



INDUSTRY REPORT

The State of Pool Service

Insights on pricing, priorities, and challenges from
25,000+ pool pros managing 500,000 pools per year.



Executive Letter

At Skimmer, our purpose is to empower pool and spa service professionals with a platform to build great businesses. And when we say “platform,” we’re not just referring to software — we’re talking about the network of resources that businesses of all sizes need to be successful, including support, ongoing education, and community.

Skimmer has the largest customer base in the pool service software industry — we have 25,000+ customers who have logged over 253 million dosages and readings, completed over 62 million route stops, and service over 500,000 pools monthly.

The sheer volume of activity in our system means we’re in a unique position to offer anonymous insights into how pool pros are working — how they price their services, the size of their businesses, how many pools they service, etc.

We also know that there is a gap when it comes to this kind of information in the market. With this report, we saw an opportunity to help support all pool pros, whether they’re using Skimmer or not, with information to help them succeed. We want to continue to uplift the pool and spa service market over the coming years, and we are committed to using our resources to help the industry grow and improve.

Jack Nelson
Skimmer CEO



What you'll find in this report

For the first edition of the State of Pool Service report, we surveyed 1,700 pool pros to learn how they are:

- Planning on meeting market challenges, notably rising costs.
- Structuring their businesses and charging for their services.
- Using technology to increase efficiency and get a leg up on the competition.

This report represents a combination of those survey responses, platform data aggregated from the activity of over 25,000 Skimmer users servicing more than 500,000 pools monthly, and market research from the pool service industry.

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report equal 100%. All comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).



**1,700 pool pros surveyed
across the country**

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Seniority

Owner	85%
Executive	5%
Office manager	5%
Technician	2%
Other	3%

Business Type

Residential	98%
Residential and commercial ...	44%
Residential and short term rentals	50%
All three	29%
Residential only	36%

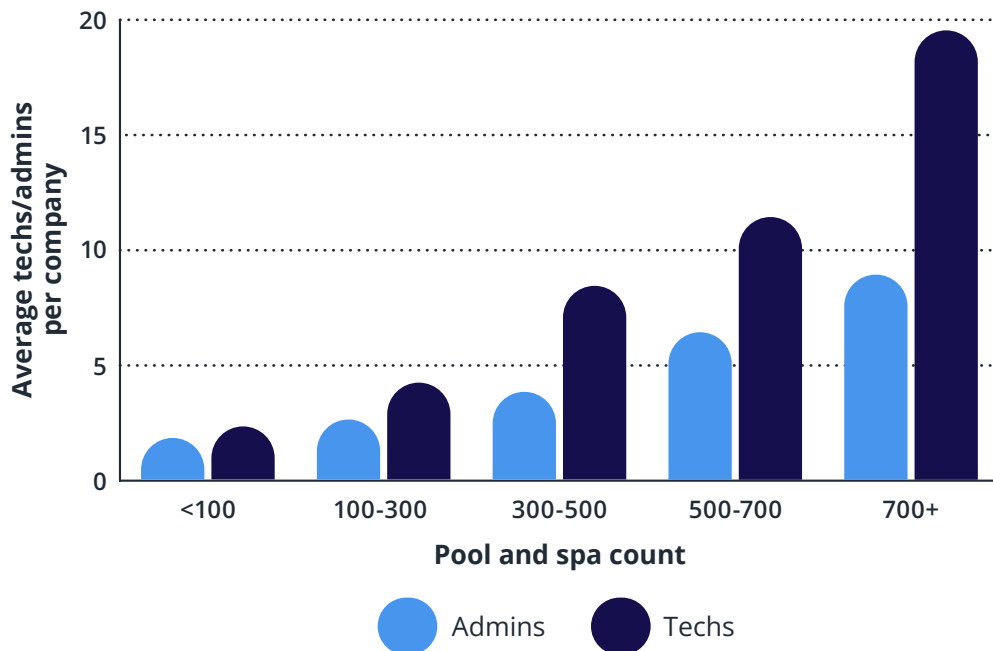
Admins/Techs: Breakdown by company size

3.4

Average Techs/Company

2.2

Average Admin/Company



SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

State

Alabama.....	1%	Mississippi.....	< 1%
Arkansas.....	< 1%	North Carolina.....	.2%
Arizona.....	10%	Nebraska.....	< 1%
California.....	7%	New Jersey.....	.2%
Colorado.....	< 1%	New Mexico.....	< 1%
Connecticut.....	< 1%	Nevada.....	.2%
Delaware.....	< 1%	New York.....	.2%
Florida.....	19%	Ohio.....	.1%
Georgia.....	3%	Oklahoma.....	.1%
Hawaii.....	1%	Oregon.....	< 1%
Idaho.....	< 1%	Pennsylvania.....	.1%
Illinois.....	< 1%	Puerto Rico.....	< 1%
Indiana.....	< 1%	South Carolina.....	.2%
Kansas.....	< 1%	Tennessee.....	< 1%
Kentucky.....	< 1%	Texas.....	17%
Louisiana.....	.2%	Utah.....	.1%
Maryland.....	< 1%	Virginia.....	< 1%
Massachusetts.....	< 1%	Washington.....	< 1%
Michigan.....	< 1%	Wisconsin.....	< 1%
Missouri.....	< 1%	West Virginia.....	< 1%

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01 2024 is set to be a challenging year — with rising costs decreasing margins in the industry

73% of survey respondents said they brought in more revenue in 2023 than they did in 2022. However, the majority also indicated that rising costs were the biggest challenge they faced this past year and they expect this to continue into 2024. The vast majority of companies are planning to combat rising costs by increasing prices — nearly 74% of pool pros indicated that a price increase is in the cards for this year to keep revenue strong.

02 Pool pros who can think strategically about pricing and business models will win

Understanding how to leverage the four most common pricing models (per stop, per month, plus chems, and including chems) to remain competitive and profitable will mean the difference between sinking and swimming in 2024.

03 Pool pros are split on which growth levers will be most impactful in 2024

Growing net profits and increasing gross revenue are in a dead heat as top priorities for 2024. The main strategies pool pros are leveraging to achieve these goals break down pretty evenly across expanding into other lines of business, reducing customer count and increasing profitability per pool, streamlining services, increasing marketing budget, and acquiring routes.

04 2024 will bring a challenging labor market, with high competition for talent

Despite finding and keeping talent being the second biggest challenge facing pool pros, 52% of survey respondents said they plan to hire in 2024. 47% said they plan to keep their staff the same size, and less than 1% of respondents said they are planning to reduce their number of full-time employees. Owners will need to focus on retention strategies to keep employees happy in a competitive labor market.

05 There is a huge untapped opportunity for pool pros in paid marketing

Pool pros heavily favor free and word-of-mouth marketing channels, with referrals and social media dominating and referrals taking the top spot for effectiveness, according to pros. Only 35% of survey respondents said they are currently paying for advertising, meaning there's a big opportunity here for pool pros to get ahead of the competition and own the online space in their area.

06 Operations are becoming increasingly digital, and pool pros who evolve are reaping the benefits

Everything from basic business operations to collecting payments to purchasing supplies is going online. 75% of survey respondents reported that they are using software to manage some part of their business. In 2023 only 2% of transactions were done via cash indicating a big shift toward non-cash payments. Finally, more than half of survey respondents said that increased costs and decreased availability in physical stores have led them to start buying supplies online.

INTRODUCTION

Like many sectors, the pool and spa service industry has had a volatile few years. COVID-19 led to a surge in new pool construction, which created more demand for cleaning and maintenance. Consumers also used existing pools more during COVID, and pool maintenance was deemed an essential industry.

However, rising costs in the industry are eating away at margins. This, coupled with high competition and a low barrier to entry in the market means pool pros need to find creative ways to stand out from the competition, grow their businesses, and retain customers.

