popularity because these systems allow builders to create unique shapes and features and, in turn, this helps them stand out from their competitors. The ability for builders to offer their clients a custom pool design allows them to compete on more than just price alone. In fact, last year many installers looked to using aluminum forms to build concrete walls for their unique vinyl-liner pool designs.

Vinyl-liner pools built with concrete walls can now support designs that include many features that, in the past, were typically associated only with custom Gunite or shotcrete structures.

"The concrete walls enable me to differentiate myself. When consumers come into my shop, they see we are offering pools very different from those offered by our competition," says Budd, who notes that most homeowners are drawn to the structural strength of concrete, but appreciate the serviceability and affordability of liners. As a result, his company now builds vinyl-liner pools with poured concrete walls and recently has moved into building all concrete pools. "It's still primarily about differentiation for our company, but we also highly value our ability to have more control over our building



Aluminum forming systems can be used to create concrete wall vinyl-liner pools in virtually any shape.

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schedule, especially this past season,” says Budd.

GETTING CREATIVE

In addition to higher-per-pool profits and greater control of the construction schedule, pool builders can present their clients with a lot of creative options for their pools when using these forming systems. “Using an aluminum forming system has allowed us to quickly and comfortably move from standard shapes into more creative designs,” says Budd.

In most cases, in the first year of building concrete wall pools with these forms, some builders will stay within the standard shapes and drawings they are accustomed to using. As a result, most builders realize how creative they can get by the second or third season. This creativity has led builders to use the forms to build retaining walls and other masonry structures beyond the water’s edge and move toward projects that encompass the surrounding landscape, too.

“If you see the liner pools we’re building now, it’s difficult to tell it’s a vinyl pool,” says Budd. “Probably three-quarters of the people who look at them simply assume it’s a gunite pool.”

There is also the client’s perception that concrete walls are strong and solid. “During the construction process, when the forms are stripped, and the

homeowner sees they have something substantial in their backyard that is big and robust, they realize they have something very solid and strong and are always very pleased with the way it looks. “This is a benefit a builder can’t always measure, but yet provides a perception of quality and strength that furthers a builder’s positive reputation.”

As pool builders look for new ways to better control their building schedule in 2022, purchasing a set of their own aluminum concrete forms seems like a no-brainer. Although having more control over the construction schedule might be the main reason builders invest in a set of aluminum forms, the lower cost per pool and the ability to

create unique designs and offer other landscaping structures make aluminum forms an attractive investment. ■

Frank Wall built vinyl-liner and Gunite pools for more than 31 years at his retail and construction company Modern Pool & Spa Inc. in Mississippi. In 2004, he closed his construction business and concentrated on developing products for the construction industry that are not normally found in pool distributor supply houses under a new company name of Frank Wall Enterprises LLC. Among these products was AquaForms – a unique aluminum concrete forming system designed for pool builders. Wall can be reached via email at frank@frankwall.com.



Some pool builders are purchasing their own aluminum concrete forms to control costs and avoid the long wait for materials like steel.



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Specialty Chemicals:

The Key to
Maximizing
the Efficiency
of Your Pool
Care Program



by Alicia Stephens

SANITIZING IS THE first step to successful pool water care because sanitizing pool water keeps swimmers safe. Due to current industry conditions, many pool professionals are faced with using sanitizing solutions in ways they have not used in the past. And because of supply chain shortages, our industry needs to remain hyper-focused on being as effective and efficient as possible with pool water balance to maximize pool water sanitizers.

This is where specialty chemicals can make a real impact. Today's specialty chemicals can help pool professionals maximize the efficiency of chlorine pool care programs and improve overall pool care maintenance for pool owners.

UNDERSTANDING THE 3PS

Proper pool care is based on three very important Ps:

- Prevent** disease
- Protect** equipment
- Provide** the expected swimming experience

Maintaining adequate sanitation is a key element to proper pool and spa maintenance as it keeps bathers safe from disease and allows for clean, clear water. Using an oxidizer weekly, adding a preventive algaecide, good physical maintenance and selecting ancillary products round out the key components of a program that maximizes the impact of the sanitizer and helps provide the expected environment for swimmers.

