



CASE STUDY

Happier Staff,

Increased Efficiency,
and a Four-Star Rating:
The Benefits of an
Operations Upgrade



Shane Bird
Director of Spa Operations at Skana Spa

Everything should feel effortless and enjoyable. On the back end, however, spa operations can be anything but serene.

I have a lot of experience with spa operations, having worked in this business for 22 years. Today, I'm the director of spa operations at **Turning Stone Resort and Casino** in central New York. We have two spas here at Turning Stone: our day spa and salon, **Ahsi**, and our resort spa, **Ska:ná**. I oversee everything from menus to staff, facilities to the guest experience—anything that encompasses the spa experience at our resort. I joined Turning Stone with a very clear three-point mandate: make the spas profit table, improve staff satisfaction, and get us rated in **Forbes Travel Guide**.



When a guest steps into a spa, they expect peace, serenity, tranquility, and relaxation.



AN EXPERIENCE MARRED BY FRUSTRATION AND INEFFICIENCY

I had my work cut out for me. Back in 2013, there were times that the spa lobbies would be completely empty. Part of that stemmed from a lack of brand presence and brand awareness, everything from how the spas were marketed to how the phone systems worked. There was one phone number for Ahsi and another for Ska:ná, and often guests would call one, not knowing the other existed. The number for Ska:ná was only publicized in one guest book at the all-suite hotel and nowhere else. Right out of the gate, I combined phone systems to a central number, where guests could choose whether they wanted to book a service at Ahsi or Ska:ná.

Staff makes or breaks the **guest experience** at a spa, and there was a lot of discontent among our staff. They felt they didn't have a voice. So another one of my top priorities was to engage the staff, listen to their needs, and address their pain points.

One of those pain points was the laborious software that we used. It wasn't integrated with anything else; there was a separate application to book services, another system for POS, and yet another for payroll. Doing payroll itself was monstrous. It used to take me six hours just to reconcile providers' commissions, and I had to do that every week. It was also frustrating for our finance or IT departments; a server-based platform like the one we used meant the IT staff had to constantly monitor, maintain, and troubleshoot on-premise servers.

The guests also felt the impact of our inefficient system. Not only were they in contact with frustrated staff, but during the checkout process, they would have to wait in line to sign a receipt like they were at a sandwich-making station—a stark contrast to the luxurious experience they received during a treatment. It wasn't how we wanted them to end their experience with us.

A NEW SYSTEM, AN EASY SELL

I first encountered **Book4Time** back in 2010. I was the director of another spa, and we wanted to implement an online booking system. Almost everything back then was server based, and Book4Time's software was ahead of the curve. After exploring the market, I was convinced that a **cloud-based platform** would give us more flexibility. We wouldn't have all our data on site, but on the other hand, our IT team wouldn't have to maintain servers.

**A CLOUD-BASED
BOOKING PLATFORM
GIVES PROVIDERS
FLEXIBILITY, AND
ELIMINATES THE NEED
TO MAINTAIN SERVERS.**

By coincidence, I met Book4Time founder Roger Sholanki, and we had some really great conversations. His perspective and goals meshed well with my vision for a platform, so I implemented Book4Time at that location. It was a great success. Fast forward 10 years, and I knew that's exactly what we needed at Turning Stone.

The success of a spa often comes down to incredible executives and general managers. I proposed Book4Time to the Turning Stone's executive team, outlining how it would improve the experience for guests and staff, as well as our bottom line.

They trusted me and were supportive, but they also wanted IT to weigh in. It was a great move and an easy sell—I just told IT they wouldn't have to babysit someone else's property anymore. Sure, they'd have to keep an eye on interfaces, but they wouldn't be responsible for maintaining and troubleshooting those servers like in the past. IT's response was, "Please and thank you. When do we start?"

Implementation was very simple. I earmarked some of my staff as trainers, then Book4Time took us through the ins and outs of the system, explaining how to create facilities, services, users, and permissions. We then put everyone through the process and went through a dry run before we went live. The entire setup only took a little more than a week.

I was comfortable with launching so quickly not only because I was familiar with the platform, but because I knew Book4Time has a built-in help centre. If any of us forgot our training or how to run a certain report, we had access to that built-in help desk. That gave us all peace of mind.

INTEGRATIONS THAT ENHANCE SCALABILITY

Because our spas are part of a larger property, we already have purchasing and retail software. Book4Time's multiple functions **seamlessly integrate** with our existing systems, presenting a unified façade for our guests. For example, we don't use Book4Time's **membership and gift card** modules but guests can easily see and use their membership or gift card through the Book4Time interface—they don't know we have separate systems working behind the scenes.

ROBUST REPORTING CAPABILITIES ALLOW YOU TO SEE OPERATIONS AT A GLANCE AND MAKE FAST DECISIONS AROUND PRICING AND SERVICES.

