



Be My Client

## turning hearts into dollars with Valentine's Day promotions

We all know that Valentine's Day is February 14th. What we may not realize is that it is the second largest card sending holiday of the year, beat only by Christmas. The United States Greeting Card Association estimates that one billion valentines are sent annually. Along with cards, most individuals plan something special for the object of their affection. These valentine gifts often take the form of flowers, jewelry, candy, perfume, a special night out and even an overnight getaway.

### **Cross promotional opportunities**

There is no question: Valentine's Day is a golden opportunity to promote your spa and med spa to both current and prospective clients. One of the most effective ways to do so is to seek out ways to joint venture and cross promote your services with other organizations and companies that are marketing to those looking for ways to celebrate their affections for others. A good place to start is with locally owned flower shops, jewelry stores, restaurants, hotels and upscale candy stores. We mention focusing on locally owned businesses first as they often can make marketing and promotional decisions quickly without corporate approval. But the practice may not always apply as some national chains allow local managers a degree of discretion. ➔

BY ROB AND CAROL TROW

Package a half day of services for two coupled with lunch or dinner at a nearby restaurant.



A simple first step is to offer to provide a coupon to these other businesses that they can give out with any purchase made at their establishment such as 20 percent off any service (i.e. massage, facial, home care product, etc.). This costs them nothing and serves to bring traffic to you. Even if the results are small, it puts your name and what you offer in the hands of many people who may not be familiar with your spa.

Another variation of the technique is to offer a discount on your services to the previously mentioned establishments. If a massage is worth \$60, sell a gift certificate for a massage to a jewelry store for \$25. They in turn can package it with a purchase above a certain amount that they determine and offer it as an incentive to their clientele. Offer to take back any certificates they do not use and refund the money so they do not incur any risk in co-marketing with you. Gift cards can be provided in any number of ways for a myriad of services. They may not only help your business but may provide opportunities to gain new clients for yourself and keep your staff busy at a potentially slower time of the year. Examples of this marketing idea include offering your clients a coupon book with discounted facials when they book their romantic Valentine's Day dinner at a local restaurant with which you are marketing your services. Or, offer a free massage if a client purchases any piece of jewelry valued at \$200 or more at a nearby jewelry shop. Provide them with a complimentary manicure when they buy a dozen roses at the corner flower shop.

### **Don't forget the media and pre-Valentine's Day events**

Most if not all radio stations feature contests and promotions during the holidays. Call your local radio station and offer to provide them with certificates for free services in return for advertising your spa and your Valentine's Day specials. Focus on arranging your spots to run during commuting time, if at all possible. You are bartering your services for advertising. This type of bartering can also be effective with print media and local cable television.

Advertise through direct mail, in your local paper and/or with in-spa signage a special series of days in which a client can come in to purchase a service and receive a gift certificate for another service at a sizable discount, such as 50 percent off. You are, in effect, getting paid in advance for the second service and hopefully gaining a new client.

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Put together a series of preassembled gift baskets that are priced at \$50, \$75, \$100 and up.



You can also offer that with the purchase of a gift certificate of a certain value, you include a dozen roses or a box of chocolates that are sent to the recipient along with the gift certificate. You partner with other local businesses and obtain these items at a discount or in exchange for bartering where they, in turn, provide certificates for services from your spa. The list of potential bartering partners for you is almost endless. Be creative.

### **Couple's experiences, gift baskets**

Create a series of spa experiences that are suitable for two. Go beyond the all too common couple's massage. Package a half day of services for two that includes a manicure, pedicure, facial, body treatment and massage coupled with lunch or dinner at a nearby restaurant and a glass of wine. Include a keepsake for them to take away: spa slippers, robe, home use product and the like. Look to your suppliers to help you by participating in these incentives through either special purchase discounts, free products, etc.

