





# turn the holidays into a wealth of opportunities

bring in more skin care and spa  
dollars with yearend events

*The end of the year is fast approaching. You are probably already thinking about what to get for whom: family, friends, staff and those you want to acknowledge for their help and support throughout the year. But another group needs careful attention and planning: your clients and patients upon whose support the success or failure of your practice depends. The ideas that follow are not meant to be an exhaustive list of every possible option but rather to serve as a catalyst to get you thinking and planning.*

## **Holidays equal marketing opportunities**

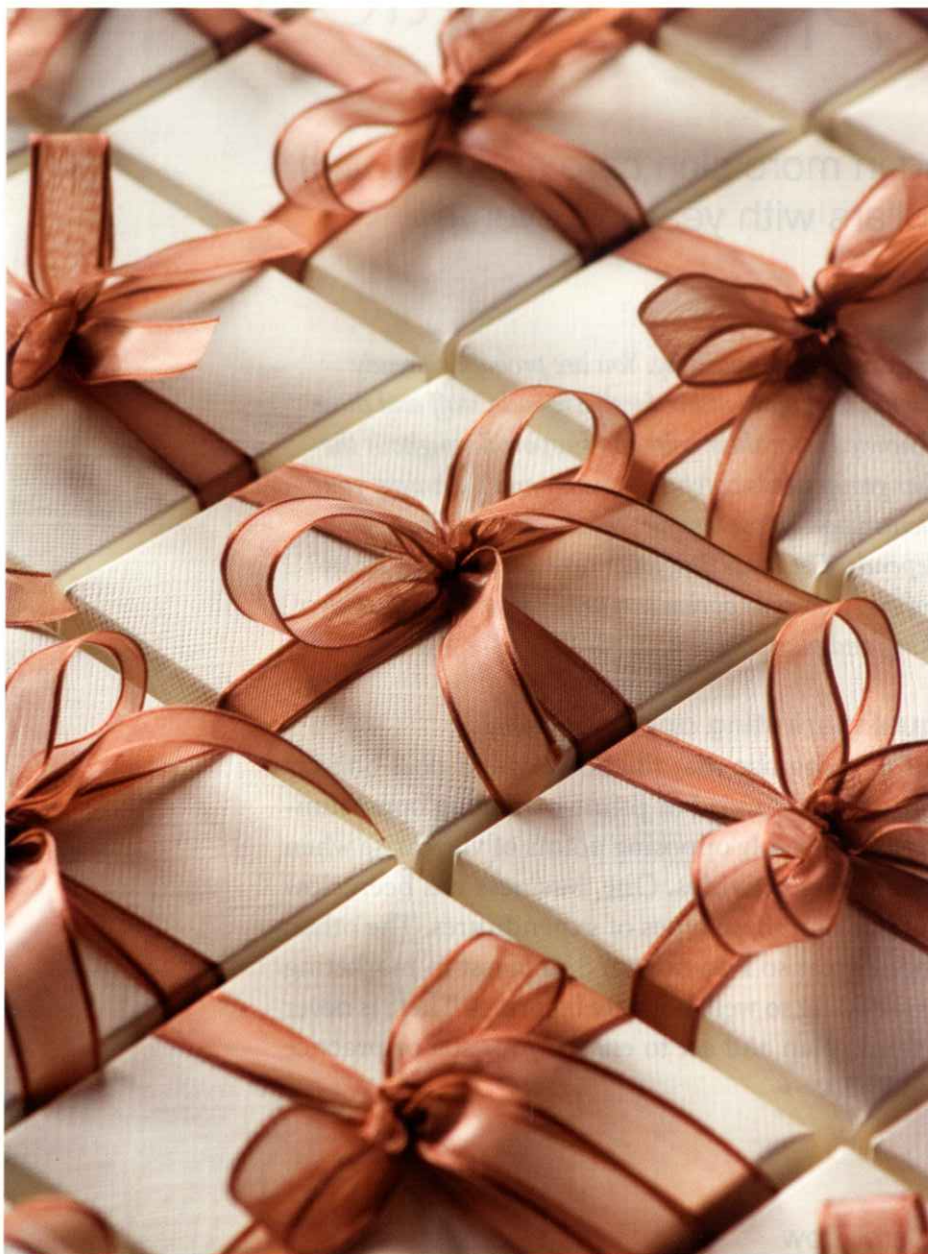
It is important to recognize that the holiday and post holiday season are replete with a myriad of prime marketing opportunities. All too often two seemingly opposing points of view arise when considering marketing activities. One, business has been slow so I need to cut back on these types of expenditures. The other, business has been great so I do not need to invest in marketing because things are going so well. Both are incorrect. There is never a time not to think, plan and act to ensure your spa or practice stays healthy and busy. ➔

by Rob and Carol Trow

### **Appoint a holiday concierge**

A sustained series of programs, events and specials are needed for the holiday season as well as for the post New Year's slow season. You or someone on your team will need the skills of a promoter, event planner and concierge. If practical, it is wise to designate either yourself or one of your staff to be the holiday event driver—taking responsibility to ensure everything possible is being done and that all staff understands the importance of these activities.

