



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

The economy continues to be a significant global issue for our industry. Our guests'/customers' spending habits have changed and travel is largely dependent on the rising cost of airfares. While a longer lead time for bookings has expanded, the short lead time vacationer is the drive-to customer, primarily because of airfare fees. Our industry will need to balance the destination travel market with the stay-cation market to hold and expand occupancies.

Another global issue is the rapid expansion of spa and wellness in Asia and India. With not enough experienced leaders to meet the demand, migration of Western experienced leaders will occur, leaving the West with a deficit of good talent to innovate and expand. Additionally, the East will seek an East-West philosophy-based model of programming, not the current West-East which is prevalent in spas and wellness today. This demand will push our industry to new exploration and discovery, but quality will suffer until a standard is created. Because a true blending of both approaches has not occurred in the West to date, the East will help elevate our industry for stress reduction, meditation, alternative therapies, herbal remedies and wisdom providing new tools for spa and wellness.

Our current Western health system has yet to truly create an integrated model, much less a profitable one. With reduced costs of labor and technology in the East the potential for the creation of an elevated brand from that side of the world would keep travel and tourism close to home, with the Western world perhaps instead seeking spa and wellness abroad in the East. This will put further stressors on the industry in the West unless significant innovation and sweeping healthcare reform occurs.

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

For our industry, the millennial generation plays a huge part in game changing. They see manicures and pedicures as a necessity. Massage is considered standard practice for overall well-being. Unfortunately this is the same group that sees a need for connection over a need for financial resources. As globalization occurs and the unequal distribution of wealth creates further social disparity, there will be a shift in who can afford quality healthcare and quality spa treatments. Social consciousness will be a big play for spas, and managing with a less-is-more reality. Innovations that can ease costs and labor but provide the same benefits will be popular among the masses. Technology will play a large role in this.

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

I love all the new sound vibrational machines and spa services that are coming to the forefront. I think currently it's the hottest existing trend.

In the future I hope we can create technology-based programming that can induce relaxation and lessen stress as the world is reaching a critical point moving from consumerism to minimalism. No longer are travelers seeking a vacation but rather an experience. Less-is-more will become standard and "how can I be more" as opposed to "how can I have more" will become the central focus of the individual. As populations become more consciously aware of who they are, other things will no longer matter. My hope is that new science and technology will blend with our industry and help provide those innovations for our customers.

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

The greatest challenge is a disconnect between what spa is and what spa could be. Many of us have witnessed the blending of the medical, wellness and spa industries for years now, and while the advancements are apparent, with the lack of a true integrated model, these developments will struggle to unfold. As globalization continues this means not only is the blending of these two undefined industries occurring but now so too are other cultures blending into the mix. This cacophony of industries and culture is a challenge. It is also the greatest opportunity.

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

Integration is the inclusion of vision that innovates.

SUBMITTED BY

Michael Tompkins
President and General Manager
Miraval Arizona
United States
E: mtompkins@miravalresorts.com
W: www.miravalresorts.com

