

European Spa

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ASPEN INSPIRATION
Innovation through
imagination at GSWS 2012

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GREEN SPACES
Take a tour through some
inspired garden designs



Mountains and meadows

'Innovation through Imagination' was the theme of the Global Spa & Wellness Summit 2012. European Spa finds a wealth of industry inspiration in Aspen Colorado



[Report by Sarah Camilleri]

Nestled in the heart of the majestic Rocky Mountains, The Aspen Institute, a renowned leadership retreat campus in the ski resort of Aspen, proved to be an inspired location for this year's Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS).

The Summit, held in June, brought together 325 delegates representing 40 nations to share intelligence on a wide range of global health and lifestyle dynamics, which had been identified as influencing and shaping the future of the global spa and wellness industries.

Intriguingly billed *Innovation Through Imagination*, the Summit offered an energetic three-day conference

programme, carefully constructed by the 12-strong international GSWS Board, who gave their time to ensure the right mix of topics and speakers was achieved. Expertly Co-Chaired by Susie Ellis, Philippe Bourguignon and Richard Dusseau, who, with the support of the Board and The Aspen Institute, provided delegates with the opportunity to engage in and learn from a vast array of conference speaker sessions, seminars, networking events and breakout groups. Each day was selectively themed to provide specific intelligence, under the titles: Imagination, Innovation and Industry.

Notably, the content of this Summit took a refreshingly 'bigger picture' approach; highlighting



the ever more complex geopolitical and economic challenges driving a global need for new, successful preventative healthcare models in the future. Many presentations explored the pandemic escalation of preventable health issues and disease, driven by obesity and lifestyle choices. These are intrinsically meshed and exacerbated by the world population explosion, as well as by the unprecedented consumption of natural resources including water, fossil fuels and minerals, fed by insatiable consumer demand and globalisation.

Space to think

Founded in 1950 by Chicago businessman Walter Paepcke and his wife Elizabeth, The Aspen Institute is now renowned worldwide for its work developing the leadership skills of countless individuals, including presidents, statesmen, diplomats, judges, ambassadors and Nobel laureates who have influenced and shaped the world in many significant ways.

The Institute's mission is twofold: to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues.

Over three days, GSWS delegates were able to appreciate the tranquil Bauhaus-styled campus, which almost belied its powerhouse reputation for catalysing exceptional thinking. Spread out across landscaped meadows, surrounded by a crown of mountains, this place perfectly epitomises the spirit of the Summit.

Spirit and sharing

The first day set a blistering pace for the Summit programme with a fascinating line up of keynote speakers. Aspen Institute's Executive Vice President of Operations, Amy Margerum, welcomed delegates to the Aspen Institute. She shared its history and vision – to bring people together to think about the latest advances in wellness and society and for that to translate to people's daily lives.

Next up, a warm opening address from Pete Ellis, CEO of SpaFinder Wellness and Chairman of the GSWS Board, reminded delegates that the aim of the Summit is one of shared purpose rather than individual gain. He urged delegates to put aside personal business goals and appreciate time together away from everyday life to share ideas and create "some new music" for our industry.

Clockwise from top left: Pete Ellis, Chairman of the GSWS Board, welcomes delegates; The Aspen Institute, Colorado; delegates network between speakers; Philippe Bourguignon, Vice Chairman Revolution Places & CEO Exclusive Resorts, US; Yamuna Zake, Sarah Brightwood, Deborah Szekeley and JoAnn Kurtz-Ahlers together on Aspen Mountain for a celebration cocktail reception and dinner sponsored by Thermarium; actress Mariah Hemingway, granddaughter of Ernest Hemingway, talking about wellness trends; delegates take the GSWS Innovation Walk between seminars through the Aspen Institute meadow; keynote speaker the Governor of Colorado, John Hickenlooper

▷ **Clockwise from top left:** Keynote John Kao provides some musical inspiration; Amy Margerum, Aspen Institute; Steve Kass, American Leisure with Michel Gras, Thalgo; Dr Daniel Friedland, SuperSmarthHealth, with Nader Vasseghi, Self Optima, and Roberto Arjona of Rancho La Puerta. **Below:** Susie Ellis, President of SpaFinder Wellness



View from the top

Susie Ellis, President of SpaFinder Wellness and Board Member of the GSWS, gives us her top takeaways

This year's theme, *Innovation through Imagination*, was spot on. The entire event reached a higher level of conversation thanks to discussions about larger global and geopolitical issues from speakers including Philippe Bourguignon and former President of Costa Rica Jose María Figueres-Olsen. The emphasis this year on innovation was perfectly timed, as it really is the most important focus for the industry.

