

# PULSE

JUNE 2021 ■ PULSE.EXPERIENCEISPA.COM

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INFLUENCER  
MARKETING



# The Power of a Testimonial

IT IS COMMON PRACTICE IN THE SPA INDUSTRY to encourage guests to share feedback following a spa experience. Whether you are using an electronic survey, feedback card or phone call follow-up, the information gathered from these efforts is invaluable. The insights collected are often used internally to evaluate performance and needs; however, they can also make for a wonderful component of your social media strategy. Instagram allows businesses to visually display the images, videos and words shared by delighted guests. Even a simple testimonial can be powerful and influence others to want to share in that same joyful feeling, and there is no better way to share the impact your spa can have on its guests than through their firsthand thoughts and experiences.



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RECENT ISPA STRONGER TOGETHER SUMMIT Power Session speaker Seth Godin is a master at using testimonials and word of mouth marketing to promote his resources. He even set up a simple link on his blog—[seths.blog/ThePractice/](https://seths.blog/ThePractice/)—to encourage readers to share their feedback after reading his book.



# HEAD OF THE

# Class

BY  
JOSH  
CORMAN

Overcome Staffing  
Challenges  
Through  
Relationships  
with Local Schools





Representatives from Bryght conduct a demonstration with students (and potential future employees).

**IT'S LIKELY THAT FEW INDUSTRIES** can match the spa industry when it comes to the particular challenges it faces regarding its workforce needs. ISPA research indicates that as of 2019, the number of unfilled service provider positions in the U.S. spa industry alone was roughly 28,000, split about evenly between full- and part-time employees. Though it is as yet unclear what effect the losses and possible attrition suffered by the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic have had on that figure, it stands to reason that the talent shortage has only become more pronounced in the last 14 months or so.

Massage therapist positions made up the largest portion of the shortage reported in 2019, comprising more than 17,000 (8,320 full-time) of the unfilled spots. Estheticians accounted for about 7,000 unfilled positions (3,980 full-time), followed by nail technicians with just over 4,000 (1,810 full-time). Given the total number of estimated positions in the industry at that point, unfilled positions represent about seven-and-a-half percent of the entire spa (not only service provider) workforce.

By any measure, the sheer volume of unfilled positions in the spa industry is an issue that spa leaders are eager to address. ISPA's own recognition of this truth led to the planning of a Talent Symposium event originally scheduled for April of 2020 before being canceled due to the pandemic. In the year-plus since, spa leaders around the world have grappled with a host of new and unforeseen pandemic-related challenges, and questions revolving around the talent pipeline and industry workforce have been, if not set aside entirely, then at least moved to the back

burner while these new issues commanded more attention.

But as the proverbial light at the end of the pandemic tunnel comes into view, the spa industry is once again ready to confront those workforce challenges head-on. One of those challenges is simply assessing the state of the spa industry workforce at this stage of the pandemic to determine where things stand after more than a year of closures, reopenings, staff reductions and attrition. If what Kellee Martin, ISPA board treasurer and spa director at The Edgewater Spa, has seen holds true for the industry at large, the talent landscape may be even tougher to navigate than before the pandemic.

"I actually think this is worse than pre-pandemic for staffing," Martin says. "I think a lot of people have just left the industry, not just in spa, but in hospitality in general because we're facing this all over our property. I mean, I definitely need massage therapists and nail techs, which I always have, but we would get applicants that would trickle in pre-pandemic, but now we're not—it's like a ghost

town. We're not getting people, so that's a huge challenge because that's our workforce." Martin adds that she's responded by reaching out to former employees and applicants as need has increased, with little success. COVID-19-related hesitancy, she concedes, may also be a contributing factor. "I've got some people that haven't returned to work also. They're waiting for more people to be vaccinated," she says.

In the face of seemingly dire circumstances, there remain a number of steps spa leaders can take to cultivate a pipeline of talent. In almost every case, that means reaching well beyond the limits of job posting sites such as LinkedIn or Indeed. For Mandy Warr, owner of the Remedy Day Spa in Albuquerque, New Mexico, one such step has been cultivating a relationship with local schools. "Just like everyone else in the industry, we were definitely having a hard time keeping a healthy talent pool," Warr says. "And we actually started to see a

lot of the massage schools in the area closing, and that left us with a talent pool that was

coming out of either community colleges or for-profit institutions. Their massage programs just weren't as robust or in-depth as some of the others that we had previously been drawing from." Warr reached out to some remaining local schools, seeking to make a connection and provide input on what her spa was looking for in massage therapists and estheticians.

Those connections soon evolved into relationships that gave Warr an opportunity to communicate directly with future spa professionals. In addition to speaking to graduating classes about what her spa looks for in applicants, Warr soon took things a step further and was able to establish an internship program with Carrington College, a local university. "With this particular program, it can't include hands-on work, but it includes being in the spa, learning about the front desk and back of house and how our treatment staff operate," Warr notes. "It's been a really good way to connect with people that are coming out of school, get a really good idea of where their skill set is and build relationships." Warr adds that they've also recently worked with Carrington to get accreditation to offer aspiring massage therapists continuing education opportunities for skills they may

lack or need to deepen after having graduated. "That's been a really great relationship we've built with Carrington that produces highly skilled staff members. By the time they're working for us, that relationship is deeply rooted."

"Relationship" is also a key word for Luba Sasowski, CEO of Bryght, a maker of skin care and lightening products. Sasowski sits on the boards of two esthetics schools—one in Las Vegas, Nevada, and the other in Vancouver, British Columbia—and has found that her role allows for far greater insight into potential hires than she would get from the traditional application and interview process. "If you're putting something on LinkedIn, or whatever it may be, you're getting someone at two o'clock in the morning that's just scrolling through stuff and hitting the 'Apply' button," she says. "If you can get in front of the people that want to be in the business, your success rate of hiring is going to be far greater, but you have to take the time as the owner, director, whoever you are, to relish that relationship, to encourage your team to build relationships with the schools. There is a cost of time in that relationship building, but it's so valuable and so rewarding because you will get



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—LUBA SASOWSKI