

# Boating Industry

MARCH 2023

INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN PROFIT FROM

# 40

↓  
UNDER  
40

40 YOUNG PROFESSIONALS  
LEADING SUCCESS ACROSS THE  
RECREATIONAL BOATING INDUSTRY.



MIBS 2023 RECAP  
ABC 2023 UPDATE  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



# Paul Kuck

**Chief Operating Officer, Regal Boats**

Anyone who's been in the boating industry more than 20 years likely knows the name of Paul Kuck, the celebrated founder of Regal Boats. He was an actively engaged, visionary leader who launched the company in 1969 and built it into a worldwide brand of luxury pleasure boats.



**By Wanda  
Kenton Smith**

Today, Kuck's 53-year legacy continues to unfold with Regal's line of award-winning sport and surf boats, cruisers, yachts and SAV (sports activity vessels) ranging from 20 to 42 feet in-demand and selling in 40+ countries. One of the premier privately-held, family-owned boat manufacturing businesses still remaining, Regal's growth has been successfully managed and directed by Paul's sons Duane and Tim since his passing in 2006, both of whom grew up in the business and forged lifetime careers.

Today, the third generation is stepping up into key leadership positions, overseeing the Orlando, Fla. based workforce of 875. Paul's first grandson and his namesake Paul - son of Duane and Cindy - was recently appointed chief operating officer with responsibility for overall operations and results. With 15 years invested in daily business operations to date, he has already earned key accolades including leading his team to win the coveted Boating Magazine "Boat of the Year" award for its 29 OBX in 2016, along with several top marketing recognitions. He's previously been named a Boating Industry 40 Under 40 and serves on the NMMA BMD board of directors.

Paul has worked in virtually all areas throughout the organization and is well-poised and readily prepared to further propel Regal's success story into the future.

## **Boating Industry (BI): What's your personal boating experience ... and your favorite memories?**

**Paul Kuck (PK):** I've been a boater my entire life. I've been driving boats as long as I can remember. I've had the incredible opportunity to boat in many places across the country and truly enjoy boating in any environment.

My favorite and most memorable boating experiences certainly come from the Abacos in the Bahamas. There's a lot of family history there; my mom is a Bahamian and my grandfather grew up in the Abacos.

Each summer, we would spend a week or two with my parents and grandparents in the islands - fishing, diving and just enjoying God's beautiful creation. We spent many days on the water, learning the islands, the history and the waterways. This is still my favorite place and I take every opportunity possible to return. There's just something about the salt island air that makes me happy and rejuvenates me. It's been awesome to now be able to do some of the things I was doing as a kid, with my own kids.



Paul Kuck, recently named COO of Regal Boats.

## **BI: In addition to earning your marketing degree from the University of Central Florida, what has been your career path at Regal that led to your present position?**

**PK:** Prior to being employed, I spent many summers assisting the marketing department, mostly cleaning boats on photo shoots and at various boating events. My first real memory, besides just being a boat cleaner, was being left out on the lake during the middle of a photo shoot with a boat that was no longer needed for the evening session and thinking ... wow, I am really here on this boat all by myself and have to bring it back and put it away with no help!

I officially started my career at Regal in IT and then spent quite a bit of time in marketing, eventually leading the marketing team. From there, I moved to product development and engineering, starting out as a product manager for our sport boats, and then eventually leading the entire PD & E team. From there, I picked up responsibilities for manufacturing.

## **BI: What are some of the key challenges of working in a family-owned business?**

**PK:** Family business brings a lot of passion. Most of the time this is good, but sometimes it causes people (me) to take things personally, which is not always a good thing. In addition, family business brings a lot of consistency, which is also great in many circumstances, but sometimes it makes it difficult to initiate change or bring about new ideas.

**BI: As you consider your own career, what have been the biggest challenges you've faced ... and how did you address, resolve or overcome these setbacks or issues?**

**PK:** Navigating through Covid was for sure a big challenge. We made the decision to consolidate some of our operations in Orlando, and then all of the sudden, the marine industry took off. It was a big challenge to manage the growth that our dealers were asking for, while starting up new assembly lines and integrating models into existing lines, all while navigating significant parts challenges. We were able to navigate by being present (on the floor where the action really happens), reacting quickly, making decisions, owning those decisions and course-correcting when things didn't work.

Earlier in my career when I was leading PD&E and marketing, we had a big push to introduce a lot of new products to move the brand forward. It was a very meaningful time for the business and did really propel us forward, but it also was one of those moments where your ideas outpace your ability to execute them. It took an incredible effort to turn those ideas into a reality.

What I learned most from this experience was that big goals do create energy and give everyone the opportunity to perform at their best, but in order to see it through, you must have the personal resolve (like working 12+ hour days, 6-days a week for months) and commitment to get to the finish line. I, and other members of our team, all look back on this as one of the most challenging times we've ever had to navigate, but also as one of the most rewarding times, as we all got to see big dreams come true.

**BI: How do you stay on top of your game?**

**PK:** I am naturally wired to be competitive and have a 'get better everyday' mindset, so at this point, it has been ingrained into my daily routine.

From a professional standpoint, I'm part of a Christian CEO Peer Group called C12. I've found it to be extremely helpful to keep me focused on working *on* the business, not just in the business, and prioritizing what God wants for the business, not just what I think is important.



Paul Kuck with wife Shannon, sons Kaleb and Klay, spending time on the water.



Paul Kuck leading product discussions at recent Regal Sales School.

**BI: As a young professional, what advice do you have for other young professionals who desire to launch a career in the boating business, or who may be in the industry and have leadership aspirations?**

**PK:** For those with an interest in launching a career, start by finding a company that you really want to work at; the role/position is less important. Build your competency, as this will become incredibly important if you want growth opportunities down the road and want to be respected. Don't be in a hurry; it's easy to get caught up in wanting to do more or to have a bigger title. If you take your time, stay humble and do it right, you will be rewarded and given opportunities.

For those in the industry now with leadership aspirations, put God first. Lead your family well before trying to lead at work well. Focus on getting better every day. Use the time that you have been blessed with wisely, focusing on things that only you can do and things that you are talented at. Do hard things. Leading isn't just doing the things you want to do or the things that are easy.

**BI: What leadership traits do you feel are most needed by those working in the marine industry today, and why?**

**PK:** Be a servant leader; take care of your team and have their back. Nothing can be accomplished without them. Work smart and hard – both are critical to success. Character starts with integrity and humility. Develop competency - you will quickly be realized a fool without it. Finally, 'relational connection' ... at the end of the day, we are all people who want to be loved by other people. Genuine connection with others will make life so much more meaningful over time. ●