

The 'Anywhere & Everywhere Spa' Concept

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Ms. Judy Singer

Spas are one of the hottest features in the hospitality industry. We all know that it's a "must have" for a four or five star resort, but now, it's also an expected feature in small boutique properties as well as large city hotels. When you have limited space, you need to be creative in terms of how you use it and what can you do to expand and extend the spa experience beyond the four walls of a "traditional spa." This creativity is also relevant to the savvy hotel operator with a large spa who is looking for ways to enhance the resort experience and make more money.

I want you to think beyond the traditional and look for opportunities to add "spa-ish pleasures" throughout your property. You can be very subtle yet provide substance. Although many spas are taking on a more serious "wellness" approach, the basic truth for the past 20+ years still applies today...when your guests hear the word "spa", they think of and expect rest, relaxation and pampering.

Many spas offer a lot more than this, but this is still the foundation of a spa. It also happens to be an important part of the foundation of the hospitality industry if you change the word pampering to service. To illustrate this point, when you look at resort ads and spa ads, it is sometimes difficult to see a point of separation or differentiation. Resorts and spas are very focused on the "RE" words...RElax, REvitalize, REnew, REjoice, REstore, REjuvenate, etc.. Look at the photos in the ads, and once again, you will see a strong thread of commonality. Spas and hospitality are very closely aligned, and it only makes sense to explore more integration options in order to enhance the guest experience.

If you are building a new spa or have an existing spa, regardless of size, here are some ideas on how you can expand the spa/hospitality experience, enhance the guest experience, do more cross-marketing, make more money and have higher profits. You may be doing many of the suggestions below so maybe it's a matter of re-packaging with a "spa sensibility" so that you get more marketing value. This is HFD's concept of the "Anywhere & Everywhere Spa" based on Special Pleasurable Amenities or Special Personalized Approaches.

Reception / Retail

You always need a meet and greet and information spa reception desk. If you do not have much space in your spa, retail will need to be part of the reception area. Since retail is the only "annuity" you have (it's consumable and profitable), you want to expand the retail opportunities.

Retail Opportunities

- Create your own signature products, use them in the treatments and as the spa amenity grooming line plus sell them in the spa retail shop
- Have a spa section in your main retail store. Make sure it is a "touchy feely" area so people can play with the products.
- Use your signature spa products as your in-room amenity line. If you have a branded property that requires a special line, select some feature items from the spa line to complement your in-room line.
- Sell the spa products in your mini-bars or display them on a nice tray in your room
- Create a Spa Toy Store relaxation lounge area. Guests can "try and buy" massage chairs, foot massagers, sand gardens, mind games, Chinese hand balls, reflexology foot boards, etc. Think in terms of items that you might find in a Sharper Image or Brookstone store, put them in your resort

maybe as a consignment or co-branding partnership and make arrangements for drop shipping.

- Create a "spa at home" shopping page on your web-site. This will not only generate on-going revenues, but it is also a great branding and marketing strategy. This is the best way to expand your spa's image and enhance retail profits.

Services & Service

You need to create as much flexibility as possible in terms of treatment areas and as much versatility as possible in terms of the service providers.

Fitness

- Space will determine how much equipment to put in. The market will tell you what kind of equipment they like to use. Use fitness areas for personal work-outs, supervised "cuts and curves" express work-outs, one-on-one training, etc.
- Use the outdoors for year round fitness activities: hiking, biking, skating, swimming, fitness trail, group classes, etc. If you can get people to be "mindful" of the experience and that it is just as much about the process as the end result, this is very aligned with a "spa work-out."
- Put rubber bands in the guest rooms for their own private "pumping rubber" work-out. These can also be retailed in your own logo bag...ideal for traveling.
- Have a Room-Service Spa Fitness Equipment Menu: guests can order exercise mats, hand weights, videos, up-right bike, etc. It can be delivered to the room with a personal trainer add-on option.
- Sports or recreation deck with ping-pong, shuffleboard, badminton, bocce, etc.
- Golf fitness programs as well as golfer's warm-up and cool-down massages; the 20th hole spa facility area; special products for golfer's grip, mosquito repellent and sun-block; etc.

Treatment Area

- Treatment rooms need to be multi-purpose. Think about a dry treatment room with a treatment table that is designed to do facials, massages, body treatments, manicures and pedicures. Add a specialty shower and/or maybe a treatment tub to also create a "wet" or hydro experience. This room can be a "spa within a spa."
- Create spa suites for a more luxurious "spa within a spa." This can be one large room with "dry" and "wet" zones, 2 "dry" or a "wet" and a "dry" treatment table, treatment tub for 1 or 2 people, specialty shower for 1 or 2 people, indoor and/or outdoor lounge and private bathroom. You could also create a spa suite with a cluster of lock-off rooms (massage, couples massage room, facial, body/bath but with ability to sell the rooms a la carte if not used by a spa party, celebration, etc.).
- Do in-room massages. If you have a fireplace, do the fireplace massage and enhance the treatment with a pre-treatment loofa shower and/or a spa bath.
- During nice weather, do massages outdoors: sunrise energizing massages, sunset relaxing massages, massage under the stars, etc.
- Offer chair massages by the pool, on the putting green, at the conference center, etc.

