



Best OF Both Worlds

When Spa Meets Traditional Medicine

BY MAE
MAÑACAP-
JOHNSON

It's a marriage that has long been predicted: the union of spa and traditional medicine. Pulse, in its October 2010 issue, forecasted the integration of spa and traditional medicine as one of the game-changing trends that could redefine the spa and medical landscape of the future. Fast-forward to today and this forecast has turned into a reality

with the groundbreaking partnership between Mayo Clinic and Mandarin Oriental. The collaboration inspired the launch of the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program at Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum in January this year. The program combined the research-based medical expertise of Mayo Clinic with Mandarin Oriental's signature treatments and therapies.

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JEREMY MCCARTHY
Group Director of Spa • Mandarin Oriental
Hotel Group • Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

The Birth of an Idea

The seed of the idea was first planted at the 2014 ISPA Conference & Expo. At the event, a casual conversation among Spa & Club Ideations LLC Chief Operating Officer Jeff Kohl, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group Director of Spa Jeremy McCarthy and ISPA Medical Director Dr. Brent Bauer sparked discussions of a new type of spa offering that focused on wellness for the growing number of health-conscious travelers.

The timing of the conversation was perfect. At the time, Mandarin Oriental was exploring options for enhancing its wellness offerings, while Mayo Clinic was looking for channels through which to deliver its medical expertise and educate the global population on issues related to health and well-being. Recognizing the synergistic opportunities that existed with the relationship—and the potential for satisfying an unmet market need—the team began exploring options for co-developing an on-site wellness program.

“This collaboration represents a new paradigm in the hospitality and medical industries. For the first time, a leading academic medical center has entered into a strategic relationship with a premier hotel brand to approach the market with a joint vision for ‘preventive wellness,’” says Kohl.

McCarthy agrees. “The complementary nature of Mandarin Oriental’s holistic spa approach and Mayo Clinic’s wellness philosophy will serve to make the guest experience more meaningful, memorable, and effective for improved long-term health.”

Mutual Benefits

From a branding standpoint, the Mandarin Oriental and Mayo Clinic partnership is a strategic collaboration. As two well-reputed international brands, the joint venture between Mandarin Oriental and Mayo Clinic ensures that both brands are able to deliver a menu of healthy lifestyle products and services that aim to reach the health-conscious traveling consumer through a “destination wellness” concept.

According to Kohl, the Healthy Living Program at Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum offers guests a choice of tailor-made experiences—from one-day assessments to five-day retreats, as well as à la carte services, that will benefit all guests by giving

them practical, personalized and evidence-based guidance for living a healthier life.

“Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group believes that travelers are looking for more robust wellness experiences. Working with the world-renown expertise of Mayo Clinic helps the group deliver this in a way that upholds the authenticity and quality that the brand is known for,” says McCarthy.

In addition, Kohl says “the strategic relationship also provides a channel through which Mayo Clinic can reach an

international population that may be less familiar with its broad, deep medical expertise, building on its already favorable reputation and fulfilling its moral obligation to share its knowledge with the world so that people everywhere can live healthier, live better, and live longer.”

Overcoming Challenges

Like in any type of partnership, there were a few initial hurdles to jump through.

“The most significant challenge was getting better acquainted with each other’s industry nuances. Learning about

and embracing each other’s operational, cultural, and social attributes was critical to success,” says Kohl. “Though each entity offers complementary services to complete the other’s product and service portfolio, getting to know the intricacies of each entity’s way of doing business required a substantial investment on the part of both teams.”

Perhaps one of the most challenging components of the partnership was looking at every little detail. According to both Kohl and McCarthy, bringing together all the “moving parts”—which required input from multiple departments in each institution—proved to be complicated. Participation by department representatives from legal, finance, supply chain management, human resources, IT, operations, marketing, etc., was necessary in order for the joint venture to succeed.

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JEFF KOHL
Chief Operating Officer • Spa & Club
Ideations LLC • Las Vegas, Nevada



Fitness room at the Dan Abraham Healthy Living Center on the Mayo Clinic Campus in Rochester, Minnesota.

Criteria Categories

According to McCarthy and Kohl, for the program to be successful, each organization’s team should understand that alignment within the seven criteria categories was critical. By adhering to the criteria below, guests benefit from a more memorable experience and enhanced well-being.

- Commitment to quality
- Dedication to best-in-class service
- Philosophical like-mindedness
- Shared vision and goals
- Spirit of innovation
- Outcomes-focused
- Brand strength



The scenic views at the Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum serves as the perfect backdrop for its Healthy Living Program partnership with Mayo Clinic.

“This extraordinary level of collaboration was the result of a collegial mutual respect that developed between team members committed to a single vision: improving the health and well-being of guests by providing an evidence-based experience that is steeped in quality,” says McCarthy.

Sustainable Strategy

Both Kohl and McCarthy agree that creating a sustainable strategy is vital to the partnership’s success. Both spa leaders pointed out that the strategy to ensure that the collaboration was both sustainable and successful revolved around two key initiatives. First, it was essential to continually monitor the guest experience and measure its effectiveness. “By giving guests a feedback loop mechanism, we are able to incorporate their input on an ongoing basis to improve the program,” Kohl says.

The key to long-term success is an equally focused commitment to growing and evolving the program. “By evaluating the guest experience, monitoring industry trends and conducting research, we can develop new programs and

services to meet the needs of the increasingly sophisticated traveler. It is only by keeping the program fresh that we will keep it relevant to those we aim to reach,” McCarthy says.

On top of this, a robust media strategy with proactive outreach to journalists in multiple cities was at the core of the marketing plan. Journalists were also invited to visit the property, tour the facility and interact with program staff.

Additional marketing initiatives included press releases, utilization of Mandarin and Mayo Clinic social media channels, in-room promotional materials, and outreach to local travel agents.

In many ways, the partnership was not simply a successful business venture by two highly respected brands, but more importantly, for the spa industry, it represented a groundbreaking collaborative model that promises to bring the best of both worlds.

How to Partner with Reputable Medical Health Institutions

Based on their collaboration experience, Kohl and McCarthy offer five things to consider when exploring a partnership between spa and medical health institutions:

Define the desired outcome of the initiative. Without identifying agreed-upon goals and metrics, evaluating its impact is elusive at best.

Decide which organization may be the best fit for collaboration: philosophically, culturally, financially, and from a brand perspective.

Determine if the experience of the collaborating entity aligns with your organization’s vision and fills identified product/service offering gaps to deliver the desired program.

Develop integrated programs that combine the strengths of both partners in a seamless way.

Delineate the scope of the program at the outset with the understanding that it will continue to evolve.



HOW DOES THE Mandarin Oriental and Mayo Clinic partnership help change the way spas and mainstream medical health institutions collaborate to create personalized health programs? [Click here to read more insights.](#)