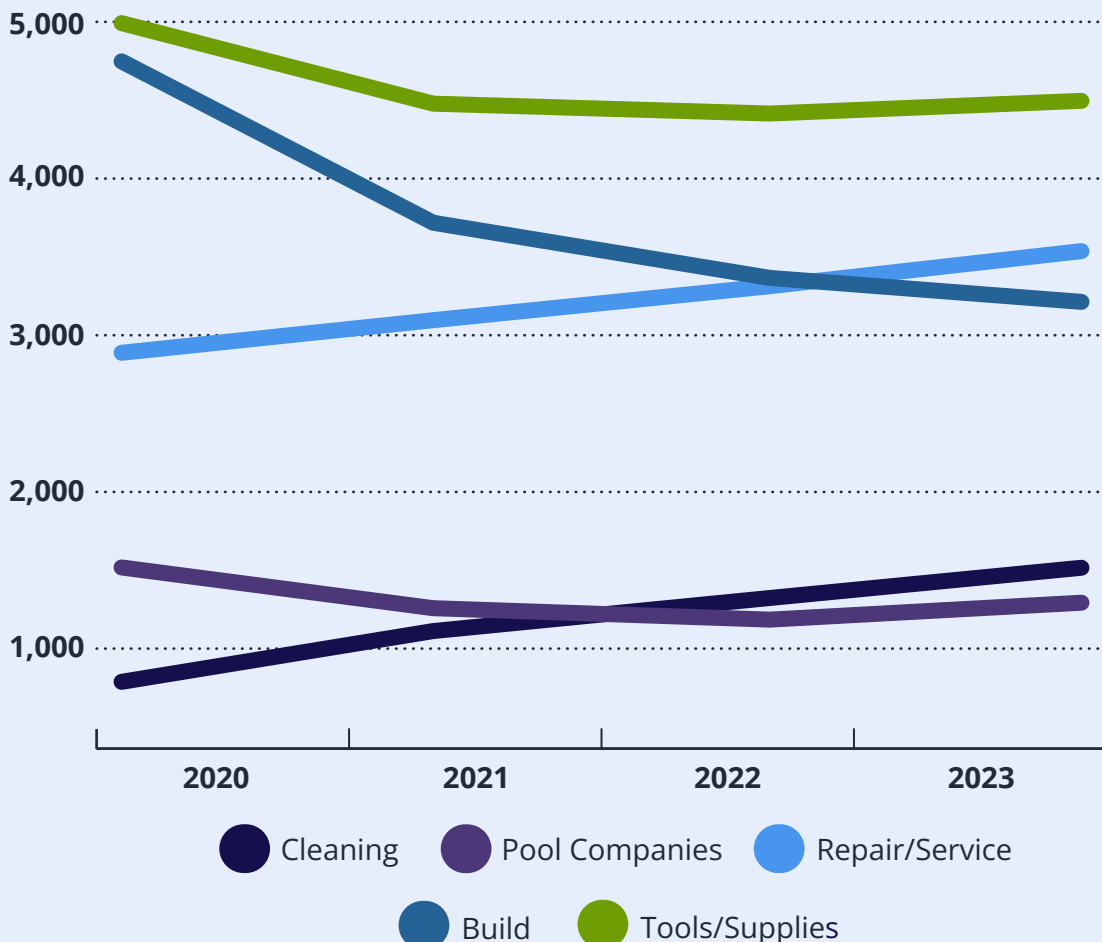


SIDEBAR

Consumer Google searches for pool service-related terms 2020-2023

While Google searches for pool builds, tools and supplies spiked in 2020 and have somewhat declined since then, searches for cleaning, service and repairs have grown as homeowners seek out pool pros to clean and maintain new builds.

Year Over Year Change (in millions)

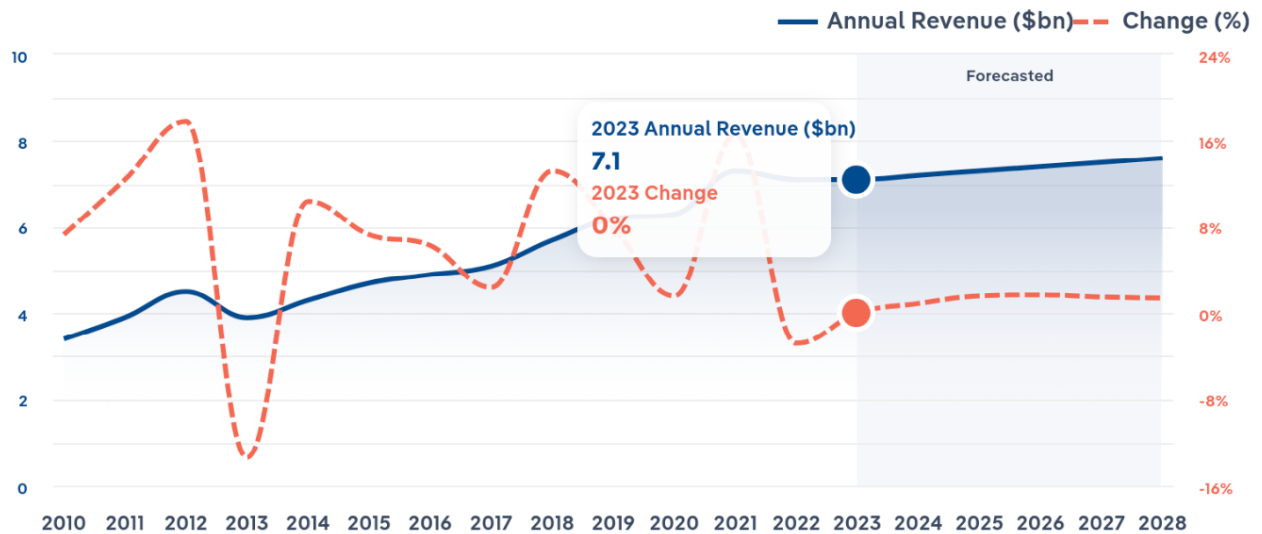


INTRODUCTION

Despite these challenges, pool pros are resilient and have more tools, technology, and information at their disposal than ever before. Those who can strategically leverage these resources will see success over the coming years and take advantage of the continued modest growth of the pool care industry.

Revenue

Total value (\$) and annual change from 2010 – 2028. Includes 5-year outlook.



IBISWorld

Source: IBISWorld

Key Market Drivers:

- Increased swimming pool construction
- Consumer spending
- More households earning over \$100,000
- Per capita disposable income
- Demand from property management
- Demand from hotels and motels

Source: IBISWorld Inc.

CHAPTER 1

2024 is set to be a challenging year



CHAPTER 1

2024 is set to be a challenging year, with rising costs decreasing margins in the industry — but pool pros have a plan

Despite challenges ranging from macroeconomic factors to talent shortages to changing regulatory environments, 2023 was a good year for the pool service industry. 73% of survey respondents said they brought in more revenue in 2023 than they did in 2022. However, the majority also indicated that rising costs were a challenge, and expect this to continue into 2024.

Top Challenges for Pool Pros in 2023

1. Rising Costs
2. Talent
3. Recession
4. Operational Efficiency
5. Asset Management
6. Regulations
7. Water Shortages

In 2023, did you:

Bring in more revenue than in 2022



Bring in roughly the same revenue as 2022



Bring in less revenue than in 2022



CHAPTER 1

The market saw a big jump in pool construction during COVID as folks who were stuck at home tried to make their living spaces more comfortable and fun. All these new pools, as well as the increased use of existing pools, spiked the demand for chemicals like chlorine.

