

The Business of Wellness – A Path to a Healthy Future

Where does the light shine in? Eight considerations for fostering a healthy wellness business

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October 2020



This pandemic changed us and only a rear-view mirror will tell us how and how much. Habits and trends have been created, disturbed, accelerated, and obliterated. The global experience is one of economic shock, geopolitical complexities, social instability, and the loud voice of nature and all while navigating a global pandemic.

So, with a question inspired by Bob Dylan - where does the light shine in?

Many believe that a net winner in all of this is wellness with the increased focus on self-care, immunity building, mental health and a healthy lifestyle.

Yet, some say the wellness industry itself may never return to its pre Covid 19 levels. Thierry Malloret from the Monthly Barometer recently noted in a Global Wellness Institute Master Class that worldwide personal economies will not recover for some time and while there is a priority on wellness, the main increase in healthy activity has been walking and breathing. He noted that neither of these have a

business application. He hypothesized that the idea of wellbeing may be top of mind but the resulting affect on the industry may be minimal.

We can accept his view and plan for downturn, downsizing and a downright disheartening future OR we can think of this time as a metamorphosis and we engage our curiosity, creativity and resilience to find the light – the new opportunities.

You see, the pandemic has also awakened us and summoned our imagination. We have become more conscious, discerning, deliberate, and selective in our attitudes and choices.

Here are 8 observations for possible changes that could affect our wellness way forward. Consumer behavior, the importance of wellness experiences, lifestyle priorities, purchasing decisions and even our intrinsic values are all being reshaped.

1. INCREASE IN PREVENTION BUT IN WELLNESS BUSINESS?



The hyper awareness of cleanliness and hygiene practices is unprecedented and completely touchless environments are on the rise. Cleaning supplies have empty shelves, but new high-tech solutions are on the rise from UV cleaning light technology for hotel rooms and hospitals, Molly Maid robots and sanitizing closets and lockers. There are even personal air purifiers to wear.

Immunity has become more important than just as a prize on a game show! People are adopting self-care as one big way to cope with the pandemic and regain a sense of control.

Immune building respiratory wellness, portable therapeutic salt inhalers, supplements and home delivery nutrition meals, anxiety awareness, walking and virtual fitness are all part of the mix and at a time when wellness facilities have been largely closed or sidelined. In fact, living a healthy lifestyle was a number one priority for US consumers in the 2020 Agility Co survey. Euro monitor 2020 indicated an increase focus on mental health as the top meaning of health and it included things like work life balance, “feeling good” and emotional wellbeing. Other surveys have included joy, music, and work in the mix of wellbeing resources. Euro Monitor 2020 showed an increasing acceptance of health advice from complementary medicine approaches especially in the younger than 40 groups. Bottom line is an increasingly mindful consumer of the importance of preventive care with lots of options – moving, social connections, healthy lifestyles, and purpose.

Consider: What do your current and future customers identify as most important on their wellness or self-care journey? Are your current offerings meeting the needs of wellness aware consumer? What do you need to eliminate or build to increase the size of the wellness aware consumer? Have you addressed mental wellness and are you spending creative time being curious about your relevance? How can you connect with your customers at home?

2. A HIGHER VALUE ON NATURE – SUSTAINABLE NOT ENOUGH

Nature has always been a refuge and more than a place to visit. It is a place where our souls reside. Backed by science, research has shown that just being in nature can be as immune building as sleep.

The pandemic has introduced a whole new dimension to nature – a true safe space. We escape outside to fresh air, to breathe deeply and safely. We star gaze, forest bath, walk a path in meditation and even reset our circadian rhythms naturally. We are mindful of the positive affect nature has on our mental health at a time of social isolation.

