

## Perfect Balance: American Spa Expo 2006

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“A Perfect Balance of Wellness, Body & Business” was the theme for the 2006 **American Spa Expo** presented April 30-May 2 at the Jacob Javits Center in New York. Co-located with the International Beauty Show (“IBS”), American Spa Expo is regarded as the premier East Coast event for the spa and skincare industry professionals, attracting more than 50,000 international buyers, owner/operators, educators and journalists in search of educational programs, technology, equipment, amenities, products, services and venues for this rapidly-growing spa industry.

Since revenues for medical spas are estimated to reach over \$400 million and growing, American Spa debuted a new component to its 2006 venue: the Medical Spa Pavilion. Dana Lupton, show director, IBS New York and American Spa Expo noted: “Three conference tracks were dedicated to medical spa development for physicians, operations basics for day spas and the management and marketing of luxury resort spas.” The Medical Spa Pavilion showcased the latest medical spa treatments, products and equipment for popular services such as botox injections, facial rejuvenation, microdermabrasion, laser hair removal, etc.

During the three-day show, more than 150 skill-building educational classes were offered to attendees in tracks of Medical Spa Development, Day Spa Basics, Luxury Resort.Spa, Manufacturer Classes, presenting intensive and specialized classes in spa business practices, critical development issues, owner success stories and revenue management.

Groundbreaking territory was carved with the program, **Spirituality in Spas: Hitting the Social Radar** by Peter Anderson, CEO, Anderson & Associates. Anderson quipped as he began his presentation: “It’s taken me 20 years to get here, and it’s had nothing to do with United Airlines’ on-time departures!”

Anderson mused about his initial studies in the field during graduate work, which “have taken the market that long to cross paths”. Anderson holds a Masters of Professional Studies from Cornell University School of Hotel Administration and a Bachelors of Arts in Psychological Basis of Behavior from the University of Pennsylvania. He sits on the Board of Advisors for the UC Irvine’s Medical Spa Management program where he is also an instructor. Adjunct faculty member at California Polytechnic University’s Hospitality program in Pomona, California, Anderson is a regular guest lecturer at Cornell University and certified Reiki Master.

Anderson observed: “Spas are rapidly morphing from a place to obtain outer beauty to an environment to attain inner peace. One of the final hurdles in that quest is the market’s ability to acknowledge and then define its relationship with spirituality. Spirituality by its very mention is a potentially volatile concept, open to misinterpretation and personal bias.” Identifying global market-based issues related to spirituality during the presentation, Anderson explored the difference between *spirituality* and *religion*.

Anderson examined *the demographic winds* behind this movement and discussed the spa market's attitude regarding spirituality as well as defined opportunities and identified pitfalls relating to increasing market share through the incorporation of spirituality in spa programming. From inside/out perspectives of veteran spa users, new spa goers, individual spa operators, and major spa and resort chains (Starwood, Canyon Ranch, Red Mountain Spa), Anderson's presentation also shared a case study from Glen Ivy Spa.

John C. Gray, CEO of Glen Ivy Spa, evaluated the conference: "I took four senior management to this conference to keep abreast of developments in the industry and become aware of new trends. It was my first time at this conference and I felt its themes were innovative. It touched upon residential spas and lifestyle projects. Peter Anderson took an initial poke into a new field that is emerging for spas: Spirituality. He was brave to do it, but it was well presented within the context of its implications for business."

Gray continues: "We are in the wellness business. We are selling the experience. The more dimensions of that experience we can assist our guests to resource, the more value our services will provide our guests. We are enhancing peoples' sense of their bodies, and part of that experience is the atmosphere."

"I think there is a general search for a deep sense of well being among people everywhere and there are many sources of the perception of well being. The spiritual is one of the important ones for which there is an openness and interest among the general public to embrace some elements. We need to make a distinction between spirituality and being religious. The spiritual is such an important topic for spa business of the future because it is such an important part of peoples' lifestyles and their sense of self. And it is integral to embrace in the corporate culture of spa practitioners. It was useful to Peter's presentation that he had some hard data from real survey work."

Charlotte Wytias, Manager of the Integrated Health Department, The Springs of Clifton, at Clifton Springs Hospital in Clifton, New York estimated the session's value for her colleague cosmetologist and herself as a manager as she also recalled Jimmy Carter's recent book, *Our Endangered Values*: "There's a difference between *living* your values which is a spiritual thing and trying to *force* your values. The values here give meaning for our lives. It is what gives the business its lifeblood. Otherwise, you have a situation like Enron! All aspects of our being have to be addressed if we want to be healthy."

Wytias continues: "Medicine and health care is totally changing...Formerly, doctors and nurses were not allowed to talk about our faith and what gives our lives meaning. Our basic values are spiritually based. I think Peter did a beautiful job in capturing that."

In 1999, Faith Popcorn wrote about trends in spirituality: "Pick-your-own religions will become the new status quo." Anderson views this trend as one of the parallel tools for self care. Imaging the spa as the new town hall, community center or "secular" church, Anderson concludes: "Spas are coming out of the closet and presenting revenue opportunities for the right spa in the right market with the right mix of clientele."

A concern with spirituality is right on target. Madeleine Albright just published her thoughts on the subject: *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God and World Affairs*.