

Retailing in a Medical Day Spa, Spa and Salon

High volume retail sales are absolutely imperative for profitability and long term success of a Medical Day Spa, Spa or Salon. In this article, we are offering proven retail strategies for ensuring profitability and continued growth of your fiscal bottom line. In today's competitive market, owners must invest not only in the products and merchandise stocked on the shelves, but also in properly ensuring their staff is adequately trained in how to sell retail, so that the products move off the shelves and into their clients' hands. Developing a staff into the ultimate retailing dream team is the best, most underexposed and underutilized investment one can make.

The Extraordinary Client Experience

Creating the Extraordinary Client Experience outline for your staff is the key to consistently providing outstanding service. Outlining protocols not only for treatments but also for how your spa or salon handles retail sales will provide a map to success, leaving nothing to chance. As an owner, it is wise to create this footprint for new staff to follow and experienced staff to stay focused on the most important task they have, which is selling retail products. The truly successful spas and salons recognize the power of retail sales, not only for supporting the profitability, but also for increasing client loyalty, retention and return visits. First acknowledge that many practitioners and technicians have fears around selling products and are hesitant when managers encourage sales. Support your staff in overcoming past fear of sales. An easy way to overcome this objection is by simply changing the language used. Instead of encouraging "sales" from your staff, promote the language "prescribe" or "recommend". Remind practitioners and technicians that they are the professionals the clients are visiting to address challenges they are having with their skin and body. The professional products available thru your spa or salon are far superior to what is available over the counter. If the practitioners and technicians don't recommend products for home use, the client is going to seek out products elsewhere, which is doing a disservice to the client.

Client Consultation

The Extraordinary Client Experience from the retail perspective begins with the client consultation. Without question every client, old or new, must have a consultation prior to beginning their treatment. The practitioner or technician should review the client history and be aware of what concerns have been addressed in the past. However, every appointment should be approached with a fresh outlook. During this time, the team member should do 90% listening and 10% talking. By asking open ended questions about the clients concerns and desires, the client will give

the practitioner the necessary information needed to properly create at home treatment protocols with the products. In essence, the client is pre-closing their own sale, when the consultation is properly executed. Have your practitioner or technician explain the treatment they are going to be providing to the client. Map out what products are going to be used, explaining the features and benefits of the product. Have the practitioner hand products to the client to hold and read the label, which will encourage the client to take ownership. Then, during the treatment, as different products are being applied, instruct your practitioner to quietly recap which product is being used and why it has been selected for the client. Follow up with engaging comments about the product, such as the wonderful aroma of the masque, the sheen the product gives hair or the smoothness of the serum, while asking if the client agrees with the observation. This brief exchange will assist the practitioner to close the sale. At the end of the service, the staff member should walk the client to the reception area where the products that are being recommended are waiting. Now is the time for the one minute recap. This comprises of what, when, why and the how of the products recommended. By explaining to the client that 90% of their success rate for radiant skin or stunning hair is tied to their home care regimen, the practitioner should be guaranteeing the client is leaving with product. Close the sale by stating “these are the products I recommend. Which products will you be taking home today.” One of the biggest challenges an owner faces is practitioners and technicians minding their clients’ wallet. Encourage staff to never do this. Their job is to properly identify which products the client needs to achieve the results they are looking for. Allow the client to decide how many products they are taking home. What you will find is the more space you provide for the client to decide for themselves, the more products they will take home. If two products are placed on the counter, the client may take one. If three products, the percentage for the client to take home one goes up significantly. Four or more products, generally the ratio will continue to rise. It is proven that when a client leaves your spa or salon with one product, the chance for client retention increases by 30%. Three or more products, it is 60% more likely that they will return for additional services and products. This is a tremendous example of how imperative it is for your staff to consistently be recommending and prescribing products. To ensure that the staff is comfortable with all aspects of the Extraordinary Client Experience, it is in every owner’s best interest to focus considerable resources toward retail education and development.

