

## Remodels and renovations

By Don Cesarone, Van Kirk and Sons, Inc.

As the builders, service providers, manufacturers, etc. who make up the pool industry, we must look for the positives in this enduring economic down turn. Although the new pool starts are stagnant, the remodel and renovation market is an area that has been long overlooked. This market could help maintain your cash flow while we wait for the economy to rebound, or you could find it very lucrative and open a separate division permanently.

However, one must remember that remodels/ renovations present challenges that most are not aware of or prepared for. New pools typically do not have many unknowns, other than sub-soil conditions and other minor issues. Remodels/ renovations need to be approached very differently... one must understand that there can be many hidden issues that could be very costly if overlooked. You are not the person that built the pool and you cannot confirm that it was built to the high standards you would use. Make sure you have visually inspected the pool, checking for conditions that would cause problems and drive the costs up. You should include verbiage in your contract about possible unforeseen conditions that could cause additional costs. Stipulate exactly what you are doing and make sure you itemize each area. If you do not have a remodel/ renovation contract, cross off the area's that do not pertain to the project. Most people do not like to hear there could be additional costs; however, most understand that there is no way to know of these potential issues until the process begins. This does not mean you have an open checkbook and you are not responsible to make sure you have done your due diligence. Walk through the pool and/or spa area with your client and educate them on what takes place during the remodel/ renovation process.

Here are a few other things to remember. Your costs are typically higher due to lack of access, the nature of the work, dismantling the existing structure and getting the debris removed by hand! Remove the furniture off the deck, it is very hard to get the dust off. Permits are required in most cases. When adding a heat pump, have an electrician prepare a load calculation so that you do not overload the existing service. You will find in many existing homes the homeowner has done work to the house and added electrical devices and have not accounted for them. Lastly, make sure you have floaters insurance to protect your company and the client. Good luck!