Unfortunately, this spike in demand overlapped with production issues at several chlorine plants. In 2020, Hurricane Laura hit a Louisiana chlorine plant, destroying nearly 40% of the US chlorine supply, and a 2022 fire in a New Jersey plant destroyed another 100,000 lbs of chlorine tabs. While the Louisiana plant re-opened in late 2022, all of these factors together have caused chemical costs to skyrocket over the past couple of years.

The rise in chemical costs also coincided with a period of rapid inflation in the US. As of publication, US inflation is at 3.1% — the lowest it's been since March 2021. Despite the recent drop, it's still putting financial strain on consumers and small businesses alike and making it increasingly difficult to maintain healthy margins.

Fortunately, pool pros continue to be deeply resilient. The vast majority of companies are planning to combat rising costs by increasing prices in 2024, with nearly 74% of pool pros indicating a price increase is in the cards to keep revenue strong.

74%
of pool pros are planning
to raise prices in 2024

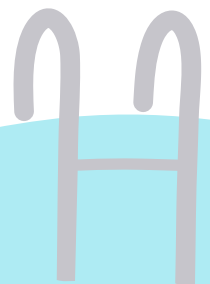
Of those that are planning on increasing prices, nearly 42% of respondents say they're aiming for a less than 10% raise while just over 40% are targeting between an 11% to 20% increase in prices.



I would agree the revenue number was higher, but that was mostly due to the rising costs of product which in turn made us raise our prices to keep the same margins. We were constantly chasing the margin all year long.



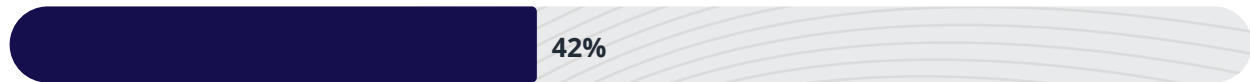
Erik Taylor
Owner, Chlorine King Pool Service



CHAPTER 1

By roughly how much are you planning on raising prices in 2023?

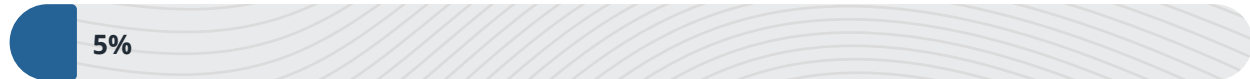
Less than 10%



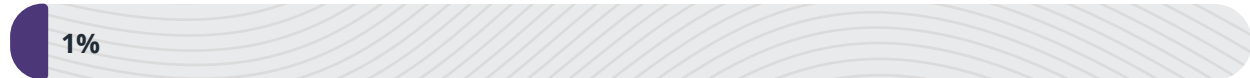
11%–20%



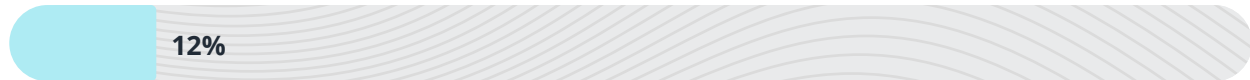
21%–30%



31%+



Unsure



Overall, pool pros are optimistic about 2024 with an overwhelming majority of survey respondents — nearly 83% — indicating that they expect to bring in more revenue than in 2023.

In 2024, do you expect to:

Bring in more revenue than in 2023



Bring in roughly the same revenue as 2023



Bring in less revenue than in 2023



CHAPTER 1



In 2023 it felt like we were getting back to business as usual. The huge wave of demand from lockdowns was fading and now we had to earn more business. It showed me that we have a great team that we can depend on as we continue to grow.



Bryce Serrine

Owner, Beyond Pool Cleaning



SIDEBAR

Price increase toolkit

Here are a few useful resources for those increasing prices this year.

Skimmer Service Rate Index

- [Skimmer's Service Rate Index](#) for exclusive details about what competitors in your area are charging.

Webinar Recordings

- [Double Profits \(Without Adding More Pools\) with Casey Graham](#) - Watch for proven profit increase strategies from untapped revenue streams
- [From 0 to 1000 Pools with Casey Graham](#) - Watch this for actionable strategies for growing your business.
- [How To Raise Prices and Increase Profits](#) - Start here for strategies to double profits without increasing pool count.
- [Should You Change Your Pricing Model?](#) - An in-depth look into pricing models and what's best for your business.

Price Increase & Profit Calculator

- [Skimmer Price Increase & Profit Calculator](#) - Google Sheets

Communicating Your Price Increase

- [Customer Price Increase Template - Per Visit](#)
- [Customer Price Increase Template - Flat Rate](#)



CHAPTER 2

Thinking strategically about pricing and business models



CHAPTER 2

Pool pros who can think strategically about pricing and business models will win in 2024

It is more important than ever for pool pros to understand what options are available to help them weather price volatility in the market. Understanding how to leverage the four most common pricing models (per stop, per month, plus chems, and including chems) to stay competitive and lucrative will mean the difference between floundering, surviving, and prospering in 2024.



We are all-inclusive with the exception of specialty chemicals. There is a rampant phosphate issue in our area and, at over \$70 per gallon, we simply cannot absorb the cost. Other things, such as stain treatments, etc., are also extra. We plan on keeping this structure. While it's not a significant revenue generator at least we aren't losing money for things out of our control and cost a lot to treat properly.



Erik Taylor

Owner, Chlorine King Pool Service

We switched to the plus chems model in 2022. This has been so much easier to manage with Skimmer. It just makes sense to increase profitability by transitioning to a plus chems model — and with Skimmer, it makes it easier for customers and for billing as well!

Chantel Dooley

Dazzle Pools



CHAPTER 2

SIDEBAR

Rate type breakdown

Per month: The customer pays monthly for service.

Per stop model: The customer pays per visit.

Plus chems: Chemicals are sold separately from other services. [With volatile chemical costs, this model makes it far easier to “pass along” chemical costs.](#) However, pool pros using this model need to clearly communicate costs with customers and ensure they have a good system for tracking chemical usage to minimize customer confusion and complaints.

Including chems: Chemicals are included in the price. This model tends to be easier for the pool owner to understand as it’s a fixed price (and also makes it easier for pool pros when it comes to billing). The downside is that big swings in chemical costs could lead to more frequent price changes.

Based on aggregated platform data, Skimmer has found that a **plus chems** model offers the best buffer against fluctuations in chemical costs and warmer weather patterns that may impact chemical usage.

Region	Rate Type	75 Percentile	Average	25 Percentile
Midwest	Monthly Rate Including Chemicals	\$234	\$192	\$139
	Monthly Rate Plus Chemicals	\$298	\$244	\$183
	Per Stop Including Chemicals	\$112	\$101	\$89
	Per Stop Plus Chemicals	\$96	\$85	\$70
Northeast	Monthly Rate Including Chemicals	\$281	\$257	\$220
	Monthly Rate Plus Chemicals	\$198	\$172	\$140
	Per Stop Including Chemicals	\$136	\$127	\$115
	Per Stop Plus Chemicals	\$111	\$103	\$92
South	Monthly Rate Including Chemicals	\$250	\$212	\$171
	Monthly Rate Plus Chemicals	\$228	\$197	\$160
	Per Stop Including Chemicals	\$83	\$75	\$60
	Per Stop Plus Chemicals	\$72	\$64	\$51
West	Monthly Rate Including Chemicals	\$212	\$179	\$134
	Monthly Rate Plus Chemicals	\$258	\$220	\$180
	Per Stop Including Chemicals	\$83	\$70	\$40
	Per Stop Plus Chemicals	\$77	\$72	\$58

Note: In this chart, the numbers associated with “plus chemicals” models reflect the cost of service, they do not include chemical costs. For example, in the South, the “Monthly Rate Plus Chemicals” means a pool owner pays an average of \$197/month PLUS the cost of the chemicals used. This table represents the average rate per type per region— interestingly, in some regions monthly rate including chems is more affordable for pool owners. Pool professionals may want to scrutinize their pricing structure to ensure they are optimizing their revenue potential. For a more in-depth look at pricing by state, take a look at Skimmer’s [Service Price Index](#). We’ll keep this index updated as we continue to collect insights on industry pricing.