A surprise discovery was learning that one of the key factors in sparking imagination, creativity and, ultimately, innovation is a state of reduced stress – the very thing our industry does best. I feel it warrants some thought and discussion on how we might be able to educate, incorporate and take advantage of this unique and important contribution as the world focuses on innovation as a key driver for the future.

Partnerships, collaboration and initiatives are always important. Already there are several underway: efforts to benchmark industry numbers via cooperation with technology companies; a group getting together for the purpose of legitimising wellness; and an ongoing discussion regarding spa education curriculum development and improving industry/education connections.

I am also excited about creating a virtual version of this Summit and future Summits so we can make them available to many more people.



Watching the moon

Fuelling the imagination, GSWS's Co-Chair Philippe Bourguignon's presentation 'Understand the World or Imagine the World?' took delegates on a personal journey back to his first visit to Aspen in 1979.

Bourguignon, who is also Vice Chairman of Revolution Places and CEO of Exclusive Resorts, then fast-forwarded to 2050 using geo-political trends to paint a graphic picture of how the world might look in 40 years' time. He pictured a scenario where climate change, mass unemployment, the failure of traditional economic models and the diminishing influence of the super powers we recognise today would impact on every aspect of our lives.

He also pointed out that by 2050 there will be two billion more people on the planet, with the vast majority of them living in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This alone, he said, will present huge demographic challenges, from food supply to immigration.

Bourguignon anchored this thought back to spa industry developments by asking delegates to consider how these many forces could, in fact, catalyse an increasing need for people to focus on improving wellness.

All that jazz

The imagination baton was passed to keynote speaker John Kao, billed as an Innovation Activist, who is the author of several notable publications, including *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity* and *Innovation Nation, US*. Kao has built a notable reputation as a leading thinker on large scale innovation.

Tinkling the ivories of a beautiful Steinway concert piano, he deftly demonstrated how the disciplines of jazz musicality could successfully be applied to the creative thinking process. He asked his audience to consider how they could turn the spa experience inside out and make the transition from 'pampering' to 'meaning'.

He also asked delegates to contemplate how to make the spa experience sustainable, accessible and more relevant in future, particularly to younger generations and across cultural boundaries.

Future healthcare models

The opportunity to listen to Dr Richard Carmona, 17th US Surgeon General and Vice Chairman of Canyon Ranch, was a highlight of GSWS. His fast, knowledgeable presentation 'Pursuit of Global Health and Wellness: The Value Proposition of the

▷ **Clockwise from top:** Dr Richard Carmona, 17th Surgeon General & Vice Chairman, Canyon Ranch, with Dr Kavita Patel of the Brookings Institute, US; Deborah Szekely, Founder, Rancho La Puerta & The Golden Door; Dr Daniel Friedland, Medical Director at Barney & Barney and Founder & CEO of SuperSmartHealth



Summit inspiration

A round up of the Summit's most useful business-enhancing ideas...

● Spas as Telomere Health Centres

The latest pioneering research into Telomeres, the caps of our chromosomes, shows they can indicate a person's 'cellular age', and predict diseases like cancer and heart disease. As telomere testing launches to the general population in the next year, the positive impact spa and wellness therapies can have on telomere health could become a major industry opportunity.

● Mental wellness and happiness

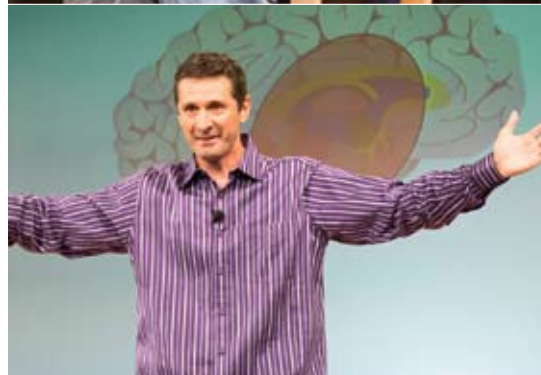
With the 'science of happiness' being an increasingly hot topic, spas have fresh opportunities in combating stress and promoting mental wellness. Until now spas have been perceived as places of escape. Now a new opportunity is becoming apparent to present them as places that promote brain performance and creativity.

● Wellness coaching

Medical studies show coaching is the superior model to traditional health education to elicit long-term behavioural change. Integrating wellness coaching represents a major, logical industry opportunity, but spas need to rewire their traditionally short-term thinking to focus on long-term client results.