SANITIZING OPTIONS

There are many different sanitizer options for pools: chlorine, bromine, salt chlorination and biguanide. While each of these sanitizers offers a different range of features and benefits, chlorine sanitization is the most common choice for pools and spas due to its ease of use and impact on water balance. Chlorine can be introduced to the water in many ways, including sticks, tablets, granules, liquid and chlorine generator systems. Regardless

of which version is being used, each form leads to the formation of hypochlorous acid. Hypochlorous acid is the killing form of chlorine that prevents disease and maintains the expected environment in the pool or spa water.

Trichlor and dichlor are both stabilized chlorine products. The primary difference between a stabilized and unstabilized chlorine product is the presence of cyanuric acid. Chlorine is not UV stable. This means that on its own, the chlorine will degrade in the presence of sunlight rather quickly. Stabilizer protects chlorine from UV rays, and stabilized chlorine will last five or six times longer than unstabilized chlorine. Thus, bathers will be protected longer when stabilizers are present or when stabilized chlorine products are used consistently to sanitize recreational water.

Sodium hypochlorite, or liquid chlorine, is inexpensive and easy to apply to

the pool, but it has a very high pH that results in the need for routine application of a pH decreaser to maintain a balanced pH. Hypochlorite products do not contain stabilizer, so stabilizer must be added directly to the pool to provide protection from UV degradation when using these products.

LIQUID CHLORINE

Due to current industry conditions, the use of liquid chlorine will continue to be more prevalent for the upcoming pool season. This may be a new approach to sanitizing for many pool care professionals, so it's a good idea to review the features of liquid chlorine and how to maximize it as a sanitizer in a pool.

Remember that liquid chlorine is unstabilized, so when using it as the primary sanitizer, check and balance cyanuric acid independently of your sanitizer addition. A residual of 30-50 ppm of stabilizer is ideal for maximizing liquid chlorine's life and protecting it from UV degradation once it is added to the pool. Even with adequate stabilizer levels, liquid chlorine must be added frequently to maintain the EPA required 1-4 ppm sanitizer residual needed to provide adequate sanitization for the pool.

In addition to stabilizer, there are other components and ancillary products to consider to maximize liquid chlorine's effectiveness. Water balance can play a big part. With the pH of liquid chlorine being around 13, the pH of the pool water will drive upward with each addition. At a high pH, chlorine is not as active as it should be, making it less effective at sanitizing the pool water. The industry-recognized correction factor is 10-16 fl. oz. of muriatic acid for every gallon of liquid chlorine added to maintain a pH in the range of 7.2-7.6. This is necessary to ensure the chlorine is active and effective in the pool.

With the use of liquid chlorine likely being more common for the upcoming pool season due to the limited availability of other sanitizers and oxidizers, certain modifications to routines and practices should be made to maximize the effectiveness of the product being used. This should be done safely

with proper storage and handling of products.

From a chemical standpoint, liquid chlorine can be an effective element of the weekly pool care maintenance program. However, since it must be added frequently to maintain the proper chlorine residual, anything that can be done to extend the life or enhance the effectiveness of liquid chlorine is a valuable addition to the program.

SPECIALTY CHEMICALS

Algaecides, enzymes and phosphate removers are three specialty chemicals that will help ensure that the chlorine in the pool water is actually sanitizing or controlling bacteria. For example, enzymes can control non-living organics by going in and clearing out some of the "distractions" in the water. Without enzymes, non-living organic contaminants will need to be broken down and removed by chlorine or shock products. When enzymes are added to do that job instead, it frees the chlorine up to do its most important job – kill bacteria. The enzyme can't kill bacteria, but it can help free up your chlorine to make sure there is enough sanitizer to do the job.

A preventive algaecide should also be a part of any pool care maintenance program to maximize liquid chlorine's impact. Adding an algaecide weekly allows chlorine to kill bacteria and not get used up killing algae. The less work chlorine needs to do in the pool, the longer it will last.