CHAPTER 3

Pool pros are split on their business objectives



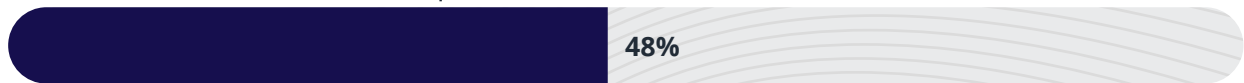
CHAPTER 3

Pool pros are split on their business objectives in 2024 (and how to achieve them)

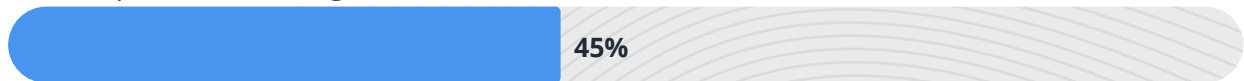
Growing net profits and increasing gross revenue are in a dead heat as top priorities in 2024. Pool pros are ambitious, with less than 2% of respondents saying their goal is to break even. Additionally, despite the massive amount of private equity that has entered the market from companies like America's Swimming Pool Company (ASP), Smart Pool Services, and Pool Troopers, very few survey respondents are planning on selling — only 2.5% of respondents reported plans to sell in 2024.

What is your primary business goal in 2024?

Grow bottom line (increase net profits)



Grow top line (increase gross sales or revenue)



Sell



Break-even



Other



CHAPTER 3

SIDEBAR

Resources to help you grow your top and bottom line

If your goal is to grow your top line...

- [Check out this blog](#) all about how to buy and sell pool services routes (from an industry veteran).
- [Watch the webinar](#) about best practices for buying and selling routes.

If your goal is to grow your bottom line...

Start by understanding profitability and cash flow! [Check out Skimmer's webinar](#) on the topic to learn:

- How to measure the health and speed of your cash flow
- The financial metrics you need to know (and lenders or acquirers want to see)
- The 3 simple rules to maximize cash flow (spoiler: don't take cash)

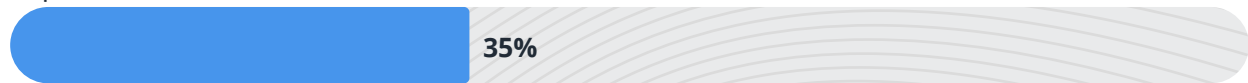
There's no consensus on what strategies pool pros will leverage to achieve goals like growing profits and revenue. Expanding into other lines of business, reducing customer count and increasing profitability per pool, streamlining services, increasing marketing budget, and acquiring routes are all popular strategies, with streamlining services just slightly edging out the others.

What strategies will you use to achieve your goals in 2024?

Streamline services



Expand into other lines of business



Reduce customer count and increase profitability per pool



Acquire routes



Increase marketing budget



CHAPTER 3

2024 growth strategies

Expand into other lines of business

35% of respondents are looking to add services and lines of business to grow in 2024. New lines of business can include expanding into retail, new construction & remodels, and other home services like window cleaning or landscaping.

Reduce customer count and increase profitability per pool

33% of respondents are looking to actually reduce their customer count, and focus on selling more services and providing more value per pool serviced.

Streamline services

43% of respondents are counting on introducing efficiencies to cut down on costs and increase profitability. This includes streamlining systems to make it easier to perform services and repairs — from quotes to getting the work done, to billing and getting paid, and also staying on top of preventative maintenance.

Increase marketing budget

31% of respondents are counting on more aggressive marketing to help them acquire new customers. Check out our chapter on marketing to learn more about using Google Local Service Ads to reach more customers in your area.

Acquire routes

31% of respondents also said they plan to grow by acquiring routes. Acquiring established routes provides a shortcut to a profitable business model and the opportunity to tap into an existing client base. It's a way for pool pros to rapidly expand their businesses and kickstart serious growth. [Check out the webinar](#) on buying and selling routes for more in-depth best practices.

To grow in 2024, owners will need to create focus for themselves and their staff and choose a few specific growth strategies or risk spreading themselves too thin.



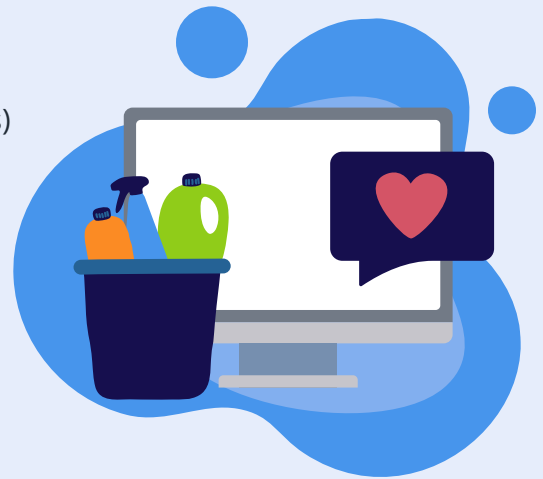
CHAPTER 3

SIDEBAR

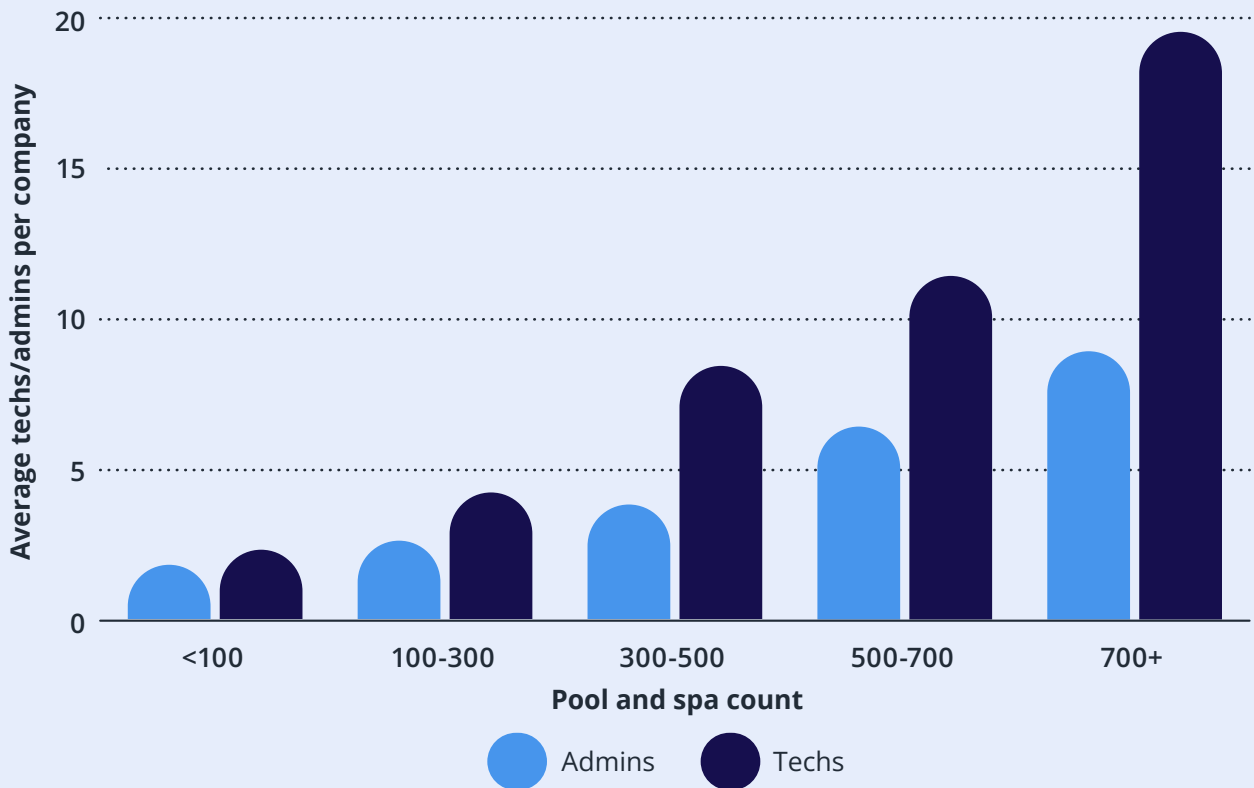
Pool service company budget & staff breakdown

