



# BRUCE DUNN Thinks Big

Using his formal education and on-the-job experience, he has made Mission Pools one of the most well-respected companies in the industry

**By Rebecca Robledo** Harvard-educated Bruce Dunn has a long-standing reputation as an astute businessman. He grew Mission Pools, which he bought as a young man, into a *Pool & Spa News* Top Builder (No. 10). The Escondido, Calif.-based company brought in nearly \$35 million in 2004.

He's also not afraid to try new things as a member of the Master Pools Guild and SPEC.

#### PERSONAL BESTS:

After purchasing Mission Pools, Dunn put himself through a rigorous continuing education business program. First, he joined the board of directors at North County Bank, which has since been acquired by Wells Fargo. Today, he sits on the board of Community International Bank. The position has given him firsthand exposure on how the best businesses run.

Dunn's peers from the boards served as mentors and led him to one of his most distinguished achievements in the pool industry: He attained an Owner-President Management Certificate from Harvard Graduate School of Business. He also became chairman of SPEC, the California pool and spa industry's most visible government advocate.

#### LESSONS LEARNED:

As a result of his experience with the banks, Dunn set up his expanding company so that each branch belongs to its manager. The individual establishes the office's culture, serves as its face and bears responsibility for all parts of the financial statement that he or she can control.

"[The managers] run it like it's their business," Dunn explains. "Then you let those people who are running the day-to-day activity get all the kudos they can because you're going to put them on the point for any and all problems that seem to be going on in that area." Companywide costs such as general liability insurance and bulk purchases are managed through the corporate office.

In the early '90s, Dunn and his brother and partner, Jeff, tried



ALLEN CARRASCO



## **RON COKER JR.** **Spurs Communication**

After graduating with a degree in speech communications, Ron Coker Jr., gradually moved up the ranks at Master Pools by Artistic Pools Inc. in Atlanta. He went from digging to selling before becoming an officer in the firm and its vice president. By 2004, he had absorbed most of the day-to-day management.

This year, the third-generation executive reached a well-deserved milestone. He was named president/COO and will manage most of the operations, while Ron Coker Sr., now CEO, concentrates on commercial accounts and public relations.

Though Artistic Pools had already established itself as a force in Atlanta, earning more than \$6 million by 2003, Coker fine-tuned the operation. He conducts weekly meetings with the sales and production teams to help projects run more smoothly. At the sessions, the sales staff, production manager and superintendent discuss upcoming projects, the status of current ones, and develop ideas for improving performance and communication.

“Salespeople aren’t always aware of the problems that go on,” Coker says. “If we discuss and dissect them, it helps them know what they can and can’t do as they’re talking with a customer rather than make false promises.”

If a salesperson wants to try something new, he or she will bring it up at the meetings. That way, the production staff can talk about how to build it before putting it on the contract. Several new company practices also have begun at these sessions.



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