

by bryan durocher

Game Plan for Growth

The way the spa industry does business has changed. Systems and structures are more important than ever with the industry's narrow profit margins and limited resources for qualified personnel. The old style of creative leadership with lack of organization or hierarchy management styles that fail to create collaboration or teamwork are no longer able to sustain themselves in today's fast-paced, competitive market. It is more important than ever to put together a game plan for your team that instills and builds upon leadership and growth.

The difference between a good business and a great one is consistency. The way to achieve this result is by defining ways of working with your team that produce positive outcomes.

Create a culture

Creating a culture that is unique to your spa is crucial for building your business. You must establish common values and goals for the staff and business. Each team member needs to be aware of the various goals of the spa and their role in achieving them. Establishing shared goals and values via a mission statement, job descriptions or a value statement will get everyone on the same page. Team members tend to rise up to a level of expectation, so knowing what is expected of them will increase the likelihood that they will achieve their goals.

There are four key factors that contribute to the success of leveraging and building your team with dynamic leadership in mind. You need clear job descriptions for each position; an understanding of the different communication styles of your team members; individual team member coaching sessions; and incentives that motivate and inspire your team to strive for excellence.

Job descriptions

Spa team members have an intimate impact on the lives of their clients. It is a

unique relationship and you must emphasize this to the staff. Each team member needs to understand the importance of their job and specific duties in order to deliver a consistent extraordinary client experience. This ensures clarity and a focused vision for all of your staff in making your spa a professional place to work. When you have clear expectations set up,

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there are no gray areas and you can coach your team members effectively. Job descriptions need to be defined in writing, understood and signed by the team members, and should include the following.

Employment requirements. These should include a current license issued from the state board of cosmetology and the equipment they must own themselves in addition to what your business provides.

Appearance and dress policy. The appearance of your team members and their dress accents your image. They both make a strong impact on the way a client will view your business. Tasteful and fashionable attire is a must. Dress should be appropriate for the image of the spa and should be at your discretion. Clothing,

hair and makeup must be complete upon arrival to work. Detail what is and is not appropriate for work including certain color schemes, clothing styles, tattoos and piercings. Do not leave anything out because it's guaranteed someone will show up wearing the clothing item or the look you do not want if it is not on the exclusion list. You never get a second chance at a positive first impression.

Dispensary policy. You have selected the finest professional products for your clients. Define the proper use as well as proper inventorying of these products. There can be a tremendous amount of waste if there is no coaching around product usage.

Cleaning and sanitation policy. Your team members should be familiar with state board of cosmetology rules and regulations on sanitation to maintain adequate levels of sterilization. Your facility's cleanliness directly affects your client's perception of your business. Include how their treatment rooms or stations need to be maintained from opening to closing in addition to assigned daily cleaning duties.

Financial goals. It is critical to outline what financial goals your team members need to meet in order to be a part of your organization. The three drivers to your business are retail sales, referral programs to gain new clients and pre-booking each client before they leave. Clearly define the process and expectations in these three areas.

Staff meeting policy. Team meetings are necessary to ensure proper communication and to provide an opportunity to establish spa goals. The attitude expected at your meetings should be positive and constructive. Include when and where the meetings will be held and the proper etiquette to be used during the meetings.

Career development and advanced training policy. Your training system assures the future of your business. It prepares new technicians for the challenge of working with clients and motivates established team members to become more productive employees. A staff training system encourages an atmosphere of teamwork in the spa. It will produce technicians who are consistent in their work and have an understanding of the techniques of their co-workers. Define what education is required both inside and outside of your business.

Scheduling policy. How many times have you hired technicians who, in the beginning, promised to be there whenever you needed them only to find out that after you hired them they wanted to leave early or come in late or all of the sudden can't work certain days? Showing up is 86% of winning in the game of business.

Clients come first. Every effort should be made to service all clients. No client should ever be turned away without just reason. Personal business is to be taken care of on days and hours not scheduled for work. Define what hours and days are a priority for your team members to be at work—and stick to it.

Client information. All staff members are responsible for gathering and updating client information. This enables you to effectively service and market to your clients.

