



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Consumers Who Actively Bare All: We now live in a transparent world where consumer feedback – good or bad – is just a mouse-click or touch-pad away. The power and influence of iconic brands over consumers' buying behavior is actually shifting to consumer-to-consumer, changing the game like never before. This phenomenon is not only impacting the buying behaviors of individuals, but also igniting social and political activism. Businesses need to determine how to effectively manage and exploit consumer-to-consumer conversation.

The Global Emerging Middle Class: The World Health Organization is forecasting a middle class in excess of two billion people in the next (5) years largely driven by the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China). Coined the new "GMC" (Global Middle Class), they are more educated and connected than generations before and have means to travel. We need to better understand and cater to their needs.

Globalizing Education: The evolution of educational curriculums and systems has not kept pace with technological advancements and needs of the global economy. Graduates need to be educated for the world we will live in tomorrow. It is no secret that the educational ranking of the U.S. has declined in recent years, but others are in similar positions given the rapid pace of change and/or lack of investment. We need to lobby governments locally to evolve education globally, and should do our part by mentoring youth.

What do you see as the main innovations happening around the world, those which are game-changing and/or disruptive?

Seamless Technological Advancements: First came the Internet, then Web 2.0 (Social Media) and soon, Web 3.0 where the personalization of information for each and every one of us will become even more sophisticated. Advancements in Mobile and Cloud computing will further speed and ease the transfer of information, redefining how we work, play and even drive ("In-Vehicle-Infotainment" or "IVI" is now available for your viewing pleasure). Determining where and how to invest in technology will be key.

Connectivity: According to the Institute for Global Futures, game-changing Facebook will soon be home to one billion people, making it the third most populated nation after China. It represents a business model fueled by comments, photos and "trusted" virtual relationships, and is already yesterday's news. Add the ongoing power of email, texts and tweets, and the idea of "disconnecting" is almost a fantasy of the past. What's next? The opportunity to connect is limitless and game-changing innovations will continue.

Managing the Pace & Face of Change: Given the speed at which information now travels, today's business leaders must look ahead while quickly responding to change. The ability to act and adapt will require agility to avoid disruption. Managers will need to juggle careful focus with constant evolution.

What do you see as the main innovations in the spa/wellness industry (existing and future)?

Innovative Use of Time, Space & Resources: Spas are experimenting with better use of treatment times, space and resources including water, energy and people. Sustainability has replaced excess as a new social value, driving buying decisions and innovation that business owners can bank on. We better understand the levers that drive profitability and ROI, and can be environmentally mindful at the same time.

Digital Health & Prevention: Advancements in connectivity, mobility and diagnostics will finally enable doctors to start

preventing disease instead of just treating it. Consumers will be guided to be more proactive with their health, fostering both demand and innovation in the spa and wellness industries. We need to get ahead of the curve by finding doctors, naturopaths and other medical providers with whom we can partner.

Corporate Wellness: The rising cost of healthcare requires that we find ways to keep employees well. Budgets are being allocated to reinvent or replace stale, compulsory wellness programs historically offered by today's insurance providers. Corporate gyms that were anxiously built yesterday sit empty, and companies are being pressured to offer lifestyle programming (personal training, nutritional counseling, stress management, and more) where ROI can clearly be measured. The spa/wellness industry can work with companies and insurance providers to reinvent what it means for corporations to be well.

What do you see as the greatest opportunities/challenges for the global spa and wellness industry?

Opportunities: Traditional marketing died with the birth of social media, and with it has come faster, cheaper and even smarter ways to generate demand and awareness. Months of lead times to finally reach small, niche populations have been replaced by hyper-distribution to millions in moments. There is great opportunity to have your voice heard (as both a consumer & business owner) and to do more with less.

Emerging markets are great stages for opportunity and innovation. They can borrow lessons from established countries and find ways to improve the future with both prosperity and sustainability in mind. Asia has been exploding for years but countries like Nicaragua and other parts of Central America are also promising. We can build smarter and better facilities in emerging markets because lessons of the past are far more accessible in today's connected world.

Challenges: With all the advancements referenced above, it will be an even greater challenge to identify operators who have kept pace with industry trends, technology and marketing advancements. Sourcing and developing talent in a world that's moving and converging so quickly will be our greatest challenge.

What are some practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation?

Set the Tone: Innovation is not just about creating something new; it's also about reinventing the old. Too often we forget that some of our greatest ideas may continue to serve as strong foundations. They are merely in need of renovation. Do not limit innovation to that which is new; you can be old and bold!

Humanize your brand, product or service. As some say, be FLAWSOME. That is, by showing the world your flaws, you can be awesome. Companies such as Starwood Hotels, FedEx and Lululemon are showcasing negative, consumer feedback on their websites, assuring consumers that they are not hiding their imperfections, but publicizing them for the world to see. By being "flawsome", you can instill trust.

Reward Participation: As we know, actions speak louder than words. Companies that merely preach innovation will have difficulty fostering creative cultures. Innovation must evolve into a mentality from the ground up as well as the top down. Assign task forces, resource exploratory projects and reward participation. Show employees that they matter by inviting them to participate in the process.

SUBMITTED BY

Mia Kyricos
Vice President & Consultant
Core Performance
United States
E: mkyricos@hotmail.com