

MAKING BETTER SPA COVERS (Page 38) • READING YOUR CUSTOMERS (Page 18)

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# AQUA

The Business Magazine for Spa & Pool Professionals

FIBERGLASS POOL  
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ground pool sales rose 25 percent. That, combined with a quick start to 1999 (above-ground pools were already selling in January, despite three straight months of rain), gives a favorable forecast for above-grounds this year.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** Once again, we elected not to participate in the Puyallup Fair. And once again, we experienced record spa sales in September. The consumer has definitely "voted" on personalized, professional presentations in an environment conducive to decision making. They do not like the high pressure, carnival atmosphere of a fair. They state that it's an interesting place to look but they wouldn't buy out there because they don't trust the dealers involved.

**Tip for Success:** Your staff is your team. Sales and service can lead to great success through team effort.

### AQUA-TEKNOLOGY POOL & SPA

**Location:** Rockville, Ind.  
**Principals:** Larry and Debbie Wickens  
**Founded:** 1989  
**Outlets:** 1 retail/construction  
**Employees:** 3 year-round, 8 in-season  
**Professional Affiliations:** Chamber of Commerce, NFIB, NSPI  
**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 0  
**Products Sold:** Package vinyl-liner pools, fiberglass pools, above-ground pools, portable spas, fireplaces, chemicals, supplies, toys, gas grills  
**Status Report:** Spring rains delayed a start to the 1998 in-ground pool season, resulting in a bum year for in-grounds. Fortunately, increased consumer awareness of the spa business, along with increased awareness of AQUA-TEKNOLOGY's plumbing and floor upgrade options for above-ground pools, increased sales in those categories.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We implemented an extensive advertising and promotion plan for 1998. By using the many different forms of media available, the possibility of exposure to potential consumers significantly increased.

**Tip for Success:** We know that our products are not a mandatory buy — that a sale begins with us and a quality product in the end. The services we offer are a specialty. Our success is determined by how special we make the customers' leisure time. Their leisure time is our end.

### AQUARIUS POOL & SPA SERVICE

**Location:** Walnut Creek, Calif.  
**Principals:** "Mac" and Marge McDowell  
**Motto:** "Committed to excellence"  
**Founded:** 1970  
**Outlets:** 1 retail/construction/service  
**Employees:** 12 year-round, 13 in-season  
**Professional Affiliations:** IPSSA, NFIB, NSPI, SPEC  
**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 1  
**Products Sold:** Chemicals, supplies  
**Status Report:** Strictly a pool and spa service company, this family business added one pool repair employee and an additional pool service route in 1998. It also became the first Baquacil dealer in California, which was received well by customers. The company expects those BaquaSpa and Baquacil customers to be repeat business in 1999, plus growth should snowball through referrals.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We investigated additional activities that we could do in our business, but rather than let our ego get us off track, we decided to continue what we do best — pool and spa ser-

vice and repair.

**Tip for Success:** Operate your business on an honest basis, and good things will happen to you.

### ARKANSAS POOLS & SPAS

**Location:** Jonesboro, Ark.  
**Principals:** John and Scottie Payne  
**Motto:** "We make staying at home fun!"  
**Founded:** 1973  
**Outlets:** 1 retail  
**Employees:** 4 year-round, 6-7 in-season  
**Professional Affiliations:** Chamber of Commerce, NSPI  
**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 3  
**Products Sold:** Above-ground pools, portable spas, fire-place logs, Christmas items, chemicals, supplies, toys  
**Status Report:** This first-generation business spent the winter reorganizing and planning all aspects of the business in order to meet goals and avoid chaos in the height of the season. Those goals include selling more by reaching more people through an increased advertising budget.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We have increased our staff levels to a point where we, as owners, are able to delegate responsibilities and are not juggling all aspects of our business.

**Tip for Success:** Don't become complacent. Review your plans and goals for the last year, change what didn't work, and build upon what did work.