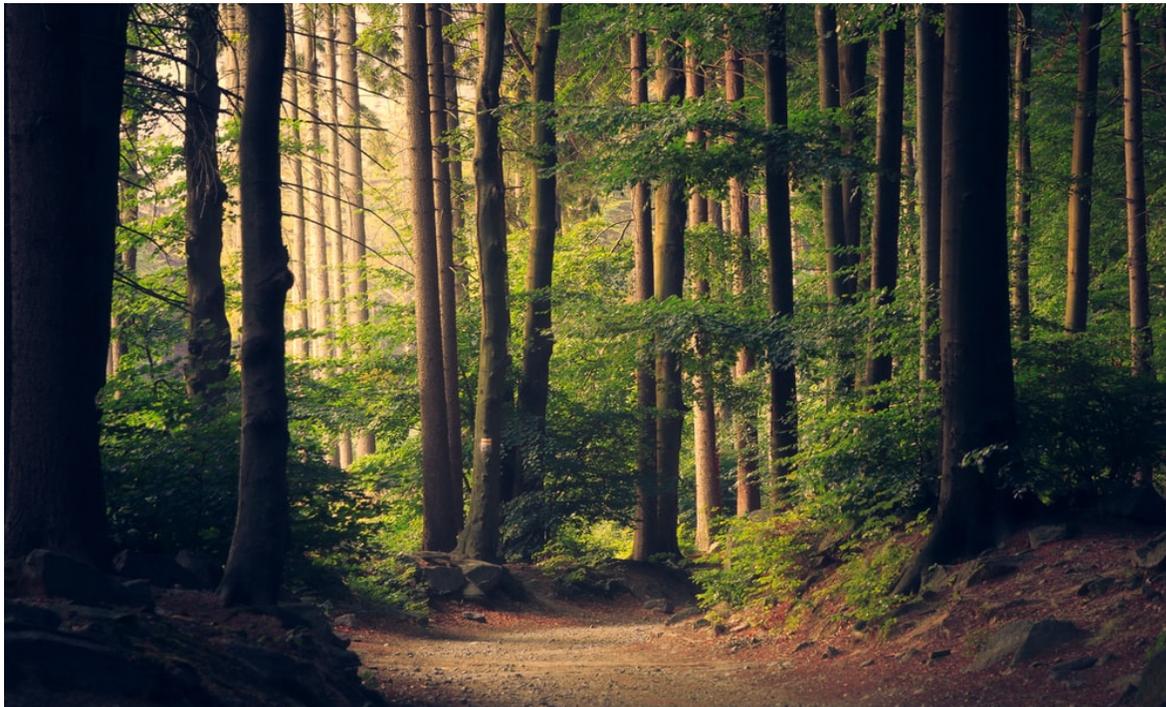
We are acutely aware of the fires in Australia and California taking our trees and filling the air with smoke for 1000's of miles. We are conscious of the record named storms and the recovered greenery from space after the factory shutdowns in China. We notice the cessation of tourism has resulted in the clearing of Venice canals that now have fish!

This is what touches us. It is more tangible and emotional than hearing panel experts on “climate change” and an “environmental movement” that has often been fear based and politicized.

For the love and joy of Mother Nature, there is a growing movement to be her steward with a deep sense of responsibility to protect her. The trend for “re-wilding” is one of many that show we appreciate her beauty, space, and refuge and fear her loss.

Nature may be the biggest asset we have, and its potential loss may help create nature as an asset class. Sustainability may just not be enough.

Consider: How can we incorporate nature in our businesses – even when you cannot directly access the outdoors? What can be done to connect customers to nature in more intentional healing way? What products, services, facilities, causes, or partners need to be reimaged or added to embrace the love of nature?



3. RECOGNITION OF NATURE AS THE NEW SPACE ODYSSEY

The health threats posed from being too close have redefined our “personal space”! Will we forevermore be acutely aware of the 6-foot or 2-meter rule? Density on a micro and macro scale is shaping communities and social space layouts. Will social spas, wellness clubs be a thing of the past even recognizing the health benefits from sharing experiences with family and friends?

Can improved indoor air quality and circulation mirror the benefits of being outdoors? Disciplines such as biophilia and biomimicry are gaining awareness along with indoor built environments that foster wellbeing rather than simply prevent illness. We are already seeing designers creating new ways to integrate the indoors with the outdoors including see through bubble yoga stations and pop up outdoor dining hubs. Will tiny homes be a thing of the past as we move to live work homes or will they be reimagined in clusters for assisted elder communities or new backyard offices?

Consider: Will wellness lead the way for inspired indoor health environments? Will a sense of space become the equal partner to sense of place in travel? How can wellness approaches and reimagining space help revitalize vibrant and exciting cities now experiencing a mass exodus to the suburbs or working from home? How can the wellness industry lead?



4. EMERGING REGENERATIVE TRAVEL MAY HELP TRAVEL AS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

The travel industry is struggling and likely the most affected global industry due to the pandemic. Financial constraints both personal and business, employers managing health and travel costs and risks for its employees, geopolitical instability, travel insurance cost for Covid coverage and environmental activism may all negatively affect travel for many years. Those who want to travel are predicted to stay closer to home and others may be “staycationers” at least in the short term.

For many, travel is a necessity and part of their *raison d'être*. It is their essential service. This group will be increasingly discerning and conscious of their spending. Emerging trends include illness prevention, valuing space and nature, and a longing for connection may be where the light shines is for reimagining wellness travel. Concepts for regenerative travel – leaving places better vs just doing no harm may be regenerative for wellbeing too.

We have moved along a travel continuum from it being part of the experience economy to authentic and connected local experiences, to transformational or transcendent affects and now maybe on to regenerative travel. Futurist Philippe Brown suggests a reset on travel to ponder why we travel at all and that future bucket lists may be centered on the why rather than the where. This is an interesting concept for wellness travel destinations and businesses to consider.

Consider: Is your destination or wellness business engaged in thinking about regenerative travel? Is purpose the new badge of honor for vacation stories? How can your business contribute to a well destination? Does your offering appeal to the conscious, discerning wellness traveler?

5. CONNECTION – INWARD, OUTWARD, AND INCREASINGLY UPWARD

Human connection is a physical and psychological need. That need has never been more apparent- to connect to our family and friends, to our community and even to something greater than ourselves

Former US surgeon general Vivek Murthy suggested that we may be able to use Covid-19 as a reset to revisit where these relationships and connections live in our life priority list.

