



Photo courtesy of Shea Homes

Trilogy at Vistancia

# Touching All The Bases

## WTS International plays on the cutting edge of the leisure industry

By RON ANGER

It's autumn, and I'm at the annual conference and trade show of the International Spa Association (ISPA), of which this magazine is a member. Amidst the tonics, oils and lotions on display on the exposition floor, I'm equally interested in the equipment, furnishings and technology available to our resort spa readers. It seems in the spa business there are treatments for this and products for that; many specialties are represented among our spa friends.

Around a corner, I come upon WTS International's simple, unassuming exhibit booth belying all that's in store for those who stop to inquire within. It's the same booth I spied last spring at the American Resort Developer's Association (ARDA), another resort industry organization that R+R supports, and at the Hospitality Design Show, too. While

you may not find many resort exhibitors finding equal success working trade shows for hotel and leisure designers or spa and fitness gurus, as well as resort timeshare executives, WTS International is equally at home in any of those venues. The word "international" is but one way of describing this unique company.

From its beginnings in 1973 as a tennis and racquet sports services company, WTS International has grown organically into one of the most respected consulting and management companies in the spa and leisure field. Gary Henkin, founder and president, says the full service multi-faceted company is defined by its three operations divisions – Spa; Health & Fitness; and Multi-use Activities – and by their comprehensive expertise in each of these areas.

"What makes WTS International truly unique is that we're not just a con-

sulting firm; we are indeed an operator of leisure businesses," says Henkin. "At our core, we're a management company, and we do a tremendous amount of consulting work, much of which can be precedent to managing those facilities; however, we're equally adept at doing either, or both. There are choices in consultants within the spa, health & fitness and recreation activities areas of hospitality, but there are precious few that are both a consulting company and a management company."

### Diversified Growth

The resort/hotel spa segment (including some day spas) has, for some time, represented the largest and fastest growing part of the WTS International's business, followed by its health & fitness division. Spa development at golf and country clubs is also a major element of its growing customer base. WTS

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International does not “brand” the spas they manage, nor do they take a cookie cutter approach to spa and leisure management. Rather, they operate each spa individually as their host properties are managed. It’s a strategy that ensures the focus is on the property’s needs rather than on the needs of the management company.

Currently behind the spa and fitness segments, but growing, is the “multi-use Activities” division of WTS International. Although it is the third-largest contributor of revenues, Henkin sees vast potential for this area.

“Within the next couple of years, we think we will experience significant growth in residential multi-use leisure and recreation facilities, similar to what we’re experiencing now in the spa area,” says Henkin. “The reason for our optimism is that more and more developers

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today are focusing on promoting lifestyles rather than their just being in the business of selling homes. As a result, they’re becoming ever more sophisticated and diverse in terms of the leisure and lifestyle options they’re offering.”

Henkin believes this is a matter of developers staying competitive. “As a result, they’re going to build more, and larger, leisure complexes,” he adds, “to include not just spa, fitness and aquatics, but a wide array of other types of spaces that can deliver programs, activities and events that are beyond the normal realm – movie theaters, music areas, billiards rooms, ceramics, arts and crafts studios, libraries and cyber cafés, food and beverage services, horticulture areas and children’s amenities.”

WTS International’s Activities division handles programs for seniors, active adults – the 55-plus age group that

is made up of more and more of the baby boom generation – and children’s programs. As more and more “boomers” move into the upper age ranges and increasingly seek lifestyle enhancements through recreation and leisure, the activities professionals with WTS International are presented with social, educational and structural program opportunities.

In order to fill staffing needs for its diverse range of management services, WTS International screens hundreds of applicants from the thousands of resumes received from all over the world each year. Henkin says he looks for individuals exhibiting core qualities such as an outgoing personality, terrific communication skills and a strong work ethic. Organizational and administrative capabilities and management skills are important as well, since the company offers professionals the opportunity to move up and around within the company’s various divisions. A spa director, for example, wishing to pursue opportunities at the corporate level, would have ample opportunity to do so at WTS International, without having to change companies. Despite a large transient population within the leisure profession, WTS International is known for its stable cadre of industry experts.

## Growing by Design

It becomes clear when talking with Henkin that he has keenly developed the art of listening, and WTS Interna-





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Peter Island Resort



the boom in spa development, WTS International has recently shown annual financial growth of above 25%, an indication that the company is extremely strong and well-positioned within the industry. As it continues to move into the luxury residential and multi-use resort segment, the domestic economy will play a role in the company's ability to improve on its current financial growth rate.

"We typically experience two types

of business opportunities," says Henkin. "The first is where a developer comes to us with a project in its early phases, whether a hotel/resort, residential community or private golf club, and says 'I know I'm going to have a spa, or a fitness center or community clubhouse, but I don't know how big it should be, where it should go or how it should be designed, or even whether it can ultimately be financially successful.' WTS International is brought in to help the developer understand those issues and

tional's transition over the years resulted from listening to customers, reading the signs in the marketplace and anticipating future trends. As a result of

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then we work with them to design the services, programs and facilities.”

Other growth opportunities for WTS International have included situations where they have developed credibility and trust as planners, and then have gone on to manage the pre-opening, and often operate and manage those facilities, too. Henkin says existing, but underperforming, spas and health/fitness facilities are another source of their growing business, where his company is asked to take over the daily management.

## All Things to All People

Henkin credits an infrastructure of exceptional individuals for the success of WTS International. He says it takes a committed group of professionals to stay focused within the diversity of the company. Yet, so broad is their ability to serve the many consulting and management needs within the resort industry, Henkin says that many resort development news reports gleaned from R+R Magazine have led to potential new business of some form, whether for consulting, design, pre-opening or management.

“WTS International sets itself apart because it is so unique,” says Henkin. “As owners and developers search for a company that is qualified to provide a needs analysis or feasibility study, yet one that can downshift into design consulting, shift again into pre-opening services that include staff selection, training and complete treatment menu development, S.O.P. development, operating budget and marketing plans, and then can shift yet again into day to day nuts and bolts turnkey operations and management, finding a company like WTS International is truly rare.” **R+R**

## RESOURCEBOX

Do you have questions or need assistance with spa and fitness management? Email Gary Henkin at [ghenkin@wtsinternational.com](mailto:ghenkin@wtsinternational.com) or phone 301-622-7800.



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