

# White Paper

## APSWC ROUND TABLE 2018

15th – 16th March 2018, Singapore

### Asia Pacific Spa and Wellness Coalition

---

Tel + (66) 8 1170 0780

Registered with the Registry of Societies,  
Singapore Reg. No. 2086/2007

[www.apswc.org](http://www.apswc.org)  
[info@apswc.org](mailto:info@apswc.org)

---

### Contents

Foreword_____	1
APSWC_____	3
APSWC Round Table _____	4
Part One: Job Seekers' Perceptions _____	5
Part Two: A Career Path_____	7
Part Three: Mindful Mentoring_____	8
Part Four: Crafting the Future _____	9
Round Table Participants_____	11

---

## Foreword

---

This White Paper seeks to give guidance to all industry stake holders to define responsibility of the steps needed to be taken to secure our fair share of the available workforce. It seeks to be an authoritative guide designed to inform concisely about industry issues and the solutions as we see them. It is penned from the collective comment and input of industry leaders from more than 15 countries at the APSWC's Round Table, in Singapore, March 2018, and is targeted to help all stake holders, including both industry and government, to collectively understand the issues and the solutions to them.

The release of this paper reflects the ability of the APSWC to bring together key industry leaders with the singular objective of facing up to some home truths. It is a paper where we as an industry take ownership, identify the key issues that we face today and the steps that we see which need to be taken to address these issues. With the issues laid bare comes an understanding that the problems of individual operators are much more common than they may have thought, and the collective resolve to address these issues allows us to move forward more easily. Some issues can be resolved with a bit of hard work and commitment by individual operators or business owners, while others require the input or assistance of third parties, but it is still up to us to say that we need their assistance. After all, this is our industry and there is nothing wrong with asking for assistance from time to time.

The Asia Pacific region has approximately 1:3 of the world's spas and more Mineral/Thermal Springs than the rest of the world combined - with China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea & New Zealand being the regional stalwarts of Thermal/Mineral Springs (source: Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor 2014). Japan, China, South Korea, India, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia have the largest and most developed spa markets in Asia Pacific although Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines are creating a presence while urban metropolises such as Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore have also established themselves as serious industry players.

The region's industry is projected to directly employ close to 900,000 people by the end of 2018 (Global Wellness Institute), with a projected shortfall of 150,000 therapists in terms of the manpower based on past growth rates. This shortage has set alarm bells off around the world. What are we doing to protect the future of our industry and how do we make it attractive enough to entice the staff that we need?

Is this a potential industry crisis of our own making?

For the industry to maintain our current market position we need to stop living on past glories, face up to present realities and take steps to make changes to ensure that we remain a viable industry into the future.

The need to attract more manpower, with a particular focus on the growing number of millennials (who are entering the global workforce but apparently not the spa & wellness industries), was the basis for discussions at the APSWC Round Table 2018.

The success or otherwise of this paper will be determined by how important the contents of this document are perceived by industry stake holders, and how urgently seen as a call-to-action resulting in steps taken to address discussion points herein.

Looking forward to meet again in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the next APSWC Round Table in March, 2019, to follow up on this.

Andrew Jacka  
Chairman  
Asia Pacific Spa & Wellness Coalition

## APSWC

---



ASIA PACIFIC

SPA & WELLNESS COALITION

The Asia Pacific Spa & Wellness Coalition (APSWC) is a not-for-profit organization officially registered in Singapore in July '07. It is the result of an informal roundtable where spa & wellness industry professionals from across the region gathered in Singapore in May '06 to map out a development strategy to improve and promote the spa industry for the benefit of all. Originally established as a bridging mechanism across national spa associations, the base has grown to be more representative of the region, now even encompassing countries where no industry associations exist, while offering a one-size-fits-all membership model for all stake holders and those interested in the industry, be they individuals, companies or organizations. The current Board has members based in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore & Thailand. The APSWC calendar includes several education and leadership focused events including an annual Round Table, Study Tours and Webinars.

