

In pursuit of excellence

European Spa reports from the sixth annual Forum HOTel&SPA event

[Report by Jean-Guy de Gabriac]

On June 20, this year's European rendezvous for the top-end hotel and spa sectors saw 150 Forum HOTel&SPA speakers and delegates gather at the city's elegant Four Seasons George V to consider the topic of 'excellence'.

With spa and hotel professionals converging from as far afield as Italy, Israel, France, Cameroon, Morocco, USA, Germany and Austria, event organiser Vladi Kovanic had promised a personalised and active day of networking and socialising. "Forum HOTel&SPA is my baby and I work very hard to 'deliver' it better every year," she said. "I think it is important to allow industry professionals to meet in person and not just 'virtually'.

Guest of honour Pierre Bord, general manager of Hotel Negresco (France) said that "excellence is a state of mind," advising that to achieve excellence, one must have discipline, humility and the ability to change.

Frank Marrenbach, managing director of Brenners Park Hotel & Spa and CEO of Oetker Hotel Management, stated that "most hotel spas have become standard hotel elements – experience-driven, but no longer with a USP," and he urged delegates to "provide a strong enough reason to visit and make your spa the only choice".

Beauty and service

Inspired by her father's treatment of cancer patients, Daniele de Winter told how she developed the InsideOut Beauty cosmetics line, combining drinks and nutraceuticals to stimulate cellular regeneration, encouraging the audience to "eat yourself beautiful".

Susanne Kraus-Winkler, managing partner of Loisium Hotel Development (Austria) said she had witnessed an evolution in the role of spa reception, with spa butlers and pre/post treatment service increasingly enhancing the guest's journey.

She also emphasised the importance of making spas more eco-friendly, integrating new lifestyle formats, and understanding new media's influence on spa marketing. Kraus-Winkler affirmed that as well as excellent technical skills, aestheticians and massage therapists must develop great social skills to be able to better recommend treatments and wellness programmes.

Keeping it simple

Highlighting the widespread adoption of reliable key performance indicators, Roger Allen, managing director of Thermarium Spa Management, urged the audience to adopt KIS (Keep It Simple) performance ratios in order to, for instance, identify staff members who are key revenue drivers or optimise spa utilisation. With hotel and asset managers now having a much greater understanding of spas, he urged consultants to be more financially transparent to their clients.

Sleeping out

In a break-out session, Clare Guss-West, founder of Swiss-based Holistic Wellbeing and Spa Consulting offered practical ways to implement a Deep Sleep program at spas.

Far from being soporific, Clare captured the attention of the audience when explaining that 75% of the factors leading to a longer life are lifestyle-based, with just 25% genetically determined.

This information positions spas as the best place to go "beyond detox" in order to boost one's immune system through higher-quality sleep. She guided attendees into a hypnotic, deliciously revitalising five-minute qigong routine which felt like being immersed in a pool of refreshing energy!

A study of improvement

The findings of an exclusive study for Forum HOTel&SPA were delivered at the event, offering seven strategies and secrets to achieve excellence in hotel spa operations.

The data was rich in examples, illustrating how to micro-motivate staff; enhance e-reputation and implement power-booking; how to maximise a spa's visibility with creativity, consistency and subtlety; how to achieve granular customer relationship management and monitor the net promoters score of your clients, as well as the motivation of your team.

The seventh Forum HOTel&SPA is scheduled to be held on June 19, 2014 at the Four Seasons Hotel George V Paris. For more information visit www.forumhotspa.com



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1. Organiser Vladi Kovanic with Louis de Vilmorin of Guerlain Spas
2. Jean-Guy de Gabriac of Tip Touch International
3. Award winners, from left, Isabelle Gobbo, Alla Sokolova, Sophie Levy and Fabrizio Palmitessa with 2012 Black Diamond Award recipient Valérie Dalmayrac
4. 2013 Black Diamond Award winner Isabelle Gobbo addresses the audience
5. A networking session in the elegant salon of the Four Seasons George V
6. Vladi Kovanic with Frank Marrenbach of Brenners Park Hotel & Spa and Oetker Hotel Management
7. A panel of experts addresses delegates in the beautiful Four Seasons George V
8. Guest of honour Pierre Bord, right, expands on his key-note address



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Diamonds of the industry

The cream of this year's spa professionals were nominated for the 2013 Diamond Awards, and last year's recipients gave out the prizes. This year's winners were:

Black Diamond Award
Isabelle Gobbo, spa manager,
Le Bristol, France

Blue Diamond Award
Sophie Levy, spa manager Cheval
Blanc Courchevel, France
Fabrizio Palmitessa, spa manager,
Donnafugata Golf Resort
& Spa, Italy

White Diamond Award
Larisa Marinica, spa director,
Swissôtel Purvöll, Turkey
Alla Sokolova, co-founder, general
manager, Global Balans, Latvia



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Words of wisdom

The following Forum HOTel&SPA speakers also shared their insights:

- **J M Adrien**, president of Motion Waves, introduced an innovative technology which mixes music and movement, turning guests into conductors, creating sounds as they move in space.
- President of the Czech Spa Association **Dr Eduard Blaha**, general manager of Thermal Spas Luhačovice and Jáchymov – one of the biggest spa holdings in the Czech Republic, totalling 2,500 beds – shared financial data about his main client groups. These comprise loyal elderly patients seeking therapeutic treatments, with a rising number of younger wellness aficionados and families.
- **Sammy Gharieni**, CEO of Group Gharieni spoke to delegates about his passion being a driving force to reach excellence.
- **Pierre-Louis Delapalme**, co-owner of Biologique Recherche (France) stated that the international sign showing that you have reached excellence is the large smile across your client's face when they leave.
- **Coralie Carbonell**, creator of Les Anges ont la peau douce, an upscale beauty lounge providing 30-minute express treatments, revealed plans to launch an e-shop and a second lounge in Paris.
- **Jérémie Navarro**, associate of Pure Informatique, presented the benefits of user-friendly online management software Spa Book.