

12/10

The leading business, design
and product resource for
the kitchen & bath trade

www.kitchenbothdesign.com

Kitchen & Bath design news



Custom Appeal

KBDN's 2010 most-asked-about products as tallied by
reader request spotlight customization, sustainability

COVER STORY:
Custom Colors Add
Drama to Kitchen
PAGE 34

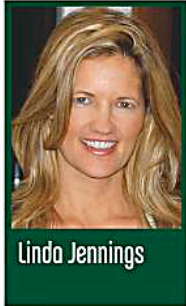
Hardware Helps
Rejuvenate
Dated Spaces
PAGE 44

Outdoor Living
Spaces Add
Indoor Amenities
PAGE 40



Wellness Quest Spurs Rethinking of the Bath

"We all have the potential to be balanced in our lives, but we seem to have lost our way in this crazy world," said noted psychotherapist Dr. Emmanuel Poirel, Ph.D. "Stress is inevitable in the modern, fast-paced world, and, unfortunately, it has a significant impact on our relationships, work and health."



Linda Jennings

Given the economic conditions and the fact that most of us are doing twice the work for half the money, stress levels are at an all-time high. The result is increased illness and corporate burnout.

Financial safety nets are gone. We share an ongoing concern about our economic bottom line, the stability of our jobs and businesses and the security, health and happiness of our families. As a nation, we are experiencing a perpetual state of movement with no rest in site.

This changing dynamic creates new opportunities for decorative plumbing and hardware showrooms looking to capitalize on the need for soothing bath spaces, while improving the quality of life for stressed out consumers.

"The starting point is to put things in perspective," says Poirel, a strategic consultant who specializes in occupational health issues. "Changing perspective means realizing the necessity of making changes. Wellness and work/life balance can be achieved through baby steps, but one has to start by taking at least one step. Small changes can make big differences."

NEW RULES

As an industry, we need to embrace the fact that consumer needs have transformed dramatically over the last few years. In the past, the buzz was all about luxury. But that word – and the indulgence it represents – has lost its appeal.

Technology promised to make our lives better, yet we e-mail instead of calling, text instead of speaking and visit Web sites instead of meeting people. This lack of human connection adds to

our stress and feelings of isolation. Thanks to technology, we are now expected to be connected 24-7 and it's stressing us out. The time is right for a reconnect in all aspects of our lives and the way we do business.

BACK TO CENTER

There's a growing trend toward wellness – a holistic approach to physical, mental and emotional health that encompasses every aspect of life. And while the movement is still in its infancy, bath designers and showrooms have an opportunity to embrace this movement to help customers deal with stress and achieve personal balance.

It goes much deeper than simply installing a therapeutic showerhead. We need to fundamentally rethink the entire bathroom and realize how it can evolve into a haven for wellness.

We need to fundamentally rethink the entire bathroom and realize how it can evolve into a haven for wellness.

While creating a therapy center at home is not a new idea, it is gaining importance. Investing in a personal wellness center is an opportunity to create focus and bring balance to our lives.

RETHINKING THE BATH

As a result of this trend, new products and even product categories are springing up to address the growing interest in wellness.

One such product, BainUltra's Vedana, represents the first product of its kind devoted solely to wellness. It's not a tub, shower, sink or vanity. In fact, it doesn't even dispense water. It is a therapeutic care center that can be positioned anywhere in the bath or shower environment. Vedana provides five therapies – aromatherapy, chromatherapy, light therapy, sound therapy and heat therapy – to benefit overall well being.

According to Henry Brunelle, president of BainUltra, "Vedana

serves as a retreat where you can mix and match therapies to create a personalized session that meets your health needs on any given day."

Indeed, numerous companies are becoming more focused on creating products that promote greater health and well-being, and an aging demographic suggests that this trend will only grow stronger in the coming years.

Showrooms are increasingly getting on board with this trend. For instance, Richmond Tile & Bath, based in Staten Island, NY, has already discovered the benefits of a wellness theme when it comes to improving sales. Established 37 years ago, the firm began selling thermo massage air baths as early as 1998, along with therapeutic accessories such as essential oils, audio therapy and colored LEDs.

"When you explain to customers that these products are not just 'bells and whistles' but actual

therapies that have real-life benefits, they become irresistible to the end user, not just an empty promise," said Anthony S. Vanario, general manager.

"The timing for this concept is perfect," he continues. "With the American health care system in a mess and our high-stress lifestyles, many of us would benefit greatly by having a relaxing sanctuary in which to reset our inner consciousness."

It will take progressive showrooms to embrace this life/balance concept, as it's not for everyone. Some, like Richmond, are already moving in this direction. For those that do, the rewards could be plentiful financially. More importantly, they will offer a service that could be life changing for their customers.

For those looking to take advantage of the wellness trend, a good start would be to search out concepts that make sense for the future and offer customers a new way to look at the bath as they

follow their quest for wellness.

Budgeting the time and money to create a personal wellness oasis at home can have a significant impact on every aspect of life, such as increasing productivity at work, promoting a more relaxed sensibility in personal relationships and fostering healthy benefits like stimulating endorphins, lowering blood pressure and improving circulation.

It should be noted that a new emphasis on wellness does not come at the expense of other consumer trends, such as energy efficiency, sustainability or multi-generational design. Rather, it is a natural evolution of these trends.

Using natural sustainable materials, respecting energy sources and enhancing accessibility for growing families are high priorities that need to be recognized and incorporated within new therapeutic wellness concepts.

It's time to look at technologies that help our clients to balance their lives and invest in their personal well-being.

President Lyndon B. Johnson was quoted as saying, "Every man has a right to a Saturday night bath." Water is the basis of our existence, and it is there we can find renewal.

Linda Jennings is president of Jennings & Company, a Sarasota, FL-based public relations, advertising and marketing agency that specializes exclusively in the decorative plumbing and luxury hardware industry. Jennings is also a member of the DPHA and serves on the association's Editorial Advisory Committee.

DPH Perspectives is published regularly in Kitchen & Bath Design News under an exclusive strategic alliance with the Decorative Plumbing & Hardware Association (DPHA).

Read past columns and features and send us your comments about this article and others by logging onto the Kitchen & Bath Design News Web site:

www.kitchenbathdesign.com