

StyleSpeak

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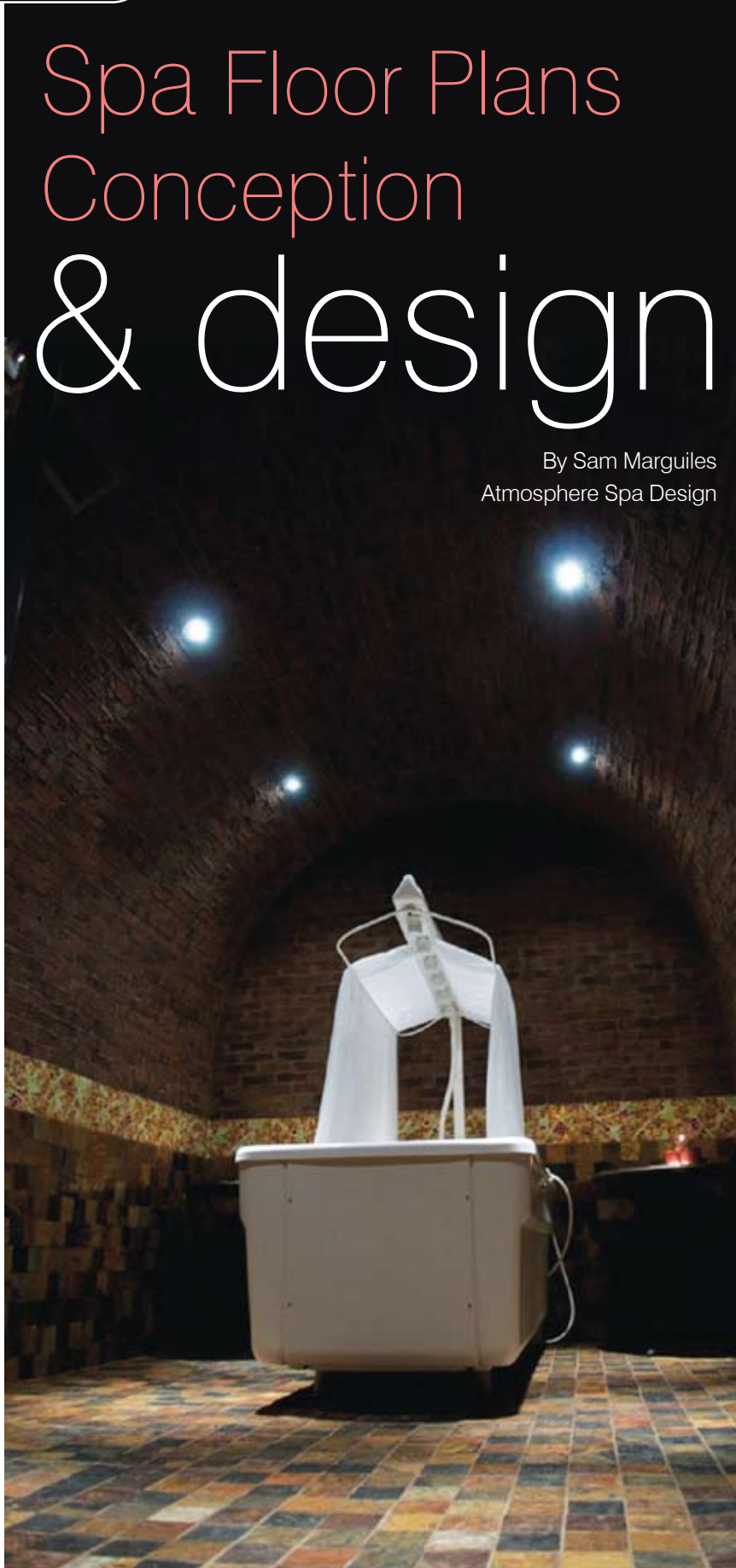
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Spa Floor Plans Conception & design

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When opening a new spa, one must have a business plan, a management system, a treatments menu, and a marketing plan. All these elements must be supported by a structure that will allow them to be useful. That structure is the physical existence of the spa. No matter how good your business plan and management team is, if your floor plan doesn't optimize the "utilization rate" of the surface within an intelligent traffic pattern, you will never have a healthy business.

I regularly receive plans from architectural firms to analyze. In most cases, the utilization rate of the square footage is rarely above 55% and the traffic pattern is not adequate for the needs of a spa, which brings the utilization rate even lower.