How pool service company owners are allocating their 2024 budgets

- 34%** People-related expense
- 35%** Pool maintenance related (eg, chemicals, supplies)
- 12%** Office-related
- 12%** Software
- 7%** Marketing



Admins/Techs: Breakdown by company size



CHAPTER 4

A challenging labor market, with high competition for talent



CHAPTER 4

2024 will bring a challenging labor market, with high competition for talent

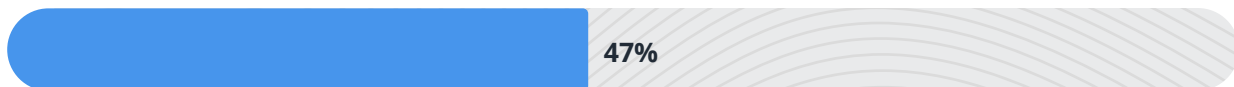
Despite finding and keeping talent being the second biggest challenge facing pool pros, 52% of survey respondents say they plan to hire more in 2024, while 47% said they plan to keep their staff the same size.

In 2024, do you plan to:

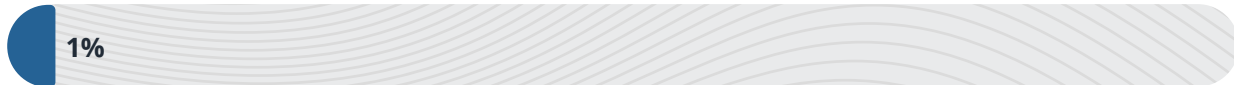
Hire more full-time employees



Remain the same



Reduce the number of full-time employees



CHAPTER 4

On average, pool techs are paid well. 32% of survey respondents said they pay techs \$16-\$20 per hour, and 30% said they pay \$21-\$25 per hour — rates that are well above minimum wage in most states. Employees are an investment, and owners need to focus on retaining and growing talent if they're going to grow their business in 2024.

On average, what do you pay your technicians per hour?

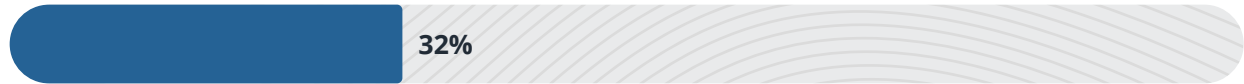
\$0-10/hour



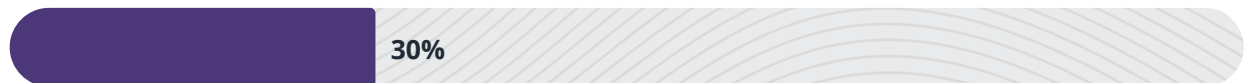
\$11-15/hour



\$16-20/hour



\$21-25/hour



\$26-30/hour



\$31+/hour



Note: This data represents hourly wages. It does not include those businesses that pay techs per stop or follow other payment methods.



SPOTLIGHT

Attract and retain great employees by providing growth paths

According to Casey Graham, CEO and Owner of Yummy Pools, pool service companies have a problem when it comes to finding and keeping great employees.



"I call it the hologram carrot," he says.

"Pool company owners are famous for getting a new technician, or a new service tech, or a new construction manager, and they put this hologram carrot out there to say, 'oh we're gonna allow you to start here but you can go be a repair guy and make this much money and you can do that one day.' And that's the conversation. 'Now go clean your pools.' And then they have to bring that conversation back up again with you about, hey where's that pay or where's that advancement."

One surefire way to get ahead of this is to use formal job letters when hiring. It's amazing how many pool pros aren't doing this, and are just relying on a verbal offer. While a verbal offer is fine, you need to follow it up with a written letter. This will make you stand out from other companies and also serve as a contract with that employee. In this letter, you can map out rates, job descriptions, and growth paths for the employee (and it also protects you if an employee isn't fulfilling their job requirements).

"Nobody says 'When I grow up I want to be a pool cleaner for 30 years'. Most people want to graduate out of that. And so you've got to be the person to show them the vision of how they do that."

Understand employee motivation to support growth

Casey says that overall, people are motivated by one of three things: Advancement, money or freedom. And it's up to you as a manager to suss out your teams' motivations.

Advancement people

Advancement people are the ones that come in and say "Hey what can I do next and when can I do it?"



How to spot an advancement person

Casey cautions that what you don't do here is just ask if they want to advance because 100% of your people will say yes, while only about 20% of your employees will actually be the advancement type.

Instead, look for certain behaviors. People who want to advance will be the ones to call you and say, can I go ride along with that person to learn that skill? How does this work in the company?

SPOTLIGHT

“They’re not just the guy that goes out and puts his headphones in and cleans the pools and goes home. They’re curious, they have questions.”

What advancement people need to thrive

The biggest thing you can do for these folks is help them understand what advancement will look like and when it will happen. Give them a schedule that serves as a commitment from you (in writing, of course) and includes things like pay, additional duties etc.

Money people

Casey says that you should be trying to pay your people as much as you can. This might sound counterintuitive if your goal is growth, but if you’re constantly battling employee turnover, you’re never going to grow. You’re going to spend all your time hiring and training. Whereas if you strive to give your employees more, they’ll be more likely to give more to you.



How do you know if your people are driven by advancement or money?

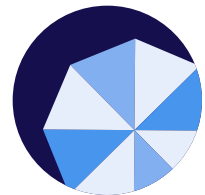
Money people are always asking to work more. When you need folks to work on Saturdays or Sundays, they’re the people who volunteer.

How to retain money people

Retention bonuses. When new employees start at Yummy Pools, if they show up 100% of the days for the first 60 days, they get \$500 cash and a \$1 per hour raise. When they make it to 90 days, they get a \$250 bonus just for being employed after 90 days. At six months, they get \$1,000, and then \$1,500 after a year.

Freedom people

The third category is freedom people — folks who value independence. They want to show up, get their job done, and go home.



How to retain freedom people

Everyone knows this employee because everyone’s got one. And the biggest way to keep these folks happy is to not ask them to do extra. And it’s not that they’re not team players, they just highly value their time — specifically their time not spent at work.

Understanding what category your employees fall into will help you create customized retention plans for everyone. Retaining employees, instead of being in constant hiring mode creates consistency and quality service for your customers and ultimately benefits your business.