To learn more visit [www.apswc.org](http://www.apswc.org)

General enquiries: [info@apswc.org](mailto:info@apswc.org)

---

## **APSWC Round Table**

---

Senior managers and key decision makers from all aspects of the spa and wellness industry including senior spa directors and managers, owners, suppliers, trainers and educators, allied health professionals, wellness consultants, government officials and media are invited for this annual gathering. It is targeted to continue to be a 'by invitation' event for industry and government, with a 'white paper' outcome. The format gives all participants the opportunity to offer input, provide guidance and ensure the output is a 'voice of the people' white paper document.

There is no grandeur - this is about organic discussions and real issues. The Round Table is expected to evolve in future years into a multiple day educational event with workshops / presentations etc., and open to all levels of industry.

An interactive event with presentations and active dialogue, it is an opportunity for regional players to network and discuss real issues with their industry peers, while addressing the content of the white paper. APSWC events have a record of attracting delegates from multiple countries across the region.

---

## Part One: Job Seekers' Perceptions

---

*Why would anyone want to work in an industry with limited flexibility and opportunity for growth, especially when most employees work in a dark room with a naked stranger in near silence? What else can we offer?*

**Issue:** The perception of job seekers is that our industry offers little in terms of professionalism, flexibility and job opportunities. In addition, confusion reigns because we as an industry still have difficulty in defining who or what we are. Many in our industry, and those that govern us, are following practices and traditions we borrow from the past, without acknowledging that the world has changed, especially when immediate gratification is often the goal.

**Solution:** It is recommended that the industry adopts the wording "wellness industry" in recognition that we offer both spa and wellness services. Spa is an important component of wellness, but it is now a given that these services are frequently offered in conjunction with fitness, nutrition and mindfulness services. Let's stop confusing job seekers (and consumers) and claim our rightful position.

**Issue:** Restrictive employment regulations are common, leading to an industry that faces major recruitment shortages.

**Solution:** Industry associations need to step up, actively represent the industry at government level and lobby for changes in employment regulations. It is logical that governments seek to protect their own workers, but when those same workers are not enough to fulfil demand something needs to change. Private and public sectors must work together for industry specific solutions, such as allowing operators to employ foreign workers with appropriate technical or specialised skills. This would enable a therapist position to be seen

as offering tempting global travel opportunities as promoted in glossy social media posts.

**Issue:** Negative imaging

**Solution:** Industry players on all levels must accept responsibility for the image of the industry beyond their own premise, and encourage collaborations and partnerships for greater professionalism. Media, Key Opinion Leaders (KOL's) and influencers can be part of the solution by assuming industry ambassadorial roles, showing the industry is not only more than 'just a job' but also a safe job, and one that can provide a genuine and respected career path for those that wish to climb it.

**Issue:** Inability to attract sufficient numbers of qualified team members

**Solution:** Operators must better plan their organisational structure and accept that not all team members are 8-hour-a-day, 6-day-a-week workers. Offering flexible timings, clear job descriptions and attractive employment packages ensures employers have team members on hand when needed and therapists are not just sitting around waiting for customers. Offering best practices management, and career development with relevant personal or professional incentives, can attract employees, keep them interested and engaged, and content to work within the industry.



---

## Part Two: A Career Path

---

*Do we offer realistic career paths that are attractive to first time job seekers, those looking to change careers into the industry, and those working on the periphery of the spa and wellness industry?*

**Issue:** The industry is seen by many as 'just a job', overlooking or giving scant regard to the need for passion and professionalism needed to successfully excel in the industry.

**Solution 1:** Offer employees a variety of options that match with their passion as well as your business mission/vision, for example, job sharing, working hours that give the freedom to pursue hobbies and regular upskilling for those that want to expand their knowledge.

**Solution 2:** Round Table delegates could share in the development of an industry organisation chart across multiple countries benefitting those in recruitment as well as motivating education centres to create or change curriculums to meet industry demands and skillsets not currently being addressed.

---

## Part Three: Mindful Mentoring

---

*Allowing staff to do their job, but without stifling individual creativity, or over burdening them with helicopter management practices can be a challenge.*

**Issue:** There is a lack of appropriate exposure to more experienced members of the industry who could assist in the personal or professional development of potential future leaders.

**Solution 1:** Become a mentor. It can be challenging and rewarding as you work with your mentee towards a leadership role for tomorrow and not just a follower for today. Good mentoring can offer life and career changing benefits to both parties, providing the mentor understands that each generation has their own nuances, and the mentor can provide options and resources for them to grow accordingly.