### ARMOND AQUATECH POOLS

**Location:** Bridgeport, Pa.  
**Principals:** Jeffrey Ciarrochi, Lisa C. McGinnis  
**Motto:** "Demand the finest — demand Aquatech"  
**Founded:** 1975  
**Outlets:** 1 retail/construction/service  
**Employees:** 20 year-round, 40 in-season  
**Professional Affiliations:** Aquatech, Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, NFIB, NSPI  
**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 3  
**Products Sold:** Custom gunite pools/spas, decks, chemicals, supplies  
**Status Report:** New home construction in the area led in-ground pool sales to be higher, and the second-generation family business expects that to stay the same through strong winter sales and a good flow of leads. The advertising budget is going to stay the same, as principals scaled back their Yellow Pages ad in a move to more focused publications that better target their customers.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We added an engineer to our staff mostly to help expedite permit issues, but it has generated a modest flow of income.

**Tip for Success:** Know your market niche, and work to be the best in your area at servicing that customer.

### BACKYARD AMENITIES INC.

**Location:** Baytown, Texas  
**Principals:** Brad and Patty Stephens  
**Motto:** "When quality counts ... you can count on us!"  
**Founded:** 1998  
**Outlets:** 1 construction/retail  
**Employees:** 39 year-round, 42 in-season  
**Professional Affiliations:** Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, NSPI  
**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 0  
**Products Sold:** Custom gunite pools/spas, decks, chemicals, supplies, toys  
**Status Report:** Backyard Amenities had an "unbelievable"





Bob Wason's pool and spa • Gym & Swim, a Master Pool Builder, Louisville, Ky.



Brad & Patty Stephens's pool and spa  
Backyard Amenities Inc., Baytown, Texas



Ron Giannamore's pool and spa • Aqua Pool & Patio Inc., East Windsor, Conn.

**Products Sold:** Package vinyl-liner pools, fiberglass pools, above-ground pools, portable spas, gazebos, casual furniture, fireplaces, chemicals, supplies, toys

**Status Report:** Additional home shows and a higher closing ratio led to a 40 percent increase in portable spa sales. Additional new store openings are expected to push unit sales up another 37 percent. Fairs, home shows and demo models combined to push above-ground pool sales up 75 percent, and that, too, is expected to continue because of better market penetration.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We prepared for the addition of two new stores.

**Tip for Success:** Continually strive to reach the highest level of customer service and insure customer happiness when relating to their spa and/or pool needs.

### THE SPA BROKERS INC.

**Location:** Aurora, Colo.

**Principals:** Don Chandler

**Founded:** 1983

**Outlets:** 3 retail

**Employees:** 28 year-round

**Professional Affiliations:** Better Business Bureau, NSPI, HPA

**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 4

**Products Sold:** Portable spas, gazebos, saunas, fireplaces, chemicals, supplies, toys, bathtubs

**Status Report:** Great products, great financing and a regular advertising campaign shot portable spas sales up 40 percent. That trend is expected to continue this year, due to a good economy, a larger customer base and continued aggressive advertising. A direct-mail promotion was successful this past year, as well, contributing to a 27 percent increase in chemical sales.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We sent all the sales personnel to outside training programs and held sales meetings on a regular basis. We also advertised in the newspaper every week, and purchased and displayed all the manufacturers' point-of-sale materials.

**Tip for Success:** Treat your employees, your customers and vendors the way you, as an individual, expect to be treated.

### SPA PALACE INC.

**Location:** Colorado Springs, Colo.

**Principals:** Mike Wiege

**Founded:** 1985

**Outlets:** 4 construction/retail/service

**Employees:** 30 year-round

**Professional Affiliations:** Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, NAHB, NSPI, Hearth Products Association, area Home Builders Associations

**Previous AQUA 100 Appearances:** 2

**Products Sold:** Above-ground pools, portable spas, gazebos, saunas, fireplaces, chemicals, supplies, toys, grills, patio heaters

**Status Report:** The Second Annual Hot Tub Parking Lot Sale was a big hit this past year, where a 20-by-50-foot tent held discontinued, blemished and single-model spas. Twenty spas, in stacks of five high, were in front of the store with banners attached. The company claims the sale helped increase spa sales by 11 percent. Moving one store location to a higher traffic area lifted sales, as well.

**The best thing I did for my business in 1998:** We promoted a high-end grill line in the spring and promoted hearth products in the winter months.

**Tip for Success:** Take advantage of the current strong

