Toolkit # 3
Retailing Recommendations

The Art of Retailing: The Right and Wrong Ways to Sell Your Wares
(From Skin Deep, September/October 2008.)

Past Prime: Track Product So It Doesn’t Go Stale
(From Skin Deep, August/September 2007.)

Refreshing Your Storefront
(From Skin Deep, March/April 2009.)

CellCharge
Use this phone-based credit card processing service to accept payments for retail purchases—in your office or during outcalls.

Client’s Regimen for Home Care
Complete this form for each client to help extend the benefits of your services.
The Art of Retailing
The right and wrong ways to sell your wares
by Monica Schuloff Smith

Just because esthetics professionals create beauty and balance for skin does not mean they can easily create attractive displays and gift baskets. For a lucky few, it does come naturally, but the vast majority of esthetics professionals struggle when it's time for seasonal and promotional display changes, or when arranging gift baskets.

"Retail merchandising and marketing is an art that takes skill, practice, and creativity," says Larry Oskin, president of Marketing Solutions, Inc. of Fairfax, Virginia. Oskin suggests visiting major department stores to get ideas from the displays at cosmetic counters.

According to Noreen Young, educator, author, makeup studio owner, and online mail-order beauty business owner, professionals need look no further than the places they shop. Even billboards and magazines can offer inspiration.

"When retailing in any skin care clinic, spa, or medical spa, it is very important to develop a crisp, clean, and visually stimulating display," says Christie Citsay, spa director of Vito Mazza Salon, Spa & Hair Restoration of Woodbridge, New Jersey. "If you have a theme, follow it all the way through. It is important to mix things up a little bit to give it a fresh feel, even if that means just moving items from the bottom shelf to the top."

Merchandising is important because of its profitability—it's an investment and service guarantee and helps with client retention, says Lisa Marie Arnold of Salon & Spa Solutions, who estimates that 68 percent of clients have never been given a proper retail recommendation, while $2.6 billion is spent per year on body, hair, nail, and skin care products sold out of the salon or spa. "Keep your displays attractive and changing every six to eight weeks at a minimum. Clients want change and get bored if they don't see it. Keep that client always wanting to come back to see what's new," she says.

Visual stimulation is a very big part of retailing, so displays, baskets, and floor arrangements should be attention-getting, inviting, and colorful.

"Eye level is buy level," says Margaret Haley, owner of My Derma Clinic Day Spa in Pinecrest, Florida. "We want retail areas to be approachable, so we don't put things behind glass. We want our clients to touch, feel, and play with product."

Keith West-Harrison, CEO at Spa Enrichment Strategies in Santa Fe, New Mexico, says clients are "secretly begging to be led." While packaging and display are important, they are just one part of the whole retail plan, as most spa sales will come from a professional recommendation or advice from staff. "Clients really don't know what they want or need," West-Harrison says. "We just have to teach the staff how to fulfill these needs with a day of client psychology training and role-playing. That usually means at least a 300 percent increase in the retail sales at that location."

Everything Has Its Place
Regardless of your style, your displays, retail areas, and gift baskets must be accessible, have good lighting, and be placed in high-traffic areas. Oskin advises spa owners to use "mass with class." Point-of-purchase (POP) signage should be used to inform clients, but he warns that it should look professional and enticing.

"Make sure there is a price on the signage, not necessarily on the products. Most people are afraid to ask, 'How much does this cost?' for fear of being embarrassed if the price may be too high," Oskin says. "Put out enough products, so your clients will know they can pick up and pay for skin care products, while not ruining the theme of your displays."

Arnold encourages owners to have a product placement system. Generally, all products from the same manufacturer should be placed together and all products in the same category should be placed.

Five Fast Retailing Tips
Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference in moving product.

- Do not place product behind the desk.
- Mark baskets and product with computer-generated price tags.
- Place slow-moving stock in the middle.
- Price all products with tags or signs.
- Testers work, so let your clients use them.

—Lisa Marie Arnold, Salon & Spa Solutions
together. Place two to three of the same product across the shelf, three or six deep. Shelf ends should be reserved for prominent product or sale items. West-Harrison agrees and adds that having a system allows staff members to easily locate the right skin type product.

“In the spa world, we need to think more like a Pier 1 Imports or Pottery Barn. Row after row of products gets very boring. You must mix up your merchandising techniques,” West-Harrison says. He suggests your visually appealing displays include attractions for the other senses. For example, if you have a vitamin C skin care line, place a bowl of citrus fruits next to the display. You can do this with any of your lines that feature organic ingredients.

“When using objects and decorative display items, keep it simple,” Young says. “Think feathers, gemstones, rocks, fruit and veggies, rice, antiques—whatever ties in with what you have to offer for the season.”

