

Marketing

by annette hanson

Market Your Know-how

Cutting-edge marketing technology and word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied clients are powerful means of maintaining your business and attracting new clients. Using the tools available can help you maintain a healthy client base. However, education is a key element in successfully implementing any marketing strategy.

Professional expertise

The spa business is expanding and evolving continually. High-tech scientific research has gone into product development, and sophisticated consumers no longer tolerate "hype in a jar." Antioxidants, alpha hydroxy and salicylic acids, and powerful sunscreens produce visible, clinically measurable results. At the same time, new technology, such as laser and microdermabrasion machines, has enhanced the industry's ability to provide quality skin care.

An integral part of customer service is the faith that clients have in professional expertise. As the industry changes, the demand on estheticians to learn about new treatments, procedures and products has increased. To satisfy more knowledgeable clients, professionals have to know a great deal more about cutting-edge technologies that define services offered. Clients also expect estheticians to recommend the latest in both in-salon treatments and home care regimens to target their concerns and achieve desired results. Ongoing training is becoming more and more key to success.

Growth and development

Educators and spa consultants encourage owners, managers and estheticians to devote a portion of their workweek to professional growth and development. Many of the most successful and prestigious spa owners also provide financial incentives and recognition for staff whose continued professional development translates into being able to provide new and improved services to clients. This is done through both in-service training and participation

in postgraduate classes at esthetic institutes, as well as keeping up with industry news and trends by reading industry magazines and attending trade shows and seminars.

Product manufacturers and distributors who want to introduce new products, as well as ensure satisfaction with those currently in use by your business, provide in-service training. The training usually is inexpensive or often offered at no charge, but be sure to schedule it enough in advance to assure maximum participation by staff.

An educated team

Creating an environment for professional growth and development begins with the hiring of knowledgeable team members. Top managers look for employees with training in new treatments and technology and, most important, who demonstrate an aptitude and willingness to learn and adapt to new information. These people are key to changing an organizational culture from stagnancy to growth, from maintaining the status quo to developing a broader and more lucrative range of services.



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Failure to carefully select and educate front desk receptionists often is a common and costly mistake. These people have both a critical public relations and sales role "at the portal" of the business, usually acting as the public relations ambassador. The receptionist often is the first and the last person clients have contact with and create the all-important first and final impression. To best take advantage of this pivotal role, receptionists should know the full range of services provided and have considerable product knowledge. Everyone coming in for service should be made to feel welcome, no matter how much money will be spent. The receptionist also can steer clients to estheticians with similar personalities.

After services, a skilled receptionist often can smooth over any unpleasantness created by a team member having a bad day, and the power of a receptionist's compliment of a

Gain clientele's trust with professional skills and knowledge.

service the spa has delivered can set the client's mood for the rest of the day. Remember, people come to the salon to nurture themselves and enhance both their sense of self-worth as well as their appearance, and clients are more likely to refer others if they have been made to feel special.

Receptionists also are the last opportunity for sales. If they are aware of the service recently provided, and the esthetician has not made recommendations for products to sustain the client until the next visit, the front desk ambassador should be making recommendations. If handled properly, sales of products for home care regimens become a continuation of the provided services.

Confidence and credibility

Having the professional skills and knowledge to inspire clients' confidence in service and recommendations means you have gained their trust. Increase the ability to do this by displaying school and postgraduate certificates prominently, and proudly displaying your license. Let clients know your profession is regulated, and that diplomas and qualifications are credentials the educated consumer should come to expect.

In the best spas, there is an air of confidence and caring. Estheticians are not just people who perform services, they are competent professionals who people can trust. By gaining client trust and abiding to it, team members can feel confident and possess a credibility that will lead to word-of-mouth advertising and success in marketing campaigns. ■