

Breakout Session: Sustainability. Our Call to Action!

Monday, May 22nd

11:45AM – 1:00PM

Beekman Suite

Moderator: Mark Wuttke, Principal, Wuttke Group LLC, Georgia

Panelists:

Mary-Elizabeth Gifford, Creative Director and Vice President, Global Brand Communications; Jurlique, Washington DC

Ulrike Klein, Founder, Jurlique International, Australia

Paul Moran, Spa Architect, Moran Architects, P.C., Arizona

Jamie Waring, Managing Director, Six Senses Resorts & Spas, Thailand

Contributors:

Clodagh, CEO, Clodagh Design, New York

Deborah Szekely, Founder, Creative Director, Rancho La Puerta & the Golden Door, California

Ted Ning, Director, LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability), Colorado

Jim Root, General Manager of Spa Operations, Sea Island Resorts and Chairman, ISPA, Georgia

Kasha Shillington, Executive Director, Raison d'Etire, Sweden

Moderator Summary:

Many thought provoking questions such as: how green is green enough; what does a green spa look and feel like; is sustainability a consciousness or a product; and does or should the spa industry focus more on minimizing its impact or maximizing its contribution to sustainable development; were tabled.

Now day's sustainability is featured in almost every mainstream media form. Due to this the spa and hospitality community is coming under greater scrutiny and increased pressure to be accountable and responsible for all decisions and actions. For example, how much prepared food is being consumed verses being destroyed; are we utilizing water in an effective and responsible manner; are the products and services we offer leaving a negative carbon footprint; and how do we consider all of the above and still remain financially and socially viable.

Sustainability is often not embraced within a spa because leadership does not know where to start. The task feels too large in most parts, overwhelming. It was generally felt that we may not regret what we have done thus far but we may end up regretting what we didn't do. It was also unanimously decided that it is not important where we start, but as long as we start.

It was also a strong consensus that Spa has the opportunity to be stewards in the migration to environmental, social, and financial sustainability. However as with all things in life, the pain of discipline is better than the pain of regret but until it becomes part of our consciousness, it will never become part of our culture.

Panel Takeaways:

There were several clear takeaways which included the need for:

- Sustainable cause contributions to be a % of revenue, NOT profit. Cause contributions from profit can often be seen as a form of green washing and not a real commitment or cost of doing business.
- Sustainability being approached as a consciousness and system, not a product.
- Sustainable benchmarks and KPI's to become part of a spas critical success factors.
- Guests to be able to differentiate authentic green spas and products via use of Green Globe, Green Spa Network, LOHAS etc.
- Us to be broadly embracing, not narrowly reductive when we communicate sustainability. Everyone has a different entry point that we need to be mindful of.
- Spas to subscribe to a “triple bottom line” of planet, people, and profit. Not doing so may put spa at risk in the eyes of the guest as not caring about sustainability and hence missing out on the wallet spend of the conscious consumer.

Next Steps:

- The formation of a spa sustainability task force that will focus on
 - Keeping the discussion alive
 - Identify appropriate benchmarks and critical success factors to provide spa with a sustainability toolkit
 - Remaining broad and embracing in its modus operandi to ensure it is inclusive, not exclusive

Panel Discussion:

Scribe: Se Bum Oh

MW: Who are the spa consumers? The LOHAS consumers may represent many consumers of the spa industry, whether or not we define them as such. Thus, the LOHAS consumers are the important group of people in the spa market.

JW: Our company is donating a % of revenues to the social responsibilities. They are considering transforming spa experiences.

PM: I have been involved in the sustainable projects for many years.

UK: Wellbeing, life energy, and making long lasting are the terms for “sustainability.”

PM: Sustainable design for McDonough means “natural – 100% less bad” and “equal.” I want to introduce the concept of regenerative development. Regenerative development meaning people seeking to be in partnership with a place. This is accomplished by illuminating the natural patterns and potential of ecosystems and communities, in a way that enables humans to

harmonize themselves and the resources they bring with the places they inhabit. Important considerations for this concept are:

1. Understand the land
2. Design in harmony with place
3. Engage the community
4. Speak to the future

MW: What does the green spa look like?

JW: It is about consciousness. It is the matter of how you live. It is the perception of wellness.

MW: What benchmarks does the Six Senses conduct to move forward?

JW: Water, electronics, treatment products, the way to monitor and dispose the waste. We use sheets instead of using towels. Can we use/leverage local transport? Things as such.

MEG: Consumers now have different kinds of shopping lists. Is it organic? Is it authentic? Those are the people's different concerns. Communication is extremely important. There are very few authentic organizations. And the part of the reason is there are few abilities to deliver their story telling. All the mainstream magazines have eco-journalists and green-editors and contribute at least one section to the eco- and green-related issues.

MW: We are in the middle of the movement. It is not impossible to be perfectly green for all the products and services. How do you actually brand as "green"?

TD: Many companies feel now they do not have distinguishing points from others since others can have all similar platform and products. So, getting certification is a huge deal from certifying bodies, such as, Energy Star.

Nobody can be completely green. But we can have checkmarks. That is important. For example, for shampoo, for towels, etc.

If we do what we do (educate our customers), then their intention and consciousness will ultimately increase.

There are many entry points for different products, so whatever it is, once you get there, they are looking for going forward. And once they get to the next level, they cannot go back. It is like once you graduate university, you cannot go back to the kindergarten.

Sustainability is organic, green, AND environmental. We cannot look at just one point.

DS: We had a project that educated people about environmental issues. We educated school teachers, elder peoples, etc. And invited local children to the property as a part of the project. The guests love the efforts by the project, and we got 100% occupancy and 85% of ROI.