Extraordinary client experience. Define the process for how your clients are to be treated from the moment they walk into your spa to the moment they leave. This should include the consultation process, dialogues for recommending retail home care maintenance, introducing your new client referral program and pre-booking the client. When you have a defined way of treating your clients it will produce consistent results. This way, your clients can see different technicians and enjoy the same quality experience.

Personal services and product cost. List the appropriate times when your team members can have services performed. Are they to be performed before or after the scheduled shift or on their day off? Include your policy on products for personal use and any applicable discounts.

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Employee performance. Let your team members know how their job performance is going to be measured. This will allow them to focus on the specific areas and apply their skill. See **Evaluation Points** as a reference.

Communication styles

Have you ever spoken with team members and felt that what you were saying was going right over their heads? You are not alone. Some of the biggest frustrations communicating with others are not being heard correctly or misinterpreting someone else's message. Moving from simply observing someone's communication to truly walking beside them and understanding where they are coming from is the classic example of relating vs. relatedness.

Being an effective communicator takes more than just listening. You have to do so contextually and hear between the lines of your communication partner to understand their point of view. That can be a great challenge unless you know what to identify.

When you understand and can recognize another person's preferred style of communicating, you can mirror their style back to them and produce a more positive result.

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while avoiding the barriers that breakdown communication, cause frustration and take away from your personal and professional quality of life and bottom line. This is very powerful, especially when used in individual evaluation meetings. (Editor's note: For more information on the subject of establishing rapport, please see "Rapport: The Foundation of Client Interaction" by Julian Cauceglia, PhD, in the November 2003 issue of *Skin Inc.* magazine.)

Some of the unique qualities of human communication can be the very thing that stops you from having success when relating to others. These qualities include your focus on people or tasks, pace of communication, being a direct or indirect communicator and big picture thinking vs. detail-oriented thinking, just to name a few. An understanding of your natural preferred style opens a window to truly see your own and other's strengths as well as opportunities for improvement.

There are four distinct natural preferred styles of communication. Each person uses their style and will flex to the other styles when appropriate. In essence, humans are made up of all the styles and use their natural preferred style as their primary mode of communication.

The communication quadrants are the Pioneer, Influencer, Diplomat and Fact Finder. Here is an insight into some of the strengths of each communication style.

The Pioneer—is bold, assertive, keeps the focus to get the job done, and sets goals and achieves them. Pioneers are fast-paced risk-takers who come up with new ways to do things. They are task-focused and very direct. You never wonder what the Pioneer is thinking.

The Influencer—is polished and poised, works well with people and attracts others with enthusiasm, is open to new possibilities and has a positive, optimistic outlook. The Influencer is great at supporting other people to help reach their goals.

The Diplomat—makes decisions with thought, appreciates others' viewpoints, is

Evaluation Points

1. *Job performance*—Meeting and exceeding your performance goals as they relate to sales, retail, retention, education and all other performance objectives.
2. *Job knowledge*—Understanding of job responsibilities and departmental procedures.
3. *Productivity*—Volume of adaptable work produced; meeting job standards; taking initiative; number of personal bookings.
4. *Quality of work*—Accuracy, thoroughness and attention to detail in daily work.
5. *Establishing and meeting priorities*—As a way to plan work, establish priorities, budget time to meet deadlines and finish work in a smooth, flowing manner.
6. *Challenge-solving*—Independent challenge-solving skills, resourcefulness and amount of supervision needed.
7. *Communication and interpersonal skills*—Written and oral communication skills with supervisors, co-workers and clients; ability and willingness to establish and maintain cooperative relationships.
8. *Adaptability*—Ability to adjust to changing conditions, meeting peak work loads, new procedures and responsibilities.
9. *Attendance and punctuality*—Period covered, days absent, number of occasions or classes missed, tardiness, late starts and leaving shift early.

very approachable and builds trust in a team environment. The Diplomat brings people together.

The Fact Finder—looks at all possibilities when making a decision, is highly organized, manages time very well, is detail-oriented and deals well with facts and figures. The Fact Finder brings intelligent viewpoints to conversations.

With this understanding you have the ability to take communication in any direction and produce the desired results and a winning outcome with all four communication styles. The goal is to be effective no matter where you are or what your dominant style may be. Once you understand the different styles, you are able to mature in your style and expand on your communication expertise.

