A Seamless Blend of Technology and Luxury

in the Modern Spa Space

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& Restaurant

It's hard to find the words for the feeling I got when I first walked onto the grounds of the Farmhouse Inn in Sonoma, California. It was a place with deep roots that was ripe for change, and it was nothing short of magical.

The Farmhouse Inn has a unique story. The Bartolomei family became winemakers when they first moved to the region, and five generations later, in 1911, they started a business. Brother and sister Joe and Catherine Bartolomei bought a property to continue the tradition, and they turned it into one of the highest-rated hotels in the country. Their goal was to foster the Sonoma lifestyle of stewardship and a commitment to the land—in stark contrast to the increasingly manic lifestyle many of us lead. The Bartolomeis have been phenomenally successful in establishing a place that is relaxing and enjoyable, a place where people feel closer to the land and community.

When I first met Joe Bartolomei to interview for the role, I knew that I'd found a heart-centered place with people who focused on the good of the world and on customer service. They wanted to find a particular person to create the vision for the spa, and I was the right fit. Starting a new job often comes with a lot of uncertainty, but between the environment and the people, I felt I was in a place where I had always belonged.

FINDING THE RIGHT SPA SOFTWARE

When I arrived, the spa used Mindbody, a very popular platform in the wellness industry. Mindbody works for wellness appointments and classes, but it isn't the right solution for every circumstance. The platform is limited when it comes to spa services, and didn't have the kind of analytics or forecasting capabilities that I wanted for the Farmhouse Inn Spa.

For more than a decade, I had used Book4Time, the first cloud-based business management software designed with the spa and wellness industry in mind. Nearly every corporate spa where I had worked used this software, but I didn't want that to influence my decision. I set out to find out whether there was something better on the market that would work for a smaller, less corporate facility. I questioned whether Book4Time was too advanced and premium for what we needed. It turns out, Book4Time offered all the features I wanted, even on a small scale.

As much as we were invested in the physical spa experience, we also wanted the spa to be profitable. I'm analytical, I love numbers, and I love ensuring that my team has everything they need to succeed. That means making sure they can focus on the clients, not on technology. I pitched Book4Time as a user-friendly platform that could grow with the Farmhouse Inn Spa. It was also cloud-based, which would be a big bonus as we scaled.

I felt strongly about the platform, but I like getting team input and buy-in from the beginning of any project. People are more accepting of change if they have a say in the changes that are made. To get that buy-in, I included three teams in the demo: the concierge, our reservation staff, and the spa team. When the demo ended, all three departments loved what they had seen. There was no pushback as we made the final decision to implement Book4Time.

STRONG SUPPORT DURING A TUMULTUOUS TIME

I started as Wellness Director at the Farmhouse Inn Spa in February 2021. The spa had been closed during the early stages of the pandemic but was set to reopen in March 2021. Getting the green light for Book4Time from staff and management was easy, but now I had just a few short weeks to implement our new platform.

Everything went smoothly, thanks to Book4Time's support and dedication. I may have a lot of experience with the system, but I am not experienced on the backend, so there was a lot that I didn't know. Their help was invaluable, and even on short notice, the team jumped right in and moved quickly to get everything done.
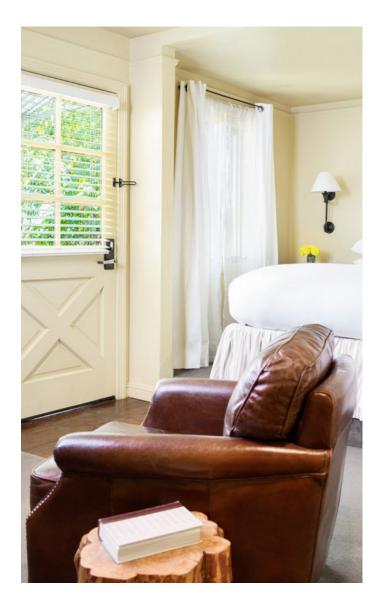
This was especially helpful when it came to integrations with other systems, such as our POS. Farmhouse Inn outsources our IT department, so I didn't know the answers to a lot of technical questions. But Book4Time's launch team took the lead, complete with due dates and reminders. If I got stuck or didn't know something, they helped us figure out how to move forward. They didn't let anything fall through the cracks, and they didn't let us fail.

This goes for training as well. A lot of the training was virtual and we also had a manual to follow, so after every training there was something for us to practice. I thought I was a master at Book4Time, but I didn't have experience with setup from start to finish. With Book4Time's help, we familiarized ourselves with the ins and outs of creating packages, discounts, and inventory management. They made everything simple.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR TRANSFORMATION

INSIGHTS INTO YOUR SPA GUESTS CAN HELP DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO BOOST DEMAND FOR OFF-PEAK TIMES.

Book4Time gave us a solid foundation from which to operate. It streamlined all of our processes, making interdepartmental coordination easier.

One of our most prevalent use cases is online booking. Some spas are still strangely resistant to online booking. That never made sense to me, since many guests want to set up their appointment in a couple of clicks when they think of it, rather than calling or visiting the spa. Book4Time offers a simple, seamless online booking option for guests. By letting people book their own appointments, our staff spends less time on the phone and can focus more on the in-person experience.

We use Book4Time's customer note feature to see everything from a customer's shoe and robe size to their preferred tea. We want to help guests slow down and enjoy more human contact, and that involves feeling cared for. It makes the entire spa experience less transactional, which leads to increased customer retention and revenue.

Book4Time has also improved our reporting. It's so easy to generate pretty much any report you need. For now, we use reports to forecast appointments and activities, and that forecasting allows us to easily determine staffing needs. We also use Book4Time to make and receive all of our purchase orders and make adjustments as we go. Having a single system to stay on top of everything in real time avoids the discrepancies that arise with a more lax management method.

We do a lot of staff performance and analysis with the platform, too. The team can quickly access their stats and appointments and see other information as well, such as how much retail they sell. It's a great motivation tool for the team, because they can see areas where they want to improve.

Using the dashboard feature, I can quickly assess information and share detailed data with non-spa management. Spa directors face a lot of pressure to meet certain metrics and ensure spas are profitable, and Book4Time shows why a spa is doing well and identifies areas and opportunities to improve services and expand reach. As an example, we can see that our average rate for services as of September 2021 was $239, and 97% of our sales are from hotel guests. While that's great, that means we aren't connecting with many local residents. Knowing this, we can start campaigns to bring more locals to the spa. This is a huge opportunity to potentially boost demand in the community during off-peak times. Many platforms don't have a way to see opportunities for growth without a lot of research, but Book4Time presents data that's clear and actionable.

A FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS

Book4Time fades into the background, allowing our staff to focus on what matters instead of spending a lot of time on the phone or figuring out technology. And what matters is giving our guests a more personalized experience.

People think that technology is at odds with a luxury spa experience, but I've repeatedly found that not to be the case. Book4Time demonstrates a beautiful way to merge finance, technology, and luxury in a seamless, user-friendly way. It's brought the Farmhouse Inn Spa into the digital age, keeping up with the needs and expectations of our guests.

To learn more about how Book4Time can help your spa & hospitality business thrive visit **www.book4time.com** and book a demo today!