

ISPA 2014

ACTIONS CREATE REALITY

By Deborah Mangum Copelli

Put away the crystal ball, the ouija board and tarot cards; they have a time and a place but it's not right now. You are the best clairvoyant for your business and you can create anything you want. In these days where people are more connected through technology than ever before, it begs us to become creators of our own destiny. And it only requires some good, old-fashioned brainstorming, listing our goals, writing down our dreams and focusing on what we want for the future. The daily steps we take, through mindful actions centered on the outcomes we wish to achieve, will get us closer to our ultimate vision.

Pioneers in every industry struggle to get to their desired end. Persistence and perseverance is part of the recipe for success. All it takes is a passion for your pursuits, a lot of hard work directed toward your idea to make it happen. Transform the way you think about your business, role-play every possible obstacle that might cross your path and note down a solution to turn those objections into opportunities. Remain flexible, and be willing to make adjustments along the way. Try not to over-analyse every detail but keep your overall objective on point. Success is not just bestowed on the lucky few, it's there for you to enjoy too. Don't just wonder about the future, create it!

What a motivational message this was for the opening of the International Spa Association's Annual Conference held in October, 2014, at The Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas. Following on from this was a stellar three-day line-up of creativity and inspiration from world-renowned general session speakers, artists, business professionals and educators.

Erik Wahl, graffiti artist, author and entrepreneur took to the stage wowing everyone with his life-like paintings, particularly one depicting U2's infamous Bono. A lucky guest in the audience wished so powerfully for this painting that she became the recipient of Erik's live artwork right then and there. Erik epitomises the actuality of creativity by performing his art up front and in person for the audience to enjoy.

Each of the three days kicked off with a General Session Speaker and on Day Two, one of Australia's very own, Mike Walsh, founder of Jupiter Research and author of "Futuretainment" graced our presence. Mike will really make your head spin as he lures

you into his futuristic insight on how we the people are changing and shaping technology to better serve us and our needs. Mike is an authority on what makes people do what they do or purchase, and when and why. His views stem from anthropology where he ascertains that people and cultures drive technological developments, contrary to what most of us would think. It's people who shape the future; technology is simply a vehicle to get there faster, he says. A self-described, "global nomad", Mike has travelled the world, especially Australasia, conducting research and gathering information so he can share his vision with the ordinary and extraordinary industry leaders of tomorrow.

The primary takeaway from Mike is that spa owners should be brave with customers and ask them what they need. Give your clients the opportunity to present ideas from their perspective. He asked some poignant questions: "What if your clients were in charge of innovation?" "What would your clients do that you might not even be noticing?" Listening to and learning from our clients is an invaluable tool for our success in this industry. Another way Mike recommends you stay connected to the latest trends is to take a good look at what your teenagers are doing and how they are interacting with their friends, the brands they love, and with new technologies. Ask them lots of "stupid questions" to get some really smart feedback. You can check out his blog on <http://www.mike-walsh.com/blog>

Singer-songwriter Jewel adorned the stage on the final day of general session and was also awarded the Alex Szekely Humanitarian Award for her charitable initiative, Project Clean Water, which raises funds and awareness for world access to clean water. This lovely and powerful musician spoke eloquently and sang poetically to an enthusiastic ISPA audience. She also reflected on her early life as a native Alaskan, her challenges and her accomplishments. She was truly an inspiration to everyone.

Getting into the nitty gritty though, were the Education and Professional Development Sessions, always a highlight of the conference and this year boasting an impressive cast of over 18 talented presenters appealing to ISPA newcomers as well as veterans. Some favourites were Gerry O'Brien, with his topic "Big Marketing with Small Dollars: Grow Your Spa like a Billion Dollar Brand". Here Gerry posed questions that big brands already know and gave the steps how you can do the same with your brand or business. Answer these questions for your business. Who are your people? What are they looking for? What is your outcome? What is your "because"? And, how are you special? Your people are looking for an outcome that differentiates you from all the others...because? You are special, so communicate that to your clients and have them all talking about you and telling their family, colleagues and friends why they love you.

Sarah Robinson owner of Fierce Loyalty, Inc. brought insight on how to "Unlock the DNA of Wildly Successful Brand Communities." She noted that in the current economy, business owners are being forced to do more with less. But by creating and deploying a loyal community of customers and brand ambassadors, you can extend your marketing reach and increase your bottom line without increasing traditional advertising and marketing expenses. She leaves you feeling confident, knowing that you have a proven model to follow to build a community that not only provides value to customers, but leads to more clients, referrals and, ultimately, higher revenues. Some of her Fierce Loyalty Accelerators include making clients members of your community by making them feel valued and important; creating something together, fight a common

enemy, create a culture of WE, empower your members to make the community their own, build in exclusivity, establish community ambassadors, stand for something bold, build a structure toward pride, trust and passion, and initiate opportunities for shared experiences. If you look at some of the most successful brands today like Apple, Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's, Qantas and Witchery, and ask what they are doing to build their brands and keep them strong and profitable, you'll find they are building a community of loyal followers through loyalty programs, and special offers targeted at what their customers want and need, and they are capitalising on the power of social networking.

SEO, or Search Engine Optimisation, might sound really boring but it's pretty crucial if you want to be known by your new and future clients. Heather Lutze of Findability Group Search Marketing gives some great tips on how to get on the first page of a Google search, which she says is a, "must" if you want to be found. You can Google her or her company for more information; she's all over the first page.

But if you wanted to know more about the "how of WOW", you could have listened in on Jean-Guy de Gabriac who brought into focus clients' emotional engagement. He explains that clients are looking for more than just a facial or a massage; they are in search of any emotionally stimulating experience. Jean says that paying attention to the details ensures that each client will feel valued and unique. Jean-Guy de Gabriac shared some of the clever signature elements he has gathered from traveling in Europe and spa visits in Asia and India. He leads attendees in a creative exercise to help them create their own signature elements and rituals that will not only surprise guests, but also break staff's routine. He has a delightful way of presenting with a twist of fun and originality.

And of course there was the impressive trade show floor where more than 200 exhibitors displayed their latest products and demonstrated their unique offerings. These included Dermalogica, Eminence, G.M Collin, Jurlique, Barbor, Spa Ritual, HydroPeptide, Dr. Hauschka, Sothys, Decleor, Phytomer and Jane Iredale to name only a few.

Congratulations are in order to Australia's Tracy Willis, Marketing Manager of Gwinganna Spa, Queensland, who took away an ISPA Innovate Award for the creation of A Sensory Spa Experience of Massage, Meditation and Hot Stone, incorporating live drumming and percussion to produce a uniquely restorative and relaxing treatment ritual.

Highlights from the US Spa Industry 2013 research study show it's back on track with a total number of spa visits at 164 million, 2.5 per cent higher than 2012. Total revenues generated by spas in 2013 rose to 14.7 billion, an increase of more than five per cent on the 2012 level. That's good news for Australia as well since the US is a good indicator for the global spa picture and the economy overall. ■

You can find out more in depth information about conferences and memberships at the International Spa Association by logging onto, www.experienceispa.com

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