

By now, everyone knows the insidious effects of sun exposure on our skin and, therefore, the value of using daily sun protection.

As a result, suncare products are the cash cow of your business; the products effortlessly glide off your retail shelves and make their way to the register. In fact, just the other night at dinner, you were saying how zinc oxide single-handedly financed your last trip to...What? That wasn't you?

Public awareness has made sun protection a fundamental part of skin care, and if you're not selling your suncare products as routinely as you are your moisturizers, it may simply be a matter of reinforcing that awareness among your clientele. We spoke with spa owners who successfully send their clients out the door armed against the rays, encouraging them to share some of their strategies for selling sun protection.



Selling Sun Protection

By Lisa Randazzo

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Instill Fear

Making clients aware of the cumulative damage of sun exposure is an effective way to sell sun protection, most spa owners report. Trying to prevent or reduce the signs of aging are likely the reason your clients come to your spa in the first place; add fear of skin cancer to the mix and you've got a captive audience for most efforts at client education. Up close and personal is how Barbara Gauthier, owner of Gauthier Total Body Image, Sherman Oaks, California, likes to break it to her skin-care clients. “We use the skin scanner on each client so she can see the damage to her skin and understand the importance of sun protection,” she says. “And of course, we incorporate sun protection into our facials.”

Indeed, seeing is believing, which is why Beryl Gosling, owner of Peaches and Cream Day Spa in Glendora,

unprotected. The display area houses a graph that explains quite vividly what UV rays do to the skin, so that's visual education for the client—it's a visual aid. So we *frighten* them.”

Spas in high-risk areas of the country—or globe—may be lucky enough to have a clientele that's already aware of the dangers of sun exposure. For them, selling sun protection is mostly about reinforcing awareness and, of course, making the products available. “As far as I understand, Arizona has overtaken Australia in terms of skin cancer. So, here in Scottsdale, people are motivated by fear—fear of aging, fear of skin cancer,” says Debbie Carter, skincare supervisor/retail manager and buyer for The Spa at Camelback Inn, Scottsdale, Arizona. “We carry a wide selection of sun protection products. The lowest SPF on our shelves is an 8, and the highest is 45. And we carry transparent zinc oxide, which is what's recommended for people at risk for skin cancer.”

Operation Education

Prepare your message and sales assault from all angles, advises Gosling, who employs a take-no-prisoners approach to sending clients out the door protected. Saturate them with information, remind them every chance you get, and before you know it, your sunscreen is selling itself.

“I'm a button-wearing person. I wear buttons on every holiday—Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, you name it. So for May, we're all wearing buttons that say, 'Say No to Sun Damage,' ” says Gosling. “That's our motto for the month. It's the theme, and we tie it in throughout the spa right down to the front door, where we have signage with the same message; we also have it in an acrylic plaque on



Courtesy Peaches and Cream Day Spa

Visual aids help reinforce the verbal message.

California, incorporates *visual* display into her client education. “We have an entire area devoted specifically to sun protection; we carry three different lines plus a self-tanner, so there's no reason for anyone to go under the rays

Reinforcing the message at the service level is far more likely to deliver results at the register.

the display in the retail area. It's a themed, month-long event, but as far as I see it, *sunblock* or *sun damage* is a continuous choice clients have to make year-round. They need to be reminded, and the staff needs to be reminded as well. The buttons are a nonverbal reminder, an eyebrow arch. If you set up an efficient visual message, it makes it that much easier to deliver the verbal message."

Once you've visually saturated your clientele with the importance of wearing sun protection, reinforcing the message at the service level is far more likely to deliver results at the register.

Gosling. "If the client says, 'But I have sunscreen in my moisturizer or my makeup,' we tell her that's not good enough. We believe in layering."

Tying service into retail is a proven successful strategy, one that straddles the spa experience to create the consistency that inspires confidence. And once your clients trust you, they're more likely to purchase at your recommendation. "We end every single skincare treatment with a sunblock—and we tell them. We don't just apply it," says Mindy Willson, owner, Complexions Day Spa & Wellness Center, Seal Beach, California. "And they like that, and they buy at retail because of it. We're definitely big on education here; we make it a part of our regular skincare routine. We always ask the client, 'What are you doing for sun protection?'"

Of course, to educate clients your staff needs to be informed first. "Education at the staff level is the groundwork of selling sun protection to the client," offers Gosling. "We either send our employees to the International Dermal Institute for classes, or we have one of their educators come here to our spa to introduce new products or ingredients."

Promotions

Promotions offer untold opportunity for creativity, cross-marketing and even community involvement. Because your options are endless, it's a good idea to consider your client base, your neighborhood and the nature of your business to come up with a promotion that's best suited for your spa.

"We have a lot of clients who do a lot of traveling, so we put together custom-made sun care kits of travel-size products," says Tim Maurer, owner, Mukha Custom Cosmetics & Skin Salon, Columbus, Ohio. "Our salon



Courtesy Peaches and Cream Day Spa

Saturate clients with a message by carrying a theme throughout your spa.

