Retail Strategies for Success

Play to Their Senses, Get Your SALE

David Watson

In an era when the largest cosmetic companies are pushing the envelope with regard to new and novel product offerings, it is imperative that medically based skin care providers change their marketing strategies to stay relevant in order to effectively keep existing patients and gain new ones.

SEE BEYOND THE ORDINARY

The first strategy is about visual impact. Of course you want to look for science-based, efficacious products but patients are also demanding an enjoyable product experience they’ll want to repeat. Products should be packaged in sophisticated, aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly containers. There was a time when physician-dispensed skincare packaging had to be plain or sterile to communicate to the patient that these products were better—think “science in a bottle.” Today’s consumer is influenced by fashion and beauty magazines, the allure of the cosmetics department at big department stores, QVC, the internet, and other retail distributors with enormous visual impact. While the majority of your patients are women with skin concerns beyond the help of the cosmetics department, they are still women who appreciate and enjoy beautiful and stylish packaging aligned with their lifestyle. Skincare packaging should speak to her sensibilities as a woman rather than reminding her of her skin issues, which is typical of many doctor brands.

SPEAK VOLUMES

Next is engaging your patient through more consistent messaging to compel them to come to you for their skin care needs instead of another office, or even worse, a department store. You have to show through your messaging that you really do have better products and knowledge than are offered outside of the medical market. More importantly, communicate that you are extremely interested in assisting your patients with the most advanced techniques for their skin’s well-being. Customization is also key.

Messaging comes in several forms from the obvious to sublime. The most obvious is advertising, which has its benefits, but without a significant investment, generally fails. Another is your practice’s website. The most exciting is Facebook and Twitter simply because of the reach, however the

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SPSSCS Mission

The Society of Plastic Surgical Skin Care Specialists is a voluntary, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of education, enhancement of clinical skills and the delivery of safe, quality skin care provided to patients within the office of a Plastic Surgeon certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

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messages also need to be unique and updated frequently in order to keep consumers interested. These pages that offer user interaction are generally the most viewed. Just ask a question or post an offer and you will understand.

Keep in mind that your messaging also needs to be visually impactful. A great example of this is the magazine NEW BEAUTY, a visionary fusion of clinically based industry information dressed in a high-end fashion magazine, catering to today's women.

Now that you have the right product assortment and the essential communication tools which typically include wall displays, posters, treatment rooms displays, it’s time to sell, sell, sell! The following points highlight key, tried and true sell-out strategies designed to move product out the door.

**SHOW and (THEY’LL) TELL [THEIR FRIENDS]**

This strategy utilizes both visual and messaging elements, and incorporates the notion of “touch” to create the ideal patient experience and selling environment. It’s about patient perception. As an exercise, picture yourself as a patient and ask yourself, “When I walk through the door, what do I see?” “How do I feel? Do I want to be here?” Internal marketing begins the minute your patient walks through the door. While department stores have this down to a science, there are some simple things you can do to enhance patient perception:

- Your office must look like it wants to succeed. From the waiting room to the bathroom, your office is a visual extension of the quality services you provide. The first impression is the most important. Offices must be organized, clean, not overtaken by all those empty backs and brochures.
- Merchandise products with the intention to sell them. Have your products beautifully displayed front and center in a way that makes sense. For example, if you want to sell a kit, your patients will see what’s inside the kit. Display product testers in front of the packaged product on wall or stand-alone displays with pricing clearly visible. Make sure to enhance the visual presentation with showcase-look displays.

contemporary furniture and don’t forget to dust display areas regularly.

- Don’t play hide and seek with your skincare products. If they are locked in a glass display unit or hidden in a cabinet in the back office, no one but you will see them. That doesn’t translate into sales. If you think of a department store retail area, all of the products are out in the open, beautifully merchandised and extremely approachable. Patients want to touch, feel and smell your product! The biggest concern for many is that patients will steal products on display. While this may happen on a very limited basis, it is more than offset by how many will actually get sold. The Medi-Spa market really gets this concept and has a better chance of increasing sales.

**GROUP EFFORT**

While the nurse or aesthetician may be intimately familiar with the products, it is also imperative that the entire staff is knowledgeable and endorses the products in your office. For example, the receptionist is the VIP in the office and should also know the brands you carry and be able to engage your patient and assist you in the sale of product. Any staff member(s) that regularly interacts with patients need to be outgoing, friendly, approachable and willing to put in the extra time to support all the ancillary services offered by your practice. In my experience, the more successful practices also have the endorsement of the physician(s), who is also familiar with the products and makes recommendations to the patient. That is a very powerful sales tool as many of us have been conditioned from a young age to “do what the doctor says.”