Before we implemented Book4Time, we couldn't even have a conversation about guest preferences because we didn't have adequate reporting

capabilities. Book4Time has robust **reporting functionality** that allows us to see operations at a glance. Initially I was focused on the basics: What are our top sellers? Who are our most frequent guests? When are our busiest times? From there, it's easy to make decisions and ask more complicated questions, such as: How do we incentivize our top guests to bring a friend? If our weekends are becoming busy, should we charge more for services during those times? How much? If we see services are underperforming, it's an easy decision to eliminate them. Likewise, we can create new services based on the ones that consistently perform well. With Book4Time, it's easy to see trends and make fast decisions around incentives, pricing, and services.

Even though we don't use all of the platform's functionalities, that's part of its appeal. It's not a one-size-fits-all solution, and even though it works for us as part of a larger organization, it can also work for smaller spas. Other divisions at Turning Stone all have their own systems specific to their domain, such as purchasing or rewards. If you've ever worked with finance folk, you know you don't want to move their cheese, so to speak. It's nice to have a platform that interfaces with other systems without disrupting anyone else.

BENEFITS FOR GUESTS AND STAFF ALIKE

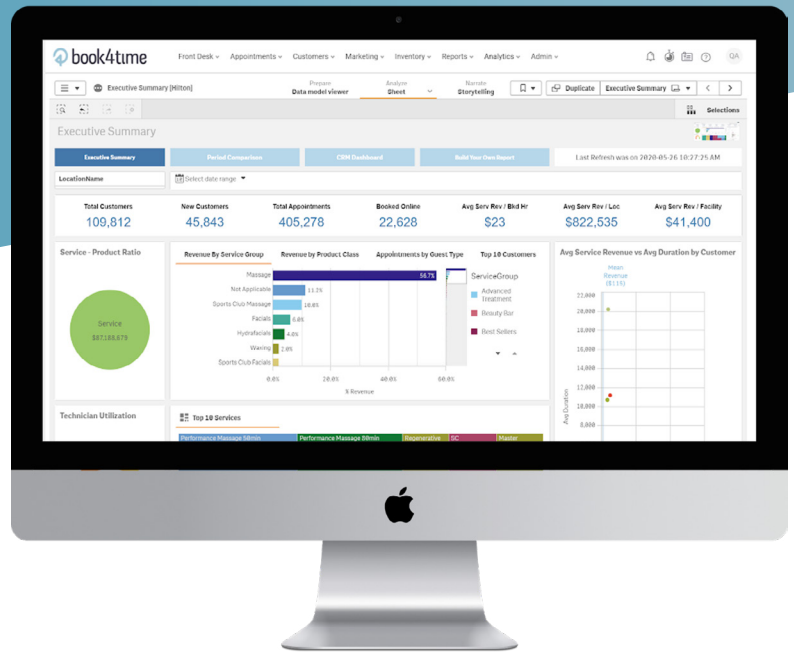


Book4Time has had such a positive impact on our operations. Our guests can now book online 24/7 instead of waiting for the hours where someone would be at reception. Pre-pandemic, 10% of our guests booked through our online portal, but now that number has jumped to 20%. Guests also don't have to wait for printouts after finishing their treatments; it's all done online.

Having remote access has also been a big advantage to staff and service providers during the pandemic. We reopened after lockdown in June 2020. People have been in and out of the facility to comply with our new distancing and occupancy guidelines, but regardless of where people are, they can log into the system and run their own reports, see their commissions, and schedule appointments. I've been under quarantine myself and had to work from home, and there have been times where staff members went to my office to connect with me, assuming I was on site based on my activity in the system.

Multiply that experience by the 100 staff members across facilities, finance, and IT who have increased access to the system. Our providers can now see what they have scheduled for any given day and whether there have been any last-minute changes. Before, they could only discover this information once they arrived on site. Service providers can also see their commissions much more clearly. The six hours it used to take to perform payroll? That's a 15-minute process now, and the burden has been entirely removed from the finance staff.

**THE SIX HOURS IT USED
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A GAME-CHANGER FOR OUR ORGANIZATION

The market has changed since I first started using Book4Time over 10 years ago. There's a lot more competition among cloud-based platforms, and spas have ample choice. I continue to choose Book4Time not only because of how **user-friendly it is for guests, staff, and providers**, but also because of their excellent service and support.

When we were shut down during the pandemic, the Book4Time team was in touch with me to discuss how they could help when we reopened. When confronted with new customer needs that a software

platform doesn't address, some companies will put their hands in the air and say, "That's just how our software is." Book4Time has always been malleable in that regard, reaching out to me for feedback on ways to improve their product.

The changes we've made have led the Forbes Travel Guide to award Ska:ná with a four-star rating, the only spa in central New York to receive that recognition. The spas at Turning Stone gained ease and efficiency at every level, and Book4Time has brought us into the 21st century.