Finally, it's important to understand that phosphate does contribute to the conditions that make it harder for chlorine and algaecide to do their jobs. Therefore, keeping a pool at a near-zero phosphate residual is the ideal goal. Testing for and removing phosphate proactively helps reduce reoccurring pool problems, simplifies pool maintenance needs, and improves both the look and feel of the water.

CIRCULATION, FILTRATION & SCRUBBING

The benefits of properly circulating pool water, providing good filtration, and even getting in a light personal workout by brushing and vacuuming are often understated. These are the basic

requirements to ensure the chlorine is not being wasted.

Balanced water, preventive algaecides, enzymes and phosphate removers all contribute to creating the ideal environment for liquid chlorine to be successful. In addition, proper physical maintenance as well as storage and handling are necessary to maximize the pool maintenance program and minimize the work necessary to protect swimmers and provide the expected environment. An all-inclusive pool maintenance program is the key to success.

Pool professionals need to take the time to understand the key elements of successful pool water care maintenance and the impact that each of these elements has on product performance. By taking the time to understand the impact of different sanitizer choices, pool professionals can implement a maintenance plan that will overcome any negative effects that a sanitizer might have. Specialty chemicals give pool professionals an incredible set of tools to increase program efficiency and minimize potential pool problems.

Now is the time to carefully understand which specialty chemicals can be incorporated into water care programs to keep pool water sanitized without wasting any of the limited supply of chlorine in 2022. |



Alicia Stephens is the education and training manager for Biolab, Inc. In her 19 years with the company, she has focused primarily on education, training, development, technical support, and new product research and integration. Currently, Stephens supports all education and training initiatives for the Biolab Pro Dealer Division.

Alicia Stephens will be a presenter at the 2022 Pool & Spa Show in Atlantic City. To view the conference schedule and register, visit www.ThePoolSpaShow.com. Stephens will be part of the Pool & Spa Show OnDemand Experience, where she will be sharing insights and valuable information on this topic.

Pool Water Mysteries – and Their Solutions

by Rick Coffey, Ph.D.

FOR POOL PROFESSIONALS, the best preparation for preventing and fixing pool water problems is a combination of Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) training and field experience. Industry training will help you avoid making bone-headed mistakes and guide you through the most commonly encountered pool operation issues. Until you've dealt with at least a hundred different pools for a year, however, you haven't seen most of the pool water problems that arise in the real world. Some of them can be downright baffling, even to experienced pros.

Let's take a look at a few.

CHLORINE THAT DOESN'T KILL ALGAE

You may have experienced chlorine additions into a pool apparently losing its punch as observed by low chlorine test readings or algae outbreaks. Usually, the culprit is assumed to be the chlorine product or the Electrolytic Chlorine Generator (ECG). These, however, are rarely the real problem. Most pros are


already aware that chlorine at high pH is less effective than chlorine at a lower pH and that excess Cyanuric Acid stabilizer retards chlorine activity. Extra sunshine (UV) can accelerate pool chlorine decomposition, and rain almost always knocks airborne algae spores into the water. Any of these can be contributors. But by far, the main unsuspected villain here is organic debris in the pool water.

Organic debris comprises all of the organic matter derived from biological sources residing in the pool water and on the filter. It represents nearly all of the water's demand for oxidizer. It's delivered to the water by a wide range of sources, including bathers (skin care products, hair care products, shed hair and skin cells), rain runoff, air-blown fertilizers, plant fragments or insects falling into the water and partially decomposed by chlorine, etc. Some organic debris is removed through filtration, but much of it is too small for pool filters to handle. Every pool has some level of organic debris and that

level tends to increase with the age of the pool water.

Because the organic debris reacts with and depletes pool chlorine, high levels of organic debris cause large losses of chlorine. This means a loss in disinfection power as well as an open invitation for algae to join the pool party.

