

The True Magic: Supporting Spa Employees

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It is easy to evaluate spa and wellness practices in hospitality from a consumer-facing perspective. Obvious touch points include unique treatments, high thread counts, and inviting environments. However, this is all for naught if supporting your employees is not an integral part of supporting your customers' needs.

Having exceptional employees requires transcending the traditional hiring steps of recruiting, interviewing, orienting, and training. It also requires deeper technical and emotional investments. However, some companies fall short when it comes to creating ways to nourish their employees. I do not use the word "nourish" in a hyperbolic sense, but rather literally, as you cannot expect more from your employees than you are willing to give to them.



Polite social contact between the front desk clerk and a customer checking into your hotel is easily managed. However, when that same client is naked on a massage table, their expectations and vulnerability can be heightened, and it is the therapist's job to support that process. How can your therapist support a client's needs if your company doesn't support the therapist first? Nurturing is not a daily tick on a manager's to-do list, but rather an ongoing process of communicating and interacting. For this to be successful, it must be part of the corporate culture.

In the wellness space, the intangibles can be as important as the treatments offered. Customers come to spas to be taken care of, and however superficial or profound those expectations are, it is the job of the therapist to be available to respond appropriately. For that reason, connection and healing should be part of the brand promise. Guests expect wellness team members (therapists, administrators, and support staff) to make good on the brand's promise. Much of that starts with how those employees are treated by management.

Thus, it is important to create a corporate culture that embraces and elevates each employee so that they have the tools to do the same for their customers. Focus, intent, and day-to-day actions work together to create a healing environment. **Bill Marriott** said it first and best: "Take good care of your employees, and they'll take good care of your customers, and the customers will come back."

Summary

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As an example, the Senior Vice President of Spas and Wellness of a global hotel chain once required all of her therapists to have breakfast before they started their shift. She also required all her spas to provide breakfast for their staff. The message was clear: We will take care of you so you can take care of our guests.

The ability to provide flawless treatment lies with your employees. So, as you refine your standard operating procedures and rewrite service delivery scripts, it is prudent to look at your day-to-day operations. Does the corporate culture support, enhance, and elevate the individual employee? While the guest-facing perspective may be enhanced with state-of-the-art facilities, beautiful surroundings, and impeccable service standards, the true magic of it all lies in the employee-facing culture.

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About **Peter Anderson**



Peter Anderson, a Managing Director and Wellness Consulting Practice Leader for HVS, is a veteran of the hospitality, wellness, and leisure industries. During his multi-decade consulting career, he has assisted with the development and programming for resorts, hotels, and spa/lifestyle communities. His expertise includes developing strategic operating plans, renovation programs, and branding strategies ultimately resulting in enhanced operations and stakeholder profitability. In his work for clients, Peter evaluates industry trends, their related revenue sources, and their economic viability. He has conducted multiple engagements that required detailed and integrated knowledge of market analysis, real estate valuation, and lifestyle trends. Contact Peter at (303) 554-9766 or [\[email protected\]](#).