

A Sure Thing



It's that time of year again—as 2012 draws to a close, everyone is reflecting on the year that just passed and planning for the year ahead. This year certainly has had its share of changes and challenges, from the still-bumpy economy to changing regulations to the presidential election; but, as always, the water treatment industry is meeting the challenges head on.

This fall, *Water Quality Products* conducted its sixth annual State of the Industry survey to obtain readers' perspectives on how this rollercoaster of a year has affected their businesses.

Following the trend of the past few years, the economy continues to weigh most heavily on readers' minds. The housing market is showing limited growth, meaning a formerly reliable source of sales has slowed to a trickle in many regions. Nearly one-third of survey respondents cited rising material prices as eliciting a negative impact on business in 2012, a problem that was only compounded by increasing shipping and fuel costs.

Despite the slow economic growth, it seems that many in the water treatment industry are beginning to see the light at the end of the recession tunnel. In response to a question on factors negatively affecting their businesses in 2012, many survey respondents commented that there was "no negative impact" or "business is great." In fact, nearly 40% of respondents said they planned to expand their operations in the next two years.

Although expanding a business is always a positive, it certainly comes with its share of headaches. Many survey respondents said that their biggest challenge in 2013 will be finding high-quality employees—employees who are motivated, fit into the company culture and are on board with company goals. Training, staffing and certification topped the list of topics of concern for the coming year.

The main concern on readers' minds aside from the economy is regulations—not only in terms of water quality and softener laws and ordinances, but also the impending implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Other regulatory concerns were a proposed Ohio law requiring water parks to use ultraviolet treatment, hydrofracturing regulations and the quickly approaching federal lead law requirements, which take effect Jan. 4, 2014.

Despite the many uncertainties of what's to come in 2013, one thing is sure: The water quality industry will soldier on, with an attitude toward providing customers with the best services and technologies possible.

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