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*Making
a splash*

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spa brand

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FRONT OF HOUSE

Anthony Saint Claire reveals more about his hotel, which is steeped in over 700 years of history



DINING OUT WITH...

Simon Kelly, head chef at the Feversham Arms Hotel and Verbena Spa in Helmsley, North Yorkshire





Think branding and people tend to view it purely as a function of sales, marketing and design. While those areas play key roles in the creation of a brand, much more is involved. A brand is essentially an instrument used to promote a product or service. It is a visual symbol that aims to create a feeling of familiarity within the minds of a target market and influence customer loyalty. Let's, then, review a few of the key elements in developing a strong brand for your hotel spa. Ask yourself: What are our unique selling points? What really sets our brand apart from others? What does the market need? What will our promise be? What are our core values?

Define your brand through your core values

Whether you realise it or not, your core values are the heart and soul of your business and they are reflected in your actions and beliefs. If the people who deliver your brand experience do not genuinely believe in, agree with, and represent your core values consistently, honestly and effectively, your brand will be misleading and will lose credibility. Clients and staff must feel a genuine connection to your brand and internalise its emotional value, as well as its practical value. People seek out brands that enhance their self-esteem and confidence, and successful brands make people feel good when buying or using the product or service. When this emotional value is successfully developed, people see themselves in the brand and strive to represent it.

Deliver on your promise without fail

If the brand is a promise you make, then the client experience is the fulfillment of that promise. It needs to be more than a name. Your spa needs to live its promise every hour of every day without compromise, and reinforce the core values you've set. Apple is a great example of a company that has clearly defined and delivered on its values. According to a BrandZ Top 100 report, Apple maintained its place in 2011 as the

MAKING A SPLASH



Serena Rogers discusses how to capitalise on the interest in the spa experience and build an exceptional brand that lasts

The word spa should evoke thoughts of relaxation, care and expertise

world's most valuable brand. Steve Jobs once said: "People don't just want to buy (products) anymore; they want to know what to do with them." By providing great products, on-site solutions, post-purchase support, and a culture to take part in, Apple delivers a full circle experience and fulfills its brand promise.

When it comes to the hospitality industry, an effective and profitable hotel spa brand is like a chef's signature dish – a masterful blend of incredible ingredients carefully measured and combined for a memorable sensory experience, delivered in an environment that supports the chef's passion and vision.

Execute every touch point

All too often, spas fall short by not consistently executing key touch points. Some are obvious, like products, treatments, service, guest comfort and marketing. Other touch points including pre-service or purchase experience, product information, online experience, post-purchase follow-up and support are more understated, yet equally important. The brand experience begins well before the client arrives and ends well after they leave.

The word spa should evoke thoughts of relaxation, care and expertise. The only way guests can ever truly relax and let

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go is if they trust the spa, and that trust encompasses everything from viewing the staff as a team of genuine professionals to relying on the environment to be secure, well-designed, hygienic and private. The connection between the spa and the guests needs to be clearly established in order to provide a fulfilling brand experience.

Maximise your online presence

Your hotel spa should have a dedicated website, which clients can visit to obtain information about your brand and offerings. Ask yourself – does our virtual experience mirror our brand experience? Does our software and website interface communicate effectively? Can our clients easily book appointments and shop online? From the consumer's perspective, successful brands need to be able to connect with clients through a variety of mediums. The digital capacity should enhance and support the actual physical product or service experience. Effective software and management systems not

only offer clients convenient options, but also help businesses track data and support targeted growth.

Be creative and innovative

Your hotel spa is a unique and dynamic component of the larger hotel business and customer experience. The hotel brand has been created around its target and main feeder markets for conventions and events as well as leisure or transient travellers. The hotel spa also needs to closely examine the potential of the local, non-hotel guest market when developing its brand. The key to success is creativity and innovation. For example, set operating hours and treatments that appeal to your local base. Position your spa as the 'go-to' source for results-driven treatments, such as long-lasting and diverse nail care, permanent hair removal, targeted facial series and therapeutic massages. Doing so will help you build a strong and loyal clientele from the local area.

Finally, a hotel spa needs to have support from the corporate office or hotel executive management. It cannot thrive on its own. Cross-promotion, inter-departmental contests and incentives, cross-training and exposure are just a few ways to get the hotel buzzing about the spa. Establish brand delivery measurements like customer service scores and verbatim comments and be sure to congratulate the team for its achievements. Remember, a brand can easily be damaged by bad customer service, hygiene or safety issues, poor quality products and other problems. To have a successful brand, build it wisely, keep it consistent and make sure it defines who you are, what you do, and how you are unique. Keep it simple; keep it great!

Serena Rogers is the founder and managing director of Nika Consulting Inc, a global consulting firm specialising in spa projects, concept and brand development. She has developed and managed boutique and luxury operations in North American, Asia and the Caribbean. Contact her at serena@nikaconsulting.ca or visit www.nikaconsulting.ca for more information.



The Sago Spa and Salon, Hyatt Regency Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina