

# spa business

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# spa people

I'm proud to share our acquisition of Fivelements Retreats publicly for the first time

**Ingo Schweder**, founder and CEO, GOCO Hospitality

**"I**'m genuinely thrilled to say out loud for the first time that Fivelements Retreats is now part of the GOCO family," Ingo Schweder exclusively tells *Spa Business*. The founder and CEO of GOCO Hospitality proudly reveals that the group acquired the Bali wellness and healing sanctuary last year and is preparing it for a relaunch and global scalability.

With a career spanning four decades, Schweder has contributed to 400-plus projects with a global portfolio valued at US\$4.3 billion (€3.69 billion, £3.22 billion). He's one of the most influential voices in the spa, wellness and hospitality industry, having developed one of the first-ever hotel spa concepts for Mandarin Oriental and playing a pivotal role in other brands such as Oberoi and Ananda in the Himalayas.

Glen Ivy Hot Springs, an iconic thermal resort in California, USA, is another key property for the group. Schweder bought the site in 2016 and brought in GOCO

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Schweder has  
contributed to 400-  
plus projects worldwide





The original Fivements is based in Bali. Sites in Koh Samui, Montenegro and Spain are in the pipeline

## Our top priority is to evolve Fivements into a scalable global wellness hospitality brand

as the management company to transform it with European standards of hospitality and sustainability.

GOCO also owns Horwath HTL Health & Wellness, the wellness division of one of the world's largest and oldest hospitality consulting firms.

In 2023, GOCO entered into a joint venture with Fullerton Fund Management – a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore's sovereign wealth fund – to accelerate its expansion into wellness real estate and longevity hospitality segments across the globe.

Here, Schweder shares the values, experiences and insights that have shaped his leadership journey.



A sneak peek at the new-look Fivements brand ahead of its relaunch

### What drew you to Fivements?

With its deep respect for local traditions and soul-driven approach to wellness, Fivements is a brand we've long looked up to. What started as admiration from afar has now evolved into something far greater and I'm proud to share our acquisition publicly for the first time.

### What are your plans for the brand?

To evolve Fivements from a curated boutique portfolio into a scalable global wellness hospitality brand with a presence in iconic destinations such as Bali, Koh Samui, Montenegro and Spain.

We'll relaunch the brand in late 2026 and the next two to three years

will be pivotal. The plan is to launch in multiple locations from the start, bringing a brand ecosystem to life across continents, cultures and communities with a unified vision and deep operational alignment.

### What's the rollout strategy?

We're building the platforms with a cross-cultural team of around 1,500 people. But the approach is not formulaic; every new opening will have extraordinary architecture, advanced healing modalities and precision-based, tech-integrated wellness programmes.

Sustainability will also be central, from energy optimisation





Each Fivements will have extraordinary architecture and advanced healing modalities

- and wastewater reduction to community upliftment.

For me personally, this journey is deeply meaningful. I do this work because I've experienced first-hand the power of wellness. The upcoming retreats and wellness communities will be living expressions of that, spaces that help people heal.

#### How did your wellness journey start?

From a very personal place. Over 30 years ago, I was diagnosed with stage

4 cancer and given weeks to live. That experience transformed my perspective on health, empathy and purpose. During recovery, I realised hotels needed a stronger wellness platform and hospitals needed a better hospitality platform. That was the seed for GOCO Hospitality – to build a company that could bridge these worlds.

#### What's the ethos of GOCO?

It's a one-stop platform for wellness hospitality, offering end-to-end

services from strategy and concept through to development, management and operations.

Every project begins with research and authenticity, looking at history and best practices. Whether that's revitalising the heritage of a property such as Glen Ivy Hot Springs, which dates back to 1860 or introducing longevity and regenerative wellness, driven by authenticity, accessibility and cultural relevance. Wellness should not only be for the affluent. It should be experiential, sustainable and inclusive across cultures and continents.

