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business | a guide to thriving

by Tracy L. Drumm

MAINTAINING A BUSY schedule is a lot like skin care. A well-thought-out daily regimen will help your face stay hydrated, youthful and vibrant. If you neglect your skin, you will have break-outs, an uneven texture and even potentially accelerate the aging process. Marketing follows these same guidelines. Failing to create a plan or "treatment regimen" for your spa will undoubtedly lead to a business blemish.

The easiest way to develop a strategy that will keep your phones ringing and clients coming back is to break down your marketing efforts into four categories: pre-commit, educate, retain and refer. Work with your team to create inexpensive and easy-to-implement efforts that cover each category. Apply this potent protocol daily to see trouble spots in your business clear up.

Pre-commit

Make a relationship with your clients before they even come in. Simply turn your "appointment reminder calls" into an "introductory call" from the provider. Have the esthetician block off 30 minutes on Fridays to call new guests scheduled for the following week. The provider can introduce themselves and let the clients know they are looking forward to their appointment. They can also encourage first-timers to write down questions before they come in to ensure any concerns will be covered during their consultation. This small gesture will make a lasting impression and be the first step to creating a long, loyal relationship between the spa and customer.

Educate

Let's face it, esthetics is a visual industry where seeing is believing. It is no secret that before-and-after photos can easily pique interest and generate excitement for new services you offer. A simple photo album will do but if you really want to grab the attention of those in your waiting room, consider a professional hardcover photo book. Following easy instructions on a website like www.mixbook.com, you can create a custom tool to showcase your before and after photos while describing in detail your facials and spa services. Treatments such as eyebrow waxing, dermaplaning and chemical peels are exciting for clients to read about and make great visuals. Most importantly, by showing before and after pictures you are subtly educating your clients on all the treatments you offer and the results they can expect to achieve.

Retain

Keep them loyal! An easy way to get your phones ringing and your schedule full is to encourage your clients to keep coming back. Give each client a "loyalty card" that accumulates points, is initialed or simply hole-punched after each treatment or after a certain dollar amount is spent. Once a client has enough services to fill the card or reaches a set point amount, give them a free treatment. By giving the patient a goal, you are turning each appointment into an investment toward a reward. The loyalty card is an effective way to incentivize patients to return and also helps them justify spending money.

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Refer

Generate new referrals without spending extra funds on promotions. Simply add a sentence to all of your printed collaterals that asks clients to: "Help us be green by sharing this with a friend." By adding one line to all brochures, business cards or newsletters, you can potentially double the reach of your marketing efforts without increasing your costs. Add a similar concept to every page of your website suggesting viewers "e-mail this page to a friend." This effort has the added value of capturing prospective clients' e-mail addresses. ■

Tracy Drumm, vice president of *IF Marketing*, specializes in the branding and promotion of cosmetic practices and medical spas. She is known for her unique, creative and easy-to-implement strategies that have been proven to deliver results. Tracy has co-authored two marketing books.