● Employee wellness

With employer-provided healthcare costs spiraling out of control and hundreds of studies showing employee wellness programmes reduce costs and boost productivity, two in three larger businesses worldwide now offer a formal employee wellness strategy. Spas are a very natural fit as centres to promote workplace wellness, but need to better communicate their total health-focused packages, for example massage, fitness, meditation, yoga, nutritional counselling, and so on.



Future', delivered an incredibly detailed picture of the US health crisis and of the economics associated with treating disease caused directly by preventable behaviour.

According to Carmona, three in four people requiring medical care in the US are suffering from self-inflicted disease and poor health as a direct result of smoking, poor nutrition and obesity, which he cited as "the greatest accelerator of poor health ever known."

Although these were specifically US figures, they were poignant to all attending, who could draw comparisons with the growing obesity crisis engulfing the western world and beyond.

Dr Carmona completed his talk with a call to action, asking delegates to consider the crucial role the spa and wellness industry can play in the future as a major player in transformational health.

"The spa industry has this wonderful organisation, globally, and it's growing every year; it's getting stronger – the platform is set," he stated. "We need to imagine a different world where we can drive the policy, based on best practices. We can do that. The solutions are what you do every day," he concluded.

Brain management

Dr Daniel Friedland, Medical Director at Barney & Barney, and Founder and CEO of SuperSmartHealth, provided an energetic presentation entitled 'Let's Neurovate: Know Your Brain to Imagine and Innovate', which was a fascinating tour of the human brain and how it responds to stress.

He highlighted how stress and chronic stress not only inhibit our creative abilities, but take their toll on the entire body. He described the different areas used by the brain to perform divergent and convergent thinking and how these can be shut down by exposure to everyday stress.

Friedland also asked delegates to consider the intriguing role that spas could play in helping to give people tools and strategies to manage stress, and so improve their performance, health and happiness.

Telomeres: the new frontier?

Championing new frontiers on pioneering cell health, keynote speaker Dr Elissa Epel, Co-Founder of Telome Health, who works with Nobel Laureate in Medicine Dr Elizabeth Blackburn, gave a fascinating presentation on telomeres and what they can reveal ▷

▷ Clockwise from top left:
Dr Elissa Epel, Co-Founder of
Telome Health; Ted Souder, Google's
Head of Industry & Retail; Jose
Maria Figueres-Olsen, President of
the Carbon War Room & Former
President of Costa Rica; Martha
Wiedemann of Badrutts Palace
Hotel, Switzerland and Lucie
Brousseau of Relais Santé, Canada,
with John and Karina Stewart of
Kamalaya Koh Samui, Thailand



Summit inspiration

More business-boosting ideas

● Harness technological advances

Opportunities in the new worlds of wellness gaming and gadgets were a hot topic, from biometric monitoring devices to mobile apps. Spas were urged to improve their online engagement, from embracing social media, including platforms like Pinterest, to encouraging their guests to 'check-in' on Facebook or foursquare. They were also urged to create educational YouTube videos of their facilities, treatments and products and ensure that online booking is easy.

● Create sustainable health solutions

The latest research described willpower as a limited brain resource, therefore spas may need to rethink their regime-changing programmes, particularly for weight loss. Using the latest techniques in self-control science they were urged to remove temptations, not over-tax client decision-making and implement mindfulness programmes to achieve truly sustainable health changes.

● Reach out to youth

The industry was asked to focus far more on children and teens, given that lifestyle behaviours, such as diet and exercise, begin cementing by age two. A global childhood obesity surge is underway. There are currently 155 million overweight adults and 45 million obese children worldwide. Spas have an untapped opportunity to create more youth programming specifically focused on developing positive wellness habits.

● Call in the community

Medical experts explained how loneliness is at an unprecedented level, and how isolation can lead to serious health problems and early mortality. Spas have a natural opportunity, as trusted places of 'touch', to address this problem, but haven't yet capitalised on their potential as places of true community.

about our biological age and future health prospects. She explained that telomeres, an unfamiliar term for many present, are the buffers, or caps, found on the ends of the 23 sets of chromosomes in human DNA. They protect our chromosomes' ends from deterioration, from fusing with others, or 'rearranging' – all abnormalities that can lead to cancer.

Referring to these chromosome 'caps' as 'Clocks of Life' she revealed that they can give a true reflection of biological age, as opposed to chronological age. She also shared some of the latest unpublished research work that demonstrates how telomere length will serve in the future as a powerful predictor of cell ageing, pending disease and even early mortality.

She also revealed that healthy-living behaviours like stress-reduction, exercise, meditation and good nutrition may work as crucial interventions in improving telomere health, making this a fascinating new frontier for spa and wellness providers to consider.

