

APRIL 2001 • 58
www.aquamagazine.com

AQUA

The Business Magazine for Spa & Pool Professionals

AQUA 100

Twelfth Annual

NEW LOOKS IN AUTOMATIC POOL CLEANERS (Page 31) • PORTABLE POOLS OFFER PROFIT POTENTIAL (Page 41)



pools and chemicals rose by 8, 13 and 10 percent, respectively. The increase in spa sales came about as a result of increased sales training, sales tools and an improved referral program, while above-ground pools benefited from good weather and chemicals from an increased mailing list. Though it has used Wisconsin Badgers' head football coach Barry Alvarez in its advertising, it says direct mailings are the most effective.

The best thing I did for my business in 2000:

Promoting our top salesperson to general manager.

Tip for Success: Strive to locate and create a staff of superstars. Once you have found them, motivate them and keep them.

BACKYARD AMENITIES INC.

Location: Baytown, TX

Principals: Brad Stephens, president/owner; Patty Stephens, secretary/owner

Motto: "When quality counts . . . Count on us!"

Founded: 1998

Outlets: 1 construction/retail/service

Employees: 8 year-round, 8 in-season

Professional Affiliations: Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, NSPI

AQUA 100 Appearances: 3

Products Sold: Custom gunite pools/spas, decks, chemicals, supplies, toys, grills

Status Report: Although this builder always offered pool maintenance and service on pools it built, last year it started offering these services to anyone with a pool. This change, along with a new and more visible store, sparked a 30 percent increase in chemical sales last year. This year it hopes to maintain the chemical sales momentum by a combination of advertising and increased product knowledge by its employees. The company also increased its in-ground installations by 11 percent and overall revenues by 21.5 percent.

The best thing I did for my business in 2000: Adding pool service and maintenance for all pool customers.

Tip for Success: Never forget the fact that customer service and satisfaction must always be your top priority, and everything else will follow.

BACKYARDS OF AMERICA

Location: Midvale, UT

Principals: Ray Schureman

Motto: "Bringing vacations home"

Founded: 1984

Outlets: 2 construction/retail/service

Employees: 9 year-round, 11 in-season

Professional Affiliations: Better Business Bureau, NFIB, NSPI

AQUA 100 Appearances: 5

Products Sold: Decks, above-ground pools, portable spas, gazebos, saunas, chemicals, supplies, toys

Status Report: More of the same was good news for this Utah-based retailer. Sales of portable spas, above-ground pools and chemicals remained at 1999 levels, as did revenues. Owner Ray Schureman says that Olympic-related interstate construction is ending and business might increase in 2001 as a result, though he's got his eye on a possible downturn in the U.S. and Utah economies. He's also considering a relocation in 2001.

The best thing I did for my business in 2000: A box van with billboard-like advertising.

Tip for Success: He honest and innovative. Keep up store appearance. Have fun at work. Instill a positive attitude in

employees. Respect your customers and befriend them.

BROWNING POOL & SPA

Location: Germantown, MD

Principals: Charles H. Browning, Jr., president; Charles H. Browning III, vice president; Duane Browning; Aaron Browning; Jerry Duval; and Patricia Browning

Motto: "The most trusted name in pools"

Founded: 1942

Outlets: 2 construction/retail/service

Employees: 20 year-round, 45 in-season

Professional Affiliations: Chamber of Commerce, NAHB, NSPI

AQUA 100 Appearances: 5

Products Sold: Custom gunite pools/spas, above-ground pools, portable spas, chemicals, supplies, toys

Status Report: Gross revenues rose by a healthy 10 percent at this third-generation family-owned company.

Business in in-ground pools, portable spas and above-ground pools showed modest gains compared to 1999, which vice president Chuck Browning attributes to a stable economy and favorable interest rates. Chemical sales, on the other hand, rose by 10 percent. "It was hot and dry early on," Browning explains. The company, which has been around since 1942, has kept advertising expenditures steady while increasing revenue.

The best thing I did for my business in 2000: Held onto our advertising budget even in a growth period.

Tip for Success: Master the basics of communication and then follow through with what you promised.

CALIFORNIA POOLS & SPAS

Location: West Covina, CA

Principals: W. Douglas Steimle, chairman; David G. Morril, president; Ryder Steimle, vice president

Motto: "Concern, professionalism, service"

Founded: 1952

Outlets: 27 construction/retail

Employees: 247 year-round, 285 in-season

Professional Affiliations: Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, NSPI, SPEC

AQUA 100 Appearances: 8

Products Sold: Custom gunite pools/spas, decks, supplies

Status Report: One of the oldest and largest companies on the AQUA 100, California Pools & Spas installed about 5 percent more pools in 2000 than in 1999. "The economy accounted for that," says president David G. Morril. "We expect this year to be static. We don't see a decline, but we don't expect to sell a lot more pools than we did in 2000, either." The company spends a sizable amount on advertising, but maintains that referrals and word-of-mouth advertising remain its most effective.

The best thing I did for my business in 2000:

Formalized and strengthened infrastructure supporting cell offices.

Tip for Success: Direct every person at every level to dedicate themselves to delivering the highest possible level of customer service and quality construction.

CALIFORNIA POOLS & SPAS OF ARIZONA

Location: Mesa, AZ

Principals: Mike Smith, founder and CEO; Joan Smith, co-founder

Motto: "Service, concern, professionalism"

Founded: 1988

Outlets: 4 construction/service

