

LEADING Leaders

A Recap of the January ISPA Knowledge Network & Marketplace



ISPA Knowledge Network & Marketplaces

have historically been great opportunities for industry enthusiasts of all experience levels to come together to discuss and share ideas. This year's first such event, held Jan.

BY AMY MAGGARD AND VALARIE MCKINNEY 29-30 at the Langham Huntington Hotel & Spa in Pasadena, Calif., was no exception; more than 60 attendees, from Florida to Hong Kong, met to discuss operations and management from a global perspective with speaker/facilitator Mindy Terry.

Expectations for the event from the diverse group ranged from reconnecting with old friends to implementing a higher business standard. First-time Knowledge Network attendee Ryan DeJong came not knowing exactly what to expect. DeJong recently took over the family business, Pineapple Day Spa in Pine Bush, N.Y., and has been learning quickly about issues ranging from employee retention to marketing.



The speaker isn't the only person teaching at ISPA Knowledge Networks; attendees get valuable information from one another as well.

From the start of the event, DeJong said he was enthusiastic about learning and growing his business. "ISPA provided a venue that welcomed us as a new member with open arms, connected us with leaders and mentors in the spa industry and presented us with invaluable information," he said. After the opening remarks from Terry, founder and president of Creative Spa Concepts, DeJong said he was energized and quickly took on the role of group leader in many of the small group sessions throughout the workshop.

Jack Morrison, a Knowledge Network veteran and 2006 ISPA Dedicated Contributor, was also an enthusiastic group leader throughout the session. As managing director of Elmcrest College in Ontario, Canada, his stance on industry education has always been strong, and he reminded attendees of the importance of group-minded and employee-focused leadership. "Retention, dedication and the overall prosperity of your business can be linked to the supportive dynamic you establish – or fail to establish – with your employees," he said.

Terry supported and expanded on this idea, suggesting that a superior management team needs to fully understand and make use of the diverse personalities that are common among employees in the industry. She emphasized and articulated the traits and characteristics of many different personality types and discussed both positive and negative potential interactions between them. While great management should possess superior analytical and assessment skills, Terry also emphasized the importance of implementing a structure for best utilizing the diversity among employees.

The importance of using universal research and educational tools, including the ISPA Spa Operations Manual, was highly recommended. Realizing one's own potential with the help of these tools builds ownership and personal empowerment, Terry said. She also addressed the importance of enthusiasm and passion and the many positive effects these attributes have through the trickle-down effect, as well as showing how negativity, lack of direction, fear, anger and fatigue all work against passion.

While learning and sharing were essential parts of this Knowledge Network, the social camaraderie and professional relationships were equally important drivers. Heidi Clark of Ocean Properties Ltd. said she came to reconnect with contacts she met at a previous ISPA event. Familiar faces created an inviting atmosphere at the Marketplace on Tuesday night. The event showcased 20 resource partners, including several at their first Knowledge Network Marketplace.

Overall, the two-day event provided attendees with many helpful take-aways and a casual time to catch up with friends. The next ISPA Knowledge Network & Marketplace will be held June 30-July 1 in Minneapolis, Minn., and will focus on wellness and the spa lifestyle. ■

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ISPA's Spa Operations Manual is available through the shopping cart on ISPA's Web site, experienceispa.com.

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