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## SHADES OF SERENITY

THE INDIGO SPA AT HILTON HEAD HEALTH (SC)



# Riding the Wave

A charming oceanside spa in an historic hotel rises to the top by connecting with guests and helping them to create lasting memories.

OFFERING STUNNING VIEWS OF THE Atlantic, the Ocean House (Watch Hill, RI), a grand Victorian hotel built in 1868, has long been a popular summer getaway. However, time finally took its toll on the historic hotel, and it was closed in 2003 after being deemed beyond repair. That proved to be the perfect opportunity to rebuild a new structure replicating the original exterior design and incorporating more than 5,000 salvageable artifacts and elements from the original hotel. The new Ocean House, which debuted in 2004, features more accommodations than its predecessor and introduced **OH! Spa**, a 12,000-square-foot oasis of relaxation. With a staff of 33, the spa has eight treatment rooms, men's and women's locker rooms with herbal



steam rooms, a two-lane indoor saltwater lap pool with an outdoor sundeck, a fitness center and movement studio, and more. A hit with spa-goers, OH! Spa celebrated its five-year anniversary in April. If history offers any hints to its future, the spa is poised to continue on its winning path. "Our success can be quantified by the fact that we achieved the incredible honor of becoming a *Forbes* Five-Star Spa after our first year," says spa manager Kimberly Gagliardo. "We have then

The majestic Ocean House and OH! Spa, with its relaxing views of the water, provide the perfect getaway.

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Soothing treatments (above) and products (top right) make the experience one to remember.

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gone on to maintain that distinction every year since. We are the only Five-Star Spa in the state of Rhode Island, and there are currently only 48 in the world that share this accolade.” Here, Gagliardo shares the formula for success.

#### How has OH! Spa continued to succeed over the years?

**A.** Our focus has always been about making a connection with our guests by providing exceptional service throughout their visit. We want to know who our guests are: Why they are joining us? Are they celebrating an occasion, looking for a break from stressful situations, coming for health and wellbeing, or perhaps even grieving? We try to tailor their experience to meet their mental and physical needs that day. We want to create beautiful memories that will keep our guests coming back.

#### What makes the spa special?

**A.** Our guests are a combination of locals, visitors from Boston and New York City, and discerning world travelers. We create a place of serenity

for our guests, where pampering and privacy are key. By focusing on quality over quantity, we are able to deliver on our guests’ very high expectations. For example, we offer spa services in 60- and 90-minute durations, because we know that this is what guests truly need. We build extra time in between services so our service providers can spend more time tending to their guests, presenting a beautiful tea and snack tray after their service and assisting them with anything at all that they may need.

#### How do you attract new and repeat clients and encourage them to visit?

**A.** We have attracted a large number of new clients through word of mouth and social media, as well as through the many accolades that we have received during our five years of operation. For example, we were honored to be named the number-three Top Hotel Spa in the Continental U.S. and number seven in the world by *Travel and Leisure* in 2013. The publicity from such designations has brought a tremendous amount of new business our way.

#### How do you use digital marketing and social media to boost business?

**A.** In our first years, our marketing was quiet and subtle. We focused on organic marketing, working a lot at developing relationships in the community, getting our name out through volunteer work with schools and groups. We found great success with this approach. We then developed

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“Our focus has always been about making a connection with our guests...”

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our Facebook page to reach a broad audience and are currently working on developing a presence on Instagram.

### How do you adapt to the seasons and what steps or cost-cutting measures do you employ?

**A.** Given that we're located at the beach, we initially thought that we'd be quite slow in the off-season. However, what we have found is there are a good deal of local people and folks within a two- to three-hour drive who are still looking for regular getaways near the shore. We also market to corporate groups during this time of year. Our corporate business has grown tremendously and carries us through the winter months. We're very proud to see many of the groups returning, making the Ocean House and OH! Spa home for their annual retreats.

### How do you keep the menu fresh and enticing?

**A.** We have a menu that changes seasonally. This keeps it fresh and interesting for both guests and service providers. We stay current with products containing the highest quality of ingredients and incorporate scents that truly complement the time of year. Guests become excited to return each season to experience the latest offerings.

### To what do you attribute the spa's success?

**A.** We are truly blessed to have an incredible staff at OH! Spa. They are fully dedicated to our mission to provide care and attention and quality over quantity. We have an amazing retention rate with staff—many have been here for four or five years—and have been able to create a true family atmosphere within a workplace. Their skill and expertise is only part of the equation for our success. Their love and passion for what they do transcends into everything. The pride they have for all we've created and accomplished together is something I have never before witnessed. The guests feel that warmth and energy, and it brings them back to us time and time again.

### What plans do you have for the future?

**A.** We hope to continue to grow yet maintain our very special sense of privacy and serenity for our guests. We have been updating our facility to stay ahead in the market. This season, the spa is undergoing a soft remodel. This "facelift" to the spa includes an exciting partnership with Technogym, where we have replaced all of our gym equipment with Technogym machines, including its signature strength line. Moving into the future, we plan to continue making improvements to the facility and offerings to keep interest piqued and to keep guests well beyond satisfied.—*Heather Mikesell*

"We stay current with products containing the highest quality of ingredients and incorporate scents that truly complement the time of year."



The pool area features French doors that open to the Seaside Terrace's sundeck.