Give your clients a nondenominational gift that contains a coupon for a free product or service upgrade.



### **Gather client information**

At the heart of any effective holiday program is having accurate information at hand. You should have an efficient computer system that allows you to retrieve and organize information to meet your needs. Clients need to be segregated by spending levels, services they receive and purchasing patterns. The efficacy of a successful holiday program is in using information wisely not solely to give something away but rather to fashion a series of events and activities that will add value to you and your staff going forward. For example, you need to know who gets facials but never laser treatments or injectables. Who comes in for manicures and pedicures but never gets a facial. Who gets facials but never a massage and who gets services but never buys products.

Let's consider the period leading up to the holidays. Obviously, decorations and creating a festive environment is critical. Be mindful that your clientele may represent different religious and ethnic groups. Regardless of our own feelings and beliefs, you are setting the tone for all of your clients, not just for you and your staff. Nondenominational should be a watchword, as decorations are for all clients and staff.

### **Holiday cards**

Sending holiday cards is an easy first step. Be sure to send out cards as a means of communicating a special event, promotion and thank you for your existing clients. Separate your clients into categories based on either their spending habits or services received. Many of those who come regularly to you may only take advantage of a single or limited number of services that you offer. Why not fashion a program that looks to make a special offer with a substantial discount, as a thank you, for a service or product that they have not previously used. In doing so you are giving them a gift while marketing to your best audience, a satisfied client. This is certainly a win-win situation.

### **Giving/gift trees**

Another idea that works well is a nondenominational gift or giving tree. While Christmas trees were originally associated with Christianity, more and more they have now become symbols of the holidays and are decorated by people of wide ranging religions.

Consider having two trees, one in the reception area and one in a more private location.

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The first can contain sealed envelopes, bags, small boxes or cards that offer a free product, service upgrade or discount for a service during a specified period that can range from the current visit or for a later period, particularly when business may be slower, i.e. January and February.

The more private tree, reserved for your top tier clients, can contain more valuable gifts including free full size products or free treatments. You should also ask your preferred vendors to contribute to this endeavor. But, the ask should be reasonable in proportion to how much you have spent with them this past year. Spending \$2,000 with a vendor and asking for \$300 in gifts is not comparable. Ask for a contribution of between 1 percent and 3 percent at the upper end of the range and only if they are among your top suppliers. If they do not help you, why should you support them? Remind them you are looking for a strategic partner, not a supplier.

### Get all staff involved

Look to your staff to get involved in thanking their clients. Each professional should be asked to send a personal thank you note, hand signed, to their top clients. These cards should offer, as their personal expression of gratitude for working with them, a free service or incentive. The incentive could be a free product, service upgrade or a meaningful discount. No matter how well off a client may be, there is something magic in the word "free."

### Give something new

It is also worth doing the research to provide a discount or sample that a client has not used so the professional and spa can better market their skills and multifaceted services. Just providing a discount for something one normally comes in for will not help expand and build business. If mailing is too problematic, these special cards can be handed to each client as they leave after a visit. However, in order for card giving to be effective, it must be personalized. As an aside, personalized holiday communications bring increased rewards for the spa professional in terms of return gifts.

### Special events

A holiday event works wonders but it must be special and approached as if one is planning a wedding. Nancy Reagan of nReagan Spa in Delray Beach, Florida, is a creative, innovative event planner. She arranged a special event that included inviting a local ballet company to perform individual, mini routines while standing on underlit podiums spaced out among guests. Nancy invited local dignitaries, neighboring businesses and area professionals. All were encouraged to bring a guest who was interested in or used spa services.

To ensure proper planning an RSVP was required. In return, those who replied received a ticket to enter and an entry form for a raffle. You had to be present to win. Aside from a welcoming buffet and a limited open bar, Reagan had vendors provide raffle prizes, which was a discreet way to build a mailing list as everyone had to complete the raffle entry form. Those that attended the event had an opportunity to receive a mini service from either one of her staff or a vendor plus receive a discount voucher for a future service booked that night.