Partial or complete water replacement, of course, lowers the level of organic debris, assuming that the replacement water isn't similarly burdened. But one of the fastest-growing water treatment approaches in the U.S. is the use of enzyme products to destroy organic debris. Unlike chlorine, pool water enzymes can attack and chop up molecules of organic debris repeatedly before they are done. In fact, the enzymes of a strong, robust pool enzyme product can function tens of thousands of times before they, themselves, decompose. They attack organic debris in the bulk water, on the pool surfaces, in the pipes and on the filter. They can so thoroughly chop up organic debris



molecules that they leave the pool water via evaporation. Not only is the filter relieved of that burden, but the pool's chlorine is preserved to do the important jobs of disinfection and killing algae.

When quality enzyme treatments are used regularly (they are maintenance products, not single-shot remedies), some other good things happen, too. Water clarity improves quickly and dramatically, scale-like scum buildup at the water line softens and ultimately disappears, and some of the combined chlorine in the pool water is reduced.

THE CHLORINATOR SCALE THAT SHOULDN'T BE THERE

Top U.S. brands of ECGs are polarity-reversing and shouldn't develop scale on their plates unless the cell is too old or the water balance is way off. But every brand does.

Earlier in my career at a large manufacturer, I was responsible for this technology and its performance. Some of our cells were returned scaled-up, customers were unhappy and it was my job to fix it. None of the obvious causes explained what I was seeing. High calcium hardness, poor water balance, age of the cell, excess applied voltage: each was absent from the scene of the crime. Out of desperation, using every chemical analysis at my disposal I analyzed the pool water that each of these scaled cells came from as well as the scale from each cell. The results shocked me. Every one of these pools and every sample of cell scale contained very high levels of phosphate. Further analysis of the scale itself proved that it was never pure calcium carbonate (i.e., typical pool scale). It included either or both of two phosphate-containing minerals: hydroxyapatite (prevalent in

bones) and carbonate-apatite (found in kidney stones). Using regular maintenance doses of a pool water phosphate-removing product prevented repeat occurrences.

THE POOL WATER THAT ISN'T THERE

Splash-out and bather drag-out cause minor water losses whenever pools are used. But sometimes pool water losses are serious. The first suspected villain is typically leakage. And, in fact, many pools do develop leaks. These occur most often in older pools where settling and other structural movements create stresses and small separations somewhere in the plumbing, on the equipment pad or around a skimmer fixture or light niche. But new installations can have leaks, too. To find out if a pool does have a leak, the classic bucket test does the job. (The bucket test is easy to find with an online search.) For major leaks of more than one inch lost per day, leak detection and significant repair is typically required. It's not cheap, but fortunately most leaks aren't big enough to require that. Leak sealer products for pools (there are two effective ones that I know of) are readily available for repairing leaks losing one inch or less per day. They are inexpensive, easy-to-use liquids that typically work overnight.

