



# Sensei Retreats takes a science-led approach to health and wellbeing

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Sponsored by Oracle for Startups program

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## About this report

Based on interviews with Vishal Patel MD, Ph.D., V.P. of Wellness Science at Sensei Retreats, and Jonathan Lee, Director of Marketing at sister company, Sensei Ag, this brief report introduces [Sensei Retreats](#), one of a growing number of highly innovative companies supported by the [Oracle for Startups](#) program.

The two companies were founded in 2018 with the joint mission to help people live longer, healthier lives. Sensei Retreats takes an evidence-led approach to wellness supported by a multidisciplinary team of highly trained individuals covering the entire gamut of health and wellness to help people live healthier lives through the practices of Move, Nourish and Rest – 'The Sensei Way.'

The theme for this month is health and wellness, with a focus on startups trying to solve some of the most pressing challenges across the wellness continuum, from food production to early disease detection, to prevent sickness and deaths and promote healthier outcomes for the long term.

This report explores Sensei and its two independently run businesses with a shared vision - to inspire the world to live longer, healthier lives. Sensei Ag focused on nutritious food production, and Sensei Retreats on personalized wellness practices.

CX-Create is an independent I.T. industry analyst and advisory firm, and this report is sponsored by the Oracle for Startups program team.

## Highlights

- The Sensei brand consists of two independent companies, Sensei Ag and Sensei Retreats
- Sensei Lāna'i is now open to guests with Sensei Porcupine Creek open to the public in 2022
- Technology and diverse partnerships will contribute to global expansion
- Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and the Oracle for Startups program prove their value to Sensei

## The business context and key drivers for Sensei Retreats

### Growing demand and desire to live longer, healthier, and happier lives

According to Statista's latest market research released in December 2022, the global wellness market is expected to grow from just under \$4.5 trillion in 2019 and reach just over the staggering figure of \$6 trillion by the end of 2025.

This covers a wide range of products and services, including nutrition, food supplements, meditation, mindfulness, Tai chi, yoga, and a vast array of new devices, like wearables with health monitoring apps, up to exercise bikes, rowing machines, gym equipment, etc.

While there are some regulations on the use of associated medicines and food supplements, the field for fads, quackery, and misinformation is not only wide open but through the medium of social media and celebrity influencers, is thriving more than ever.

On the positive side, growing interest in wellness and mental health has spurred people to be proactive with their health and wellbeing. Many of us now have wearables that encourage us to do more exercise and positively reinforce new and healthier habits. The personal challenge is determining which combination of activities, nutrition, and rest works best. The relatively unregulated wellness market and the need for a genuinely personalized and risk-free approach to suit everyone makes this problematic.

### Sensei cuts through the noise with a scientific and integrated approach to wellness

Sensei has taken an evidence-based approach to wellness and is on a scientific discovery journey before it expands its reach to bring the benefits of its knowledge and capabilities to the wider world. It is driven by data and supported by technology and some of the best minds across multiple disciplines that collectively contribute to proactive wellness. The company is in the early stages of development but has a unique testbed to further its shared purpose: to help people live longer, healthier lives.

## Sensei - the story so far

### Sensei was founded with two companies, Sensei Retreats and Sensei Ag

Sensei was founded in 2018 by Larry Ellison, co-founder, CTO, and chairman of Oracle Corporation, and Dr. David Agus, a world-leading physician, scientist, and founding director and CEO of the Lawrence J. Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine. The death of a mutual friend inspired the idea behind Sensei. Agus and Ellison were convinced that a combination of leading wellness science, healthy lifestyle practices, and advanced technologies could revolutionize preventative healthcare and ultimately improve the length and quality of life. The first goal was the development of a multidisciplinary evidence and knowledge base. This covered everything from food, its production, and nutritious value to developing an environment where customers led by guides and expert practitioners could learn and experience various wellness practices, leaving refreshed and rejuvenated. Sensei split into two sister companies in 2020 – Sensei Ag, focused on sustainable food production, and Sensei Retreats, providing the direct and highly personalized customer experience. Ellison had bought the secluded Hawaiian island of Lānaʻi in 2012, which would serve as a base and laboratory for both Sensei companies.

## A driving vision and patience, and support to take the long view

Although independently run since the bifurcation in 2020, allowing each company to chart its own growth trajectory, both Sensei Ag and Sensei Retreats share the same vision - to inspire the world to live longer, healthier lives. This global ambition is tempered by Sensei's firm evidence-based values consistent in both companies. Expanding through collaboration with partners, licensing of I.P., franchising, and even acquisition won't happen until both companies have a solid foundation of proven methods, technologies, and practices.

## Sensei Wellbeing Retreats – overview

Sensei Retreats opened its first retreat on Lāna'i in partnership with the Four Seasons hotel chain. Guests learn healthier lifestyle practices through personalized programming supported by Sensei Guides, expansive gardens to connect them to nature, and diverse wellness consultations and classes such as yoga, meditation, and nutrition.