Retail Education

Begin by meeting with every vendor representative with the goal being to maximize the opportunities for education their companies offer. Set an ongoing schedule for the year including training sessions around product knowledge as well as hands on training sessions. Product education tied to actual service training will significantly increase knowledge retention. By scheduling the entire year in advance, any time there is a staff change, you will know how much of one-on-one time you will need to invest in an individual, which is more time and resources than group train-

ing sponsored by a vendor. In between the scheduled group education events, create an on-going schedule of Role Playing Sessions with and between the practitioners and technicians. Carve out designated time regularly for two team members to trade off “playing the client”. This will provide a comfortable atmosphere to practice how to deal with different types of client personalities. Recommending retail product using the language of a client’s natural preferred communication style enhances the opportunity in relating better with the client and increases the likely-hood of closing the sale. For example, a Pioneer Personality Type will be interested in the bottom line results of the product and how it will benefit them while an Influencer Personality Type will best respond to language like “exciting, new, cutting edge” and “makes you feel great”. The Diplomat Personality Type will be concerned with the value of the product and have others used and benefited from it, while the Fact Finder Personality Type will be concerned with the ingredients and studying the features and benefits of how the product will perform for them. The bottom line is by investing in the education of the practitioners, the overall confidence of your staff will grow in direct correlation to your retail sales and in turn, your profitability.

Education for the clients is another outstanding way to increase retail sales. Consider this; your existing clients are the best and most cost effective advertisement opportunity your spa or salon has. When your staff properly educates their clients, they are able to maintain their service results at home. This ensures their satisfaction and return to your spa or salon, while creating enthusiasm to spread the word about their experiences. One great way to maximize exposure of client education is by creating a “Clients Right to Know Program”. Simply create informational handouts and posters strategically placed throughout the spa and salon explaining how your facility is dedicated to educating the public about every aspect of skin, hair and body care. This public declaration creates opportunities for the spa staff to talk freely with anyone and everyone interested in learning more about the services you spa or salon provides. By creating as many opportunities as possible for education, your spa or salon will be guaranteed increased client retention and in turn, greater retail sales.

Incentive Programs

A little bit of healthy competition is another simple way to increase retail sales. In order to maximize retail sales, involve the staff by getting them excited through the creation of games and contests that are directly related to retail sales. It is best to have short term contests with incentives clearly mapped out for it supports keeping the focus on consistently recommending products to every client who enters the spa or salon. Contest programs that are daily, weekly or monthly at the longest work best. Incentive programs that run longer can tend to lose their momentum. America is the land of instant gratification and everyone want to reap rewards immediately. If you set up an incentive program that is structured as a game and is fun and engaging,

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practitioners and technicians will be motivated to make a difference in their retail recommendations. Programs that have a proven track record of success are those that are simple and clearly defined.

An example monthly incentive program for practitioners would be to reward the highest percentage of retail sales to service dollars with a gift certificate to a favorite retail store, services at a non-competing spa or salon or even a weekend getaway at a Bed and Breakfast. Use this as an opportunity to create synergy within the business community to support other owners in creating incentive programs for their staff. Offer to trade gift certificates to inspire both of your teams. By making the winner of this monthly incentive the individual with the highest percentage of retail sales to service dollars, the issue of part time versus full time employees becomes a non issue. It is a win-win situation for everyone who participates.

Don't forget to include the clients in on incentive programs. Planning retail promotions in advance is the key to your selling success. It is a great idea to plan a retail promotional calendar on a twelve month basis. This will set the spa or salon up to succeed. The promotional calendar needs to be shared with your team in advance. The most powerful way for this to happen is through a staff meeting. A monthly team meeting is imperative to ensure the staff is aware what the game plan is and what actions are needed in order for the promotion of the featured special to be a success. Post the twelve month promotional plan in the break room so savvy practitioners can prepare their clients to take advantage of coming events. This creates an opportunity for practitioners to build rapport with their clients and open communication to ask for clients to refer their friends to the spa as well. Examples of successful monthly promotions include basic ideas such as when the client buys two products, they will receive the third product complimentary or at a significantly reduced cost. Maximize on different times of the year. Offer a back to school special on travel size products. During holiday seasons, offer beautifully detailed gift boxes for gift certificates and complimentary gift wrapping. The important thing to remember is whatever the promotion is, plan ahead and plan thoroughly. Keep track as the year goes along as to which promotions you will repeat for they were extremely successful and well received and which promotions need to be modified to create a greater return.

Successful retail sales entails more than just putting product up on a shelf. Developing sales training programs, creative incentive programs and the Extraordinary Client Experience for your staff will ensure consistency and profitability for your business long into the future.

To learn more about the Personality Types and Communication Styles discussed in this article, please visit www.durocherenterprises.com and check out "The Success Circle" Workbook.