



How SAUNA HOUSE® Democratizes Hot/Cold Therapy

Locations: Asheville, North Carolina
Boulevard customer since September 2021

saunahouse.com

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Introduction

For Andrew Lachlan, hot/cold therapy is a personal obsession. When Lachlan was battling depression two years into his sobriety, a tour of European bathhouses and saunas gave him a new strategy for dealing with it. Not only did these businesses provide what he describes as a “state-changing experience” in the form of the hot/cold therapy itself, but they were built around a social approach to wellness rarely seen in the United States. The hot/cold treatment fed the body, but the social element of hanging out with other like-minded humans at the sauna fed the soul. Lachlan came back to Asheville, North Carolina flushed with inspiration, and after researching similar businesses around the country, he started building SAUNA HOUSE.

Lachlan met Jennifer Richter at a coffee shop while building SAUNA HOUSE’s first location and invited her to see what he was working on. The two decided to team up, and Richter joined on as Lachlan’s business partner to help mold and execute his vision of a uniquely approachable sauna. SAUNA HOUSE opened in 2019 with a focus on environmental sustainability, fair pay, and spreading the gospel of hot/cold therapy.

Challenge

When asked about SAUNA HOUSE’s software challenges before landing with Boulevard, Richter responds, “How much time do we have?” She and the SAUNA HOUSE team tried several solutions, but each had problems. Some of the troubles stemmed from saunas being relatively rare in the US; most software didn’t support the services SAUNA HOUSE offered out of the box. Onboarding with these solutions proved challenging as vendors would deliver the software to SAUNA HOUSE without teaching anyone there how to use it. That might have worked out had the software been intuitive, but Richter says “every other booking software looks like it was made in 1970.” Staff struggled to wrap their heads around how to use the tech, and customer service was nowhere to be found. Many even lacked an option for gratuities — a cornerstone of SAUNA HOUSE’s belief in fair compensation for workers.

Solution

For Richter, the first green flag with Boulevard was its design. “To be honest, my first impression was, ‘This software just looks cool,’” she says. But what really sold her was Boulevard’s commitment to developing a relationship and making their client experience platform work for SAUNA HOUSE. “You just truly don’t find that with any other booking software that we’ve experienced,” she says. That support starts with Boulevard’s chatbot, which Richter and team frequently use to solve smaller challenges. The dedicated customer success manager assigned to SAUNA HOUSE extends that support through a standing meeting with Richter and easily made ad-hoc support sessions. Supporting both systems is Boulevard’s solutions architect. “We’ve yet to be able to stump him with our crazy report requests,” says Richter.

With Boulevard, Richter had no trouble tailoring the booking process to SAUNA HOUSE’s particular needs. That’s largely because of the software’s open API suite, which allows for deep customization. “Having access to the API suite, where we can truly build our online booking and client experience to be exactly what we need it to be, especially having this unique business model, is incredibly helpful,” says Richter. The booking process integrates seamlessly with SAUNA HOUSE’s website, and clients describe the experience as sleek. SAUNA HOUSE also uses Boulevard’s unique client tagging system, which lets all staff seamlessly see each client’s specific needs.

SAUNA HOUSE’s customized approach and high client satisfaction are reflected in the gratuities employees receive. So does the transparency in the Boulevard Duo app, which tells clients exactly where their tips will go. “We’re working to support our vision of what sustainable employment looks like, and Boulevard does a great job of supporting us with that,” says Richter.

In addition to upping the gratuity per client, Boulevard has increased booking efficiency at SAUNA HOUSE with its Precision Scheduling™ features. Richter says the system encourages clients to choose appointments that best fit the business’s schedule, allowing it to fit in more appointments. Employees can toggle between calendar view and front desk view, group appointments, and perform group checkouts while maintaining each individual appointment’s identity and client info—making the process more efficient for the front desk and for clients alike.

Beyond the client experience, Richter names Boulevard’s marketing features as a key to SAUNA HOUSE’s recent success. Over the last two months, SAUNA HOUSE’s automated marketing campaigns have brought in over 200 completed appointments with more than \$12,000 in associated sales.

“Those lost client drips have been super effective to get our retention rates up,” says Richter. “It’s great to just set and forget something and have the email automation working for your business while you’re not even thinking about it.”

Business has been so good that Lachlan and Richter plan to expand SAUNA HOUSE via franchising. Boulevard will play a critical role in that expansion, with new locations nested under SAUNA HOUSE’s enterprise account. The founders will help franchisees set up the software, educate employees, and optimize calendars. They’ll then continue to support those franchises with Boulevard’s marketing platform and leverage Boulevard’s open API to keep the gears turning. “We are working right now with a developer using Boulevard’s APIs to design a custom checkout flow that will work best with a multi-location company,” says Richter, demonstrating the flexibility of Boulevard’s platform.



“We say all the time that no software is perfect, but Boulevard keeps making improvements,” says Richter. “Every other software we worked with, any issue has been filed as a ticket into the void, and then you talk to somebody, and then you have to give them your entire life’s story so they can get caught up to speed with your issue. **But with Boulevard, you have people there who get it.”**

- Jennifer Richter, VP of Operations, SAUNA HOUSE

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