



EUROPE: FRANCE

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Without getting into climate change, environmental problems and water scarcity, I see two issues that could be addressed during the GSWS:

Firstly, we have busier minds than ever: being always connected, with a blurred line between work and life, there is a growing perception that we do not have enough time to do everything we have to do, that weeks, months and years are zooming by, and that we just cannot afford to stop, pause and reflect. Spas have a responsibility to lead the way to better lifestyles.

Secondly, decreased perceived value of quality by customers: the internet has surely brought more transparency in prices, giving more power to consumers (especially with group deals), and leading the general audience to believe that they can always get a better deal than the price tag that they see in a shop or at a spa. Instead of discounting services and treatments, let's continuously raise the bar for spas to prove that they go beyond pampering fluff, that they offer ways to impact positively the human physiology, and that they can deliver reliable solutions to improve the lives of their clients.

What do you see as the main innovations happening around the world, those which are game changing and/or disruptive?

I think one word is changing the world: ATAWAD (Any Time, Any Where, Any Device).

How many business days could you live without your smartphone, your interactive tablet or your computer, knowing that people are trying to reach you? The fact that we are all connected sounds great, but it also means that we are all expected to answer a question, or a call, within the day, if not the hour, which is not so great! Spas are places where people can find ways to better manage this non-stop frenzy, lower their stress levels, and learn how to discover three treasures within themselves: a balanced body, a clear mind and a peaceful heart. This can be experienced any time, anywhere, with no device!

What do you see as the main innovations in the spa/wellness industry (existing and future)?

For the past few years, anti-aging was (and still is) a major focus and marketing promise. I believe that in the coming years, the therapeutical techniques of Chi Kung, Ayurveda, Lomi Lomi, Reiki, and acupuncture based on the enhancement of the circulation of energy, will come to the forefront of what clients crave. I hope that with the proper education, ongoing training, the right mindset and a less "taylorist" way of overloading therapists with back-to-back massages on busy days, massage therapists will be able to guide their clients to reconnect with their source of energy and feel the breath of life flow through their body, and in their lives to enjoy richer, fuller moments.

What do you see as the greatest opportunities/challenges for the global spa and wellness industry?

I hope to see more spas, like the Lanserhof in Austria, and the Spa Eastman in Quebec, where the staff is also in tune with the spa life that they are advocating. Unfortunately, I have seen too many spas where staff is physically and emotionally hurting, where managers and owners are disconnected from their initial vision. One of the biggest challenges for spas that have shifted from a vocation (a calling) to an industry is to find ways to reignite communication, rekindle the mutual motivations and visions between owners and managers from Generation X with therapists and receptionists from Generation Y. As the gap widens between values and commitments, staff turnover increases, quality of service drops, clients look for deals, and a lot of spas barely swim while others sink.

What are some practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation?

In one of my previous companies, every Friday was a “shiatsu day”: management and staff would leave their shoes by the door as they came in, and we would spend the day in our socks. Besides the fact that we could all be creative about what socks to wear that day, we had our weekly team meeting in the morning and a shiatsu massage in the afternoon. In the morning, we would all share how near or far we were from reaching our objectives, and we would all be creative in helping each other find opportunities and solutions in all the challenges and obstacles that would have been encountered on that week.

The afternoon was spent in making sure that all of our clients and prospects would get from us the documents and answers pending, so that we would be on schedule the next Monday. And, we would all take turns on a 30-minute shiatsu massage on a futon in the conference room, either to disperse the excess energy or to boost it when our immune system was down. This “shiatsu day” and the overall organization helped us outperform our competitors and strengthen the our corporate culture.

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