Moments that matter

Google's Ted Souder, Head of Industry & Retail, gave an excellent presentation called 'Make Technology Work for You', tracking the technological revolution and how these advances in technology can be used to positively influence

the spa guest's experience. He asked delegates to consider how they were engaging with their customers through technology at every stage of the spa journey "to create moments that matter".

He also highlighted how important it is for delegates to engage with their teams. Are they encouraged, at whatever level, to communicate ideas to innovate business? He used the Google business model to highlight the importance of utilising every person in a company in order to gather more creative suggestions, make better decisions and help the business grow bigger, faster.

Finally, he reminded us that technology is cheaper than it has ever been, stating: "The cost has never been lower. The ease has never been easier. This is a fabulous time, even with challenging economic conditions all over the world. Use it to build better relationships with your customers."

Souder concluded: "As an industry, we're feverishly trying to figure out how to be liked. You, as a business, should be trying to figure that out as well. It's about economic value. Can [potential clients] find you easily? Can they navigate your site easily? The data [that technology can provide] helps you understand that, so you can provide a more robust experience for your customer."

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▷ **Clockwise from top:** Student Challenge winners from the University of Denver; Sonu Shivdasani, Founder of Six Senses Resorts & Spas and Chairman and CEO of Soneva; GSWS 2013 is to be held in India; Charlene Florian, Vice President of Creative Development at Kerstin Florian International, US



Young innovators

Winners of the 'Spa of the Future' Student Challenge announced

Each year at the GSWS, a selection of universities are invited to submit designs for the most innovative and potentially profitable spa of the future. Student teams are responsible for developing all the conceptual and financial details of their project, and are then assigned a professional architect to bring their ideas to life.

Taking top honours from participating US universities this year were students from the University of Denver who won US\$1,000 for 'Defiant!', a spa for teenage girls that rejects the typical "pampering-patronizing-pink-and-sparkly-manicure" teen spa model to tackle the emotional, physical and social needs of real girls.

Cornell University came second with its 'Mente Spa & Studio', which reimagines the "body-focused" gym as a sanctuary of social and intellectual engagement. Coming joint-third were Penn State University, whose students created a greenhouse concept, marrying intense sustainability practices with a "southern hospitality" approach, and the University of Houston, whose team proposed 'ModerNature', a social spa, revolving around principles from the Slow Movement.

The panel of judges were: Thanisr Chaturongkul, CFO, Chiva Som; Adrian Egger, Managing Director, Spa Division, KLAFS; Christopher Norton, Chair, Global Spa Task Force, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts and Niamh O'Connell, VP, Spa Operations, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts.

Next year, when the Summit moves to India, top universities from across the Asian region will be invited to compete in the 2013 Student Challenge.

Water of life

In a GSWS programme where all speakers deserve mention for their excellent contributions, as well as the many delegates who contributed in daily breakout sessions, I must give the last word to Charlene Florian, Vice President of Creative Development at Kerstin Florian International US, and the Founder of Six Senses Resorts & Spas and Chairman and CEO of Soneva, Sonu Shivdasani, whose words particularly resonated with me.

Bringing the whole Summit back to spas' source, Florian asked delegates to reflect on the power and possibilities of water, and our duty as an industry to explore its healing potential and protect it as a precious resource.

Shivdasani followed Florian with a sober reminder that, today, nearly one billion people do not have access to clean drinking water, yet, ironically, the hotel industry is shipping branded bottled water around the world for hotel and resort guests. Announcing a new initiative called 'THE-Water Campaign', he said: "If we sell our own water in reusable bottles and donate 10 per cent of the proceeds, we can really reduce the world's water crisis. As hoteliers, spas and restaurateurs, our industry can help solve this problem if we really get behind it."

He played a video message from Richard Branson, who is also supporting the THE-Water Campaign, which promotes the use of on-site, triple filtered tap water served in reusable glass bottles as a more responsible alternative. Hotels signing up to the scheme will be asked to contribute 10 per cent of sales from this water, which will be distributed to a number of chosen water charities worldwide.

Shivdasani revealed that if all 10 of the world's largest hotel groups joined the scheme and donated the water sales of 4.3 million hotel rooms collectively, this could generate a staggering US\$955 million (£614 million/€780 million) a year to pass on to water charities.



For more about THE-Water Campaign, and how your business can get involved, turn to page 98.

STOP PRESS: India to host GSWS 2013

In 2013 the GSWS moves to India, one of the ancient 'spiritual homes' of the global wellness movement, and also one of the fastest-growing economies, technology sectors and spa industries. Dates and the exact venue will be announced in the coming months. www.globalspaandwellnesssummit.org