

Merchandising the Retail Area for the Holidays and Beyond

By Susan Tipton, Universal Companies Education Manager

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The holiday season is almost upon us...are you ready to retail? Here are some practical ideas to put a little extra cash in your stocking and pump up the profits in your spa's boutique all year long.

Displaying Products

It is hard to sell retail if your retail area isn't properly merchandised! A basic principle of merchandising is to make sure that products are visible, inviting, and accessible. If clients can't see products or examine them, they will be less inclined to purchase. Another "must" is to keep it clean! There is nothing worse than dirty or dusty products or shelving. Designate one person to maintain the retail area ... or rotate responsibility, but make sure it is maintained.

Avoid clutter at all costs. You've probably heard the old saying "less is more." That is especially true in merchandising. Showcase just a few products on your shelves. This will give the retail area a cleaner, less cluttered appearance.

Keep retail shelves neat and well stocked at all times. Your merchandise will look picked over if the selection gets too low. It is important that as customers remove product from the shelves, the empty spaces be filled in with additional product. This should be done daily. If you have a busy retail business, you may need to replace product to fill in empty spaces several times a day. If your retail space is limited, make sure there is ample, accessible storage elsewhere in the spa.

Typically a spa should re-merchandise their retail area at least twice a year, moving products categories to different parts of the spa and placing new or seasonal items in feature focus areas. The check-out desk is a great place for season promotions, new products, travel items, and impulse products.

All of these techniques will help you keep your retail area clean and neat and more visually appealing. Your area can be merchandised by brand or product classification. The customer's eye tends to move from the left to right, so you should arrange your merchandise in graduated sizes ... small to large ... from left to right.

Retail Helpers

Shelf talkers and other signage are valuable selling tools, especially if your staff is not large enough to have a full time retail sales person. However, shelf talkers and other signage shouldn't take up valuable retail space, so limit the number of signs and shelf talkers. Consider using one shelf talker to summarize a group of products.

Testers are another effective sales tool and allow the customer to experience new products by smelling and feeling them. When you let clients sample some of the retail items your boutique has to offer, they will be more likely to buy products. If a spa uses testers, it extremely important that they be kept clean. No one wants to handle dirty, contaminated containers. Your client will be turned off rather than being enticed to purchase products.

When merchandising apparel, use mannequins or "T" stands to display examples of robes or other spa apparel. Clothing can be stacked in cubes or on tabletops. If a spa's retail area is small, they can layer the clothing to maximize space. Be sure to label all items so that customers can see the prices easily. If they can't see price tags, they may move on and not purchase.

One excellent merchandising technique is to create one or more focus areas in your retail areas. Limit the number of featured products to one type or one brand. This would be an excellent way to display new items, seasonal items, or items that are on special. Make sure you change the products in the focus area frequently, particularly if you have clientele who visit your spa often. They will be tuned in to look for your specials.

You don't necessarily need a separate section of fixture to create a feature "focus area." Simple props such as decorative trays, bowls, rolled towels, stones, decorative tiles, flowers or other plants, baskets, vases, and screens or curtains may do the trick. Don't be afraid to use your creativity when you select props to merchandise your retail area.



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Spa boutiques sell more retail items and gift certificate during the holidays than any other time of the year. So make sure you're ready with a good supply of both.

Help clients shop smarter during the holidays. Ask whom they are shopping for, and then assist them in finding the perfect gift.

Use mirrors! People love to look at themselves, plus mirrors brighten up the retail area and give it a feel of abundance.

Festive presentations = more holiday retail sales. Help clients finish their shopping with a display of easy gift ideas.

Play some holiday tunes in the background (but not too loudly, please!) to help clients enjoy their shopping experience.

Offer clients a deal they can't resist. After treatments, present them with a coupon good for a significant amount off of a shopping spree in your retail boutique. Although you'll specify a minimum amount they must spend, they'll appreciate the FREE "Holiday Shopping Bucks" and you'll practically be guaranteed more retail income.

Seasonal spa snacks, anyone? Incorporate pumpkin or wine into seasonal facials, and then serve up some mulled cider and pumpkin bread or wine in your retail area for just a little extra cost and even less effort.

Ready-to-go gift sets make retailing simple. Display gift sets near open stock, so it will be obvious to the clients where they can buy full-size and replacement products. Seal the deal by setting out a tray of testers near your display. You will sell more gift sets when clients can sample the products beforehand.

Differentiate retail offerings by price point. For example, display gifts "Under \$25" to catch the price-conscious consumer's eye.

Summary

Are you getting the most bang for your retailing buck? A little forethought will go a long way toward ramping up your holiday retail sales, and a well designed-retail boutique will help you boost your revenue year-round. Happy retailing!

Author's Note: Although this series of retail articles is based on a number of articles and other resources, it relies heavily on two books: Retail Management for Spas from the ISPA Foundation and In the Bag - Selling in the Salon, by Carol Phillips. This series of retail articles is based on Universal Companies' curriculum titled, Selling Retail. If you are interested in implementing retail in your spa or training your staff to sell retail, this curriculum is available from Universal Companies. Universal Companies will also introduce a new series of retail webinars in 2012.