[Learn more about growing your pool tech team without sacrificing quality.](#)

CHAPTER 5

Opportunities for pool pros in paid marketing

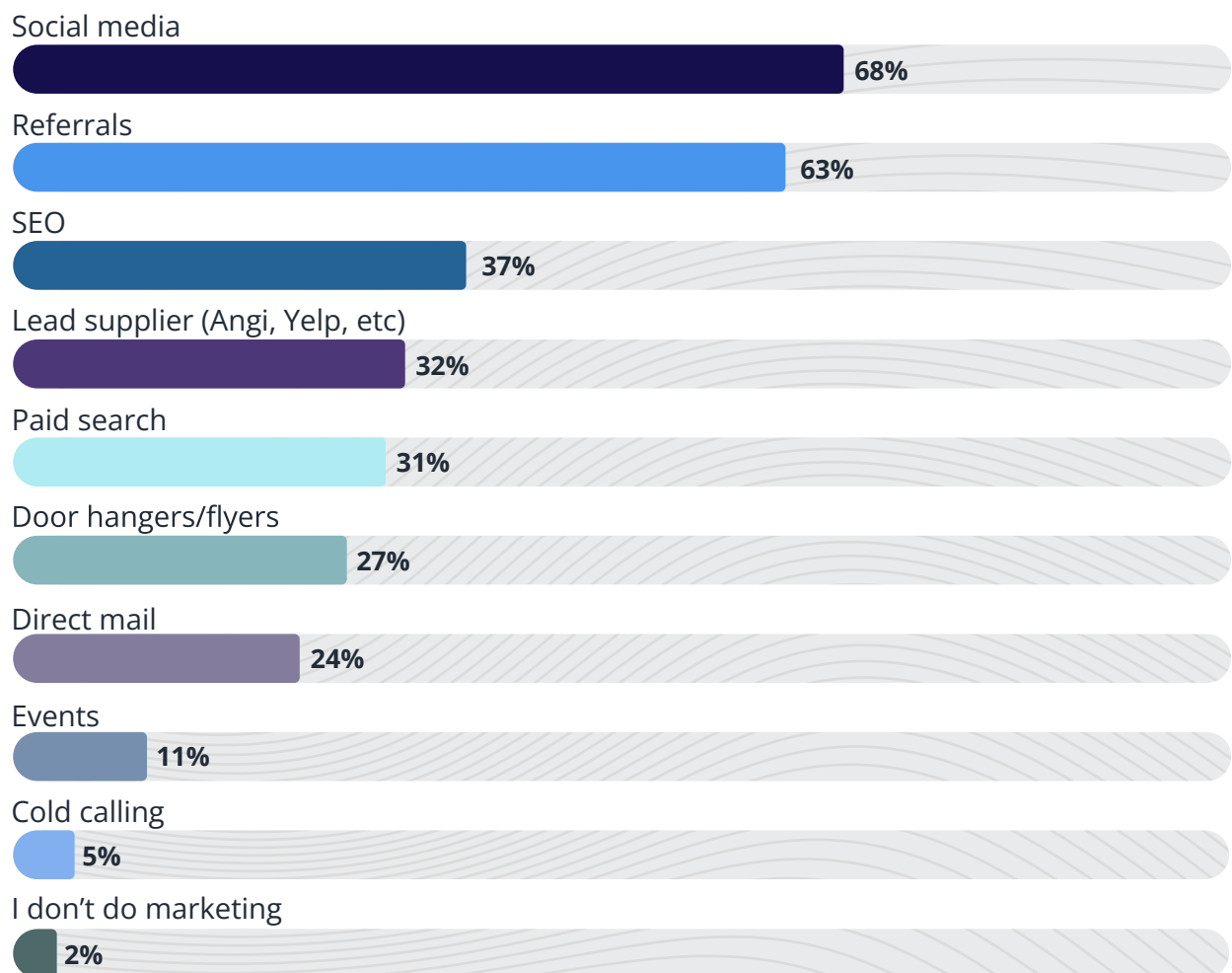


CHAPTER 5

There is a huge untapped opportunity for pool pros in paid marketing

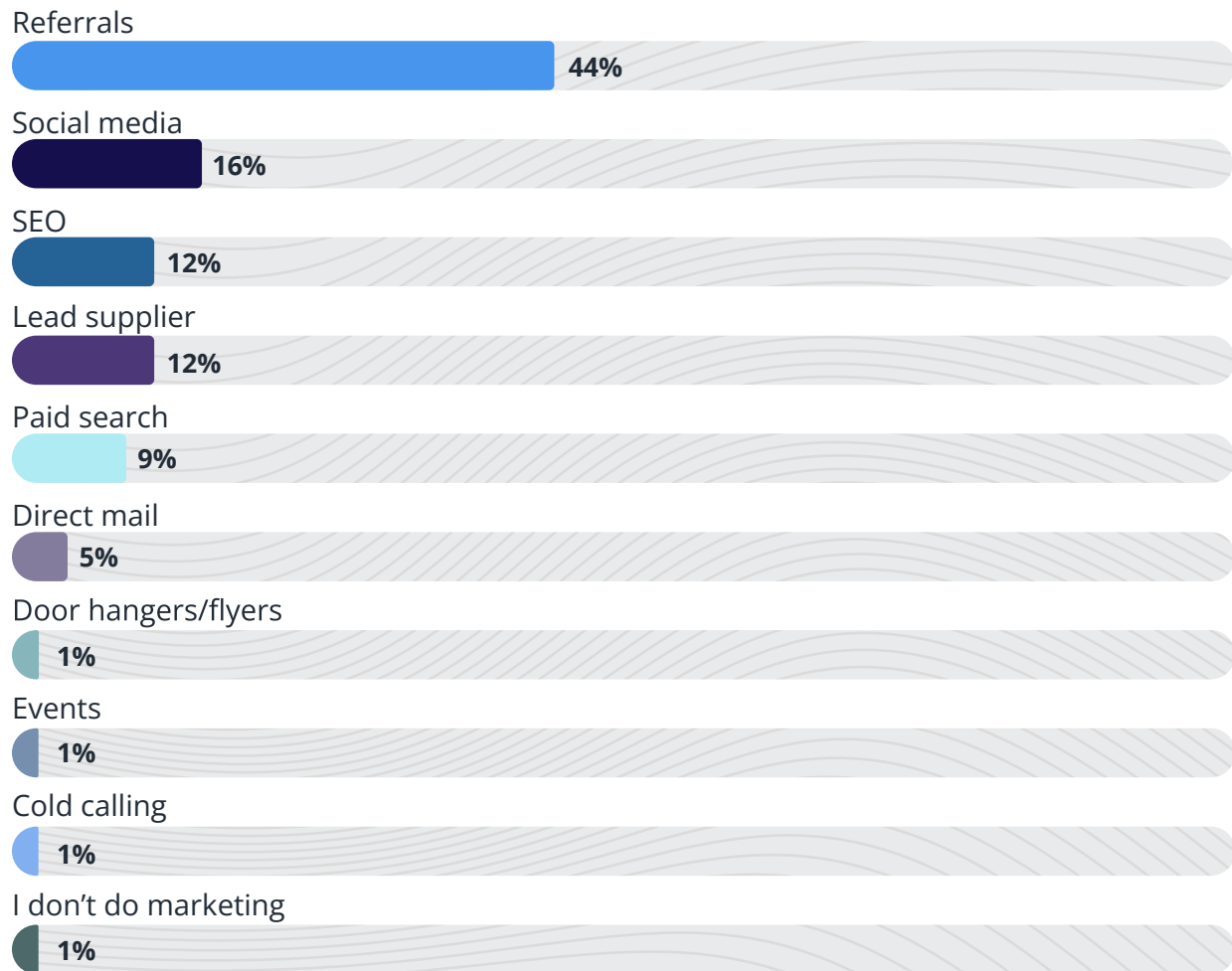
Pool pros heavily favor free and word-of-mouth marketing channels, with referrals and social media dominating and referrals taking the top spot for effectiveness, according to pros. While these are highly effective channels, especially for small businesses that are just ramping up, there is a huge gap in the industry when it comes to more targeted, refined marketing plans.

What marketing channels do you currently invest in (time and/or money)?



CHAPTER 5

Which channel provides the best quality leads?



Survey respondents were split on what marketing spend will look like in 2024. While very few (only 9%) are planning to spend less on marketing this year, 45% plan to spend more and 45% plan to spend the same.

The biggest opportunity when it comes to marketing is paid marketing. Only 35% of survey respondents said they are currently doing paid advertising, meaning there's a big opportunity here to be a first mover and own the online space in your area.