In addition to product placement, lighting can make or break an area. According to Arnold, light attracts four times the attention of unlighted areas, and spotlights, moving light, and color work well. In addition, light should be adjusted every time you change a display.

“Fortunately, there really are no bad or really wrong ways to merchandise retail programs, as long as you creatively merchandise your products, baskets, and displays. The only wrong way is to do nothing at all, expecting your clients to magically buy products that are still hidden in your back room or stored away in boxes. Put it all out there,” Oskin says.

Haley prefers to hold some product back, rotating every week, so she has something new on the shelves.

“You can go too far. You want to put a lot out on the shelves, but you don’t want to overdo it. You have to go with your instincts—it’s easy to go too far,” Haley says. Her solution is to ask her sister-in-law, who has an eye for design, to come review her displays, floor space, and baskets.

**Accessible Products and Information**

Citsay feels that professional retail display areas should tell a story. “Whether it be a boutique, skin care line, or hairstyling products, you should always display the complete product systems, lines, or themes together, so your client will easily be able to visualize what they need and to purchase them together,” she says. Citsay adds one of the worst things you can do is make products inaccessible to clients because you’ll lose their interest.

“If they can’t steal it, they can’t buy it,” Haley says. “If they can touch it, chances are they’re going to buy it.” She notes that shelf-talkers, which are signs or tags that focus a customer’s attention on the product, work well in product play areas.

“Shelf-talkers are like having a little salesperson near the product. They are as important as good lighting and making the retail accessible,” Haley says, but West-Harrison goes further.

“I have all of my affiliated spas dedicate one person to being a retail relations manager, West-Harrison says. “That designated person is responsible for being in the retail area to help educate clients while just answering questions and making recommendations."
Strategic Selling Calls for Planning

Having an annual plan for your promotional efforts will keep you on track, especially when you are extra busy.

Create a Calendar. An annual marketing, merchandising, and promotions plan will help you remember to change your displays every four to eight weeks and be prepared well before each season or holiday.

Feed the Media. Consider creating a seasonal public relations and media relations campaign for local print and broadcast media. Keep in mind you must help the editors/ producers and their readers/viewers learn how to improve their skin and lives, without being overtly commercial in selling your wares, products, and company. To get in the news with positive local exposure, be ready to share your expert advice without commercialization.

Have a Look. Keep everything in your marketing, advertising, POP, and merchandising programs consistent, while you build your brand and image.

Invest in Graphic Design. Hire a professional graphic designer to create your seasonal merchandising materials, counter cards, shelf talkers, posters, and banners. (Just because someone has a computer graphics program does not make them a designer.) It’s a great idea to create matching direct-mail postcards and advertisements. Show photographic illustrations of people using these products.

Promote Services with Products. When promoting product gift baskets, add services by putting gift certificates into your packages for facial treatments, series programs, and day-of-beauty packages.

Vary Your Prices. Offer gift baskets in price ranges of $50, $100, $200, and more.

—Larry Oskin
Marketing Solutions, Inc.

It is the only way spas can win back the sales from the competitive department store counters.”

Haley places her nail stations directly in her retail area to make good use of her floor space and, at the same time, offer clients getting pedicures and manicures something to look at. “The manicurist has a captive audience and is there to answer retail questions, but not push,” says Haley, whose retail center features baby shower baskets, handbags, hostess gifts, and jewelry.

“I go to the gift trade shows and look for unusual things that complement the spa, such as sandals and handbags,” Haley says. “If a client has a pedicure she’ll want to show it off with sandals. But when you get into things like shoes, you’ll need to stock several sizes. I would warn against overextending yourself unless your clientele can support it. The great thing about accessories like jewelry is that they are usually one size fits all.”

Baskets and Packaging

The biggest trend with baskets is less, West-Harrison says. “Less boxes, less plastic over-wrap, and more use of sustainable materials.”

Oskin says owners should try to incorporate some earth-friendly packaging and a smart way to do this is to include a special eco-friendly tote bag imprinted with your business logo.

“Going green is an ongoing process that salons and spas should definitely try to get into,” Citsay says. “It is important to do right by our environment, yet it is an ongoing process you would have to take slow steps into. At our Vito Mazza Salon & Spa, we do use some recycled packaging.”

Haley says there are natural materials available to make attractive presentations. She found her baskets online. “I have learned how to do baskets myself,” Haley says. “We use sinamay baskets—woven mesh with wire framing—and they look organic and natural.”

Young says packaging “overdoes” and is not planet-friendly. She suggests looking for products with less paper, cardboard, and plastic to get in sync with the greening trend.

