

ISPA Conference 2015

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES

By Deborah Mangum Copelli



With the who's who of the world spa scene in attendance, ISPA 2015, themed appropriately "Explore", left no (hot) stones unturned. Held in mid-October in Las Vegas, from the Sunday afternoon pre-conference kick-off through to Wednesday night's farewell disco, there was an impressive three-and-a-half day line-up of expert industry speakers on the General Session stage and throughout the daily Professional Development breakouts. International spa and beauty tradeshow exhibitors graced the convention floor while sponsored relaxation lounges featured personalised guest treatments, experiences, and new product demonstrations. Marrying high tech with touch, ISPA 2015 excited all the senses and challenged our grey matter with science and research to provide evidence in support of our integrative spa and wellness industry.

Randi Zuckerberg, former Facebook marketing executive, beamed onto the first General Session, like the Broadway performer she's recently become,

to enthrall us with her exposé on the hottest trends on Facebook now. As you read these, note that some have probably already changed, as the social media landscape is the fastest moving topography in history. Randi's new book, "Dot Complicated", gets right into the specifics of "untangling our wired lives" and is a highly recommended read. The following is Randi's trend list from which you can take away some great ideas for your salon or spa.

Trend 1: "The age of the entre-ployee"; a made-up name of course, but with good reason, to value your greatest assets, your employees. Listen to your employees and give them a platform to create and get involved in their own passions as well as yours, within the framework of your business. You could throw a before- or after-hours "thinkathon" where your staff can brainstorm great ideas for marketing, operations, product development, client services or similar to engage them and make them a part of the company's culture.

Trend 2: "Think like a media company"; if you've got a social media account then people come to you for content, so make sure your social media message is consistent with your brand because your followers expect it. And if you're not on Facebook, why aren't you? That's where you will attract new clients and keep them engaged with your brand.

Trend 3: "Connections are currency"; things like tweets and Instagram photos will become a form of payment. In London a pop-up restaurant lets guests post meal photos to waive their bill; they realise the value of their customers' followers and what that can do for their brand marketing.

Trend 4: "Reinventing retail"; Sydney hotelier, 1888, lets guests stay for free if they have 30,000 Instagram followers. "Pay-as-you-will" restaurants are becoming popular. Vending machines selling Chanel handbags and Havanas are appearing in shopping malls.

Trend 5: Turn FOMO into JOMO; the “fear of missing out” is when you see all your friends post about all the fun they have. Randi reminded us that we are all good marketers and that we can turn FOMO into JOMO, the “joy of missing out” which is, “there is nowhere I’d rather be than where I am right now.”

Trend 6: “The maker movement”; like 3D printing, which is positioned to become a multi-billion dollar industry in just a few years. This includes printing attachable, functional human ears, entire wardrobes for travel, edible noodles, and even a whole house. And how about virtual reality for curing PTSD and phobias? The possibilities are endless!

Trend 7: “Life-logging” is recording every aspect of a person’s life; the narrative clip is a new wearable device that can take and store a photo automatically every 30 seconds. Better examples include health-tracking devices, children tracking and even a countdown to the end of your life (really?) See the Tikker app.

Trend 8: “New frontier education and health care” is also thankfully a growing trend with increasing teaching content online on the advances in medicine, with “telemedicine” facilitating ultrasounds, and water testing for people across the world.

Trend 9: “Gamification” - for motivation, have an alarm that charges your credit card every time you hit snooze instead of getting up and going to the gym, and exercise bikes that power laundry machines so you can multi-task when single-focusing.

Trend 10: “Unplug to Refresh”; the best trend of all, being digital detoxing. Turn it off and put it out of sight because even silent mobiles are stealing your alpha brain waves. Some hotels and businesses are now promoting the absence of wi-fi as a selling point, unthinkable a few years ago. Tongue in cheek, Zuckerberg’s advice: “You only live once, so be sure to spend 15 hours a day on the internet desperately seeking the validation of strangers!”

Next on stage was the “Doctor who Walks the Talk”; Dr Pamela Peeke, renowned as a triathlete, a former research scientist with N.I.H. on nutrition and metabolism and Professor at the University of Maryland Medical School. Dr. Peeke and her colleagues’ latest and most profound discoveries are around epigenetics. Technically speaking, epigenetics are the chemical reactions that activate and de-activate parts of a genome at strategic times and in specific locations within our DNA. Epigenetics is the study of these chemical reactions and the factors that influence them.

As we know, we are all made up of DNA, which is our genetic map and the instructions from which our body is





built. Our DNA code does not change throughout our lifetime, but the epi-genomes are flexible and changeable and react to signals from the outside, like stress on the downside, or like meditation and exercise on the upside. And the good news is that your DNA is not your destiny; you can change your genome messaging by how you think, believe, act, react, eat, drink, move, and sleep. And now we have the science to back it up, thanks to Dr Peeke and colleagues with their mission to educate people on the importance of what she humorously refers to as, “mind, mouth and muscle”.

