



Is there room for Sustainability, Social Responsibility, and Community Initiatives during Turbulent Economic Times?

Concurrent Breakout Session: Roundtable Discussion

Tuesday, May 19th 2009 1:30pm – 2:30pm

La Salle Seiler, Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa, Interlaken, Switzerland

Moderator: Dr. Marc Cohen, Professor, RMIT University, Australia

Panelists:

Joerg Demuth, President, the Organic Spa, Germany

Motti Essakow, Founder, OmWard Bound, Canada

Dr. Geraldine Mitton, Magic Hands for Visually Impaired, South Africa

Mark Walton, Managing Director, VOYA, Ireland

Scribe: Cécile Ngan Chee Wang (Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne)

Dr. Marc Cohen (session moderator)

Some people sacrifice their health to gain wealth. Right now humanity is going through a crisis (terrorism, pollution, high level of toxicity). Will the spa industry in the future boast about rejuvenation?

The spa industry is a vehicle to turn all the wrongs around. WE have to embrace new ways, together. We can separate wellness and the individual. Business cannot be well without embedding itself into the economy life.

How to conduct humanity in being conscious to all these issues?

It is important to link people to technology and technology to people. There is an opportunity to embed spa as a necessity instead of a luxury, there are more people who are more and more ill.

The spa industry is fully global but is not globalizing well. Spa is a mix of touch, herbal medicine, rituals, and water for healing and beauty. The spa industry has the potential to build a structure for thousands of years.

WE are ALL connected, all over the world. **The characteristic in the spa industry is the human touch.**

Question:

Sustainability and changing towels in luxury hotels. Is it more luxurious to be sustainable/responsible?

Dr. Geraldine Mitton [on Magic Hands for Visually Impaired]

Magic Hands is a school for impaired people to give massages. The massage manual used was translated into Braille books.

Question

Is there an accredited massage brail certificate?

This project creates jobs and the persons who are taught become great massage therapists. This is a beautiful example of connection between people and the disadvantaged community.

Idea: create a movement for this type of school/training. Examples:

- WWF (World Wellness Fund)
www.wwfund.org, the WWFund aims to support the provision of schools, scholarships, service delivery, scientific studies, etc.
- The footprint alliance is another project present in hotels, which gives the choice to the client to add a dollar at check-out if he/she wishes



Q&A

How important is sustainability?

We need to respond with responsible sustainability. There are three pillars of sustainability but focus and importance was only given to one of the three. It should be all three as a whole. Global shift: restoring instead of changing the world/the planet. Well-being.

How to translate actions into numbers?

Consider this example: Right now in the spa world there is no sustainability brand (excluding Six Senses). Six Senses is usually profitable and the guests are looking to express their responsibility. Some hotels have their own sustainability brand - why doesn't the spa industry? There is a need to sit down with all key players and make plans in this direction.

What are the infrastructures?

If you believe sustainability is part of what you are supposed to do, then part of our spa DNA should be creating its own best practice - You believe in it and the client sees that and believes in it also.

Water should be the main sustainability theme.

It does not matter how strong you are. True sustainability is to share your knowledge, it is a commercial step to be able to control and apply the best practices the best way possible.

Being part of the community, learning and discovering; it is part of the challenge, as the parameters are always changing.

Consumers are being more conscious about the impact on the planet. Guests have to make a relative choice about luxury and sustainability.

Sustainable profitability: productivity and efficiency. It makes commercial sense. The practice of sustainability still has a myth around it – especially vulnerable in uncertain economic times: people believe that being sustainable requires spending more money.



The Global Spa Summit is an international organization that brings together leaders and visionaries to positively impact and shape the future of the global spa and wellness industry.