"People are seeking evidence-backed wellness brands they can trust as health and wellbeing now feels more important than ever before,"

Kevin Kelly, CEO of Sensei.

Its second retreat, opening later in 2022, is in a desert oasis in the foothills of the Santa Rosa Mountains in Rancho Mirage, California. Like Sensei Ag, Sensei Retreats has global ambitions for growth. These will manifest in two ways—partnerships with other high-quality hotel chains with suitable environments at the luxury end of the market. And remote guidance using technologies, such as wearables and smartphones, all served by the same growing scientific knowledge bank, and AI-supported recommendations, potentially available to everyone

Dr. David Agus continues to advise the multidisciplinary team of wellness and technology team members at both Sensei companies. Under CEO Kevin Kelly's leadership, Sensei Retreats have built a highly educated and skilled team spanning the industries of technology, hospitality and wellness science. Comprised of PhD's and master-level graduates in service of the Move, Nourish and Rest paths, as well as representation from top tier hospitality and wellness brands such as Canyon Ranch, Ritz Carlton and Rosewood, Sensei Retreats are well positioned for growth within the broader wellness lifestyle category. Since its foundation, Sensei has accumulated and developed an evidence-based knowledge base to ensure that those staying at the Sensei Wellbeing Retreat get the best possible advice and guidance to pursue their personal goals.

## Current position – Sensei Lāna'i is now open to guests, with Sensei Porcupine Creek opening to the public in 2022

Two things distinguish Sensei retreats from other resorts offering activities, relaxation, and good food. The first is the scientific research underpinning personalized guest experiences and their intent-led pathways. The second is that the long-term goal is to help people, not just those that can afford stays at luxury resorts, wherever they are, adopt better lifestyles and practices based on the accumulated Sensei scientific body of knowledge. It is currently competing with other resort providers. In the future, discussed below, Sensei will deliver ongoing wellness guidance via remote technology and through a broader ecosystem of partnerships.

Sensei Lānaʻi opened in late 2019 in partnership with the Four Seasons hotel chain and, due to Hawaii travel restrictions throughout 2020, was forced to close due to the pandemic. It reopened in July 2020.



**FIGURE 1: SENSEI LĀNA'I**

Guests can book a stay online or work with a Pre-arrival team to curate their stay, and after settling in, each guest has a consultation with a Sensei Guide. The program is individually crafted based on the intentions of the customer and a health assessment using various biomarkers to determine the optimal regime for their stay. Sensei Guides, familiar with the range of options and yoga, fitness, and meditation practitioners, help to align and tailor the evidence-led program to support the customer's specific intentions. Sensei distills preventative health practices into three simple paths for everyday living:

- **Move** – guests explore practices involving breathing exercises, strength and flexibility assessments, and they learn how to establish healthy habits, improve endurance, coordination, and balance, as well as align mind and body with one's intentions. A mix of one-to-one and group sessions is available, and each day a list of activities, including hikes and invigorating yoga, can be selected.
- **Nourish** - to nourish the whole self, Sensei's team of culinary experts, nutritionists, and mindset coaches help guests understand what their body and mind need to feel at their best. In addition to developing a personalized dietary plan, the retreat partners with the world-renowned Nobu chain to establish a new concept Sensei by Nobu, serving a range of delicious and nutritious dishes and food to match the Nourish philosophy, sourcing fresh produce from the nearby Sensei Farm. Food can

be ordered via a one-touch menu for in-room delivery or Q.R. codes for contactless menu access on the guest's mobile. Nourish also includes a guest's passions, hobbies and connections with others for nutrition of the mind.

- **Rest** – Practitioners provide guidance on methods for physical recovery, sleep optimization, a range of personalized massage and spa treatments, and meditation and mindful breathing techniques to soothe the body and rest the mind. The design of the retreat also provides ample opportunities for quiet reflection and introspection surrounded by nature.

To take advantage of the location and expertise of the guides and practitioners, a range of activities is available. These include:

- Balance basics
- Hikes across the Koloiki Ridge
- Getting started with meditation for novices
- Sensory walking meditation around expansive grounds
- Art Garden tours
- Meditation combined with yoga,
- Minimalist resistance training
- Tai Chi

Sensei Porcupine Creek, an oasis in the foothills of the Santa Rosa Mountains in Rancho Mirage, California, is expected to open later in 2022.

## Successes to date

After a false start due to the pandemic, Sensei Lāna'i is proving to be a world renowned wellness retreat, having won esteemed travel awards such as Conde Nast Traveler's Gold List in 2021, recognizing the top hotels and resorts globally. According to a survey by MMGY Global on behalf of the U.S. Travel Association, 60% of travelers expressed a desire to go to a resort to help them destress. Sensei Lāna'i removes the traveling stress by providing a serene natural environment, empathetic staff, and enriching wellbeing activities throughout their stay.