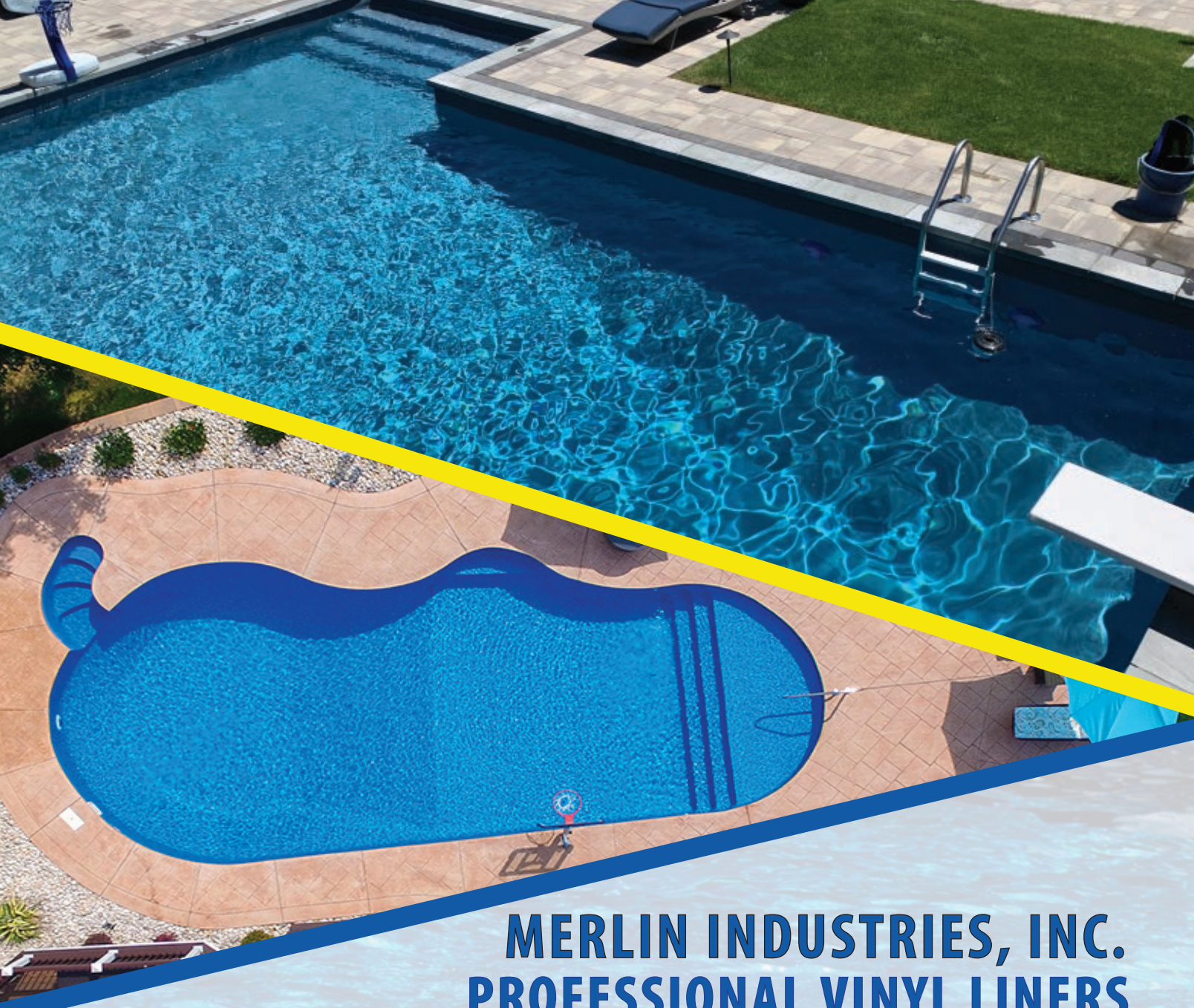
What if the bucket test shows the water loss is not caused by a leak? In that case, it is almost certainly due to evaporation. Most of us underestimate the amount of pool water lost through evaporation. A meteorologist based in Phoenix, Arizona, told me that the average annual pool water loss there due to evaporation was 93 inches – that's 7 ft. 9 in.! Only nine

inches of it gets replaced by rain. A study in St. Petersburg, Florida, showed that the pool water evaporation there was also about 7 ft. per year. The air in St. Petersburg on average is not nearly as dry as in Phoenix, although St. Petersburg has nearly the same average air temperature (73.7 versus 75.1 for Phoenix). Wind makes a big difference, and in St. Petersburg "scalping," the increase in evaporation due to air movement, is far greater. And unlike Phoenix, St. Petersburg gets 51 inches of pool water replaced by rain annually.

So, water loss through evaporation is a pretty big deal everywhere. And in cool months when the air is drier and many pools are heated, the evaporative loss can be alarming. But what can we do? Pool covers have been around for a while and they reduce evaporative water loss. But they're ugly, a nuisance to put on and take off, and tend to rot in about two years. Fortunately, in recent years some new liquid pool cover products have emerged that are far more effective than the old alcohol-based liquid products. These new liquid cover products are not as effective as a solid cover, but can make a huge difference in water retention, are very easy to use and keep your pool ready to use and nice to look at. At least one of these liquid pool cover products suppresses heat loss as well as evaporation during cool months, providing energy cost savings as well.

Each of these pool water mysteries is real, common and – once the real villain is unmasked – easy to solve. |

Rick Coffey, Ph.D., is general manager of Lo-Chlor, LLC, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Lo-Chlor is a manufacturer of pool chemicals.