In a typical spa, there are two types of spaces. This is true for any type of spa, be it medical spa, salon/spa, fitness/spa, wellness/spa, destination spa, or any other type of spa. The spaces which are usually referred to as either "Income Generator (IG)," such as the treatment rooms, retail areas and such, or those that do not directly generate income (NIG=Non Income Generator), but without which the spa could not function. I have, for example, received some floor plans for assessment, where only about 22% of the square footage was IG. Try to imagine investing one million dollars in a venture where only \$220,000 will generate revenue?

The conception and design of your spa floor plan is what will have the most dramatic influence on the business viability of your spa. From a conceptual perspective, the floor plan must be based on four principles: The purpose

of the spa, the vision of the owner, the projected client experience and the technical requirements.

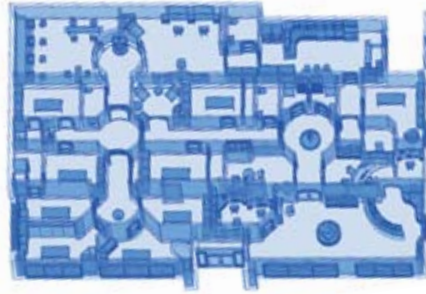
The purpose, the vision and the client experience must be defined prior to any other elements. Before anything else, your spa architectural designer must lead you in defining the real profile of your project. Then, you will develop together the core of the floor plan that is the “sequenced pattern of the spa life”.

Let’s take an example: If your sequence pattern begins with the check-in followed by changing in the locker-room, it must translate by a direct way from the check-in to the locker-room. If the locker rooms are separated from the front desk by treatment rooms or relaxation room, then your floor plan will not support the sequence pattern.

It is not only for the comfort of the client that this is important, but it is a critical issue for the general management of the appointments, as well as for the square footage utilization rate. If the floor plan and the traffic pattern don’t match, it will increase the average time per treatment. It might be only 2 to 3 minutes each time, but multiply this by the number of treatments per year, and you’ll see a significant loss in potential revenue. Also, this increased traffic will translate in a larger NIG surface.

More treatment rooms don’t always result in more treatments and more income. Sometimes, it just translates into higher operational costs. It is the utilization rate of each treatment room that makes all the difference. In order to attain the best utilization rate for each treatment room, your spa designer must conceive the plans with a deep knowledge of how a spa operates, what are the general and specific needs of a spa, as well as of your specific project, incorporating the correct amenities for the structure and creating the best traffic flow.

The floor plan is the most important element in the creation of the client experience. If the treatment rooms are too small, the reception area too cramped, or the corridors too narrow, the client’s experience will become negative. The key word here is “perception”. If the perception of the



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client is uncomfortable, it won't matter how good the treatments are. This will turn into a word-of-mouth nightmare and call for a constant and costly damage control.

Generally, a project begins with a business plan. When that plan is ready, one needs to build or to find an existing location that will meet the needs of the business plan and support its goals. It is necessary to allocate space for locker rooms, relaxation area, perhaps separate spaces for men and women, staff break room, dispensary, utility room, proper corridors, etc... All these additional spaces don't generate direct revenue, but without a corridor, there would be no access to the treatment rooms and without utility room, there would be no heat, AC, light or water for the treatment rooms. With just a few treatment rooms, it might not be necessary to provide locker rooms.

When, however, exceeding a certain number of rooms, in order to keep the services at an acceptable level, as well as the utilization rate of each room, you need to incorporate changing rooms or locker rooms; otherwise, the utilization ratio of treatments per room would drop dramatically. In other words, for every square foot that will generate direct income (IG), you need to add space that will not generate any direct income (NIG), but without which your spa will not be fully operational.

Every aspect in a spa must be thought through, in order to create the right experience for the clients. The principles of energy flow are an essential part, in the creation of this experience, by creating a structure within which the energy flow will be well balanced.



In conclusion, remember this: When opening a spa, you are investing most of your money (or of the banker's or investor's money) in the construction of the spa, which is based on the conception and design of the floor plan. Therefore, it is in the conception and design of the spa that you cannot afford to make any mistake. My best advice would be, to hire a good spa architectural designer. You should hire one, who is really specialized in the spa industry, who understands the principles of energy flow. If you are about to build or redesign a spa, open the door to the river and look at the water flowing evenly and harmoniously into the spa. **SS**

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