



Pool Routes: From Food Scientist to Starting a Pool Service Company from Scratch

Kirk Bradley's story begins as a food scientist, traveling not just the nation but the world. Bradley, for years, was tasked with trying to perfect the flavor of Orange Juice at Lipton and working to improve McDonald's and KFC's seasoning and spices among the few responsibilities he had.

But then, in an extreme turn of events, Kirk Bradley traded in his suit and tie for a t-shirt and shorts to work in the pool industry.

It was the year 2004 when Bradley was faced with a dilemma: his company, a large food corporation, wanted to move him to New Jersey and away from the place he loved, Sarasota. Kirk thought of an out-of-the-box solution, hang up his comfortable lifestyle which came with a 401-k, health benefits and job security, to start a pool servicing company from scratch in order to stay in the area.



"I knew absolutely nothing about the pool industry when I made this choice," Bradley says as he laughs. "I realized no one was going to hire a food scientist as a pool service professional, so I rode along with a friend who was in the industry and went on one of his pool routes."

When the day ended and Bradley had a moment to reflect on this potential new endeavor, he realized that this was the perfect fit for him and he was all in on starting his new business. The new gig involved water chemistry, customer service, sales and marketing, all traits that made him highly successful as a food scientist.

"I quickly bought a truck, hung up the suit and tie and began to secure customers," said Bradley. "I knew I had to be different as a pool professional and be unique in a way that would allow me to stand out from the crowd."

Bradley was indeed unique and different in his marketing approach. He partnered with a car wash and detailing company and bought gift cards from them.

“I went out to customers with these gift cards and ran a promotion where if they tried my service for three months, I’d hand them a \$150 gift card to get their car detailed and waxed,” said Bradley. “None of my customers quit after those three months.”

Bradley targeted customers by mailing letters that looked like wedding invitations which outlined this promotion and even had the graphic placed on his truck.

Bradley, the man with a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Food Science, was finding his unique way of standing out from the crowd and he was successful doing so. Fast forward to 2019 and his company, On-Time Pool Service, which is a very fitting name considering his attention to detail in the customer service realm, has over 650 pools that he services.

When asked what his reaction would be if someone were to have told him in 1999 that in a few years he’d be running a pool servicing company, Bradley laughed.

“I’d chuckle at that,” said Bradley. “I mean I went from working with a large corporation with a 401-k, health benefits and job security, to sole proprietor and business owner. I never foresaw this coming.”

When asked if he made the right choice looking back, Bradley responded: “Oh heck yes.”