Some things in business can be fine-tuned and tweaked to the ultimate degree – inventories, client databases, KPIs – but people tend not to respond so well to micro-management. In order to perform to their very best, aestheticians, therapists, receptionists, fitness and yoga coaches need to be inspired by their managers. Working with spa teams, I have noticed that motivation is a door that can only be opened from the inside.

The Global Mentorship Pilot Program, launched at the 2014 Global Spa & Wellness Summit in Marrakech, aimed to inspire those who aspire to make a difference. We wanted to help high-potential spa managers become real spa leaders. So, we scouted talented spa managers with a minimum of two years experience, and, using the ISPA body of knowledge, matched them with seasoned spa directors with a minimum of five years' experience, who generously offered their time, active-listening skills and guidance.

Never more than now has this programme been needed, as the spa industry continues to grow at an unprecedented pace. According to the Global Wellness Institute in SRI International’s 2014 Report The Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor, the global spa industry grew 58% from $60 billion in 2007 to $94 billion in 2013, with a 47% increase in spa locations.

The flipside of this impressive growth is that the industry really does not have enough qualified staff to fill its leadership positions in future. In the 2014 ISPA Annual State of the Industry Survey, 24% of respondents cited staff skills or recruitment difficulties – or both – as key challenges facing spas.

These revealing statistics tell a story which certainly catalysed the formation of the Global Mentorship Pilot Program, as part of the Global Wellness Institute’s Global Career Development Initiative.

Leading by example
Although mentorship programmes can be found in large corporations, this was the first of its kind across the spa industry. The pilot took off with 17 outstanding spa directors, who worked with 32 mentees from 22 countries over two three-month periods, with two calls or face-to-face meetings per month.

Rather than just answering questions as experts, mentors empowered their mentees by encouraging them to dig deep to find new perspectives and creative options in the challenges they faced.

We also launched a dedicated website with a wealth of resources, profiles and online application forms.

This year’s participant questionnaires found that the areas in which our mentees most required nurturing included leadership and management, and human resources. In addition, the positive feedback we received has encouraged us to increase the scheme to two six-month sessions next year (January-June and July-December), thereby offering an even stronger, unique opportunity to grow and strengthen those on whom the future of the spa and wellness industry depends.

Thanks to the active support of Biologique Recherche, Gharieni & Altearah the 2016 programme will still be free for mentees. For more information on how to apply, visit www.mentorshipEvidence.com