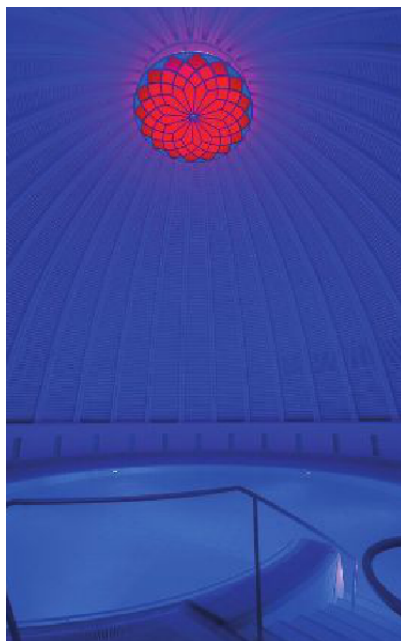
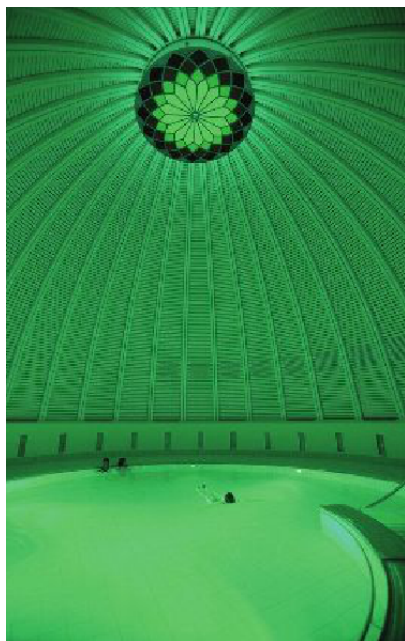


Marion Schneider

CEO, TOSKANAWORLD & TOSKANAWORLD CONSULTING, GERMANY

Schneider's operation and consultancy companies, Toskanaworld & Toskanaworld Consulting, have created innovative complexes in German spa towns. Toskana Therme in Bad Sulza, Bad Schandau and Bad Orb offer beauty and spa therapies and rehabilitation with thalassotherapy, steam, salt inhalation and Liquid Sound® – a unique light, water and sound experience. Schneider is also chair of the British International Spa Association.



The Liquid Sound multimedia system is offered at all three Toskanaworld spas to enable guests to hear relaxing music and see different lighting effects both under and above water

What have been your biggest achievements in the last 12 months?

The building and opening of the Toskana Therme (spa complex) Bad Orb last May was my greatest challenge and achievement in 2010. It features more than 800sq m (8,611sq ft) of pools fed by natural thermal waters, a vast sauna area, wellness park and large swimming pool for training. It's situated in a traditional spa town in one of Germany's largest forests, 40 minutes from Frankfurt.

Toskanaworld took over the management of Kurotel an der Therme on-site in August 2008 and the new Toskana Therme, to which it is linked, complements it perfectly. The hotel is open, but is currently being refurbished.

What makes your company stand out?

Three main aspects set the Toskanaworld spas apart. The first is Liquid Sound® – a sound and lighting multimedia system which can be used in water – which is offered at all three spas. The technology enables our guests to hear music (as well as see different lighting effects) under and above water. Bathers have a sensation of being immersed in a natural, relaxing environment, with music, whale and dolphin sounds. Second, while our spas are modern

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and expressive, they are located in traditional spa towns (Bad Sulza, Bad Schandau and Bad Orb); each in its own beautiful landscape. As such, they are embedded in a healing environment and rooted in local tradition. They also contribute to the long-term stability and growth of the region. Third, Toskanaworld can draw on its extensive knowledge of traditional German health and rehabilitation techniques – it set up the TOMESA and Klinikzentrum medical spa clinics, both still in operation.

How did you first get involved in the spa industry?

Originally a historian, I joined my family's health business of making and selling sauna and healthy sun tanning equipment and developing rehabilitation services for chronic skin diseases. In 1996, the business branched out into the spa sector following a health reform in Germany that drastically reduced funding for the rehabilitation of patients in spas.

What do you want to achieve over the next 12 months?

I am chair of the British International Spa Association (BISA), a growing voice in the industry (see p69). BISA aims to improve



skills and services in the spa industry and to become a hub for professionals at all levels.

Over the next year I will be working on expanding BISA's offerings both within Britain and internationally. For example, we are ready to launch our Essential Spa Standards (including those on sustainability) and we are also currently developing some standards for schools and consultants.

