

Managing the “Green Rush”

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Three thoughts on the dealing with the changes and opportunities that have come with the Green Rush.

THE BUSINESS AND ENERGY CLIMATE

Next to the economy and the spotty recovery taking place around the marketplace, two topics seem to dominate business conversations: the environment and energy. The ongoing debates about sources of energy and how it's used demonstrates there are cost, safety, engineering and environmental challenges that no current available technology can fully meet. Promising alternatives have more development and proving to go through so we must find a way to live and work with an energy mix for the foreseeable future.

So, one short-term means of reducing CO2 is to save energy. At the same time we need to ensure the productivity of our systems. Finding the balance between energy efficiency and productivity is the challenge. This challenge opens up many possibilities to apply new technologies and profit from those sales. It also, with proper system design, allows us to provide our customers with more efficient systems that meet their operational needs.

THE GREEN BALANCE

I believe we have some responsibility to do our part in meeting the challenge of getting our society greener. However, I also believe we have a responsibility to our customers to do what is best for them. Selling the highest efficiency pump (variable speeds) is not always the best answer. Two speed pump systems can deliver excellent energy efficiency and still meet the customer's filtration and sanitization needs at significant installed cost saving vs. variable speed systems. However, selling the less expensive of these two alternatives just because it is the less expensive may not serve the customers needs in the most effective way and many customers are willing to pay for the extras. Heating systems, gas, heat pump and solar all have a place in the market and each carries it's own price tag and operating characteristics. Taking the time to understand the customers needs and desires is crucial to determining which system fits their particular requirements. Of course, designing the plumbing system to achieve the lowest possible TDH is simply good engineering design practice and can only result in a lower, more effective cost of filtration for our customers. In the case of specifying over sized filters, the TDH will not only be lower but the owner/operator should need to clean the filter less often which will result in lower water usage as well.

THE IGNORANT CUSTOMER

A Florida clothing retailers ad once stated, “An educated customer is our best customer”, or something to that order. That has never been truer than now as we in the pool industry have a wide variety of new technologies and system design to offer to our customers. In some cases these new designs are simply mandated by State code. In others, they represent opportunities for us to improve customer satisfaction with our overall product as well as decrease operating expenses. Simply telling the customer “this is the new Code” is selling at its worst. While some in the industry may resent the increasing legal and regulatory obligations that have and continue to come at us, they quite often carry embedded opportunities for us to profit from. In many cases these opportunities will only be turned into reality when we have the ability to fully inform the owner/operator of the benefits of purchasing what we are selling. Your customer's ignorance of these legitimate products can only lead to lost sales opportunities and potential distrust when the customer hears the price tag but not a clear definition of their favorite radio station, WIIFM.(What's In It For Me).

Educate yourself. There are a great many industry training programs available. Get yourself and your staff up to speed on the new products and technology. Take your newfound knowledge and products and educate your customer. They want to give you their money, as long as they feel the investment is worthwhile. Educating them is the key to getting a “yes” in the sales process. And we will all have done some small part of keeping things just a bit greener.