Gift baskets can be custom-made right at your facility with creative baskets and bags that can be found easily these days, Arnold says. “The key is to understand your inventory turnover rates and move slow movers, sometimes even at cost, to keep from having your money tied up on the shelf,” she says. “These kinds of products are great for filling baskets for sales. Baskets should be available to target holidays: Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day, and the December holidays. Have them premade and make it easy for clients, especially men, to shop.”

It is best to have a mixture of some generic baskets and some seasonal retail displays to sell your beauty care wares, gift certificates, products, and services, says Oskin, who also suggests you place baskets in your spa at least two months prior to any holiday. You never know if a client will need a baby shower, bridal, or hostess gift, so you should always have some retail baskets and displays that will meet everyone’s needs in between the big gift-giving seasons. This way you’ll never miss a potential sale.

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It's common sense—if a carton of milk in your refrigerator smells sour or becomes curdled, you know it's time to throw it out. In fact, you probably know it's time to throw it out long before those tell-tale signs, because the milk has a best before date. So why don't skin care products and cosmetics offer the same information?

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there are no regulations requiring cosmetic manufacturers to print expiration dates on product labels; it's the job of manufacturers to determine product shelf life as part of product safety.

While some manufacturers include expiration dates on product labels, it's important to be aware of product deterioration and use the information not only in your practice, but in advising clients on skin care at home. It also makes sense when ordering product for your practice to know how quickly you'll use it so you don't end up with wasted inventory.

**Active Ingredients**

Bioelements, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, puts all of its products through a double-testing procedure to ensure products will perform effectively up to the expiration date, says Dawn Gantt, the firm's regional education manager. “Once the product is past that date, we can't guarantee it will work in the same way.”

For products containing active ingredients like sunblocks, antiaging creams, or acne medications, it's even more important to abide by expiration dates. “We have two forms of coding on our products,” says Jackie Bronfenbrenner, marketing manager for Carson, California-based Dermalogica. “On products that have active ingredients, we print an expiration date. On those that don't, we use a symbol of a jar that has a number in it. Once the product is opened, it is good for that many months.”
It’s essential to know what you’re stocking in both your retail and back-bar supplies, especially with more and more products containing active ingredients these days.

“Some estheticians don’t keep an eye on what they’re stocking because they don’t have a good management inventory system in place,” Gantt says.

And knowing your supplier is key. “It’s the esthetician and spa owner’s job to watch the company that they’re buying from,” Gantt says. “We make our products fresh every sixty to ninety days, so we’re not stocked with massive amounts of inventory that can then go bad.”

**Rash Decisions**

Many unpleasant consequences can result from using expired products, including rashes, infections, and increased skin sensitivity. While you don’t necessarily notice any negative side effects from using old product, you won’t notice any benefits either. “There is no nutritional or active benefit from expired product,” says Audrey Kwan, marketing spokesperson for Eminence Organics, a Vancouver, British Columbia-based organic skin care company. “For instance, after a year (of using our products), their activeness may be reduced, so we recommend replacing them.”

Many American companies and those in the European Union (EU) do testing to protect consumers (the EU requires a version of an expiration date on cosmetics and skin care products called the period after opening date). These tests, according to Paula Begoun, creator of Seattle-based Paula’s Choice skin care and cosmetics, include “exposing the product to cycles of temperature extremes, testing the effectiveness of the chosen preservative system over time, testing the product in its chosen packaging, and patch-testing it on human volunteers to ascertain irritancy or to reveal unforeseen complications.”

Unfortunately, however, even these tests don’t cover all the bases when it comes to product expiration. Two other factors play a key role in how long a product will last: storage and usage habits of the consumer.

**Storage Setbacks**

Just as you wouldn’t want to leave your groceries in your car on a sweltering summer’s day, you don’t want to store cosmetics and beauty products in a hot, well-lit area. Having lids off or loose is another no-no. According to the FDA, expiration dates are simply rules of thumb, and product safety may expire before the date indicated if product is cared for improperly. At the same time, products stored under ideal conditions may be fine after the expiration date has passed, according to the FDA website.

Your clients also can have a direct impact on how long their beauty products will last. According to Begoun, you and your clients should “be sure to wash your hands before using product, keep it in a cool, dark, dry place, and close all caps firmly to prevent premature expiration.” If possible, use products that come with pumps so you don’t have to submerge your fingers in them. “Products will go bad when exposed to heat or exposed to excessive bacteria when you dip your hands into them,” Kwan says. “This is why we provide scoops for our products.”

**Natural—But Lacking Longevity**

While in many ways natural and organic products might be better for skin and the environment, it is in the very lack of chemical preservatives that cause them to go bad more quickly. “Certain ‘all natural’ products may contain plant-derived substances conducive to microbial growth,” the FDA warns, and there may be “increased risk of contamination in products that contain non-traditional preservatives, or no preservatives at all.”
Keep this in mind when using natural products, and look for telltale signs that product has gone bad. “It is evident when products expire,” Kwan says. “When you open a jar you will see the differentiation between the color and texture from fresh product.”

