

## **How to Bring in New Products and Treatments**

### **Convincing the Decision Makers**

**By Carol and Rob Trow**

A growing source of frustration for skin care professionals is centered on the problems they encounter when trying to bring in new products, treatments, devices and protocols to their physician's office, medi-spa or day spa. Aestheticians spend a great deal of time keeping current, attending trainings, professional development workshops, trade shows and professional society 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 or selling their owners, directors or colleagues on these new ideas, products, and treatment regimes. This article will focus on what you can do to ensure your ideas and suggestions are heard and implemented.

There is a natural dichotomy in our profession. Most of us have chosen a career in professional skin care for reasons other than financial. We all know there are easier ways to earn a living. 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 mind set 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.

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 aestheticians bored, tired or looking for something new and better as well?

Aestheticians 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 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 in direct (actual cost) for the item and indirect (time, training, space), new menus, printed materials, infrastructure improvements, marketing, and launch expenses.

If it is solely a product line, explain how it will improve the services offered, the impact on patient/client retention, increased visits, professional treatment costs (product cost per treatment vs. what can be charged), staff income and incentives, and how it compares 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 cost, monthly carrying charges, disposable items needed per treatment, product cost and how many treatments can realistically be expected to be performed each month. What can be charged for the treatment or product and what is the breakeven point.

Reach out to your potential vendors to help compile this data - do not look to do this yourself. 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.

Put a great deal of the burden on making the case for change on the manufacturer's representative. Ask for and expect, in short order, answers to the following questions for 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 is provided, where, at what cost? How often? What happens when there are staff changes? 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 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?

What is a typical opening order? Are there ever minimums for either an opening order or reorders?

Do you support, and if so to what extent, charitable efforts on our part (i.e, Breast Cancer Awareness, Local Charitable Events, Silent Auctions, Raffle Baskets)?

Define the product cost per professional treatment or amortized equipment cost per treatment?

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 the company is available at these times 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 equipment, what is needed for installation (plumbing, electrical, space) code requirements? Do local and state regulations allow the use of this in your business and by whom? Is there any impact on professional liability insurance?

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 this 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.

An aesthetician 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. 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 as demonstrated by the list of questions to be answered. Now you are ready to make your case.

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 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 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 patients and clients and staff. Explain that what you are proposing is different and enhances what is currently being offered and why.

Mention what is difficult about increasing business or selling services with the current offerings; and how your idea will improve the business outcomes. 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, why it will allow you to be more successful and therefore the company. State the reasons why it has been hard to market and sell the existing services or products (i.e., 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. Even 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 bettering the company and enhancing offerings to patients and clients. It will show that you are invested not only in your own interests but also in the success of their business.