



ASIA: JAPAN

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

“Social Unrest” is the most significant global issue facing us today. Unexpected natural disasters, severe financial crisis, an aging society with fragile social security, a series of political changes, ideological conflicts, ambiguous nuclear future, climatic aberration, increasing mental health problems – these phenomenon have led us to the mood of “social unrest” and they have brought global stagnancy. Now, everyone must seek “stability” in their life and society.

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

“Social Media” is the main innovation happening around the world, which is game changing and disruptive. As we saw the news of Arab Spring (revolutionary wave in the Arab world, 2010-2011), the Social Network Services brought a “power shift” from autocrat to citizen. This newly popularized communication style also caused a power shift from providers to consumers because consumers can easily share and check the evaluations of any services and goods before they purchase. Facebook® has the third largest population next to India and China. So, providers cannot ignore the true needs and criticisms from consumers today. Social media is becoming a “market.”

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

“Predictive Analysis with PHR” is the main innovation in the spa/wellness industry. Many of the experimental projects to standardize technology for the innovative business model with Personal Health Records (PHR) have been conducted in cooperation with other industries, universities and governments. By utilizing a PHR user network with the algorithm for predictive analysis, we will be able to personalize the optimal menu or wellness program with quantitative index for wellness conscious customers. Then, customers will be able to know the expected effects before purchasing, and wellness providers (including spas) also will be able to appeal the added value more clearly. (Especially on social media, quantitative figures are more persuasive than word-of-mouth.)

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

“Quality of Life (QOL) management services after illness/medical treatment” is the greatest opportunity/challenge for the global spa and wellness industry. As many advanced countries face problems of an aging population, the QOL management service to keep senior citizens active and healthier is a big potential market. “Taking good care of customers’ health after illness” must be a promising opportunity. With advances in medical technology today, there are so many survivors of adult diseases or cancers. (According to CDC, there are almost 12 million cancer survivors in U.S.) And they are keener to stay physical and psychological well after surviving their illness than healthy people are. One of my friends who experienced breast cancer surgery has taken herbal medicines and spa-therapy with hot spring bathing (ONSEN) to ease the side effects of anti-cancer drugs and recover faster. These treatments are not medical, but alternative therapies to enhance QOL. The enlightened wellness services for QOL management are needed for people after illness. Recently, some leading healthcare groups have developed wellness centers (like healthcare town) with partner ecosystems all over the world. Therefore, the wellness-related industry should join the ecosystems as their partner if they can provide genuine QOL management services and make good use of the environment.

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

The followings are practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation:

Communication: Exchange views and ideas among leaders and teams, providers and customers, professionals and academia, private sector and public sector, men and women, adults and children, etc.

Networking: Joining constructive societies enhancing the fields.

Study & research: Collaborate with university students, government institutes and different industries in order to create common views and understandings.

Play: Enjoy experiencing innovative technologies, or services based on creative concepts, with colleagues, customers, friends and people from different fields.

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