

Anitra's Spas Blog



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More From The Global Spa Summit

A week ago I gave you my quick take on the first-ever Global Spa Summit in New York City, a three day, invitation-only gathering of leaders from the global spa, real estate, investment, travel, spa education, beauty, and wellness sectors. (Don't feel bad if you weren't invited -- press had to settle for a one-hour briefing!) Now more details are out about what the 160 delegates consider to be the most important issues for the \$40 billion spa industry. In a survey, 29 percent of delegates cited labor shortages as the top issue facing the industry. Another 22 percent said the main challenge is the lack of industry-wide standards for defining spa categories and best practices. Environmental sustainability was cited by 12 percent of the delegates as another top concern.

When asked about opportunities, delegates placed the greatest emphasis on enhancing clients' health (29 percent), educating consumers that spas are about wellness (26 percent), and promoting preventative medicine (20 percent).

One major concern raised by delegates was "protecting the authenticity of the spa industry" – how its emphasis on the genuine transformation of mind, body, and spirit might be threatened by outside investors whose first priority is the bottom line. Maintaining the integrity of a fast-growing industry, while at the same time attracting investors and reaching more consumers, was cited as a key challenge that would require a world-wide strategy.

Kevin Kelly, president of Canyon Ranch, drove home this point in his keynote address. "Because demographic trends are so economically compelling, Wall Street has increased its interest in our industry," Kelly said. "The danger to avoid is shifting the focus to efficiency at the cost of losing our soulfulness. I believe we can grow a profitable business and retain our authenticity. We need to hold fast to the vision."

Delegates attended from 24 different countries, including Australia, Austria, Bermuda, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Turks and Caicos, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States. For an overview of presenters, delegates, and sessions, please visit the Summit agenda at globalspasummit.org.

According to Spa Finder CEO Pete Ellis, delegates overwhelmingly agreed that the Summit should become an annual event and take place in different cities around the world to reflect the industry's global status.

Sunday June 3, 2007 | [comments \(0\)](#)