## Current go-to-market

Sensei's partnership with Four Seasons means the company benefits from the hotel chain's marketing activities. Availability checks on the Sensei.com website link potential guests to the Four Seasons online booking system. This simple partnership model, along with the opening of their first standalone property, Sensei Porcupine Creek is expected to be the primary business focus in the near term.

## Future direction

### Technology and diverse partnerships will contribute to global expansion

Based on the best science and data, Sensei's vision is to help everyone live longer and healthier lives. That will require technology to scale. It will also change the fundamental business model, currently entirely based on physical retreats. Sensei will deliver AI-assisted science-led guidance and progress monitoring through a combination of technologies, smartphone apps, wearable

device connections, and a broader ecosystem of local and global partnerships across various industries.

Sensei can replicate its Four Seasons partnership with similar quality hotel chains in the first instance or develop its standalone wellness retreats such as Sensei Porcupine Creek. It may also add partners in other travel-related companies, such as airlines or urban clubs, sharing information, subject to each client's wishes. This could lead to an individually tailored travel experience based on their wellness needs.

## Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and the Oracle for Startups program prove their value to Sensei

Despite Ellison being a co-founder, Sensei's leadership team has had complete freedom to select technology. Sensei only joined the Oracle for Startups program in late 2021. The two-year discount rate of 70% on Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) and applications were attractive. However, its previous experience on Google Cloud technology provisioning was a little easier based on a few clicks. However, as well as having some technological advantages, notably speed and security, Oracle's enterprise applications and market access to enterprises proved compelling. Currently, Oracle NetSuite is used by Sensei for its day-to-day operations. The Oracle Content Management and Knowledge Management systems are also used to codify and store the growing scientific knowledge base. The Oracle for Startups team has also proved to be responsive and helpful.

The Oracle technologies and global market access will provide additional benefits as Sensei Ag, and Sensei Retreats expands physically, in partnership with others, and digitally as its partnership ecosystem develops. The foundations for that are in place.

## CX-Create's viewpoint

### Sensei Retreats offer a unique combination to deliver wellness

Although Sensei Ag and Sensei Retreats are run as separate companies, the combination of nutritious and sustainable food production (Sensei Ag) and the science of wellness practices (Sensei Retreats) offers a unique combination to foster wellbeing. Sensei Ag is more obviously a technology-led company, while Sensei Retreats today is heavily person-to-person in its value delivery. That, however, may change as knowledge and best practices are codified and shared.

The franchising and licensing model could serve both companies well and accelerate growth and geographical presence, while Sensei Retreats may see economies of scale by using digital technology to deliver its knowledge-intensive services. There is no doubt the world needs reliable sources of nutritious food and significant lifestyle changes to live healthier and longer lives. Under guidance from Dr. Agus and with Ellison's backing and desire, their shared vision, hopefully, will come to fruition.



## Summary details

Table 1: Fact sheet

<b>Sensei Retreats</b>		<b>Solution category</b>	
<b>Key industries</b>	Wellness destinations	<b>Geographies</b>	Hawaii and California
<b>Deployment model</b>	N/A	<b>Licensing basis</b>	N/A
<b>Size of organizations served</b>	Individual consumers	<b>Go-to-market model</b>	Direct and via travel agencies
<b>Number of employees</b>	80	<b>Key partnerships</b>	Four Seasons Hotel Chain, Oracle for Startups
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://sensei.com/retreats/">https://sensei.com/retreats/</a>	<b>H.Q.</b>	Santa Monica, CA, USA

## Appendix

### Further reading

- [Aindra Systems - democratizes healthcare in India](#)
- [HEARTio. – smarter cardiac triage](#)
- [PRORADIS - shortens distance and time improving patient care in Latin America through innovation](#)
- [Skin Analytics - helping more people survive skin cancer](#)
- [Sensei Ag - .improving human nutrition](#)

To explore more startups supported by the Oracle for Startups program, follow this [link](#), and under categories select Startups and Scaleups for innovation, sub-category: Oracle for Startups.

### About CX-Create

Jeremy Cox founded CX-Create Limited in January 2021, a former principal analyst at Omdia (formerly Ovum) focused on customer engagement strategies and platforms.

He is recognized by major CX vendors, clients, and former colleagues as a leading thinker in customer experience and engagement. Formative experiences in the 1990s at IBM convinced him of the critical importance of understanding the business world from the outside in. These insights were put to practical use in his former roles as a principal CRM consultant at KPMG Consulting and as an independent consultant supporting public and private sector organizations.

## Our mission

CX-Create's mission is to help enterprises and the vendors and startups that serve them remain relevant. The company's primary focus is to track and understand the constantly evolving customer experience world and share those insights with clients. Continuous innovation is also an essential component of persistent customer relevance, directly and indirectly, which is why we are enthusiastic about startups and the Oracle for Startups program.

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