Put together a series of preassembled gift baskets that are priced at \$50, \$75, \$100 and up. These baskets include a certificate for an appropriate service along with any selection of the following: home care facial or bath and body products, a robe, slippers, candles, soaps, grooming/spa accessories, a bottle of champagne and chocolates. You can also prepare both a male and female basket series. Price each basket on its own and then add the appropriate gift certificate for the services the client wishes to purchase.

### **Corporate outings, niche marketing and a coupon book**

Look around your area. Are there several large office buildings, medical facilities, companies or locales that might allow you to set up a table in their lobby, cafeteria or similar place to promote your Valentine's Day offerings? Check with your clients as they might have suggestions or a relationship with a location that could help you offer your services off-site. Maybe they will even offer that you set up a table at their own businesses. Offer free gifts with the purchase of a service or a gift certificate as a way to take the stress out of shopping for a valentine. Donate a percentage of your sales to the choice charity of the facility that is hosting your presentation—it pays to be generous.

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Create a list of services targeted to groups such as mothers to be, new moms and a younger clientele.



When creating your Valentine's Day menu, take time to think about specific segments of the population to which you would want to market services. Create a list of services targeted to groups such as mothers to be, new moms, mothers with daughters, a younger clientele, work at home clients, mothers in law and the like. This makes it easier for the purchaser to make a selection, as you have taken some of the decision making out of the process. Make it easy.

When we think of a coupon book we tend to think of a card that is stamped every time you buy a car wash, coffee or sandwich with the ultimate goal of getting the eleventh product/service for free. A unique take on the approach is to create a services coupon book with special selections that has certificates for manicure, pedicure, facial, massage, IPL, microdermabrasion, light peel, anti-aging hand treatment and waxing services. Another option is to create a book for six of the same treatment but only charge for five: buy a book and get the sixth service free. Create the coupon book to highlight services you would like to showcase. Price the book so that a particular service comes free. Remember, the word free is

very powerful and enticing. This type of offering is also cost effective, as you are paid for all these services at the time of purchase and thereby increase initial cash flow.

### Words are powerful

It is important that when you think of Valentine's Day promotions you should cast them in a romantic light. Take the time to word your promotions in the language of warmth, care and love. Compose descriptions of these activities and services as if you were writing a romantic, harlequin novel. In this case, over the top should be the norm, even for medical based services. A sample description might read as follows.

*When you enter our spa, you are escorted into our relaxation area where you are handed a luxurious spa robe that is yours to keep as a reminder of your time here. Once you change, you experience a detoxifying foot bath to help relieve the stress of everyday life, while soaking you are handed a glass of champagne. A warm aromatherapy neck wrap helps to soothe you. After you are relaxed, you and your partner (if couples) are escorted by your personal spa professional to a warm treatment room replete with romantic lighting, soft music, the flicker of scented candles. Heated stones and warm scented oils become an integral part of a massage suited to your desire (specify varieties of massages you offer). Upon completion of your service, you again are escorted back to the relaxation area where you are treated to fresh fruit, a soothing drink and a special gift to take home.*

Every special occasion or holiday is a time to be creative. Use the language of the holiday to drive your strategy. Be generous with your offerings and the returns will be great. Look to these special occasions as both a way to reward your loyal clientele and to attract new patrons. Never forget that for your spa to be profitable, 30 percent to 40 percent of your gross revenue should come from nonservice, retail items such as at home product protocols, spa accessories and gift items—Valentine's Day is a time to focus on them! ■

**Rob and Carol Trow**, his wife, own *DermaConcepts USA*, the eastern U.S. (excluding metro NYC) distributors for *Environ® Skin Care*. Rob's background includes two decades in higher education as a faculty member, administrator and business consultant. He has been in the skin care field



for over ten years. Prior to her involvement with *Environ® Skin Care*, Carol served as an RN, director of marketing for *Professional Service Business Development* and operated her own consulting firm focusing on practice development. Rob is an authority in the business of skin care and has authored articles for professional publications. He speaks frequently on current and emerging topics of interest to medical spas, estheticians and physicians.