

Ledger-Enquirer

Job spotlight: Gordy Pease, owner of America's Swimming Pool Co. in Columbus

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Approaching two decades in the banking sector, it was in 2008 as the Great Recession was materializing that Gordy Pease went to work looking for a second career.

The Columbus native, 43, took a look at several businesses in the area -- from service companies to manufacturing -- before deciding to take a leap into the swimming pool maintenance and repair industry. After doing some research, he became a franchisee with Macon, Ga.-based America's Swimming Pool Co. in January 2010. Since then, sales have grown and the Columbus operation has gobbled up a competitor, 40-year-old Southland Pools, with plans to keep the upward momentum going in a market that is believed to have more than 4,000 swimming pools. He has eight employees currently.

The Ledger-Enquirer sat down with Pease recently to discuss his career transition, his day-to-day duties and the pool business in general.

- [Click here for more about America's Swimming Pool Co.](#)
- **BIO**
Name: Gordy Pease
Age: 43
Hometown: Columbus

Family: Wife, Stacy, a teacher at Brookstone High School, and three sons, Jack and Charles (twins), 14, and Gordy, 10

Education: 1986 graduate of Brookstone High School; 1990 graduate of Auburn University, bachelor's degree in marketing

Career: Four years with Regions Bank (once known as First Alabama Bank) in Montgomery, Ala., and Columbus; 15 years with SunTrust Bank in Columbus in commercial banking and commercial real estate; became owner of America's Swimming Pool Co. franchise in Columbus in January 2010

Off the job: Enjoys playing golf and fishing at any lake or pond he can find.

Why did you decide to leave banking for swimming pools?

The banking industry had begun to change the way they were delivering their products and services, and I began to look outside the bank for other opportunities. The credit crisis and the recession (were part of that). So the decision-making began to change from the point that banking was fun a long time ago, when you could help people be successful. It got to where it was more and more difficult to have your own autonomy and decision-making ability.

The sector was starting to cut personnel and close branches?

Exactly. Everybody was doing more with less. And that was part of me looking out for the future and having an opportunity to try to leverage my skills that I've attained in 20 years of banking and try to take those skills and put them in the private sector.

Was the swimming pool business your first choice?

No. There were numerous businesses that I came across and a lot of them required an extensive amount of capital. I never could find the right fit. I had some friends that I went to school with at Auburn that were from Macon and they kept telling me about this ASP pool and spa franchise that they started up over there. So I began to look into that. ...

I did a lot of research and called a lot of the other franchisees and folks with similar backgrounds, some with pool experience and some without. The success ratio and the support from ASP was fantastic. So I began to look at it more and more. The opportunity presented itself, and the capital outlay on the front end of it was manageable. So I pulled the trigger.

Did you have any pool experience?

No. It was strictly a business-type decision. It was looking at the opportunity and doing the market research and realizing there were two main players in Columbus in the pool industry (Southland and Aquarius). There was a tremendous amount of homeowners that had pools, and the need for service will always be there. I started adding that up and realized that if you took someone like me with a professional background and instilled that concept into the pool industry -- which historically has been unprofessional and very fragmented -- and delivered the products and services. ... It made complete sense to me.

A lot of people dream of doing what you're doing as an entrepreneur and think it to death, but never make the leap?

Exactly. I had really thought it to death and had an opportunity with ASP two years prior, but we couldn't do it. So I continued taking my time and ultimately got to the point that it was time to make that jump, and haven't looked back.

What does your business do?

We're a full-service pool and spa company. We've got a full array of maintenance and cleaning programs for the homeowner who wants to pay someone to clean their pool either weekly or monthly, and make

sure it's balanced, make sure it's clean, make sure it looks good and they can enjoy it and not have to worry about it.

Pool maintenance can be a hassle?

A lot of people try to do it themselves, and they'll do it and get fed up with it and can't keep it straight, so that's where we come in. ... We also are full-service repair, any type of pool equipment, pumps, motors and all of that ... to include leak detection. A lot of people complain, 'Hey, my pool's leaking.' So we've got the equipment and expertise to do full-service leak detection and repair on pools.

We've also got a newly renovated 1,200-square-foot showroom up there to include a full line of pool chemicals and supplies for the homeowner who does it themselves. While we're not building start-from-scratch pools, we do a significant amount of renovation work on existing pools, whether it be replacing people's liners, or gunite pools that need to be replastered.

Are people buying pools today?

New pool construction was tied indirectly with real estate, and as home sales began to slow and inventory began to build up in the home sector, new pool construction slowed. New pool construction has been off considerably over the last three to four years. But, there's enough existing homes in a four-county area for us to do well.

What's your day-to-day schedule like?

I get out there whenever need be. If a customer calls, we've got to deal with it. We've got a maintenance staff and their primary job is to clean the pools everyday. We've got a route, we organize it each morning and they go do it. They're professional and know what needs to get done. The service manager I have on staff, he and I jointly organize the work orders. I oversee both of those to make sure the customer is getting a positive impact every time they call in.

I'm handling all the billing. I'm doing a lot of the new proposals, whether it be renovation work or significant service work. Meeting with (prospective) and existing customers ... Checking with the people to make sure they've had a positive experience, thanking them for their business. Those are the little things that go back to that professional approach.

Pools are seasonal. When do you get really busy?

Your normal weather patterns are going to vary year to year. This year it's been very warm and our phone is ringing more than it would. With 70-degree days in February, people are starting to think about their back yards, think about their pool. But typically that begins mid-March and goes through Labor Day. And Labor Day through February is really when we do the majority of our renovation work. People want to close their pool. They want to get it replastered. They want to redo their tile. So that revenue source makes up for not doing as much service work.

What's the biggest mistake people make with their pool?

Not paying attention to the chemical balance. Because if the pool's not properly balanced it can have an impact on the surface of your pool. It can scale. It can bleach a liner. It can do various things to the visible look of it. It may look clean. It may look pretty. But if it's out of balance, it's eating away everyday at the side of the pool or the equipment. A lot of people don't realize that until it's too late and then it's time to do something about it.

Pools can be expensive to maintain and aren't necessarily for everybody?

It's an amenity, and with any amenity there's a price for upkeep. But, especially those with younger kids, it's such an enjoyment with family time. So it's expensive to do right sometimes. But for a lot of homeowners, it's worth it.

Read more here: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2012/02/06/1922397/job-spotlight-gordy-pease-owner.html#storylink=cpy>