Service Providers

- Hire staff who have more than one license: massage and skin care, skin care and nail care, nail and hair, full cosmetology (skin, hair and nails)
- Fitness staff should be cross-trained and certified as instructors, personal trainers and recreation specialists
- When staff have free time, they can help in the retail area. They are the most qualified to answer questions. They can also give spa tours, etc.

Guest Rooms

It seems that many hotels are focused on creating great beds and bathrooms so people get a good night sleep as well as luxurious bathing/shower experience.

- In-room amenities were mentioned above, but you can also include reflexology slippers, spa robes (not just guest robes), loofa mitt, ear plugs, packet of multi-day vitamins, spa teas, spa snack rather than chocolate at turn-down, etc.
- Private label relaxation CD and/or DVD for your entertainment system
- Spa Comforts Menu with selection of additional CDs and DVDs; choice of pillows; customized aromatherapy bath and body products to help you relax, be more productive, go to sleep, etc.; candles or aromatherapy diffusers; etc. All of this can be on your spa shopping site.
- Wellness Room: special sleeping, ventilation and water "systems"...you can charge a higher room rate for these rooms.
- Tubs with air jets (more sanitary than water jets) and color therapy. Your spa products can be used in these tubs.
- Multi-head showers for a hydro-massage experience with or without the steam shower option
- Guest rooms which are large enough for an in-room spa experience (more than just massage) or guest rooms with a mini-spa treatment suite as an adjacent lock-off area.

Food & Beverage

It's important for people to enjoy their fine foods and wines. This is a pleasurable indulgence, but you can provide some healthy options for those guests who want to splurge but not for all 3 meals.

- Provide smaller portions and maybe smaller plates or add more garnishing to the presentation but keep the original recipe
- Change some of ingredients for a low-fat, low-calorie option to your popular items
- Spa Sips Menu with Elixirs and Smoothies with or without nutritional "bumps" (additives) for more energy, clarity, etc.
- Happy Hour with Spa Mocktail options
- Set up a Power Breakfast and Lunch Bar with select energizing, nourishing foods that give people the "ready to conquer the world" feeling.

The Outdoors

If there is room on your property, think of all the private, pleasurable venues that can be offered to help people relax and find a sense of serenity and balance.

- Meditation gardens with wonderful aromatic plants, flowers and herbs; hammocks; rocker chairs; private sitting areas; water features; labyrinth walking path; etc.
- Reflexology walking path

The spa is more than what is within the four walls so don't worry if you do not have the space to build a large or "traditional" spa. Look beyond the spa walls and focus on creating a broad, tempting, fun, pleasurable, multi-dimensional spa experience. If you know you have a spa-sensitive market or if you want to attract one, consider the above ideas as a means of providing and integrating spa experiences at multiple locations. This will enhance the overall experience you offer in your spa facility while also being an excellent marketing tool to softly introduce "spa virgins" to many familiar elements of a spa experience with the hope that they will go to the spa, enjoy the more traditional spa experience and become "spa veterans." At the same time, the spa veterans can never get enough of a good thing, so they will love all the little pleasures and delights that you provide.

There may be many spa-ish things that you are already doing and there may be more that you can easily do. It may be a timely exercise to see how you can expand your appeal and capitalize on ... not exploit ... the spa cravings of your existing and target markets.

Judith L. Singer, Ed.D., ISHC, is the President & Co-Owner of Pompano Beach, Florida-based Health Fitness Dynamics, Inc. (HFD) (www.hfdspa.com) an internationally recognized spa consulting company that specializes in the planning, marketing and management support services of spas for fine hotels and resorts, day spas and mixed-use developments. HFD is also actively involved in conducting economic and consumer spa research. Since its inception in 1983, HFD has been the consulting firm to over \$650 million of completed spa projects. A partial list of clients includes: Little Dix Bay, Four Seasons Hulalai, Miraval, Malliouhana, Cranwell, Pinehurst, The Homestead, The Greenbrier, Bacara, Silverado, Delano, La Posada de Santa Fe and Hotel Crescent Court. Dr. Singer is also the past chairperson of The International Society of Hospitality Consultants (ISHC). Ms. Singer can be contacted at 954-942-0049 or judysinger@hfdspa.com

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