

# A Sunshine STATE OF mind

ISPA Conference 2012 Florida USA

By Deborah Mangum-Copelli



**B**lending creativity with discipline is the key to success. This was the overriding theme that kept emerging and weaving its way through all the presenters' messages throughout the four days of conference. Just as Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*; *How The Mighty Fall*; *Great By Choice* and *Built To Last* said in his opening speech to this year's attendees creativity is present from an early age, but "we aren't born disciplined; we need to learn this". Jim also notes that it's healthy to have "productive paranoia" quoting "the only mistakes you can learn from are the ones you survive".

If you retain discipline in good times and run your business conservatively, saving for times when there could be difficult years, you are much more likely to survive the down times. And isn't this all just good general business practice anyway? Of course it is, but look at the companies that boasted and upgraded in the good times with newly refurbished facilities from business loans — and then the crash hit and they couldn't pay back those loans. They didn't do what Jim advises; they over-spent during their peak performance without saving for the unknown. And then the worst happened: consumers reined in their frequency of visits to spas and their dollar spent per visit and, to add insult to injury, along came group buying websites, eg., Groupon, that world-renowned discount devil that finished off many a good business through greed and brand destruction.

And yes, Groupon and Living Social — amongst other group buying bullies — were topics of discussion at ISPA this year, with statistician's opinions differing from true marketers. Don't be fooled by all the statistics that spa revenue is up around the world; yes it is, but at what cost to each individual spa business? Trust me on this; in some cases it's by your entire profit and the ultimate demise of your business. If you look just at stats on overall revenues, then yes, Tom, Dick and Harriet all spent \$50 at a spa whose treatment they purchased from a group buying website and they got 1.5 hours of treatment time and yes, they were blissfully happy. But were you, the owner or operator of that spa? Did you recoup your cost per treatment? And did Tom or Harriett come back the next month and spend \$125 on that same treatment? Chances are the answer is an emphatic NO! So if you multiply that \$50 those first-time spa-goers spent by, say, one million, then yes, revenues are up for 2012, but did Tom, Dick or Harriet ever come back? And if they do, will they spend your published rate for that same treatment? Again, almost certainly NO!

So...who do I and most other spa and salon business professionals agree with when it comes to running a profitable business? Yes — the marketers, not the statisticians. Those discount-dallying consumers are not worth the sacrifice of your profits or ultimately your business!

Susie Ellis, best known to most of us as the trend forecaster of the spa industry, was deservedly awarded this year's ISPA Visionary Award. I had the privilege of a brief interview with Susie, and this is what she had to say. "Spas have had such an impact on the overall health and wellbeing of the consumer that now hoteliers are taking the spa concept to the next level and integrating 'wellness' concepts into their properties. You will see the integration of this concept as hoteliers renovate, expand and grow their overall spa treatment offerings. Also on the rise are branded workouts; things like 'ploxing', pilates and boxing combined. This is a great marketing niche as it gets those who hate to breathe and stretch to do it all in one go, or at least in one class.

The other big trend you'll see is 'earthing' and more experiences that integrate earthing, from hiking trails and guided walks to design elements within the spa that provide earthing for short periods of time. Susie is the president of Spa Finder Wellness and chairman and CEO of Global Spa & Wellness Summit; she's travelled extensively in the name of spa, gathering first-hand information on how consumers worldwide are crying out for better health and wellness. The other trend she noted that will become a hot treatment offering is authentic Ayurveda. Where consumers have tried a little Shirodhara at their local spa, they will soon be craving more of the holistic Indian Ayurveda and detoxification regime. It's not

surprising spa-goers in the Western world are leaning toward this modality as it's steeped in tradition, being practiced for thousands of years in India. Check out The Raj in Iowa, USA, to see how they are doing it.

Speaking of vision, creativity and discipline, no-one better embodies this than the world-renowned spa godmother herself, Deborah Szekely who, at 90, spoke eloquently and wisely about her latest quest and challenge, "Wellness Warriors". For the MIND subject at ISPA, Deborah needs no introduction. As the founder and owner of Rancho La Puerta which began in 1940, Deborah is still campaigning for health and wellness, educating the masses and expanding her own and our minds at ISPA 2012. Her truly inspiring presentation on how we can all make a difference through education and awareness was so mindful. She's formed a lobbying mission from single individuals, like us, to community outreach, right up to the Federal Government in Washington. Deborah cited what we all know too well; that our world is "sick" — unwell, obese and in need of fitness, health and wellbeing. If you want to get on the "wellness warrior" bandwagon then go to [www.wellnesswarrior.org](http://www.wellnesswarrior.org) website and see how you can make a difference to help inspire the world to get well.