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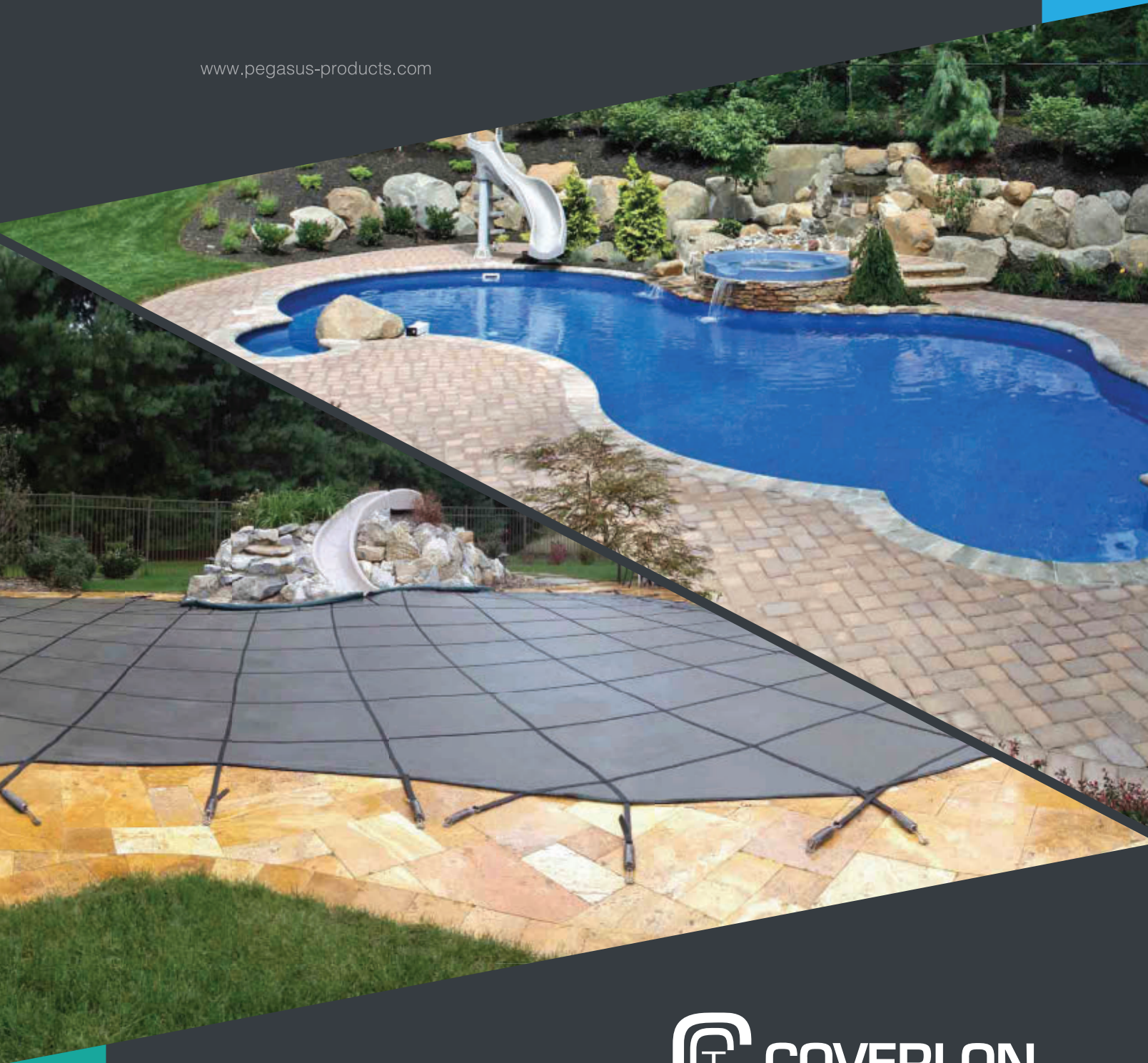
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