GOCO was recently recognised as the Best Global Spa Development Group by the World Luxury Spa Awards. But this recognition did not happen overnight and it's the result of hundreds of people doing exceptional work across multiple countries, cultures and projects. The award validates our work and opens doors to attract top talent, trusted collaborators and long-term investors. Most importantly, it pushes us to raise the bar even further.

#### How are you leveraging technology in your offerings?

We will embrace tools such as wearables, biohacking, telomere and genetic testing and precision medicine, all of which may be integrated into the wellness programmes we design and manage globally.



## We've developed regenerative sustainability guidelines, benchmarked against leading brands



A cancer diagnosis sparked Schweder's mission to build stronger wellness and hospitality platforms

However, for us, technology is a powerful enabler, not the headline act. It can support diagnostics, personalise guest journeys and improve operational efficiency, but the essence of great hospitality still lies in genuine human interactions.

### How crucial is sustainability to you?

It's always been a core value for GOCO, but we're now going beyond the basics. Over the past two and a half years, we've developed our own regenerative sustainability guidelines benchmarked against the biggest and most renowned ESG-supportive hospitality brands. There's also a comprehensive manual that

touches every area of design, development and daily operations.

Personally, I've taken these principles into my own life. My holiday home, constructed from natural materials, is fully off-grid, powered by solar energy batteries, with its own water harvesting and purification systems. I even built in EMF-reduction technology so I can shut off all wireless signals with a single touch. These are not luxuries; they're necessities

for a healthier way of living and they inform the blueprint of what we bring into our commercial projects as well.

### How do you manage such a diverse and global portfolio?

Although GOCO Hospitality, Glen Ivy Hot Springs, Horwath HTL Health & Wellness and Fivelements operate in different sectors across different regions, they're actually highly complementary. ▶

Authenticity and sustainability are key in every project







Schweder bought the iconic Glen Ivy Hot Springs in California in 2016

- What unites them is a shared commitment to wellness, quality and transformative guest experiences.

The key is creating cross-functional teams that are empowered to take ownership and drive innovation. Hiring the right talent is paramount to this and I deliberately surround myself with people who have unique skills and perspectives and who can do things I cannot do.

To stay aligned across the organisation, we host daily learning time sessions. These last 15 to 30 minutes and bring together team members across our companies to reflect on a wide range of topics, from design principles and wellness trends to hospitality service, teamwork and quality management. It's a small but powerful ritual that reinforces our values and keeps us sharp.

#### What's shaped your leadership style?

For me, authenticity is everything. For example, in Thailand, most people would typically go out for street food at lunch. Instead, a private chef in our Bangkok office prepares fresh, organic meals for our team every day. We also organise regular spa days in

## Legacy is not about being remembered, it's about leaving something that continues to serve others

the office. This is all complimentary and a way of showing we care.

I believe in walking the talk. My colleagues do, too. People who work with us do so because they care deeply about wellbeing, not just professionally but personally.

Leadership is also about empowering people. I take pride in guiding and supporting employees, but I don't micromanage. I've been micromanaged in the past and I hated it. I want to create an environment where people feel free to express ideas, challenge me and contribute to something meaningful.

#### What's been your most significant achievement?

It's not one resort or figure; it's how we've evolved. Our name, GOCO, stands for goal, community, co-creation. That philosophy now

defines everything we do: creating living ecosystems that combine wellness, hospitality, real estate, education and human connection.

We want to shape destinations that truly uplift people's lives through better health, better food, deeper creativity and shared values. A recent, humbling affirmation was Fivelements being ranked as one of the Top 10 Destination Spas in the World by *Conde Nast Traveller*.

I'm fortunate because I don't feel like I've ever worked a day in my life. I do what I love and that's what drives me.

#### What legacy do you want to leave?

Legacy to me is not about being remembered, it's about leaving something that continues to serve others. I believe we're doing that already, but there's always room to learn, to refine and to give more. ●