**BUNDLE OF JOY**

Many clinical skincare treatment products are designed to work synergistically with ancillary services. Get creative when it comes to bundling. Skincare is a great pre and post add-on to prepare the skin for treatment and to help maintain results thereafter. Besides, women like taking home products. A great way to engage new patients is by requiring them to first see the skincare specialist for a complimentary skin evaluation in order to create the relationship. They should also be offered a bundled package reserved for new patients including a procedure and home care product(s) at a value. You can offer new bundles seasonally or on a monthly basis. You can even offer special bundles to VIP customers.

**GIVE THEM an EVENT to RECALL**

Events are critical to an office’s success selling ancillary services. A successful event requires several important factors:

- Ensure someone actually comes to your event. Website, social media and e-blasts are mandatory to create a buzz, but simple things like messaging the event within the office through display ads or simple invitations are also a must. Again, this is a group effort. It is critical that the staff and the physician talk about the event to all patients.
- Charge a reservation fee. Many of you have gone to a department store event. They are run very consistently. Most events charge a reservation fee which can be redeemed towards the purchase of products on the day of the event. This does a couple of things. It encourages participation from your VIP clients and weeds out the patients that solely come for the food and wine. If your practice is good at cold-calling—really knowing your patient base, you will be more successful. Most importantly, a reservation fee or deposit will ALWAYS increase sales beyond the amount to not charge a fee.

The challenge is that it takes a bit more effort upfront for the office to collect the deposits. Many offices will feel this is inappropriate but be assured that it is not. Your patient is used to this in the retail world and will not be put off especially if you create a value offering for making the deposit. Events that charge fees up front generally sees a 60- 70% increase in revenue the day of the event from those that do not.

Follow up with your patients before AND after the event. While an invitation or an e-blast is pretty and saves you time, the old-fashioned follow up call will help solidify patient attendance and will brighten patient loyalty post-event. Women talk to their aestheticians or nurses like they talk to their therapists. They want to hear from you.

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- Key Ingredients with percentages available per product
- Insights in science help but only the end result of the completed formula is key to function
- Integration with your existing products
- Does the line "play well with others"
- Back-bar sizes available?
- Review selection, need/requirements
- Clinical Treatments or Peels available
- An asset but not always needed for success
- Product specific marketing materials available
- Appearance/cost to you?
- Education provided in practice
- Who, when and how often provided are things to determine
- Business-building programs available
- Not just discounts but about true business support
- General comments
- Make notes and file for future reference

Successful retailing begins and continues with a thorough evaluation and ongoing review of practice requirements, products and vendors by the entire Aesthetic Team. Effective and attentive vendors will work hard for you to help you reach and exceed your retail goals. Appreciate and embrace your dedicated vendors as true business partners. By creating standards for products and business partnerships with vendors from the beginning, this will ensure a profitable retailing department.

Bea Hunter Erdman is a licensed cosmetologist and medical skin care specialist who has been in practice since 1970. Ms. Hunter was the Inaugural President of The Society of Plastic Surgical Skin Care Specialists from November 1994 to April 1996, has served as Advisor, Nominating Chair, Scientific Program Chair and participated on several committees. She has been a Speaker for the Society on multiple occasions and continues to be an active member of the Society.

Currently Global Clinical Educator for Innovative Skincare, Sandra Adams is proud to be a former member of the SPSSCS, as well as having served on the Board of Directors. She designs and conducts advanced training seminars for estheticians, nurses and physicians throughout the country. She has also the honor of conducting and managing the IS Cancer Care Program worldwide.

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from our neighbors in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, they banded together, as they always do, in times of crisis. However, it saddens me terribly to have heard the most callous comments from those in our field. Have these people never had difficult times? While my aim here is not to judge anyone, I do have to ask, "Where is their empathy and compassion?" How can anybody work in this industry without those vitally important qualities? We all crave love, acceptance, and understanding. Those are the very traits that make us HUMAN.

As we begin 2013, let's be more kind and compassionate when seeing our patients. I urge you to really listen when they express their concerns. Take a moment to look your patient in the eye and see the person behind the comments and imagine how you would feel in the same situation. Empathy doesn't cost a thing, it's a trait we need to share with our patients, family, and friends. The payoff is exponentially rewarding.

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Don't be afraid or hesitate to call and remind them about the event and the value of the features and benefits so they don't miss out! I assure you, your good clients won't want to disappoint you.

By including these simple strategies outlined above in your current marketing plan, you will not only stand out as a leader among your patients and peers, but you will strengthen your efforts in order to compete with the both the department stores and large cosmetic companies. This is critical as the medical market is measured in millions of dollars while the retail market is tens of billions.

Need I say more?

David Watson founded Philosophy and built the game-changing brand BioMedic, leading both to huge success. Now this industry icon is taking on mybody, his next rock star brand, overseeing its development from strategy to formulation. David will be a presenter at the SPSSCS 19th Annual Meeting in New York in April. He can be reached at davwson@loveybody.com.