

The New Spa Wellness Culture Movement

As we all strive to retain our existing clients AND tap into new client segments ongoing, its vital to know what is current and what is trending... and right now it is very safe to say that we are all either watching, or riding, the wellness wave. But this important culture movement also has many spas wondering; just how exactly can they ride that wave?

This change involves a series of careful steps...

With so much of our time being spent in the workplace, attention to employee wellness is becoming a more common practice and a wise business investment. A healthy employee is not only more present and productive on the job, but being educated on self-care and being health-aware, also makes them better equipped to help your spa business, grow into a spa *wellness* business.

In 2014, the Global Wellness Institute released The Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor. Within this report, a survey revealed that 91% of those already responding to the wellness movement have seen an increase in revenues of between 5-20%, with the belief that the concept of wellness is considered extremely important to the future of spa.

There are many degrees to integrating wellness into a business, but before a spa considers biting off even the smallest piece, it is wise to examine current employee wellness and workplace conditions, to fix what may be broken, first. If your employees are not in harmony with the health and wellness way of thinking, or trained on how to convey this concept to your clients, it may be difficult for you to make this transition at all.

Here's your pre-checklist to help you determine if your workplace is well enough to take on this change:

Engaging Social Environment

A good social environment at work may very well be the first step to workplace wellness. If respectful social workplace policies and conditions exist, employees feel a fit and freedom of expression is encouraged. Staff are active contributors because leadership is communicative, 'present' and 'human', supporting work and home balance, involving employees in decision making, and placing reasonable demands on their staff.

Physical Surroundings and Physical Self

With regards to *surroundings*; ergonomics, natural sunlight, air quality, safety and hygiene must be present. Proper tools, training and support have to be in place. And at the same time, your staff's *self-image* and self-health are of primary importance and a business that plays a pro-active role in helping to ensure all of these things are in place, will experience the greatest success in taking on this change.

Emotional Health is no Joke

Businesses who strive to create a mentally healthy workplace, see a direct positive impact on employee morale and productivity. This kind of support can help your stressed employees gain resilience skills before their stress hits the tipping point and turns into depression. 40%+ of your employees are highly stressed; only 4% get help. How can an employee possibly reduce the stress your clients are carrying, when they themselves are so stressed?

Spiritually Speaking

Spiritual wellness comes in many different forms, but a sizeable component of spa wellness can entail services such as touch therapy, mindfulness, mind-body programs, energy healing, guided imagery and meditation, to name just a few. So even if our staff who are not directly responsible for administering such treatments, are at least open to them and knowledgeable of them, the business stands to see greater success with the integration of wellness concepts.

I think Andrea Lomas-Gong, Head of Group Spa Operations, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Hong Kong said it best: "When we take care of our health and wellness, everything else falls into place". Andrea's group has a Spa Induction for colleagues, which focuses on business and overall wellness, based on the employee's element (wood, fire, earth, metal or water).

Before you develop any new initiative, you know you have to perform due diligence...

Define your goals: What is your company's philosophy and vision when it comes to wellness? This transformation has to be a well aligned approach and everyone on the ground has to be all-in to help you realize your goals.

Research: Like most things, wellness too, is driven by the consumer. So what are your current clients saying? What are your target clients who represent the active wellness segments in your community, demanding?

Maximize existing potential: What can your current pool of staff provide to clients that will up the ante and not require an aggressive hiring initiative?

Have a budget: You must connect the dots. Costing to determine profitability is a major driver whenever you develop new concepts.

In many ways, most spas have a very good basis to start from. They already have a suite of services that by most people's standards can be considered health-giving. Wellness is in the eye of the beholder, and many of your clients will consider the wonderfully relaxed, calming feelings they get from even our most basic facials, manicures, pedicures, massage and body treatments, as wellness experiences.

Khumura Khumnetertauset, a 16 year Entrepreneur in the New York Beauty Industry says "Upon arrival, my clients first took a 10 minute Zen time. With them relaxed, it made the energy exchange required during the session, less draining on me."

Now you're ready to begin:

1. Speak the 'Wellness Language'

You will probably need to consider making slight changes to the terminology you currently use to market your health-giving services, so that you are now speaking the 'wellness language'. At the very least, this will serve to grab the attention of wellness seekers, because speaking their language means there is a similarity in beliefs and opinions; you are their people. And these people are not looking for the basic Swedish Massage or European Facial; you'll need to be very creative now, but know that even the smallest tweaks will have an impact. Begin with your written materials, including everything from your website, to your spa brochure and signage. And let's not forget our staff; their language has to mirror this new intention.