Where Deborah motivated us all to help and serve through our mind, Dr. Jordan Metzl, the athlete's highly recognised sports medicine doctor at New York City's Hospital for Special Surgery encouraged our interest in our BODY. Dr. Metzl spoke on "Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body, Keys to Optimising Physical and Mental Health". And what a great athlete Jordan is; fit and living his profession. Just keep your body moving and it will keep working for you; we all know it, we just have to employ discipline to keep it real. All of us in this "wellness" profession need to participate and help encourage exercise; it's the best medicine, says Dr. Metzl. He prescribes exercise and movement every day, and we all need to take it, seriously. Since Dr. Metzl's speciality is knees and hips; he says just keep walking, biking and working out. And to minimize impact on your joints and pain later just shorten your stride and take quicker, shorter steps. Even if you have an injury, even an old one, you still need to keep strengthening all the muscles around that injury to ultimately strengthen the "kinetic chain". You can order his book on Amazon; *The Athlete's Book of Home Remedies*.

From BODY we moved on to SPIRIT with an awe-inspiring photographic montage from Louis Schwartzberg, award-winning cinematographer, director and producer. Louis awakened our spirits with his presentation on gratitude from a nature-photographer's perspective. The patience this man possesses! Louis is best known for his time-lapse imagery, and we in the audience were so privileged to watch vignettes from Louis's vast portfolio. One

most arousing is his Honey Bea movie in “the hidden beauty of pollination” you can see on YouTube [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqsXc\\_aefKI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqsXc_aefKI)

And now a little re-cap of some US spa research; you can log into [www.experienceispa.com](http://www.experienceispa.com) to get the full-blown report. Anna Bjurstam gave us a bit of insight from past stats to some future predictions based on her analysis pulled from US spas that participated in the research. For a quick synopsis, fitness is up, wellness is in and personal training is a growing thing. Healthy food is becoming integrated into spas, with consumers seeking wellness and fitness and more education and cooking classes on how to “eat fit”. Pilates is still big, as is yoga, but combining it in one class is a growing brand. Boot camps, indoors and outside, is happening more. And branded dance and choreography combining workout routines with multiple fitness/ cardio workouts is on the rise. Ever heard of “Fen-Training”? If not, you will soon. Check out Madonna’s “Hard Candy” concept; she’s big in Moscow! Check out her website and much more on <http://www.hardcandyfitness.com/en/> And “beauty from within” is also on the move up, integrating anti-ageing concepts with naturopathy, herbal remedies and teas, raw foods, water bars etc.

Research in the US is also showing us that consumers change products frequently in search of something better and more fitting to their goals. Consumers also believe that “being beautiful is getting what they want in life”. They believe if they feel beautiful, they are beautiful and they look beautiful. And, not surprisingly, consumers like celebrity. As Susie Ellis mentioned earlier, there’s an upswing to the “healthy hotel and wellness-focused traveler”. Look for Westin Workout, Fairmount Fit, MGM Grand’s Stay Well Rooms with wake-up light therapy.

So to Australia. Ever heard of Peter Sheahan? Well, if you haven’t, you’re in for a big shake-up; he’s an over-energised Aussie boy fuelled and taking off in the USA. He was the closing speaker at ISPA, and what a force du jour. His key message was “change” and that he did; even while speaking he walked around the stage, jumped down onto the floor several times and came out into the audience just to keep us surprised. But his message

was so right-on. Peter has spent over ten years teaching businesses how to flip their thinking around and find opportunities just by approaching it differently. His company is appropriately named “Change Labs” and he’s the author of six books; two bestsellers, *Flip* and *Generation Y*. Talking about change; Peter sighted some intriguing stats, some you might already know and some for thought. Men are more profitable to your business than women. Men are more loyal. Smart people start in early; they’re early adopters. Move early and learn fast. He cites Kodak who lost market share while Fuji moved into LCDs, colour, cosmetics and even drugs; now that’s diversity! Peter says, “Change is slow until it isn’t”.

Take a look at a new age grocery delivery concept at the subway in Tokyo; you choose your food with your smart phone and it’s delivered to your door within three hours, home and ready for you to eat just after you arrive. Now that’s service!

Peter reminds us to suspend judgement and get perspective. There’s something out there he calls the “gravity of success” and it’s the differentiation to develop clear, compelling and unique value propositions and then deliver on them. Ponder on this awhile.

And thank you, Mr. Sheahan, for some of your closing statements “The second you discount you change the customer’s perception about your brand”. I know I beat this drum myself all too often, but he’s so right — don’t lower your brand value by being victimised by the discounters out there; they will chew you up and spit you out. You’ve taught your clients how to behave in your business; they are used to your value proposition so don’t devalue your business, your products and your services. And remember, the more you try to become everything to everyone, you become nothing to anyone. Know your niche and expand on it, develop it and serve it well.

You’re not alone in your quest to succeed in your business; there are so many resources available to assist you. One that I find truly inspiring is the international connection with ISPA; you can visit their website on [www.experienceispa.com](http://www.experienceispa.com) Statistics have it that the worst of the economy is over in the USA and spa visits and revenues are on the upswing, so let’s all stay informed and on target for a banner year in 2013! ■