

Bringing Wellness to The Guest Experience

By [Lynn Curry](#), Principal, Curry Spa Consulting | July 10, 2022



Wellness. It's a ubiquitous term with highly individual interpretations. For some it means healthy living that incorporates movement, nutrition, and sleep. For others it means emotional peace, or holistic improvement within a specific aspect of life.

Wellness is truly in the eye of the beholder, but however it's defined, the last few years have thrust wellness into the spotlight as a universal priority that has created both exciting opportunities and daunting challenges for the hotel industry.

Well-being offerings are so diverse and far-reaching that just reading the list can be exhausting. Beauty services have expanded to include Botox and body sculpting and a wide variety of technological pieces of equipment touted by manufacturers to spas, and by aestheticians to consumers. Nutritional offerings range from one-on-one consultations with dietitians to learning to

grow organic, nutrient-dense food.

Stress management counseling, mindfulness classes and meditation, naturopaths, and personal training have stretched the space limits of fully equipped fitness centers and made group classes and state-of-the-art equipment seem quaint. It's tempting to think that each new trend and shiny object will boost your bottom line and reputation, but it's far better to do a few things well than to offer an endless menu of amenities that fall short of expectations.

Successfully designing impactful guest experiences and integrating them into your property, with the correctly educated and licensed staff, is well worth the investment. But it requires a thoughtful approach built on a thorough understanding of your property's unique strengths.

Defining Wellness on Your Own Terms

Wellness has so many potential applications - spa services, fitness, relaxation, mindfulness, and adventure to name just a few - that there is no single interpretation, and therefore no single best way to implement and incorporate it into your offerings. The biggest mistake that hotels and spa facilities make lies in trying to be all things to all people instead of concentrating on what they can do well that meets their guests' expectations.

When considering how your organization can distinguish itself as a destination of wellness, begin by understanding that each offering will always be, at its heart, an experience. From that point of reference you can identify the unique resources you already have at your disposal and build on them to create your own wellness amenities and services that guests will carry with them long after their stay.

Start by Assessing What You Have

Though you should always strive to provide what your guests want, you need to ground what you offer on the resources that you have. Take inventory of your space, your equipment, your surroundings, and your staff - including those who are not necessarily part of your current concept of wellness but who can potentially add to the experience - and consider your ability to expand with a realistic eye. Remember that wellness is not only an organized service, it can be a solo experience, a hike around your property, a swing in a big tree!



Your Space

Existing spas with ample space have the opportunity to add new and exciting services – and increase revenues – through a myriad of additional treatments and experiences. Tapping into novelty has upside potential, as many guests look forward to discovering something unfamiliar and impactful, and then sharing it with friends and family back home. But you'll find the greatest success when additions enhance and extend the overall feeling and mood of your facility rather than disrupting or disappointing consistent and repeat guests who count on a specific feeling from their visits. This makes it important not to add too many wellness services at once, and to make sure you add the personalized touch, so guests feel that you are curating the experience, or something during the experience, especially for them.

Don't have space for expansion? Turn your focus instead to aesthetic upgrades of your facility, upgrades of equipment, and enhancement of existing services. Novelty often requires renovations and installations that don't always pay off, especially when - at the end of the day - what clients want most is that personalized, attentive service in a beautiful setting.

Your Equipment

Physical fitness is inarguably a key part of wellness, and many of today's guests invested in high-end or multi-purpose equipment and apps that allowed them to exercise at home when COVID shuttered their gyms. It's important that your equipment does not feel disappointment or feel outdated or inferior to guests who consider their work-out an integral part of their daily routine. Consider making it FUN! Energetic classes, areas on the property where TRX bands and stretching exercises can be done under a tree, for example. Facilities that have limited space will want to ensure that their equipment is state-of-the-art while providing movement opportunities for those with a wide range of abilities. It's also a good idea to upgrade to equipment that integrates with the most popular apps and uploads data to fitness trackers.