CASE STUDY: YUMMY POOLS

How Yummy Pools Dominated Search Results with Local Service Ads



Casey Graham, Owner of Yummy Pools knows a thing or two about leveraging paid marketing for growth. He grew Yummy Pools from 0 to 1000 pools in short order, by thinking creatively about customer acquisition — growing by acquiring companies and routes, and by leveraging Google in ways that very few in the pool industry are doing.

Casey attributes a decent portion of Yummy Pools' growth to his use of Google Local Service Ads.

Local Services Ads are paid Google ads that will show up specifically for customers in your area. When a potential customer Googles “pool care near me” (or any similar term) your ad will pop up with a Google Guaranteed check mark, and an option to book, message or call your business. Unlike pay-per-click (PPC) ads where you pay every time someone clicks on your ad, Local Service Ads are pay per lead meaning you only pay when someone actually gets in touch with your business.

“It is pure gold and it is pure money waiting to be made,” says Casey.

Results for **Atlanta, GA** · [Choose area](#) ⋮

Sponsored · Pool Cleaners | Atlanta ⋮

✓ GOOGLE GUARANTEED

ASP - America's Swimming Pool Company of Atlanta

4.7 ★★★★★ (170) · Pool Cleaner

10 years in business · Serves Atlanta

Open until 5PM



Call

Yummy Pools

4.7 ★★★★★ (64) · Pool Cleaner

7 years in business · Serves Atlanta

Open until 5PM



Message



Call

More pool cleaners →



CASE STUDY: YUMMY POOLS

The catch, according to Casey (and likely why very few pool pros are doing this) is that it's not easy to set up. You may be asked questions about your business license and insurance, or even be asked to provide pictures of local street signs to verify your location.

But once it's set up it's well worth it, says Casey.

"It costs me \$20 [per lead] on Google Local Service Ads. And our close rate is about 55% to 60% of all of those phone calls that come in. Think about the ROI on that. If I'm selling 40 new pools a month at \$325 to \$350 a month, and I'm only spending \$2,000 a month in ads, I literally have positive ROI in month one."

You can see the opportunity available here in the search data. The charts below show search volume and year-over-year growth of relevant keywords for pool pros.

Casey goes on to say that reaping the benefits of Local Service Ads isn't difficult, but there's one thing you MUST do to make it worthwhile:

"Answer the phone. The reason most pool professionals don't answer the phone is because they're doing the pool work. So if you want to grow your business, step away from the pool, step away from the customer, focus on your team, do Google Local Service Ads, and you're going to get calls in."

If you're interested in setting up Local Service Ads, [check out this helpful article](#).

Yearly Searches	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cleaning	788,640	1,112,140	1,323,660	1,516,780
Repair/Service	2,888,860	3,096,180	3,313,250	3,537,630
Build	4,748,300	3,718,660	3,366,680	3,213,770
Tools/Supplies	4,992,970	4,478,100	4,415,040	4,496,330
Pool Companies	1,518,370	1,258,180	1,185,160	1,293,490

YoY Growth	2021	2022	2023
Cleaning	41%	19%	15%
Repair/Service	7%	7%	7%
Build	-22%	-9%	-5%
Tools/Supplies	-10%	-1%	2%
Pool Companies	-17%	-6%	9%

CHAPTER 6

Reaping the benefits of digital operations



CHAPTER 6

Operations are becoming increasingly digital, and pool pros who evolve are reaping the benefits

The pool service industry is going through active digitization. While most survey respondents (75%) said they're using accounting software, disparate business solutions like scheduling software, marketing platforms, and CRMs are not as popular. This is partly due to the growing popularity of horizontal platforms like Jobber, ServiceTitan, and Housecall Pro.

Additionally, pool-service-specific solutions like Skimmer, PoolCarePro, and PoolTrac are gaining in popularity. These solutions have a leg up on horizontal platforms since they are built specifically for pool pros, to make things like scheduling, managing routes, tracking chems, and billing really simple. The growing popularity of these solutions is letting pool service owners move away from having a bunch of different systems to managing everything in one seamless solution.

Do you use any software to help manage and operate your business?

Accounting Software (eg, Quickbooks, Freshbooks, etc)



Scheduling Software (Does not include all-in-one solutions, like Skimmer)



Google Suite/Microsoft 360



Billing Only Software (eg, Biller Genie)



Email Marketing Platform (eg, Mailchimp, Constant Contact, etc)



CRMs (eg, Hubspot, Zoho, Salesforce, etc)



Other



CHAPTER 6

Similarly, how pool pros collect and process payments has seen a leap towards digital systems over the past year.

As an industry, pool and spa service has historically been slower to move towards credit and digital payment, and away from cash and check than many other industries. This slower transition can be attributed to several factors:

- The perceived lower cost of cash transactions
- The pool service industry as a whole is slower to adopt technology
- There's a subset of retirees who prefer cash/check

But 2023 saw a big move towards non-cash payments. According to aggregate platform data, only 2% of transactions in 2023 were done via cash. Over half of all transactions were done via card, and 30% of transactions were still done by check, although this number continues to decline rapidly.

Those who make the switch to accepting card and digital payments are seeing major upsides in terms of time saved, speed to payment, and customer happiness.



If you can change your business to a prepay/autopay structure it virtually eliminates having to chase money and you are already paid before you go out to the property. We do allow them a two-week grace period before we cease service. This allows the customer to "steal" very little if they decide not to pay, versus postpay where they could get 6-7 weeks of service for free.



Erik Taylor

Owner, Chlorine King Pool Service



CHAPTER 6



Skimmer billing has given our Admins peace of mind as it truly helps to make sure we aren't leaving money on the table and that everything we install is getting billed. Before using Skimmer billing, it used to keep me up at night worrying and double checking or triple checking to make sure I had billed a customer, I billed them for all the right parts, and more. Now, with Skimmer billing, our techs are trained to make sure they know how critical it is to only install it if they swipe it.

Chantel Dooley
Dazzle Pools



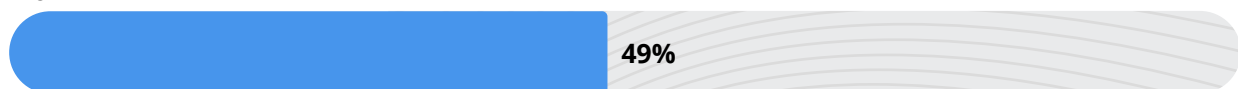
Finally, how pros buy for their businesses has shifted more to online retailers, with more than half of survey respondents saying they order their chems and supplies online. This shift has been accelerated by increased chem costs and decreased availability. These challenges have decreased brand loyalty, as pros look online for competitive pricing and availability.

Do you order your supplies online?