**Know the Numbers**

Every product and company is different—look for expiration dates on your products and encourage your clients to do the same. If you can’t find them, call the manufacturer to get an expiration timeline. According to Begoun, it is generally best to toss cosmetic products used around the eyes after four to six months and to dispose of facial products like moisturizers and foundations after one to two years. Powder-based products should be thrown away after two or three years.

Some industry experts warn mascara should be replaced every three months or sooner if it dries out. Moistening the wand with saliva or water can introduce bacteria into the product, and other products used near the eye, like liquid eyeliners, also pose an infection risk as they age.

“If you have an eye infection, consult a physician immediately, stop using all eye-area cosmetics, and discard those you were using when the infection occurred,” Begoun says.

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Don’t get caught using old products, and make sure your clients don’t either. Fresh is always best! Skin Deep

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Q: I need help keeping my customers and moving retail product off my shelves. Any suggestions?

A: “Our economy is going through a rough period, but that doesn’t mean consumers have stopped buying,” says Rick Segel, retail expert and author of *Retail Business Kit For Dummies*. “People still like to reward themselves with new shoes or a new watch after a tough week at work. So the shoppers are out there—you just have to attract them.” Following are some rules to live by.

**Tune Into Customers.** Now’s the time to make sure you provide your customers with exactly what they want, when they want it. Don’t waste time trying to guess what your customers want. Ask them. Hand out a customer survey or organize a focus group to get feedback. Let them tell you which items they’ll buy, even when they’re trying to cut back on spending.

**Pump Vendors for Information.** Business owners are usually trapped in their stores. That means you may not have a good feel for what your competition is doing or what products are emerging. Let vendors be your eyes and ears in these areas, Segel advises. They go to visit different stores in different locations every day. Ask them what items businesses like yours are ordering and if they’ve noticed any hot products you aren’t currently selling. Ask them what prices your competition puts on merchandise. Find out if they’ve seen any unique marketing efforts.

**Conduct a Signage Audit.** Retail signage is one of the least appreciated and most effective forms of brand building and brand recognition. It enhances the shopping experience and sells more goods than any other tool available today. It can also make a difference in this slow economy.

“Take a look at how many signs you use,” Segel says. To determine if you are informing, selling, educating, entertaining, and creating an emotional connection with your customers through signage, include related question in your customer surveys and focus groups. Find out how customers really react to your signs. Can they recall what your signs even look like? Or were they compelled to check you out because of a specific sign? “All of this feedback will help you pinpoint what really works,” Segel says.

**Shop, Shop, Shop.** “You need to shop your own business, your competitors’ businesses, and websites so you know where to start when you are looking to make changes,” Segel says. “Shop different types of retailers, not just retailers that sell what you sell. Shop supermarkets, convenience stores, jewelry stores, sporting goods stores, and any other successful retailer. Notice how these stores display, what colors they use, the types of signs in view, the number of employees, and how they market and advertise. Talk to the owners to see how business is holding up and what marketing efforts they see as successful.”

Segal says this isn’t the end of the line for business owners. “As an owner, you simply need to block out all that bad news you’re hearing and focus on your business and what you can do to keep people coming in.”

—Compiled by ASCP staff.
A skin care program for ____________________________ Date ________________

Cleanse the face by applying about a teaspoon of cleanser, massaging over the entire face in circles for about 30 seconds and rinse with tepid water. Be sure no excess cleanser is left on the face.

Recommended product: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Apply freshener on moist sponges and wipe the entire face well, turning sponges until all traces of dirt, oil and makeup have been removed. Apply freshener again by spraying or by using the fingertips and patting the skin.

Recommended product: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

In the morning, apply a peanut size amount of day cream on a clean, toned, (after freshener) face and neck. Massage it in well. This day cream also provides protection for your skin from the sun due to an SPF of _____.
Wait until dry before applying makeup.

Recommended product: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

At night before going to bed, apply night cream on a cleansed and toned (after freshener) face and neck. Massage it in well. The skin should feel slightly moist but not too greasy. The cream will nourish your skin as you sleep.

Recommended product: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Once or twice a week, apply a mask on cleansed and toned skin. The mask should be applied with the fingertips to the thickness of a dime. Do not allow the skin to show through the mask. Leave the mask on the length of time recommended by the manufacturer and rinse the mask off with tepid water. Follow with a freshener again and follow the nightly treatment procedure.

Recommended product: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Special Instructions: __________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Client’s Regimen for Home Care