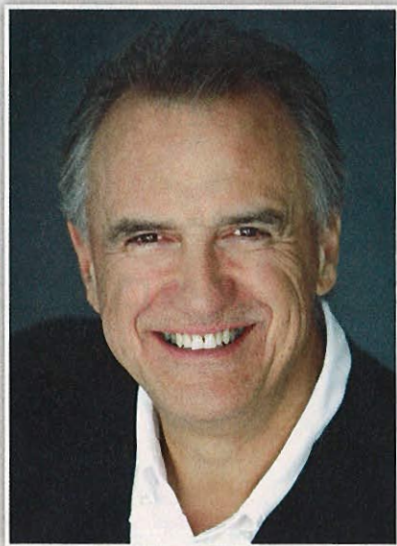


Adding an Outdoor Pool Can Help Protect You from a Summer Slump



HERVEY R. LAVOIE
HLAVOIE@OLCDESIGNS.COM

Many health clubs lose members and see less member usage during the summer, but adding an outdoor aquatic attraction can help stem that loss. A pool can become a 12-month, four-season reason for people to become members and remain members. However, before you decide whether to add a pool, consider the following from a planning and design perspective:

Timetable. If you want a new pool project to open by the start of summer, set a mid-May date for the grand opening and work backwards from there to create the overall project schedule, building in time for weather delays and labor shortages. For pool projects of any size, construction must be underway no later than the previous autumn for a mid-May opening. A fall construction start requires bids to be opened and contracts signed in September. This, in turn, dictates a late spring/early summer start on the design and programming work the year before the opening of the pool so that bid-ready documents can hit the

streets in August. You must select your pool designer and architect by early February to complete the creative work by late spring. All of this means that market feasibility work and business planning should begin about now—late September to early November 2013—for a pool project scheduled to open in spring 2015.

Mix of aquatic attractions. A six-lane, 25-yard competition pool with a diving board at one end and a wading pool at the other no longer cuts it in today's water park saturated world. Instead, consider adding water slides, climbing walls, lazy rivers, zero-depth entry pools, spray gardens, play features, leisure pools, diving pools, lap lanes and whirlpools.

Access planning. You should have two paths for member access to the pool. One provides direct access from the parking lot while the other allows for circulation between outdoor pools and indoor pools, as well as locker rooms. In a club with various categories of membership, both pathways will need to channel through a single staffed check-in gateway to assure proper membership access and guest registration.

Support buildings. Although your primary attractions will be the aquatic amenities, they require support, such as food and beverage concessions, a kitchen, changing rooms, locker rooms, toilets, showers, towel handling, staff facilities, an electrical/telecom room, a mechanical/pumps/filters/heating room, chemical holding rooms, in-season storage, out-of-season storage, a first-aid room, a lifeguard break room and party/band pavilions.

Sheltering needs. You must provide protection from intense sunshine and

short-duration rain showers to help maximize member enjoyment, whether on the deck or in the water. Roof overhangs and pavilions keep members on site while they wait out a passing rainstorm. These kinds of hard roof sheltering options can be supplemented by fabric shade structures and large, deck-mounted umbrellas to provide plenty of shaded coverage for outdoor lounging.

Food and beverage. Successful pool deck concessions can handle peak load demand with efficiency and speed. They have multiple points for ordering, paying and pickup, helping to maximize revenue during the short periods of the day when food and beverage demand surges. Grab-and-go options, as well as roving waiters, are great ways of breaking down demand to manageable proportions.

Landscape and lighting. Pools and landscape materials do not mix well. Leaves and seed pods tend to litter the water and clog the filters. However, pool users love to see green landscape relief from barren slabs of dry deck. Skillful, pool-savvy, landscape design with water-friendly plant materials can make the difference. Inspired landscape and lighting, using the water and the landscape as the light fixtures, can combine to deliver a sparkling, yet comfortable, nighttime scene.

Budgets. Depending on the project scope, the all-in budget generally will range from \$1.5 million to \$5.5 million. Plan to allocate one-third of this budget to the construction contract for pools and deck, one-third to the support buildings, and one-third to furnishings, equipment, landscaping, fees and other soft costs. ●

BIO

Hervey Lavoie is president of Ohlson Lavoie Collaborative, an architecture, aquatic design and interior design firm. With 35 years of design experience, Lavoie has completed club design assignments in 42 states and six countries.