Your Surroundings

If your facility is surrounded by lush landscapes, magnificent mountains, or other natural marvels then you have almost limitless opportunities to add memorable and unique experiences to your well-being offerings, Guided or independent hikes that take your guests into the heart of your environment can be tailored to different ability levels and coordinated through your fitness staff, and so too can meditation sessions or yoga classes in the idyllic and unique natural setting that your facility enjoys. Your spa can offer services that play up your setting. Private outdoor massage spaces can capture ocean or forest breezes as well as desert winds, and can be further enhanced by aromatherapy oils, herbs, and products with mineral content specific to your area.

Though facilities set in concrete jungles may seem to be at a disadvantage, they have their own remarkable resources available to

them. Fitness offerings can expand beyond the gym to include self-guided walks or bike rides that take guests to architecture, art, or history within your city. A luxury resort hotel in a city with a robust restaurant scene can offer healthy cooking classes or nutritional classes.



Staffing

Superior staffing is imperative in every area offering wellness services. Nutritional programming taught by a staff member without relevant background is no different from Reiki performed by an inexperienced massage therapist – both are examples of service mistakes that can prove to be devastating to your reputation. Staff must not only be well trained in the offerings and protocols within their area of expertise, but must also understand and thoroughly invest themselves in all aspects of guest services and the guest experience. If your staff is not up to the task, then invest in additional training and incentives, recruiting new employees, or both.

In addition to gauging the strength of your spa staff, don't forget about other experts that you may have access to within your property. Do you have a talented Food and Beverage program that is robust and amazing? Not only can you collaborate with management to craft programming for guests: You can also ask them to create a wellness menu for within the spa as well as part of a special wellness menu within the property's dining areas and bars.

Offer The Wellness Experience Your Clients Want

Just using the word "wellness" in your spa's menu can paint vivid images in guests' minds, but it's essential for you to recognize that each of those images may be different, and offer options that will appeal to the range representing your guests' interests. New treatments, service offerings, and even adventures must be carefully curated depending on the type of property in which the spa is situated. Consumer behavior and preferences vary tremendously globally, regionally, and even locally. Much depends upon the level of service expected, which can shift depending upon whether you are a luxury resort spa, a luxury urban spa, a day spa, or a full-service hotel spa.

Medical spas don't work in all locations. While a medical based efficacious spa treatment may be the best way for some guests to feel that they're elevating their well-being, it may hold no appeal for others. You can offer both if you have the space, but only in a way where one will not dissuade the other from participating

Similarly, some guests' idea of well-being may mean quiet self-reflection, while others may be seeking reconnection with others, with hospitality rooms that allow small groups to partake in spa treatments and experiences together. Properties may cater to one or the other - or both - depending upon the resources and space available. You may offer areas that are tranquil or convivial - individual soaking pools or communal thermal pools and soaking tubs - but it is important that you make clear which are available so that goals

are not frustrated.

Consider your hotel market, repeat business percentage, average length of stay, and double occupancy factors when adding wellness offerings. Many services don't necessarily mean better guest experiences, and there's no need to provide every possible offering. Overwhelming guests with too wide an array of service offerings, potentials, and ideas is counterproductive, and may even intimidate them into opting out. No matter your facility type, your goal when crafting a wellness experience is to entice the guest with the promise of personalized service and attention.



Building An Experience With Staying Power

Consumers want a great wellness experience, and that goes far beyond the service itself. What happens before and after is as essential to their sense of enjoyment of the amenity you've provided as the service itself, and that makes how are they greeted, treated, and escorted as important as what are they experiencing along the way. The same is true of what happens afterwards.

A rush to get a guest in and out of a treatment room may be operationally necessary but can be disruptive of the overall experience. Spas can offer a soothing area that makes guests' departure part of the experience. Adding a garden or water features like thermal bathing expands the experience and allows guests to move at their own pace, enhancing their sense of self-care.

To ensure that wellness is a holistic aspect of your property, be sure to evaluate and plan for your non-revenue producing space, because they will impact revenue one way or another. Guests won't enjoy themselves if they are uncomfortable, and that means they won't come back. Are there too few chaise lounges around your pool, preventing small groups from sitting together? Are common areas inviting and well appointed? Do you need easily moveable FF&E so that a single area can be utilized for different opportunities?