Your brain circuitry is always there, but you can learn and develop healthy new habits that physically grow your grey matter just by doing something as simple as learning a different language, walking more, taking up tai chi, looking at beautiful nature scenes and meditating. And if you're already flying the flag for wellness, then Dr. Peeke has some great tips on how to maximise your social media platform to get the word out on your brand. You can find out more on these and other epigenetic studies by visiting <http://www.drpeeke.com>

If it was motivation you were after, the conference duly impressed with speakers like Amy Purdy, the 2014 Paralympic bronze medallist, author, clothing designer and former spa professional. Amy engaged the audience as she told of her life-altering experience having both legs amputated below her knees. But Amy just got on with things, achieving goals that most would find hard to accomplish. And just three months after a kidney transplant, she entered the USASA National Snowboarding Competition where she took home medals in all events.

The closing day's general session was enhanced with the delightfully energetic Scott Harrison, who's on a mission to find water to quench the thirsts of the developing world. Scott's 'charity:water' foundation is a not-for-profit enterprise focusing on the global water crisis and the world's huge population without clean water to drink.

Scott's gone from being a NYC nightclub promoter and model with “no conscience”, to selling his Rolex, Boss and Gucci's and joining a hospital ship off the coast of Liberia, West Africa where he volunteered as a photojournalist for two years.

Scott is now recognized in *Fortune*, *Forbes* and *Fast Company* magazines as one of the most creative entrepreneurs under 40 doing philanthropic work to help save the world from dehydration and disease.

In eight short years, with the help of over 500,000 donors worldwide, 'charity:water' has raised over \$150 million and funded over 13,000 water well projects in 24 countries. When finished, those projects will provide over 4.4 million people with clean, safe, drinking water; no small feat indeed. If you and/or your business want to get involved, visit charity:water.com

Education was also key this conference with Professional Development breakouts off to an early start. Taking over the mike were presenters like Darlene Fiske, reminding us that 'Public Relations and the Art of Vintage Networking' was still popular. While still very young; Darlene is old school when it comes to manners. She's a proponent of 'thank-you notes' and encourages others to write them too, and/or go even further and send a cookie or other treat. Make a personal phone call to your clients. Don't forget their Birthdays. Tweet someone something nice. Host educational evenings with guest speakers; make your most loyal clients feel appreciated. Words matter, so talk to them and most importantly, listen to them.

Andrea Foster of PKF consulting had some statistics to share at her session on Spa and Wellness: Driving the Opportunity in Hospitality.

To summarise, spa and wellness have a huge opportunity just now, as the largest available population of baby boomers have more time on their hands in retirement, the economy is stronger, hotel occupancy rates and demand are up, guests are interested in lifestyle, education, and programs to enhance longevity, people are seeking a sharing and caring environment, and the



LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Pamela Peeke, Scott Harrison, Randi Zuckerberg, Amy Purdy.

age management | FEATURE

shifting spa perception toward wellness is a more positive inclusive offering. Some stats from Spafinder Wellness and GSWS include; wellness tourism and travel are growing with an expected growth of nine per cent annually. People are seeking healthier hotels with customised healthy food. By 2030, 80 per cent of people will live in urban settings; there is greater revenue in urban spas and resorts.

Women are living longer than men with wealth and education shifting to women. In 30 years, 60 per cent of households could be single. There is an increasing sense of 'aloneness' from demographic shifts, urbanisation and technology. Wellness experiences are on the rise with most spas now offering focused programs for guests including guided meditation, lifestyle coaching, naturopathy, acupuncture, tai-chi and more. And for hotels with no spa there is an increase in specific wellness programs.

Heather Lutz presented a dynamic, fast-paced demonstration on 'Social Media Productivity Tools: The Cure of Social Media Overload' with her take-away message to get online if you're not already, and expand to each and every platform, especially Pinterest, because that's where most women go.

Be sure you are tapped into what your clients want; satisfy their needs, not yours. Do surveys on Survey Monkey and reward your clients for participating. Be social on social media and let your clients in on the latest trends; engage them and offer them something to discover. Include YouTube videos in your website, make it involving and sharable. Ask people to follow you on your Facebook business page. Include lots of pictures of your spa, reception, and guests enjoying themselves and relaxing.

The more you socialise on social media the more people will like you and engage in your brand and products. Be very findable; research yourself



on search engines and make sure you and your business are available. Respond to your critics in a timely way and get them back into your spa or salon quickly. Kittens and puppies might not seem very spa-ish but they get followers on social media very quickly. Share your 'wow' moments and if you don't have time to manage your social media, hire a professional to do it for you.

ISPA 2015 'Explore' was an information-packed, rich and varied international conference, that ended with the promise that next September, ISPA 2016, will be even more rewarding. Therefore start planning your trip to Vegas now by visiting experienceispa.com. ■
Visit copelli@bigpond.com
