



Quiet SUCCESS

Spa consultant and trainer **Linda Harding-Bond** explains why tailoring your retail training to introverts can help drive revenue, and make for a happier workforce

The growth of the global spa industry and the increased interest in wellness, health and beauty is something I'm thrilled about. However, there are significant challenges that need to be met in order to sustain that growth and improve the outlook for the future. This includes the type of therapist training and education needed to ensure that sales increase significantly and that the market is positively impacted. The industry is, overlooking a secret weapon when it comes to driving retail, one that is hidden in plain sight.

The fact is that most spas don't teach their therapists retail sales skills and when they do, that training is rarely designed for introverts, the predominant personality type among spa therapists. According to Alen Mayer, author of *Selling for Introverts*, this group has certain strengths that makes them the ideal salespeople. They like to listen, which is critical in the initial stages of selling; they excel in one-on-one situations; they're composed and therefore able to strategise more effectively; and there is no hard sell from them, as they are less aggressive in their approach than extroverts.

The spa introvert

Years before I became a spa consultant and trainer I worked for one of the largest telecommunications companies in the US, where the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was used. This personality test assigns people to

one of four categories, based on their answers to a series of questions, defining whether they are predominately introvert or extrovert, with levels in between. The test is widely used in major corporations, with executives finding that it helps determine how to best match staff to the appropriate type of training. Although different personality types exist in



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EXPERT VIEW



the spa industry, introverts are naturally more drawn to the serene and quiet atmosphere of spas.

This means there is a huge flaw in the sales training most spas give their staff, as most training is not targeted at introverts. That is a problem, because the right training for the therapist's personality is important. If, for example, you have a team that is made up primarily of introverts, as is likely, you might find that they perform better in a low key, more nurturing environment. You might also find that focusing on aspects such as how taking the time to make a personal recommendation will make the client feel is an approach that will appeal to this personality type.

Redesigned training

Competition in the beauty sector is fierce, with spas and salons up against department store beauty counters when it comes to product sales. An obvious competitive advantage spas and salons have is the therapists; trained professionals with in-depth knowledge of skin and of the body. However this advantage must be leveraged beyond mere product training.

Traditionally, spa training has consisted of educating therapists on products, ingredients and treatment protocols but a different type of training is also required, training that builds on the inherent talents of therapists and helps make them more confident. Therapists who feel confident in what they do are more likely to ask the right questions, make informed recommendations and deliver the type of personalised experience that customers are looking for.

To generate robust sales, therapists must understand the art of engagement and be able to deliver a superb customer

experience. Most sales are not based on simply spewing product knowledge; customers buy from people who ask the right questions, listen well, express empathy and offer the best way to address their concerns. If a therapist can do all of the above, there is a good chance customers will purchase products from them and with proper training that matches the introvert personality, this can be accomplished.

Traditional sales training has always been designed for extroverts. No consideration was given to introverts because the common belief was that they can't sell. The truth is that they have the same capability to sell as anyone else; they just process information differently. In order to make training more effective and tailor it more to introverts, the following modifications can be made:

1 Create a safe space

When possible, create small groups of three to four students rather than a large circle or a standard classroom configuration. Don't use typical icebreaker exercises; they only cause performance anxiety. Instead pose a question like: "What is the most exotic food you've had in this city?" Allow five/ten minutes for them to think about their response and have them share their answers with the small group.

2 Set expectations of success

Most introverts have never received appreciation for their learning style. So at the start of the training and throughout it, they should be acknowledged for their tendency to think about something in depth before making a decision. Let them, for example, know that their attention to detail will enable them to make impeccable product choices for their clients.

3 Make a list

Use a chart to list at least 10 qualities of an introvert and explain how those qualities help positively support the selling process. Ask the therapists to write down which of the qualities they associate with themselves. This will help them perceive themselves as successful sales people.

4 Discuss obstacles

Identify what is getting in the way of selling: the process of working through fears is critical to removing self-doubt and overcoming obstacles. Always bear in mind the sensitivity of introverts. Respect this and deliver only positive feedback in public: give constructive criticism privately.

Making these changes in the way training is conducted is a major step towards building a stronger relationship with your team. 📞

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Linda Harding-Bond is president of Moontide Consulting, which offers retail training workshops, digital marketing and mystery shopper services to the global spa industry. She is the creator of Increasing Your Retail Selling, an online training programme designed to help spa managers increase the engagement and sales performance of their therapists.