

Staff to the rescue

A GROWING SOURCE of frustration for estheticians who are not business owners is centered on the problems they encounter when trying to bring in new products, treatments, devices and protocols to their skin care practice or spa. Estheticians spend a great deal of time staying on top of the latest industry developments by attending training classes, professional development workshops, trade shows and trade meetings. They come back from these events recharged, refreshed and full of energy. Their minds are overflowing and bubbling with a myriad of new ideas and updated information. All too often, they have trouble articulating what they have learned in order to encourage the owners, directors or colleagues to incorporate new ideas, products and treatment regimes. This article focuses on what you can do to ensure your ideas and suggestions are heard and implemented.

bring in new products and treatments by convincing the decision makers

There is a natural dichotomy in our profession. It is natural for us to look for ways to increase the efficacy of our services and achieve greater results—the best possible outcome. But, when presenting a new idea for improved products or treatment modalities, you have to venture out from your typical professional comfort zone and into the mindset of a business owner or manager.

The first point you must remember before you approach any of the key decision makers about bringing something new into your practice is that they are running a business. Ultimately, it is about money: revenue and profits—the proverbial bottom line. ➔

By Rob and Carol Trow

Find out what the cost will be per professional treatment for any new equipment you may purchase.



Put yourself in the owner's shoes. What do you think would motivate them to make a change or addition to their offerings? Are your clients and fellow estheticians bored, tired or looking for something new and better as well?

Show them the money

Estheticians will need to demonstrate how a product or service will make money. When presenting the potential new offering, be very specific on how it will help the business and staff. You must be clear on how much it will cost to bring in and/or install plus maintain a new initiative and how the money invested will reap rewards.

It is vital to know how much it will cost to bring in the treatment or service, both the direct, actual cost as well as the indirect cost, i.e. time, training and space. Consider expenses involving new menus, printed materials, infrastructure improvements, the marketing campaign and launch efforts.

If it is solely a product line, explain how it will improve the services offered, the impact on patient/client retention, increased visits and professional treatment costs, i.e. product cost per treatment versus what can be charged. Mention the product's possible effects on staff income and incentives, and how they compare to what is currently offered. Be prepared to explain why you believe in the product or service. In the event equipment is on your list, obtain the capital

Ask away

Put a great deal of emphasis on making the manufacturer's representative responsible for bringing in the new addition. Ask for and expect, in short order, answers to the following questions from a potential vendor:

- Will you trade out products or equipment that we presently have to help reduce any initial investment in your products?
- What training do you provide, where, at what cost and how often? What happens when there are staff changes—do you update them? Under what conditions and how often do you provide refresher and new staff training?
- Is the staff provided with products or treatments to get them excited about the introduction and launch?
- What is the cost, if any, for collateral materials and samples? Are there product sample limits?
- What incentives are offered to my company if we make a commitment to this new venture?
- What is the price point of treatments and services, and how does this compare to what we currently offer?
- What is the lead time needed to launch this undertaking?
- Will you provide sample menus, product descriptions and at-home and in-room professional protocols?
- What point of sale promotional support is offered?
- Explain the opportunities for add-on treatments or products.
- What does your company offer as part of a launch program?
- Can you explain, in detail and in writing, your policy on marketing support, open houses and client events?

cost, monthly carrying charges, disposable items needed per treatment, product cost and how many treatments can realistically be expected to be performed each month. Find out what can be charged for the treatment or product and what is the break-even point.

Reach out to your potential vendors to help compile the data—do not look to do it alone. If you are not offered all the assistance you need at this point in the process, one can only imagine how poor the support will be after you become a customer.

Presentation, referrals and homework

Obtain a list of times the company can send someone in to present to the owner. If there is interest on the part of the decision maker, you can then say when the company is available to make a presentation to you—which date works best? Ask for a list of references from the vendor and through other sources. Make certain you have objective and independent verification of the vendor's track record in supplying products, customer service, training, marketing and professional development.

Determine where else this product or service is offered in your area. Who will be your competition? What do they charge? How widely available is the product or service? If it is a product, can it be found in retail stores, in catalogues, in multiple Internet outlets, via infomercials or in beauty supply stores? If so, think about it!

If it is equipment you want, what is needed for the installation, such as plumbing, electrical connections, more space, code requirements? Do local and state regulations allow the use of the equipment in your business and by whom? Is there any impact on professional liability insurance?

An esthetician who takes the initiative to learn about and recommend a new product or treatment is a valued member of the team. We all want someone to jump up and down and applaud when we make suggestions or have new ideas. But do not expect this to happen automatically. You must make your case with business facts. Hopefully, your potential supplier has provided you with the needed information. Now you are ready to make your case.

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Talk to the manufacturer's representative so you can build your case with business facts.

- What is a typical opening order? Are there ever minimums for either an opening order or reorders?
- Would you support, and if so to what extent, charitable efforts on our behalf, i.e. breast cancer awareness, local charitable events, silent auctions, raffle baskets?
- Define the product cost per treatment.

Come up with your own questions and concerns as well. The above list is meant only as a catalyst to start you thinking like an owner. If you have these answers, you are now ready to present your ideas to the decision maker.

Carefully chose a time to present your ideas to the owner or manager. Don't try to do so on the fly. Pick a day and time when things are less hectic. Schedule a meeting—possibly outside the office so interruptions will not occur.





Explain how a new line or service will allow you, and the company, to be more successful.

Listen to be heard. This may sound strange, but no one is better prepared to hear what you have to say than someone who knows you have listened to them first. Know your audience. Start out by letting the owner realize that you are aware that they are running a business and must be concerned with profits, inventory costs, client retention, pricing, staff retention and performance and competition, to list just a few of the issues that are always at the forefront of their mind.

Let them know you are as concerned as they are. Tell them you are about to make a proposal for their consideration that has, at its heart, the best interests of the company, its clients and staff. Explain that what you are proposing is different and enhances what is currently being offered and why.

Explain, Why the change?

Mention what is difficult about increasing business or selling services with the current offerings, and how your idea will improve the business' outcome. At this point, your own personal credibility comes into play. If you are very successful

in marketing products and services, all the better. If you are not, state how this line or service is different and why it will allow you, and the company, to be more successful. State the reasons why it has been hard to market and sell the existing services or products, such as ingredients, lack of results, discounting at other locations, product is everywhere, client reaction, newer technology on the market, etc. Review with them why this product or service will be successful.

Be enthusiastic about your ideas and recommendations. Your chances of success will be greatly enhanced if you can get your professional colleagues on board, supporting your idea. Make it a joint recommendation. If more than one person is behind the proposal, it will be easier to convince the owner. Invite your co-workers to read information, try out products and share literature. Market to them as if they were a potential client or the owner. It is harder for decision makers to turn against a united front, especially when the change will enhance their business, increase profits and boost employee morale.

Most owners would be most impressed and glad to have a member of their staff taking an interest in improving the company and enhancing client offerings. It will show that you are invested not only in your own interests but also in the success of the business as a whole. ■

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