

Wellness Tourism Roundtable

*Wellness Tourism 2.0: How to Make a Destination Successful
by Incorporating Wellness*

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Facilitators:

Dr. Franz Linser, CEO, Linser Hospitality GmbH, Austria

Professor Dr. Terry Stevens, Professor of Tourism Innovation, School of Management, Swansea University, Wales, UK

Participants:

Gemma Arribas, Project Manager, Health & Welfare, Iniciativa Actua, Andorra

Charles Davidson, CEO & Co-Founder, Peninsula Hot Springs, Australia

Dr. Paul J. Limburg, Medical Director, Mayo Clinic Global Business Solutions, U.S.

Joshua Luckow, Executive Director, Canyon Ranch, U.S.

Eleni Michopoulou, PhD, Senior Lecturer Business Management, University of Derby, UK

Carrie Phelps, Director, Membership & Resource Development, National Wellness Institute, U.S.

Robert Ranzi, Cluster Manager, Standortagentur Tirol, Austria

Tamás Várhelyi, PhD, College Professor, Eszterhazy Karoly University College, Hungary

David Wickline, Chairman, Alchemy Ventures Group, U.S.

Article written by Jane Kitchen from Spa Opportunities

Panel asks: How can wellness help create a destination?

The panel was part of a breakout session at the Global Wellness Summit in Kitzbühel

A panel gathered for a break-out session at the Global Wellness Summit in *Kitzbühel*, Austria this week to discuss how to make a destination successful by incorporating wellness.

David Wickline, chairman of investment group Alchemy Ventures Group, said he looks for resorts that can be transformative but also sustainable financially.

“I look at it as a subject where to do well, you have to invest and be invested both with the heart and the mind,” he said.

Wellness communities can be small villages, areas or even a country, said Dr Eleni Michopoulou, a senior lecturer in business management at the University of Derby in the UK. Some destination wellness communities can take everyday life activities and showcase them as wellness activities, she said, such as picking mushrooms in Finland.

Robert Ranzi, cluster manager for Standortagentur in Tirol, Austria, said nutrition, movement, body workouts, fitness, relaxation and and water therapy are all important in incorporating wellness.

“Water is a very basic part of our life – people are attracted to water, sea and the mountains,” he said. “More and more people are looking for solutions for their work-life balance, and are heading towards transcendence and spirituality.”

Nature and natural activities were mentioned by many on the panel as being crucial to incorporating wellness.

“You want to be in a space that inspires you,” explained Wickline.

Paul Limburg, medical director for Mayo Clinic Global Business Solutions, however, said that sometimes, an outside-in perspective can create a wellness destination, much like his company has done in its wellness community in Minnesota.

“Rochester is not a tourist destination and never will be,” said Limburg. “We had to look at how we can truly create something that is more integrative that puts the person at the centre. The needs of the person comes first – that is how we can create something that we can draw people in.”

Josh Luckow, executive director of Canyon Ranch in the US, said that the experience of the destination rather than the locality is what makes it work.

“Each area is going to have its own unique qualities, and you want to draw upon those, but it’s more the passion, and the facilitation of the space where transformation can happen,” he said

Sometimes, an area has something that unites it in wellness activities. Charles Davidson, CEO and co-founder of Peninsula Hot Springs in Australia, is working on bringing together an entire hot springs wellness region in Victoria, Australia.

“For me, to bring wellness destinations together is about connection and cooperation – so rather than competing, you have to be able to work together,” he said.

Luckow said that having an integrated environment is important for a wellness destination.

“First and foremost, the experience that somebody has is front and centre, so when someone comes into a wellness resort, they have an opportunity to explore their life, their health and their wellness from end to end,” he said.

But at the end of the day, creating a wellness destination has to be marketable. Creating someplace with a purpose, making a location and programming personalised, having good travel connections, incorporating local agriculture and staffing, and creating a place with a sense of culture were all mentioned as being important.

“In creating the culture, what we need to do is to get the buy-in from everyone in the region,” said Davidson. “It has to permeate throughout the whole community – you live it and breathe it.”

One of the challenges with creating a wellness destination, said Wickline, is that there are high expectations from the guest.

“If you have a beach resort, it’s kind of easy,” he explained. “But when people come to a wellness resort, they expect to be transcendent and come to a whole other level of wellbeing. You have to ask: can you be true to the outcome that people expect?”

And measuring those outcomes can also be tricky.

Limburg said Mayo asks guests to set their own personal goals, and judges its success on how often they are able to meet those goals – and whether they’re sustainable in the long-term.

Luckow said at Canyon Ranch, guest loyalty is a good indicator that they’re doing something right, as well as their high level of staff retention.

Wickline said it’s down to three things: “Did you deliver on your promises to your guests? Did you deliver new standards of excellence? And can you pay the bills?”