Similarly, facilities can drive wellness outcomes by ensuring that amenities have an educational aspect that allows guests to extend the benefit that they have just received. Interested guests can be offered products that approximate the same effect in their home, whether minerals similar to what is found in thermal baths or in their skincare treatments. Services should be explained where appropriate, both in terms of what is happening during treatment and what its effect will be. Not every client will want to be talked to during a service or sold products afterwards, so care should be taken to ensure sensitivity.

Final Thoughts

Spas help us hit the pause button, and that pause must be enjoyable. The goal of each hotel property should be to provide a unique and inclusive path to wellness that makes use of their available resources and meets guest expectations. This process starts with understanding both your facility and how your key demographic relates to it.

The latest trends from the Global Wellness Institute include a variety of trends, from learning to grow food (or at least to participate in growing it) to using clean products for skincare to building muscle and overall health. Senior guest interests include spa services, general wellness, and fitness, while consumer interest in traveling for both well-being and sustainability is increasingly popular.

While it is imperative to study and understand trends, forethought must be given to the property offerings and whether or not additional menu offerings are needed. Try not to be everything to everybody, as doing so is not necessary to satisfying the most important part of the wellness experience - encouraging healthful living and self-care.

The interest in wellness continues to grow year-over-year, especially post-pandemic. You can create an outlet for physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being for your clients in your way. A way that features your property, and your staff, in a great light. Let your wellness experiences make guests feel well and create great memories for them!



Ms. Curry

Lynn Curry, CMC, ISHC, has been a Spa Consultant since 1997, providing financial feasibility, design development, creative direction, and pre-opening consulting services to upscale and luxury resort, casino, hotel, residential community spas and well-being hospitality properties since 1997. She launched Curry Spa Consulting, a certified Women's Owned Business Enterprise in 2011, which quickly became a global spa consulting firm with clients in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Ms. Curry was named American Spa Magazine's Favorite Spa Consultant for the 2018 Professional Choice Awards, and a runner up to the industry's Women In Wellness Spa Consultant of the Year. She is a proud member of the International Society of Hospitality Consultants, (the leading source for global hospitality expertise) and a Certified Management Consultant™ (CMC®) with the Institute of Management Consultants (an ISO/IEC 17024 Certifying Body). Career projects in her portfolio include properties that have been featured on the "best of" lists in Travel & Leisure, New York Times, and other industry publications. Her portfolio includes Montage Laguna; Island Spa Catalina; The Ritz-Carlton Spas of Paradise Valley, Bachelor Gulch, Dove Mountain and Laguna Beach; The Four Seasons Spas of Cabo Del Sol, Westlake Village, Dubai, Vail, and Punta Mita; Rosewood Resort Spas at Sand Hill and Mayakoba, and the Hard Rock Spas of Tampa, Hollywood and Atlantic City. Also in her career portfolio are private luxury club, boutique and casino spas. From the Manager of Tourism Development providing destination sales services for The Anaheim Visitor and Convention Bureau, Ms. Curry's career led to Sales with Hyatt Resorts Hawaii as a Group Sales Manager, and then to Grand Wailea Resort where she opened the renowned resort in both Hotel Sales & Marketing and Spa Management. She assisted in opening multiple Hyatt Resort properties and then became the Spa Director at the Hyatt Regency in Fort Lauderdale and assisted that Spa Operator with other projects. Ms. Curry is a Board Member of the GSN Planet (Green Spa Network), a BLLA Task Force Member, a member of the Questex Wellness Advisory Board, and an Educator with Gerson Lehrman Councils. She is an active public speaker, panelist, and educator. Ms. Curry currently serves on the Spa Consulting Task Force of the Global Wellness Institute, is a past board member of Glen Ivy Hot Springs, and provides education to various industry development teams, vendors, and suppliers about the inner workings of the spa and wellness industry. Ms. Curry can be contacted at +1 707-933-0408 or lynn@curryspaconsulting.com

[Extended Biography](#)

The Hotel Business Review is a weekly journal of best practices in hotel management and operations and is available at www.hotelexecutive.com. HotelExecutive.com retains the copyright to the articles published in the Hotel Business Review.

Articles cannot be republished without prior written consent by HotelExecutive.com.

© 2022 Cummins Communications