**Related information:** APSWC White Paper 2017 page 8 & 9: Our People, Our Future

**Solution 2:** The APSWC can be active in this respect, updating their website by including information on the wellness industry, its scope, the variety of positions available (e.g. research, product development, human resources, social media marketing etc) beyond the obvious careers of receptionists, therapists, managers and directors.

---

## Part Four: Crafting the Future

---

*Human Resource Management practices from 2000 are already obsolete, so how can we build our team for a stable future?*

**Issue:** A little like the haggled mother with three young children and not enough hours in the day, we focus on the health and wellness of others, often to the detriment of ourselves.

**Solution:** To be credible in our health and wellness offerings we need to walk the talk ourselves. Human resources managers/departments are encouraged to build loyalty within team members with appropriate levels of workplace wellness for the entire duration of their employment. Programs, activities and daily actions must be developed to address:

**The Physical** – i.e. the employee's physical fitness level. This can be as simple as a policy to use the stairs only, ensure ergonomic work spaces, break from a computer screen at regular intervals, use adjustable height work benches and tables, or participate in a regular class or activity that benefits the employees overall fitness or an element thereof.

**The Spiritual** – i.e. the employee's spiritual awareness. Encourage meditation or meditative practises such as conscious breathing or yoga. Another option is mindful eating, a practise that is also good for the digestive system.

**The Mental** – i.e. the employee's mental state. A stressed employee is of little benefit to anyone. Be fair, be reasonable, keep calm. As professionals trained to give care, the increasing global conversation about mental health is one that is especially important among our industry's employees where we should be leading through example.

**The Health** – i.e. the employee's health status. It is relatively commonplace to offer pre-employment or even annual health checks, but in walking the talk we need to offer much more. How healthy is the

food that you serve your employees and customers? How many chemicals are in the cleaning products that you are using? What are the potential side effects?

**The Intelligence** – i.e. the employee's strengths. They might be a great organiser, be a natural people person or rather shy and reserved. Make sure they are in a position that plays to their strengths and encourages their loyalty.

---

## Round Table Participants

---

Alyssa Lim, Spa Consultancy Asia: Malaysia; Dr. Anchulee Yongamukul, St. Carlos Medical Spa, Thailand; Andrew Jacka, Spa Origins, Thailand; Ashlyn Tan Geok, Singapore; Barry White, White Living, Hong Kong; Catharine Nicol, Hong Kong; Claire Lama, Singapore; Dianna Liu, China National Spa Association, China; Donald Cha, Nepal; Eugene Lim, Singapore; Farhana Chua, Singapore; Janice Ng, Singapore; Datin Jeanette Tambakau, Association of Malaysian Spas (AMSPA), Malaysia; Julie Garrow, Intelligent Spas, Singapore; Julie Neo, Singapore; Kent Richards, Six Senses Hotels, Spas & Resorts, Thailand; Luise Ng, St. Gregory Spa, Singapore; Marie-cor Militante, Nissan Car Leasing, Philippines; Neil Macadangdang, Singapore; Ni Luj Putu Susantini, Westin Hotel Nusa Dua, Indonesia; Phattiraporn Khiewsanun, Milk Line Thailand; Ravij Sethi, Pinnacle Connections, India; Regina Martinex, Asia Life Concepts, Singapore; Rekh Chaudhari, Indonesia; Richard Williams, Indonesia; Sabrina Chen, Capella Hotels, Singapore; Sanjay Lama, Amantran Salon & Spa, Nepal; Sheinette Ivy, Naman Retreat, Vietnam; Shirley Hasmani, Rafflesia Wellness, Malaysia; Sirinapa Yongamukul; St. Carlos Medical Spa, Thailand; Suzanne Ng, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore; Tamara Brnelic, Maldives; Theresa Chew, Expressions International, Singapore; Theresa Winkler, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Malaysia; Tomoka Nguyen, Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore; Tsuguru Dobashi, Nippon Spa Association, Japan; Vionna Wong, Eminence Organics, Indonesia; Vikki Aquino, Okada Manila, Philippines

□