



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

World economy struggles: 1) the widening gap between the rich and the poor 2) the impact the U.S. has on the rest of the world; Global warming and earth stewardship issues; Wars, weapons, viruses and the military orientation to solving problems rather than the United Nations approach; World illiteracy; Over population: unwanted children being born; Food/water challenges: obesity/starvation/safe water to drink; The emphasis on growing Gross Domestic Product versus growing well-being index of people; The discrimination of peoples in different cultures, countries, religions and the lack of understanding between people, causing conflicts and ultimately wars.

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

Small business loans (such as through KIVA) for people to rise above poverty; The economic growth of the BRIC countries; Alternatives of energy besides oil; Creation of open and collaborative government structures to solve community problems as well as innovative and effective public-private partnerships; Social media's staggering growth along with technical devices which take us away from face-to-face contact, but give us more information; The positive growth of "Giving Back" in local, regional, and national ways by all kinds of people, groups, institutions, etc.; The free knowledge/information available via the Worldwide Web (and Google) from education institutions; It's tougher for criminals and people making awful choices to hide, given how fast and how far information travels; Change is so constant that it is hard to keep up with new innovations. The "Slow" movement reminds people of mindfulness in the moment.

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

Enormous increase in local/regional spa associations forming and engaging people to learn together, network together, and help people evolve in their careers; Increase in number of skin care brands and products; More spa/esthetics/well-being conferences and expos for spa professionals and consumers; Acknowledgement of the importance of spa/positive orientation in life/wellbeing to improve one's outlook on daily life challenges and improve physical condition; Scientific research readily available (thanks to the GSWS) for consumers to understand the significance and importance of spa treatments to their well being

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

Continually educating massage therapists/estheticians/managers/directors in the technical and managerial aspects of spa work to match rising expectations of consumers; Finding qualified people to work and manage spas especially in the BRIC countries; Creating global internship opportunities for people to work in spas around the world without the government red tape.

Creating one association where all local/regional/national spa associations belong, with annual conferences to solve worldwide spa-related problems and opportunities (the "United Nations" approach). This association would unite people to focus on selected issues such as:

- Work in partnership with appropriate associations to train estheticians, massage providers, and cosmetologists how to detect melanoma early for their clients and carefully inform them of their findings
- Institute models of local wellness centers in partnership with governments
- Create training opportunities for people who want to spend time in various countries learning spa

- Measure and focus on improving the World Well-Being index rating
- Connect all people involved in the spa business everywhere via a newsletter, blog, website, etc.
- Share spa related training, education, and experience with attendees so they go home and train the trainers there
- Establish a world-wide discount card for all spa staff to receive a set discount at all spas (like the accepted practice in the wine industry)
- Have an emphasis on improving peoples' fitness levels
- Work together on sustainability issues to help reduce using earth's resources

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

Take a lead from Facebook, Amazon, Nike, Pixar, Google, Apple, and other leading companies. Sleuth out and hire individuals who are highly creative and innovative through an interview process, most likely involving many people in the selection process with a number of “tests”. Treat these people right as soon as they are hired with orientation, mentoring, kindness, communicating what is expected, the culture “rules”, and terrific benefits, perks, and appropriate compensation. Don't micro-manage them. Provide opportunities to shine. Give them tactful constructive criticism privately. Be open with company information and communicate it constantly. Disarm the attitude of “entitlement”. Embrace team orientation, openness, authenticity.

With input from staff, create imaginative, creative and fun work spaces for people to collaborate and engage in non-traditional, relaxed, and colorful office settings with non-traditional rules (it's not “9 to 5” any longer) with lots of opportunities for chance encounters to bounce ideas off of one another. Put the emphasis on work achievements and less on “being seen.” Create a work culture where it is be okay for staff to engage in non-productive activities. Carve out creative space in the work place where people can “play”, relax, and meditate when they are “stuck” on the project at hand.

Cater as much as possible to staff on a personalized basis (offer great food, massages, discounts, cool perks, fitness activities, etc.). People will give back to the company and create innovative solutions.

The top person of the organization/company should absolutely embrace innovation and creativity and set aside a budget for research and development. Produce a culture/work environment where good ideas are recognized and celebrated and don't blame people who produce ideas which turn out not to be “successful”. Institute and award out-of-box and practical ideas, which add value to the business, with public recognition and fun prizes.

Allow all staff to work on their personal agenda items for the first 30 minutes of each workday so their minds are clear for work tasks.

Institute company focus groups representing different department and levels to brainstorm on specific challenges. Good ideas feed off of each other's thoughts and solutions are discovered.

Keep staff involved with a daily digest sent electronically and available to all. Include one new creative/innovative idea/ solution contributed by an individual regularly.

Mix business with pleasure (recreation teams, socials, celebrations) so that staff members have another chance to mingle and connect - you never know when a good idea will happen.

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