Just some examples of the words and phrases that the wellness community relates to might be: give-back, prevention, mind-body, farm-fresh, natural healing, re-balancing, energy, organic, touch, detoxify, de-stress, century old, harmony, natural elements, ancient remedy, coupling, engage, embrace, health giving, earthy, botanical, antioxidant and maybe even, Zen! Here's one example of how you might modify your treatment descriptions:

Facial: *Existing Spa Language*

This premium facial will soften lines, brighten dull skin and leave you feeling refreshed, rehydrated and rejuvenated!

Facial: *New Spa Wellness Language*

As you breathe in the essence of this health-giving experience, ancient skin regiments and our fresh earth essentials will work to rebalance and beautify your skin.

2. Should you add to your current offerings?

You may need to expand upon your core services to add alternative offerings. This could be achieved either through your current talent base who may have untapped expertise; from outside alliances; or more likely, both.

Further complementing the health-giving experiences available at your spa with alternative therapies, will allow you to address the whole person; mind, body and spirit. **Be careful to not forget that these services will ideally be "retail-driven". New services should always be able to create 2 revenue streams. And of course, our wellness advocates want their products to be natural, organic, fair trade, with no testing on animals.

And it's ok to start small and simple, a micro approach combined with genuine enthusiasm will always help to overcome any limitations you may have. Do you have a wet room that could handle additional wellness-focused hydrotherapies, body wraps and scrubs? Is there someone you know that works in the hotel that specializes in Ayurveda and could help you introduce these therapies into the spa? Do you have a steam room or sauna where you can integrate aromatherapy, detoxification or herbal wrap treatments?

What additional wellness therapies can you add to your existing beds and chairs?

You may consider any number of health modalities, and choosing those that complement your existing core strengths and provide improved quality of life, would be a good place to start.

You might bring in experts to run classes on best practices for at-home family wellness; or have an expert available to book client wellness assessments; healthy self-image seminars; cooking classes, and even laughter workshops! This way you can gauge interest on which services will help you to ultimately realize your new spa wellness goals and grow this new business sector. Alliances with fitness experts, alternative therapists, beauty specialists, wellness practitioners and/or medical experts will help you provide a more undivided, whole approach to spa wellness.

3. Package your offerings to your target audience

Just as you package your current spa service offerings, you will want to package your new spa wellness offerings, to help you grow both your existing client base into wellness advocates, as well as attract the vast wellness client segments that are your new target. Wellness weekends may even be on your radar. Using your wellness language, consider developing packages that include a selection of services and experiences that with your research, you now know your target audiences are demanding. Here are just 3 ideas we know wellness clients will notice, and that may be great examples of themes for spa wellness packages:

Pace, not Race – Meditation, Nature Walk, Thai Massage, Tea Ceremony

Quality of Life – Walking the Labyrinth, Himalayan Salt Stone Therapy, Nutrient Soak, Sleep Pod

Coupling – Hands & Feet Partner Reflexology; Laughter Workshop, Healthy Mains, Mixes and Marinades, Wine Tasting.

4. Adjust your Marketing Position and Touch Channels

Begin by modifying your marketing strategies and channels of distribution, so that your spa is best positioned to reach those client segments who actively live within the wellness community, either locally, or globally, depending on your intentions. Identify those channels and your plan of action.

Use a mix of communication methods, including your website, social platforms, brochures, flyers, in-house posters, promo items, health fair and wellness event kiosks, lunch and learn, etc. Ensure you are utilizing your cross-departmental marketing opportunities at your place of work, and as well, any local or global business alliances or platforms that will help you get the word out.

Mixing Staff and Guests: Veljko Savic had a great program in Hawaii, Lanai, Four Seasons where he connected with the local health center and organized "Wellness Wednesdays". Professionals from the center came to the hotel on Wednesdays and conducted educational sessions for employees and guests on different topics such as nutrition, smoking cessation, physical activity, etc. They mapped out a whole year with monthly topics, which was a big success.

Although this wellness movement is being referred to as 'new', the truth is that it is simply breathing new life back into its old soul... and it's on a mission.

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