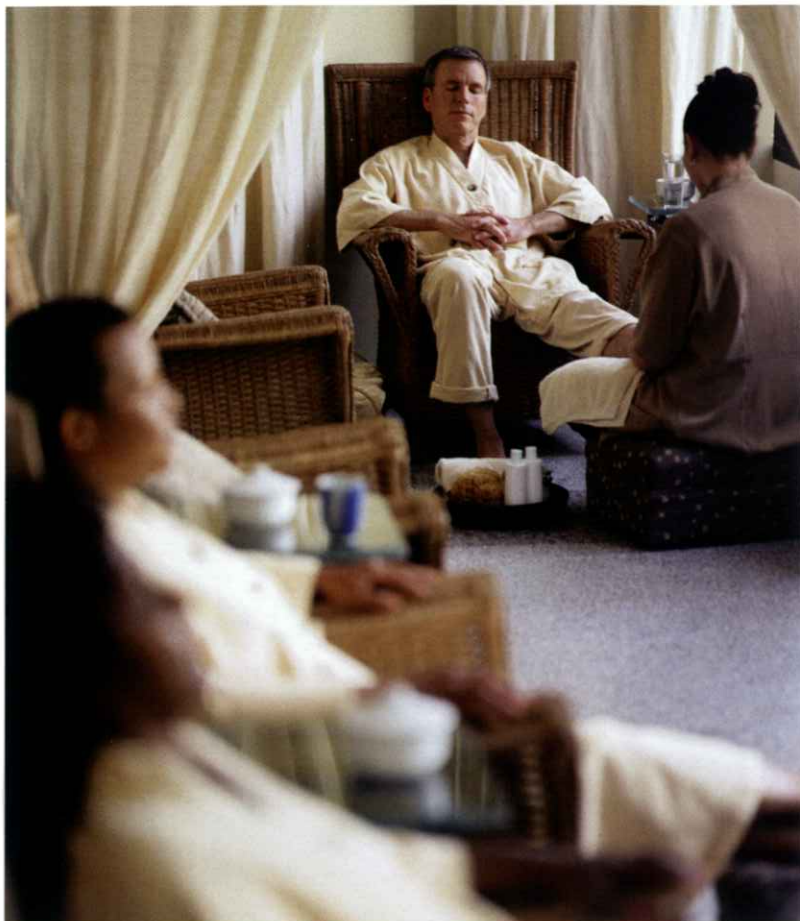
Local media were invited, which led to publicity after the event. A local radio station was also involved, which promoted the event for free. In return, they received free gift certificates for services that they could give away to their listeners. The exposure on the radio also brought in new clients, as Reagan's medi-spa was mentioned frequently on the air.

Another variation is to conduct such an event but only for a limited number of clients that you have designated as VIPs. Involve your vendors. But remember, if you have too many product lines or cherry pick single products, it is unlikely any supplier will be in a position to invest heavily in your promotional activities.

### A potpourri of ideas

Millie Haynam, who owns Natural Beauty Salon and Spa in Twinsburg, OH, is a seasoned holiday marketer. She combines a variety of events to create a potpourri of activities. Some of her favorites include setting up holiday boutiques featuring gift specials and client appreciation nights that offer special incentives. Haynam has also hosted men only events

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Host a holiday VIP event at your spa featuring food and beverages, mini treatments and take-home treats.

with food, an open bar and personalized gift suggestions that have been requested by their clients whose significant others have encouraged them to attend.

Her staff put together preassembled gift baskets to be purchased, made to order gift packages assembled while you wait, and gift cards. During these events, free mini services are available at no charge to expose those attending to treatments with which they may not have been familiar. Just for attending the event, departing guests are provided with thank you cards that include discounts on future visits or purchases.

### Wish list

One of Haynam's unique ideas was to circulate a client wish list, similar to a bridal registry that includes space for contact information for family and friends. She included the client wish list on the back of a newsletter so it could be cut out and placed on a refrigerator or left at the spa. If left at the spa, her staff then contacted family members and friends to make them aware of what was wished. While this may seem bold, many appreciated the concept as it made their gift giving so much easier.

Other ideas include sending out a notice to area businesses suggesting spa gift cards and services as potential employee holiday or recognition awards.

### Beauty bucks

Still another of Haynam's programs is Beauty Bucks through which clients get spa money based on how much they have spent during the year. They can use these toward retail purchases at specific times when she wants to draw people into her establishment.

### Prepared, wrapped gifts

Anyone who comes into your spa during the holiday season is thinking about gifts they have to give. Try wrapping up presents that could serve anyone and sort them according to price and male/female ranges. Have an opened box on top or near by so all can see what is in the box. If something they like is already wrapped and is within their price range, they are likely to make an impulse purchase. Use your imagination to come up with a variety of gift ideas that fall into various price points from inexpensive to a series of treatments replete with at home products. You can also create an attractive display out of each gift selection that adds a festive atmosphere to the retail area.

### Don't forget your team

Keep your staff in mind. Provide contests, rewards and recognition gifts for them. You may even be able to barter with area merchants, exchanging gifts for your staff because spa services are highly valued. Remember the old saying, "The shoemaker has holes in his shoes." The spa professional often has little opportunity to enjoy the wonders of the services offered at your spa.

With careful and thoughtful planning you can make the holiday season a joyous time while using the end of the year as a resource for bringing in more funds. ■

**Rob and Carol Trow**, his wife, own *Derma-Concepts 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.