The pandemic is providing us with time to look not only outward but inward—and upward too in a spiritual sense. These shifts will likely last longer than pandemic restrictions.

Pray Inc. has seen increases in content purchases based on meditation and children’s stories to fight anxiety. Headspace is booming with demand for guided meditations. Gaia streaming service is in high demand and spiritual and religious leaders are finding audiences responding to messages and contemplation of purpose, joy, and happiness. Pondering purpose, priorities and values is at an all time high and surely will be here to stay at some level.

Brands can contribute with tools that foster human-to-human interactions and nourish companionship.

Consider: How do we touch someone emotionally in a time when we cannot touch? How do we make a touchless experience feel connected when “reach out and touch someone” is generally through Zoom? How do we nourish partnerships, adapt brands, and connect with communities that we cannot visit? This is certainly a defining moment for interconnected reality.



6. WELLNESS INDUSTRY POSITION OF TRUST REWARDED

The wellness industry has a long history of truly wanting to make the world a better place – one caring business at a time and for the most part has been perceived that way. This perception may be our future as consumers increasingly align their considered purchases with their values and beliefs. Company ethics, value statements, historical treatment of customers and employees, selected charities and causes and even their supply chains are under significant scrutiny. The well life is outpacing the desire for the high life.

Partnerships, co-creating products or services with customers, increased curiosity, and response to customer data in real time are critical. Ultimately, as McKinsey advises “finding the sweet spot between the responsibility to maximize profits and the desire to find purpose across social and environmental impact on the world is the core reason for being”. People want a business or brand to believe in and “conscious capitalism” is a growing sentiment.

According to Wunderman Thompson Data, 90% of consumers in the US say brands must take responsibility to take care of the planet and its people. The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer shows trust at an all-time low while Future Hunters calls it the most valuable and rarest of currencies. Consumers who perceive profit over people or a deception in living up to stated values or claims will

lose trust forever. Wellness will be the lens through which all businesses and brands are ultimately viewed, and our industry can maximize its head start. In wellness we trust will be under intense scrutiny as the focus on it grows.

Consider: How is your brand and business perceived? What are you doing to maximize your position of wellness trust? How can you increase your contribution to global wellbeing?

7. WELLNESS FOCUSED LIFE SOLUTIONS WILL EXPAND

While we are looking at brands and businesses through the lens of trust and belief, we are also looking inward and assessing what is important personally. We are redefining what essential means to us and making conscious choices.

We are saving more, spending on our homes, and looking at what we need and value. We are making more conscious choices based on needs, importance, and impact.

We have new issues to manage as our lives have shifted. We need new solutions including life balancing, healthy eating with foods you love that love you back, grocery shopping or home study assistants and even remote home technology departments! Melisse Gelula of Well + Good, pointed out that the “pandemic made us realize we need healthy things in everyday life to help fortify our health and keep our sanity” and that healthy food, mental wellness, meditation and gratefulness are amongst the highest searches on the Pinterest.

Consider: What solutions can you provide to evolving life issues? While we pay more attention to how we spend time and money, is your business paying attention and becoming one of the essentials?

8. TECHNOLOGY HIGHS AND LOWS WILL COEXIST



What would we have done without technology in 2020? In many ways, tech saved us. We have been zooming in - instead of zooming around. We were connecting with previous customers and building new ones online with a focus on imaginative and useful online content. In fact, there is now content competition and content overload may be looming. We have created expectations that our businesses stay with customers long after the pandemic is over, and we truly will (and must) stay with customers long after they leave our businesses.

Technology allowed for an unprecedented global medical research collaboration that no doubt has helped accelerate vaccine development and new technologies are being created daily including new biosensing wearables for detecting the presence of viruses at early stages.

Protective technology has been helping safeguard against germs and there are new standards and inventions for cleaning hospital rooms and even the clothes in our closets.

At the same time, we are online - all the time. As we fight an epidemic, we are also fighting an infodemic. We seek more and more information to determine what is good for our health; yet must sort through increasing fake news in all areas. Developing trusted sources is critical for our comfort and our wellbeing.

So, with tech benefits also comes physical and mental health issues. We may have upped our need for a digital detox when the time comes.

Consider: Is your business a trusted source? Are you developing engaging and useful content and creating an ongoing relationship with old and new customers? Are you gathering data and anticipating their future needs?

The success of our wellness businesses will come from a path of curiosity, being nimble, and of getting rid of our old stories. As someone said, “the future just isn’t what it used to be!”. It will not be enough to be resilient. We must recognize first that this is not a temporary situation – patterns, attitudes and habits have been disrupted long enough to have created a shift. Nothing is off the table for re-imagining or re-inventing. There are no sacred cows – there is only letting the light shine in on imagination, love and hope



Consider: Are our current wellness products, services and experiences the most compelling to consumers of today and the future? What needs to be invented, eliminated, or reimagined? What values, ethics and responsibilities will conscious consumers demand of our wellness businesses? How are you taking care of yourself and your teams – self-care is infectious?



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