



EUROPE: GERMANY

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Simply the fact that we are talking global now. Whatever we do will inevitably have an effect on people, industries and societies, and these effects often are beyond our control, creating anxieties and fears. So one issue is to add more courage to our daily work. Changes will happen whether we like them or not, so it's best to face them. Living and working in a country and society which has made environmental awareness one of its principles certainly offers surprises in store for manufacturers here. How does a supplier of water-bearing articles comply with more stringent regulations for water saving, while at the same time trying to satisfy clients' demands for more rain-like, downpour shower systems?

The answer to Dornbracht is a holistic approach to a wide portfolio we offer to our customer: Save water and energy wherever it makes sense, with fixtures and small showers, and be the best, fulfilling rain experience when talking mega-shower systems.

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

The plethora of cultures we are meeting in our business and in our travels is overwhelming. Under the influence of social networks, email and the internet, we are meeting more people than ever before. The simple answer will be the enormous influence electronic media is having on our daily life.

The truth to me, however, is not this simple. Humans are resistant to change, they are persistent when it comes to keeping what has been near and dear to them for decades. So the influence of media, albeit huge for the moment, still has to prove that it leaves a real mark on us. Technology has long seemed to pose a threat to us, especially in its military and nuclear manifestations, as well as a menace to the environment.

Right now, a lot of technical developments are showing a different face - one of saving, protecting, support and augmentation - and the spa industry in particular has always been able to make use of technology to the best benefit of the client.

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

At present, many nations have to deal with re-innovating themselves after years of political oppression. We are watching these developments and at this point in time, we cannot be sure whether these political struggles will be disruptive or not. But they will take place, with an immediate result that we, even as bystanders far away from the hot spots, get caught more by the adverse than the positive effects.

A spa will likely reflect the society and culture it is located in. This is easy to say for any Asian spa design; for Europe, on the other hand, there was no native spa culture in many countries, and those emerging, novice cultures discovering spa imported it from abroad, and it was much easier to present clients with a certain image of a spa. This has changed dramatically, and designers have learned to create spas based on, and rooted in, the culture they are meant to serve. A spa being a place of pampering and of certain luxury, design was willing to spend on newly invented tech to make treatments more effective.

The word "effective" offers the most promise at this point in time. Spa is coming to be seen as a curing place, a soothing resort, distinct from mere pampering. It is only now that we are truly asking why, and how treatments are working on the human body and mind.

Fragrances are now being scrutinized for their powers, while not long ago we had no idea that a smell, a fragrance, will enter our limbic system without asking our brain if it may do so.

There was simply no way to create the correct lighting in a spa without daylight. We are seeing a move from often dim-lit spaces to spa environments which make correct lighting an instrument whose positive effects are evaluated and calibrated.

Water always played an important role for humans, it was sacred to us and at the same time its major role was as a cleaning agent, a dirt remover. High and low appreciation at the same time. Not so for the spa, which perceived water in a completely different way. From early on it was seen as an intermediary between body and spirit.

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

The Spa is becoming a part of more people's everyday life. Will standards of supply and treatment maintain a high level? I can imagine a two-way future, with the luxury spa on one hand, with a new kind of "affordable" spa serving alongside as a prevention institution in all countries with faltering health systems.

A spa is part of the environment, and only those who truly understand this will succeed.

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

Be open to change before someone, or the market, forces you to change. People working with you have to know that their input is valued. We have to develop systems to gather ideas - not just a suggestion box but a transparent medium. To spur creativity, people must be given the credit for their ideas, but must also defend them. Providing careful guidelines helps channel creativity without suffocating it. Let people have access to information, do not shield internal innovation.

SUBMITTED BY

Matthias Voit
Chief Executive
Dornbracht
Germany
E: mvoit@dornbracht.de
W: www.dornbracht.de

