

Your Customers Only Treat What They Test For

By Joe Sweazy, Hach National Sales Manager

Everyone recognizes this customer and probably even knows them by name. This is the customer who comes in to your store and buys the cheapest chlorine, the cheapest pH dechlorinator and the cheapest 2-way test kit and nothing more. Ever wonder why that is all that they buy? They never purchase any chlorine stabilizer (cyanuric acid), alkalinity buffer, calcium hardness increaser, or other secondary chemical unless they have a problem. That is all they know because that is all that they test for!

Many of our typical pool and spa owners were taught when they purchased their swimming pool or spa that chlorine and pH were the only parameters they needed to test, and therefore, the only things they need to treat. Most likely these customers were given a 2-way OTO test kit as a part of their starter kit when they purchased their pool or spa. They get comfortable with the chlorine/pH kit and no one ever explained why they need anything more. So, how do we get these customers testing for, and more importantly treating, more than just chlorine and pH?

1. Stop creating this customer.

Most of your customers will get a test kit with the initial purchase of their pool or spa, and history shows that those customers will continue using the test kit until they no longer own the pool or until someone convinces them otherwise.

To ensure that your customers are testing for all the parameters you want them to be treating for, *start them with the right test kit*. Every pool and spa that you sell is a chance to retain this customer for the life of their investment so why would you condition them to buy the cheapest test kit in your store? At a minimum you should be providing a 4-way test kit that includes free chlorine, pH, total alkalinity and stabilizer like AquaChek Yellow 4-in-1 test strips. There are even 10-count "not for resale" samples of AquaChek Yellow that you can include in the starter kit. Even better would be the AquaChek Select 7-in-1 for pools or the AquaChek Spa 6-in-1 for spas (also available in that 10-count sample size). Spend a little more on the initial investment in your new pool or spa owner and you could be reaping the benefits of this investment for the life of that swimming pool or spa!

2. Change the habits of your 2-way kit user.

Admittedly, changing the ways of an entrenched user is more difficult than starting them down the right path in the first place. However, it is not impossible. You must convince them that what they are using does not get the job done. The easiest time to do this is when they have a problem. A careful explanation of the problem including how the right testing could have prevented the issue goes a long way towards convincing a customer to switch. For example, when your 2-way test kit user has recurring algae problem, educate them about the importance of free chlorine and stabilizer together and encourage them to test for both. Whatever the parameter they are having trouble with, recommend a test that can help them track the problem.

When the education effort fails, you may need to get creative. This is where targeted sampling can make a huge difference. Inexpensive AquaChek 10-count samples can be a way to convince customers to test and treat for more chemistries. One very effective way to do this is to give a free sample to any customer who purchases a cheap 2-way test kit: "Don't take my word for it, try it yourself!" They'll love receiving a free sample, and the sample might convince them to buy the better (and more expensive) kit next time – and to start treating for additional chemistries. Another option is to consider offering a reduced or break-even price for customers willing to trade in their cheap 2-way test kit.



The next time this customer comes in, have a plan. Convince them to start testing, and treating, for more chemistries, and talk to new pool owners to help them understand the benefits of broader testing. It is in your long term best interest to have this customer buying better test kits and more chemicals. 💧