Your communication right now is a reflection of the current moment in which you are involved. Many factors may alter your style such as emotional well-being or environment and take you out of your natural style. Adapting out of a natural style can be done. Each individual's time

frame for operating out of natural style can vary. Through understanding and maturing in your style, you increase your ability to understand others.

Recognize the individual

The whole person is coming to work and you need to acknowledge the individual and personal motivations and concerns of your employees to be able to provide the appropriate structure for optimum employee performance. This is where coaching comes in.

The reason coaching succeeds is because you work side-by-side with your team members over a long period of time, keeping them focused and accountable on reaching their goals. It is shifting from telling them what to do to asking them questions and listening for distinctions that you can use to help them grow. This takes practice and when it is working well, it becomes the fastest way for your business to grow.

The coaching process is a simple five-step model. It begins with identifying where your team members are now and ends with where they want to be. Your job as their personal success coach is to

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work with them through the middle, called bridging the gap. The gap includes discovering all the possibilities to get them where they want to be, planning action steps to get them there and looking at what barriers can get in their way of achieving the success.

Focus and work with your team members on setting goals in the growth areas of your spa. Retail sales, client referrals, pre-booking and service promotions should be at the top of the list. Help them practice dialogues and create strategies to support them moving forward. Ask questions about how they are going to achieve the goals you set together and keep asking them until they come up with solutions and ideas on how they will achieve them. Be mindful of the communication styles. Some of your team members will need more time to process, adapt and integrate these strategies into their business game plans.

Coaching works best when you schedule individual team member meetings on a weekly basis. They take about 15 minutes with each person and create an open space for communication and true connection with each of your team members. If you have a large team, have your managers or department heads support you in the coaching process. They will appreciate you for taking time to focus positively on them.

Motivational environments

There are two types of motivational environments that work very effectively in moving your team forward. They are incentives and casual motivation.

Incentives. Incentives are the old carrot and stick principle. If you achieve the goal, you receive the reward. This works very well in business. As an owner you do not have to outlay funds until results are achieved. Many incentives can be self-funding because of increased productivity. For example, whoever has the largest retail percentage increase this week gets movie tickets. The resulting increase in sales created by the excitement of the incentive far surpasses the cost of the reward.

Keep incentives and contests short and sweet. Instant gratification is everywhere and people like rewards right away. If you draw out contests too long, people forget about them and they lose focus and momentum. The best incentive programs are daily, weekly or, at the longest, monthly. Be wary of starting contests with rules such as "whoever sells the most gets the prize." There always are one or two real go-getters who usually win everything. This can be de-motivating for the rest of your team. Instead, look at whoever has the largest increase percentage-wise—they will win the contest. Using a percentage increase allows for an even playing field where everyone has a real shot at winning. A final thought is to use prizes instead of cash so you can deduct them as business expenses and not have to pay FICA taxes as you have to on a cash outlay.

Casual motivation. This is the most powerful motivational environment you can have in the workplace. Casual motivation

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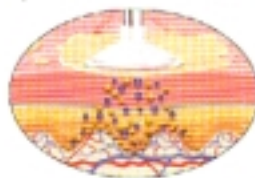
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***Casual motivation
is achieved by
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is where everyone in your workplace is there because they want to be. In other words, when the cat's away, the mice aren't playing. This is achieved by really spending time finding out what motivates each of your team members. Use a whole coaching approach. Focus on their personal and professional goals and take authentic interest. If you help them to achieve their goals, they, in turn, will help you to achieve yours and everyone wins. It is the little things that count—acknowledging great work when you see it, making a big deal when it's someone's birthday and having special team night dinners or parties. Another example is when you are on your way out the door and you see a staff member being challenged in providing service and you put your bag down and pitch in to help. This is all a part of servant leadership and supports creating a casually motivated environment.

Leading a dynamic team takes dedication, and really listening and responding to your team's needs. The results are fantastic when you see your people grow and achieve goals that they never could have imagined. The connections you have will be richer and more rewarding. Your emotional and financial bottom line will reflect excellence. ■