



FINDING YOUR 'FIT' IN A SPA

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You wouldn't buy a pair of shoes without trying them on, would you? Shopping for a new workplace isn't all that different from shopping for a new pair of shoes. In either case, you would likely consider size, appearance, comfort, cost and overall "fit."

Size does matter, both in shoes and in spas, and there's considerable difference among four common types of spas: day spas, medical spas, resort/hotel spas and destination spas. The size of a spa greatly influences the type of work you can expect and the scope of services offered.

A day spa is typically small and may offer a variety of esthetic/cosmetic and prevention/wellness services that are within the scope of practice of its staff but do not require on-site medical supervision. Day spas make up 80% of the more than 18,000 spas in the U.S.¹ If you prefer to build your own client base and focus on a limited range of services, then a day spa may suit you best.

A medical spa is a facility that operates under the full-time, on-site supervision of a licensed healthcare professional to provide comprehensive medical and

wellness care, integrating spa services with traditional and complementary therapies.² If you have medical training or an interest in therapies following the medical model, you might look to the medical spas which now number about 1,400, more than twice the number in 2003.

Resort/hotel spas and destination spas are typically the largest of all spas, in both size and number of staff. Resort/hotel spas make up nine percent of the industry and destination spas represent less than one percent. These spas offer a wider range of professional services and are typically more luxurious, catering to guests who want a unique, pampering experience. Despite the stringent standards with regard to licensure, certification and continuing education, these spas appeal to therapists who desire a steady income, a pristine work environment, opportunities for continued career development and advancement, and other incentives and benefits that a large organization can provide.

Many larger spas offer attractive compensation packages to lure top-notch staff. With over 138 million spa visits in the U.S. in 2007,

revenue is climbing, and spas such as ours at The Grove Park Inn Resort and Spa in Asheville, NC continue to enjoy an expanding client base and increased profitability.

Just as appearance and comfort are important in selecting shoes, these factors also weigh heavily in choosing a work environment. Let's face it – image is important to most of us, and we have certain expectations about how our workplace should look and how it operates. Comfort has to do with how we feel physically, emotionally, and mentally. It just feels better to be in an appealing, nurturing setting surrounded by nice things and happy, competent people. Think of your level of comfort in your current workplace and ask yourself "Do I feel proud to work here? Is this a business with a good reputation for both customer service and staff satisfaction? Is my workspace pleasant and inviting? Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my best work? Can I support the mission and purpose of the spa? Do I like and respect my supervisor and coworkers?"

Cost is an important consideration in choosing a workplace. What

would be the cost of making a change? How will your cost of living be affected? Will the commute time to work be acceptable? Does the base salary meet your requirements? Are incentives in place for earning above the base?

The final factor to consider in selecting both shoes and a spa as a place to work is overall "fit." This means looking inward to determine your own needs and expectations, then looking at all the criteria – size, comfort, appearance, and cost – to see if you've found a match. In a spa, would you have the opportunity to do your best work each day? Would your personal and professional development be encouraged? Would your opinions count? Will there be a commitment among the staff to perform quality work? How would your

contribution to the spa's success be recognized or rewarded?

Before you step into what you think is the ideal workplace, get very clear on what you need, both personally and professionally, to feel good about going to work each day. Be a "secret shopper" for a new job and visit, as a guest, the spas that appeal to you most. Talk to people who work there and ask the questions that will help you decide if the spa meets your needs and supports your career goals. For spas that pass your initial test, ask for an interview and go armed with questions. A good interview will give you a realistic job preview, pointing out the pros and cons of the job.

If you are shopping for a new job, examine your options among spas.

There is a shortage of nearly 24,000 massage therapists in the U.S. and 6,600 openings for spa directors and managers.³ As the industry expands, so do the opportunities to take your career to the next level. By being a wise shopper, you just may land your dream job. It's a buyer's market for spa professionals, and both large and small spas have many shoes to fill.

1. International SPA Association, U.S. Spa Industry Update, 2008. www.experienceispa.com

2. Johnson, E.M. & Redman, B.M., SPA: A Comprehensive Introduction. (Lexington, KY: International SPA Association Foundation, 2008), p. 80.

3. Johnson & Redman, p. 119.

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A massage therapist for more than 20 years, Jaime is a Vice Chair of the North Carolina Board of Massage and Bodywork and serves on the Executive board of International SPA Association (ISPA). Jaime is a noted national and international speaker in the hospitality industry, and Executive Director of a world-class resort spa ranked #6 in North America and #13 in the World. In supervising 50+ massage therapists, Jaime instills an attention-to-detail philosophy of "every experience counts" that pervades all aspects of The Spa at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, NC.

Learn more about The Spa at
The Grove Park Inn at groveparkinn.com.