"In the treatment rooms, our estheticians apply sun block. When she's checking out at the front desk, the client is told 'This is the sun block we used on you,' and she's shown where it is on the retail shelf," says



Courtesy Gauthier, Total Image Spa

Having clients look into a skin scanner is a great educational aid.

has a modern Asian look, so we set up the kit—which consists of three tubes of product—on an Asian plate. This way, they get a really pretty plate as a memento. The three tubes of product are: an SPF 30; a protective self-tan in either light, medium or dark; and a body moisturizer that has either gold, silver or bronze pigment that leaves behind a glow as it dries, and doesn't leave a residue on clothes the way a powder will. Clients can blend these three together however they wish to make really cool mixtures, depending on the particular look they're striving

for, and they can always be chic and sun protected at the same time."

In-house promotions that combine a how-to session with a retail item undeniably offer great bang for your buck: You've not only got a captive audience—worth its weight in gold—but your staff can also benefit from the educational how-to.

"We have an in-house promotion called Dust in Time," says Willson. "We package the darker shades of mineral powder with little twist brushes, making them into little kits that we give as a 'gift' during an in-house educational how-to where we show clients how to apply mineral makeup as a bronzer, one to two shades darker than their own skin tone. They're taught the protective benefits of mineral makeup; not only is it great coverage and a great bronzer, but it's a great sun block as well. This really increases their awareness."

A worthy cause will nearly always get people's attention, and there may be no other closer to the heart of the skincare industry than National Melanoma Awareness Month. "Admittedly, it's not as hard to sell sun protection products as it used to be. Throughout May, however, we'll be running promotions for National Melanoma Awareness Month," says Gauthier. "We'll skin scan all of our clients as usual, and the clients who don't use our products already will get a sample of a sunblock plus a bounce-back coupon to come back in two weeks to purchase a product at a discount. Fifteen percent of all the sun protection products sold throughout the month of May will be donated to the American Cancer Society."

Cross-marketing with other spa services lets you emphasize the importance of sun protection, while perhaps giving

Layering Liability

"You use a sunscreen in your skincare products, and so putting it in your makeup is extra insurance," says Stephanie Belleci-Manna, owner, Belleci Cosmetics, Alamo, California. "It's double whammy sun protection."

Belleci-Manna specializes in customizing mineral makeup powders, which provide natural sun protection by virtue of their ingredients: micronized titanium dioxide and zinc oxide. Then, if a client so desires, she can boost the SPF in the makeup by using an additive made with octyl methoxycinnamate.

"I like to layer the mineral powders. I start off with an SPF 15 moisturizer, and then if they want color, I go ahead and set it with an SPF mineral powder foundation that I add an SPF to—it looks like silk. I also blend the SPF into the eye shadow, because lots of clients forget to put sunscreen on their eye area. In order to look younger, look flawless, you have to protect your skin. You just *have* to use sunscreen."

The photo to the right is what you see with the eye. Below, a UV camera reveals the cumulative damage of a lifetime of sun exposure. Below right, a second shot with a UV camera shows improvement resulting from Murad vitamin therapy.

Courtesy Murad



Courtesy Murad



“We do a lot of sampling because people tend to be sensitive to SPF ingredients.”

a little shove to a service or treatment that may be lagging in sales.

“For spring we’re running a promotion called Spring Fling; when a client buys a series of three microdermabrasions, she gets a hatbox filled with samples of a cleansing system that includes an SPF,” says Maurer. “In the summer, we’ll launch the Cruise Kit: Buy an air-brushed self-tanner service, and get a travel kit of your cleansing system that includes an SPF and a self-tanner.”

Willson, too, likes to send her clients into the warmer months with an artificial base tan. “In the spring we have a promotion where they pay the regular price for a body bronzing service; we build the price of the self-tanner into the price of the service,

then give them the rest of the tube with a sponge applicator on a stick so they can give themselves the follow-up applications.”

Sampling. Everyone likes to try a product before they purchase it, but with sun protection it’s especially helpful in securing the sale because individuals tend to be opinionated when it comes to this particular product category. In fact, any woman who has had a bad experience with a sunscreen or sunblock will turn up her nose at sun protection in general, not realizing that different products contain different ingredients.

“We do a lot of sampling because people tend to be sensitive to SPFs; it’s good to let them try a variety until they find one they can tolerate,” says Gauthier. “What many people don’t always understand is that just because they’re sensitive to one product doesn’t mean they’ll be sensitive to all SPF products. If they use one and don’t like it or are uncomfortable with it, they’re likely to shun sun protection altogether. So, sampling is very important.”

The Spa at Camelback Inn provides free sunscreen for guests poolside, in gallon jugs with pump dispensers. “That definitely reinforces the importance of using sunscreen,” says Carter.

The month of May offers the perfect opportunity to educate clients on the dangers of sun exposure and the importance of wearing a sun protection product. Take advantage of this opportunity to introduce your clientele to your suncare lines, and make it the start of year-round dedication to sun-safe skin care. ♦

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