The annual BISA Conference – held at the University of Derby, Buxton, in the UK in June 2011 – will be an important event for further discussions on all of this.

What are your longer term ambitions?

Mineral spring spas, wherever they may be in the world, offer some of the most powerful healing potential known to mankind. I want to develop BISA so that it becomes an organisation which champions and unites such places and also provides them with a political and economic platform.

Toskana Therme Bad Sulza in Germany is Schneider's favourite spa because it attracts people from all walks of life

What drives you?

To see people in pain is one of the worst things I can imagine. To help change that is one of the most satisfying experiences I know.

What's the best business decision you've ever made?

To equip our rehabilitation clinic (Klinikzentrum) with Liquid Sound, although at the time it was neither accepted nor 'normal'. It became the springboard for all that followed.

What's the worst business decision you made?

Deciding to employ someone who I thought would be most fitting for the business at the

It is necessary to critically assess your services on an ongoing basis to modify and adjust to changing circumstances

- time rather than someone I liked. Feelings of sympathy and being able to relate to someone are very important in the long-run.

What's been the biggest challenge of your career?

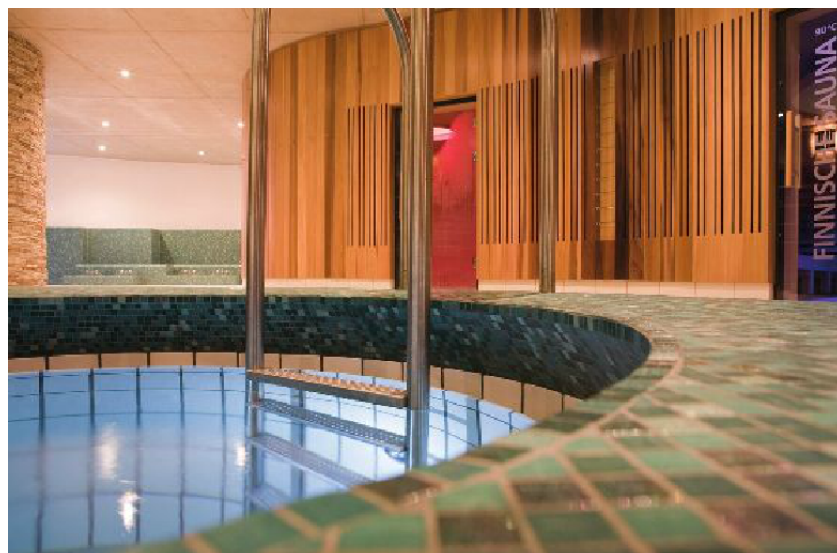
To recover from a liquidity gap caused by external circumstances. This situation has presented itself twice and there can be few things more harrowing. To survive as a person and as a business is one of the biggest challenges and achievements. My recipe: never give up.

What's the key to weathering the economic downturn?

Demand in the spa industry will continue to grow because people are so stressed and need spaces for refuge and recuperation. Spas that offer a profound experience and relief will weather the crisis and become stronger. It is, however, necessary to critically assess your services on an ongoing basis to modify and adjust to changing circumstances.

What will be the biggest issues facing the spa industry in the future?

Sustainability. The implementation of ecological, social and economic standards is a must for long-term stability. Towards this end, BISA has partnered with Green Globe Certification. We have just finished developing



standards for spas and related industries and everybody is welcome to join these long-term efforts in this respect.

Education. The spa-goer expects high quality staff as we reach out to the most intimate parts of his/her being. Therefore, ongoing training – for therapists and management employees – is necessary. With growing competition, steady innovation is a good means of keeping your customers – and this can only be reached by ongoing education and communication within your staff force.

Communication. Customers expect a trustful relationship – and trust is based on knowledge and understanding. Operators which communicate their achievements and challenges will find themselves rewarded with faithful guests.

What's the difference between a good spa and a great spa?

A great spa is one that always creates unforgettable guest experiences.

Schneider has pulled her businesses through two liquidity gaps and says her recipe for success is to "never give up"

What is your favourite spa in the world?

Toskana Therme Bad Sulza. It brings together the old and young, rich and poor, east and west and the national and international.

What's your favourite spa treatment?

Foot reflexology. It's amazing to experience a skilled specialist at work and to know that my entire body is represented in my feet.

What advice would you give to someone coming into the spa industry?

I would tell them to always go for quality and to never stop learning. ●

For a more in-depth read on Toskanaworld's first spa complex in Bad Sulza, see Spa Business magazine, issue 2, 2005, p52.