



WaterGuru Case Study: TowneBank/Venture Resorts, Gatlinburg, TN

Lodging Transformed by Automated Pool Maintenance

The swimming pool service and maintenance world is undergoing fundamental change, with AI-powered robotics now assisting property and hotel managers in maintaining a pool's chemistry, water flow, and temperature. This makes sound business sense because a pool is the most complex and the highest liability asset to manage for both property management firms and hotel chains.



While historically cost-prohibitive, recent innovation has made sophisticated IoT maintenance systems much more affordable, which has led to their rapid adoption. In the case of swimming pool maintenance, new IoT devices emerging in the market are now being adopted by property managers and pool service professionals seeking to automate and simplify complex maintenance tasks. The results?

- Improved guest experiences and satisfaction
- Reduced labor, chemical, and energy costs
- Predicting and preempting equipment failures
- Legal protection from unfounded lawsuits claiming unhealthy hotel pool water

Venture Resorts' Pool Challenge

What caught Billy Parris' attention was the possibility of new technology improving his guests' experience, as pools were his most challenging asset to control. As General Manager of Venture Resorts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee — part of the 2,500-strong property management division of TowneBank — he was looking for a smart solution to his most complex maintenance task: the resort's pools. Billy needed a cost-effective and consistent way to deliver exceptional guest experiences for the 200,000+ guests lodging each year at the 350 properties in his portfolio.



As the saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention. “There isn’t a professional pool service in this area of Tennessee,” says Billy. “That is why I have had to be creative in how I approach the pools I manage. I currently have two CPO-certified workers, and prior to installing WaterGuru, it was nearly impossible to check all the pools consistently and on time.



Billy was looking to improve his organization’s operational efficiency and deliver better guest experiences, and solving the pool chemistry challenge was a high priority. It was also the most difficult of all Venture Resorts’ property management functions. Managing fifty pools ranging in size from 2,000 to 50,000 gallons was an act fraught with operational complexity. Performing hotel pool maintenance the old way required an ever-watchful human eye and a dependency upon manual, error-prone test methods, translating into high labor costs and erratic guest experiences. Having a technical background, Billy searched for a cost-effective solution to give his staff control over the property’s pool amenities.

In order to reduce excessive staff labor costs, his ideal pool maintenance solution would automate chemical testing while monitoring water conditions such as temperature and water flow. It would also report daily pool data across fifty pools into a centrally viewable dashboard, trigger alerts when conditions worsened, and provide dosing advice to ensure staff had the required chemicals to maintain the many pools in his portfolio. On top of that, this solution would need to be cost-effective for a lodging operation managing fifty pools.

For Billy, finding the WaterGuru SENSE, which functions invisibly in the skimmer and automatically analyzes each pool’s water quality daily, was the transformative pool maintenance system he needed. The SENSE robot relays his chemical analysis, temperature reading, and water flow data to the WaterGuru app on his phone. Billy also receives expert advice that assists his staff in achieving resort-quality water and optimal temperature for the guest experience.



Venture Resorts’ Results

The operational efficiencies achieved by Venture Resorts were greater than expected. Replacing unnecessary and error-prone manual testing with a fully automated lab-precision solution delivered a 70% reduction in labor costs. For guests, automation of the management of each pool



meant guest satisfaction rose, and pool-related complaints disappeared. Access to essential water quality data in hand empowered his staff to take ownership of the pools.

“I send my staff out to dose the pools when the WaterGuru app says I need to.” Billy says, “The best part is that based on the expert advice feature of the app, the staff knows exactly how to treat each pool. They don’t even need pool maintenance experience to do that. We now manage that daily task through a central view into the pool’s health without needing a manually administered test, a huge labor recovery. I already know chemistry, water flow, water level, and temperature reported in the app dashboard. I have 45 SENSE robots installed with more added as we expand the portfolio of pools under our management.”

Total Pool Control

According to Billy, “Being able to look every morning at our WaterGuru dashboard allows us to see the health of all fifty pools. Before, staff would physically visit each pool every day to do a health check. After installing the WaterGuru SENSE, we now have all the pool health data at our fingertips and only dispatch staff when needed. This has been a game changer for our business, staff, and guests, who no longer find pool-related reasons to complain upon checking in. Modern-day technology met the complex operational situation.”



Billy no longer worries about guests jumping into an unsafe swimming pool.

“It’s a game changer,” Billy says. “The pools at the properties I manage used to make me nervous. The chemicals are not easy to gauge the old-fashioned way, especially if you are color blind, something that affects many people. Accuracy is of paramount importance. What if someone got sick from one of your swimming pools? The WaterGuru SENSE system helps us avoid that liability, gives us an opportunity to provide our guests with better experiences, and improves our record from a health department standpoint. We identify and solve the problem before anyone even knows it’s a problem.”

Some of the remotely detected problems reported by SENSE to Venture Resorts staff:

- Water Temperature below (uncomfortable) or above (energy consumption) target
- Chlorinator empty
- Salt Cell low
- Water level too low
- Pump beginning to fail
- pH out of range



Billy predicts that with SENSE robots monitoring fifty pools, he will pre-emptively catch faltering pumps several times a year before failure occurs, saving money and avoiding guest service problems. Best of all, given the geographic dispersion of the pools he manages, his WaterGuru mobile dashboard goes everywhere he goes.



“The data is a perfect early warning signal,” he says. “I know some of the other property managers in and around the Gatlinburg area, and most of their pools eventually turn green. We don’t have that problem. A typical pool service, if available, would come once a week, but a pool can turn bad in a day given the wrong conditions. Trying to restore a green pool after the fact is both timely and financially painful. That is a problem best avoided. If more pool service companies, property managers, and apartment complex owners installed the WaterGuru SENSE pool maintenance solution, they would see big efficiencies with the investment paying for itself quickly. It’s truly a no-brainer investment decision.”

From a legal standpoint, WaterGuru protects the Venture Resorts portfolio of TowneBank from unfounded lawsuits, a problem for all property management companies, particularly those that maintain swimming pools. This is a big deal for a resort that hosts over 200,000 guests annually. Insurance companies are expected to begin offering discounts on hotel property policies for monitoring pool health using SENSE robotics, similar to the subsidies provided to hotels with their security systems monitored. SENSE is the latest innovation for TowneBank, whose property management division spans 2,500 properties, to help contain insurance policy costs.



“We don’t have to worry about bogus lawsuits because we have the historical data to back us up from a legal standpoint,” says Billy. Mitigating legal issues, achieving operational efficiencies, improving staff utilization, and better guest experiences are just some of the benefits the WaterGuru SENSE has brought to the property management and pool service industries.



Growing the Business

A key revenue growth driver for Venture Resorts comes from property owners growing tired of dealing with the expense, complexity, and unending effort of managing their pools remotely. As word spreads of the company's prowess in managing pool-equipped properties, owners are increasingly turning the property management keys over to Billy and his staff.

For Billy, discovering the WaterGuru SENSE system solved pool-related guest issues and increased profitability as pool-related labor and chemical costs plunged. Rising profits and revenues from expanding the pool-equipped property portfolio under management have become the perfect success recipe for both Venture Resorts and TowneBank. Thanks to the foresight and technical savvy of Billy Billy, innovation is driving heightened success for a regional bank that had the forethought to combine property management with advanced technology.

