



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Energy Needs from a Hungry World: We are just beginning to feel the mega-demands of energy arising from parts of the world without readily available sources. How do we balance these soaring energy costs, a shift from carbon fuels and develop alternatives? How the world takes care of its energy needs undergirds everything from wars and food supplies to commerce and travel.

The Political Divide: Most individuals are fed up with unrelenting political divisiveness and entrenched ideologies both here and abroad. The “middle path” needs a renaissance. Further disenchantment with political solutions will continue to siphon the best and the brightest from choosing leadership roles in politics. Expect a continued rise in multinational corporate “nation-states,” and further corrosion of how we care for our institutions (postal, education, safety, safe water, safe food), and our infrastructure. The old school curriculum of “civics” will be redefined, and new solutions will emerge on how to care for our communities.

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

These are paradoxical times. While some aspects of social and economic life grow massive and global, there is a longing for the small and familiar. Boutique-thinking will grow more attractive: unique, affordable, with a sense of elite. Shifting from market-dominating models to ways to provide targeted slices of the universe can be a blueprint for greater creativity, collaborative learning, and general well-being for all concerned.

- Cloud computing will be the new norm: Work will be everywhere at once. Personal digital devices and social media will grow more complex, multi-layered, and more accessible.
- Changing roles for women, this time worldwide: Birth control and women in the workplace are two of the biggest social drivers for Western nations in the past 40 years. The Arab Spring will continue with spurts and stalls until women “who hold up half the world” are valued and guaranteed rights in economic, political, social and religious sectors.
- Adolescents and young adults will continue to take longer to socially grow up, emotionally mature, get educated, get employed and move out of the nest. Marriage and child rearing will be delayed in high-literacy nations. (But not low-literacy nations.)

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

- Educating spa staff in wellness coaching – ask me how! Spa staff will be the change agents for lifestyle improvement, as they are recognized as experts in coaching models that bring about core-level transformation. The “aha!” experience within a coaching conversation is fondly remembered, and instills a loyal following.
- Continued “wow-y-zow-y” effects, such as spa architecture and treatment rooms that are awesome and entertaining. It all might lead to a fierce one-up-manship that will rival the Las Vegas strip. It might just inspire a return to simplicity.
- Special interests will be catered to, but beyond horse whispering, dolphin communicating, beehive tending, organic permaculture tending, foodie-festivals, be-with-your-tribe gatherings, spiritual healing pilgrimages.

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

- To make partnerships with medical tourism but resist over-medicalizing the spa experience, otherwise, people will need a vacation from their vacation.
- Wellness has finally caught on! It's obvious that we can't afford our sick-care system at its current rate of inflation and rising insurance costs. If we're going to be well, it's because we've initiated self-care. However, sustaining that effort is hard. The spa industry can serve this mass need for teaching wellness as a lasting transformation.
- Encroachment of a sedentary lifestyle and non-nutritious food sources have resulted in skyrocketing rates of diabetes and obesity in leading nations. Hand-in-hand with that growth is a growing dependency upon high-tech medicine and big pharma to fix symptoms and treat chronic illness, when the problem is best resolved through lifestyle improvement. The global spa and wellness industry can network with educators and the health care sector as a primary learning and experiential center.
- One of the most enduring social institutions in these turbulent times seems to be the clustering of friendships (through social media, church groups, sports organizations and shared value groups). With all of the bells and whistles that are available in the spa industry now, the biggest appeal for many is to go with a friend or "my favorite five."

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

- Invest in the human element. Research shows that investing in the health and wellness of employees will produce a 1:3 or 1:5 return on investment (ROI) in terms of productivity and performance, not to mention a boost in morale and retention.
- Our brains need a certain degree of stress-free calmness in order to access executive function in the cerebral cortex and creativity centers. A little stimulation goes a long way, and creativity can be taught. We need calm oasis centers in all corporate settings and public settings.
- We need creative approaches to make the growing number of single people feel like they're with "family." Spas could address how to heal social isolation and loneliness with creative meet-your-tribe kind of gatherings.
- Become ambassadors of safety and ease. Collaborate with airlines and ground travel to usher people around with minimal hassle and worry as they travel to parts of the world once considered too politically unstable.

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