Yes



No

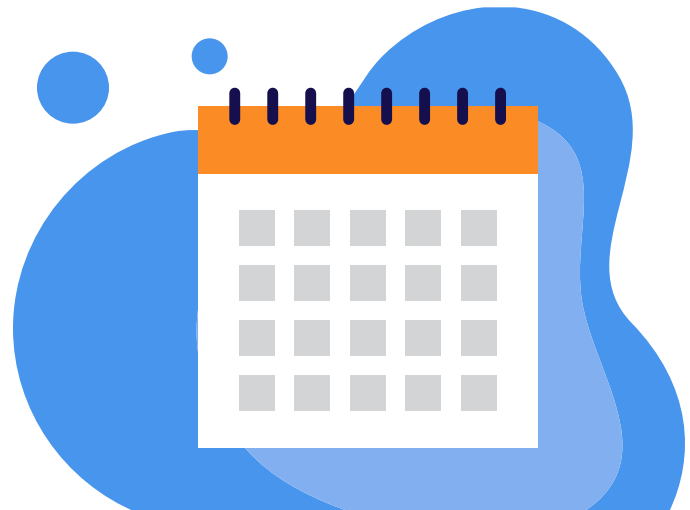
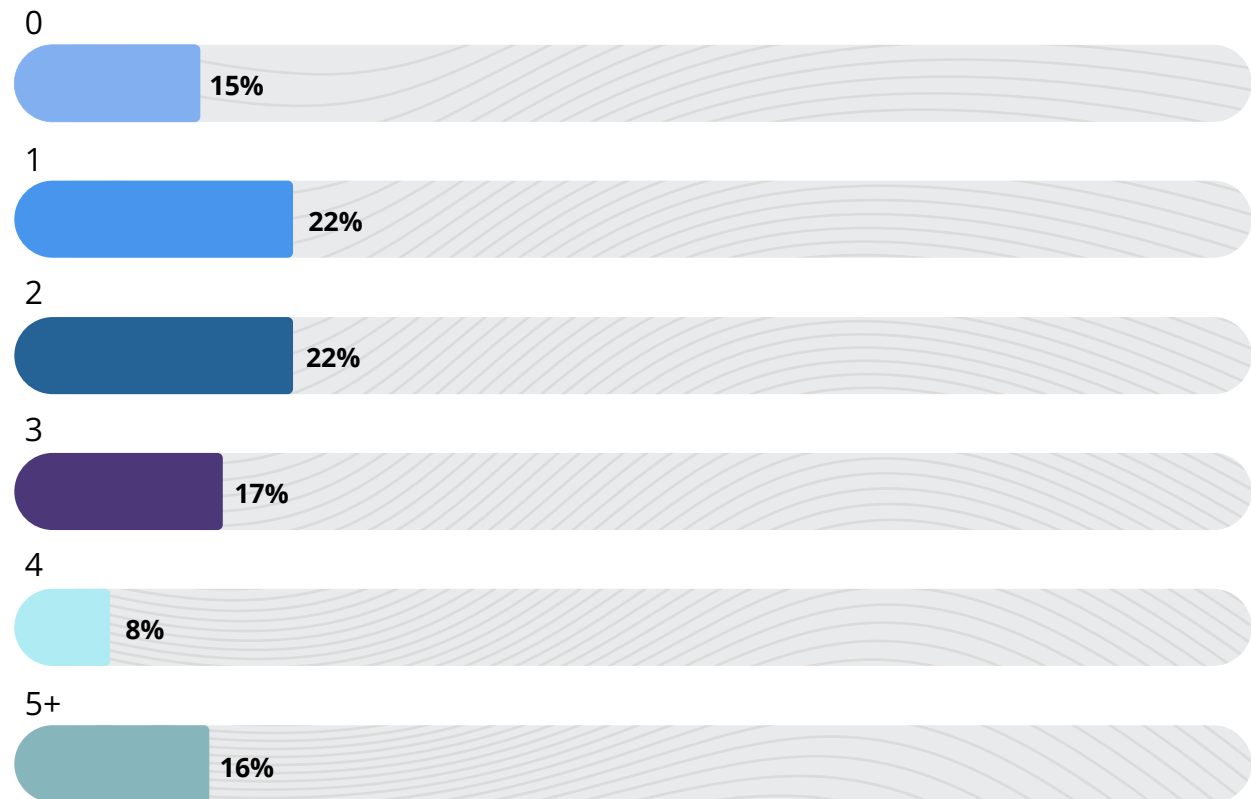


SPOTLIGHT

Pool Supply

We asked survey respondents about their preferences when it comes to stores, brands, and how they buy supplies. Here's what they said.

How many times a week do you go to your local pool shop?



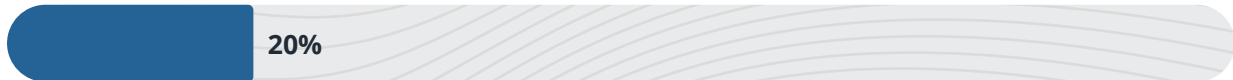
SPOTLIGHT

Where do you prefer to shop (either online or in person)?

Poolcorp Stores (SCP, Superior, etc)



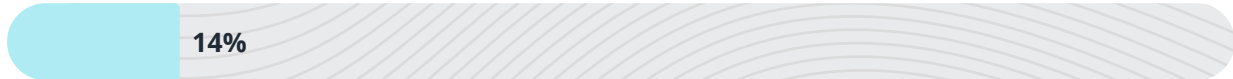
Heritage Stores (PEP, Texas Pool Supply, Pool Builder Supply, etc)



Amazon



Leslie's



SPOTLIGHT

What is your favorite brand of pool chemicals and tools?

There is little brand loyalty when it comes to chems, with most pros indicating that both price and availability trump any specific brand.

When it comes to tools, there is a bit more brand preference, with Primate dominating the list with over 24% of votes, and Riptide coming in third with 18% of votes.

Preferred Pool Chemicals

No brand preference	26%
Hasa	15%
Orenda	14%
Regal	7%
Natural Chemistry	6%
Leslie's	5%
Jack's Magic	3%
Re-Fresh	2%
All Clear	2%
EZ-Clor	2%
Poolife	1%
SCP	1%
GLB	1%
SeaKlear	1%
EasyCare	1%
Other	15%

Preferred Pool Tools

Primate	24%
No brand preference	22%
Riptide	18%
Piranha	6%
Purity	6%
Hammerhead	4%
Pentair	4%
Skimlite	3%
Ultimate Pool Tools	3%
Animal	2%
Hayward	1%
Bottom Feeder	1%
Other	16%



LOOKING FORWARD

**Owners who hone core
business skills will win
in the long run**



LOOKING FORWARD

Owners who hone core business skills will win in the long run

While the pool service market itself will grow modestly over the next four years, growing at an estimated rate of 1.4% through the end of 2028, there's a big opportunity for pool service owners to outpace the competition by getting creative about customer acquisition, providing a superior customer experience, and carefully managing costs.

There are five development areas that pool service company owners should focus on to thrive in 2024:

1. Financial literacy

Know your business inside and out. Seek to understand profitability, including your gross profit, operating profit and net profit margins. Leverage things like pricing (remember plus chems tends to provide the best buffer against rising costs) to adjust where necessary. You don't need to be a CFO to have a strong handle on your financials, and this knowledge will help you confidently manage growth.

2. People skills

Whether it's acquiring customers, managing your customer base, or retaining employees, business is all about people skills. Formalizing customer relationships, proactively communicating with customers and connecting with employees are some of the easiest ways to create immediate, positive change in your business.

3. Marketing

As we mentioned in our chapter on paid marketing, there are some gaps in knowledge in the pool service industry that savvy owners can exploit to their advantage. Getting ahead of your competition and setting up a smart marketing program now is one path to predictably driving business growth.

4. Business focus

One thing a lot of small and medium-sized business owners struggle with is working on the business, not in it. When you've always been a pool pro it's tough to break out of the mentality of having to do it all. But one of the best things you can do is learn how to pull your focus up and out of the minutiae to focus on building people, processes, and systems to set your business up for success.

5. Technology adoption

There are so many tools available to make your life as a pool service owner much easier, and looking forward, the gap between those willing to modernize and those unwilling to adopt new tech will only become wider. The efficiencies companies get from software (especially industry-specific, all-in-one solutions) are huge — everything from better customer, technician and financial management, to time savings and cost savings can put your pool service business on more solid footing for the year to come.

Thank You

Thank you to all the individuals and organizations who helped make this report a reality.





About Skimmer

Skimmer is America's #1 pool service software platform. The company is on a mission to modernize the pool and spa service and repair industry through easy-to-use software and best-in-class support. Over 25,000 pool service professionals servicing 500,000 pools in North America use Skimmer to get organized, get paid faster, and grow their businesses.

For more information about this report, Skimmer, or our products and services, please visit www.getskimmer.com.

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