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LET'S HEAR
IT FOR THE
BOYS

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THE WORD "SPA" CONJURES UP A SERIES

of stereotypical images in the minds of most people. Cucumber facial masks, dainty manicures with nail art and floral body scrubs are all things commonly associated with the day spa experience. Up until the last few decades, spas have been the sole domain of women, the epitome of ostentatious bliss representing a social focal point for the pursuit of femininity and beauty. Yet, in spite of the rapidly growing demographic of image-conscious men, spas have been slow to update their marketing strategies, leaving this group and its disposable income largely untapped. This unfortunate business trend proved true when the International Spa Association (ISPA) reported that women account for approximately 70 percent of spa guests in the United States.

Due to the economy's uncertain future, it is vital that the esthetics industry utilize clever and innovative marketing methods to increase clientele. However, continuing to compete with everyone else in the market over the same slice of pie—women—often proves to be an expensive exercise in futility. For savvy professionals looking to move their business to the next level, it is time to take the first steps into the largely unexplored and untapped final frontier of spa clients: men.

Details on dudes

Men may not be the fairer sex, but their desire to look younger and more attractive to romantic interests represents an opportunity to expand clientele and increase business. To reach them successfully, there are several straightforward and inexpensive steps you can take to maximize results and set yourself apart.

The initial roadblock many treatment providers must overcome is the male perception of the average spa. Unlike men in most European countries who view spas as places to network with business contacts or show off their elite social status, men in the United States view spa visits as a female prerogative. It is natural for a man to maintain his masculinity, so throwing him into a traditional, female-centric spa environment could make him uncomfortable and unwilling to spend money.

It is necessary to consider male desires, but do not go from one extreme to another, as doing so could alienate your existing female clientele. Implementing a few simple changes

to the spa's ambiance and marketing will help alter the male perception of the spa experience and open your door to a new world of clients.

Neutral environment

Men who have never been to a spa or received an esthetics treatment possess a level of apprehension when it comes to booking their first appointment. Do not let their rough exteriors fool you; men are just as sensitive about their surroundings as women are. This "spa anxiety" has kept many men away for far too long. Men typically worry about how and where people see them, which may seem silly and superficial to you, but even the slightest misgiving could cost you a potential client.

Something as simple as a new paint color on the walls can make a difference in putting men at ease. Color schemes including rich, earthy and chocolate tones paired with relaxing blues are a great way to create a gender-neutral space. This will allow your spa to project a trendy, luxurious feel, creating a place where men will be comfortable while still maintaining the soothing environment and lavishness that women enjoy.

Many men also value privacy during spa treatments. Creating a separate "man space" that allows them to relax and fully enjoy their spa experience is essential. For spas with an open layout, consider separating one section by setting up a simple room divider or a contemporary curtain panel. For spas with individual treatment rooms, revamping a few of the rooms with more masculine details provides a suitable atmosphere.

Talking the talk

When considering marketing spa services to men, remember you are going against a new breed of clients. While many women enjoy getting manicures on the weekend, most men, when given the option, will spend their Sundays watching sports on the boob tube. As cliché as it sounds, this fundamental difference is the reason that successfully marketing to men requires innovative thinking and an altered plan of attack.

Spas that use bright, flowery marketing campaigns with the standard "look younger and more beautiful" verbiage will need to think outside the box to draw in male clients. The first step in any successful male marketing operation

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MANLY SPA SERVICES

The first step in any successful male marketing operation is to identify where the men are hiding.

Remember,
behind every
woman you
treat, there
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is to identify where the men are hiding. Places like gyms, golf courses, country clubs, arenas and sports bars represent ideal venues. Talk to facility managers and make arrangements to put out flyers or small posters in highly trafficked areas.

When creating advertising content, utilize unique and creative artwork with focused bullet points. Avoid the urge to explain everything about your business, as this can muddle the ad and make it difficult to read. Simplicity ensures your ad will stand out among others, catching the eyes of those who pass. Some businesses may ask for a fee to advertise in their space. Instead of offering cash, suggest a friendly bartering. Offering businesses free or discounted treatments at your spa is a fantastic way to get your foot in the door while also increasing the likelihood of your advertisements receiving prime placement in the common areas.



Girl power

As you reinvent your marketing campaign, do not omit the most powerful promotional tool in your arsenal. Not sure what that is? It is hiding in plain sight...women! Making up 70 percent of the average spa clientele, women are key players in reaching men. Remember, behind every woman you treat, there lies an entire family of men, whether they are brothers, fathers, boyfriends or husbands. Just because these men have not walked through your doors does not mean your advertisements will not reach them and draw their attention via the women in their lives.

Most women want men who look clean, fresh and sexy. Do not be afraid to take advantage of that. Create special "Make Over Your Man" treatment packages that aim to fix certain "issues" with the male appearance that bother women most. The incredible advancements in medical esthetics technology have allowed practitioners to easily correct conditions such as excessive body hair, wrinkles, acne and uneven skin tones and textures. This is also an ideal method to gain referral business because once the results are revealed, the woman in his life will likely brag about it to her friends.

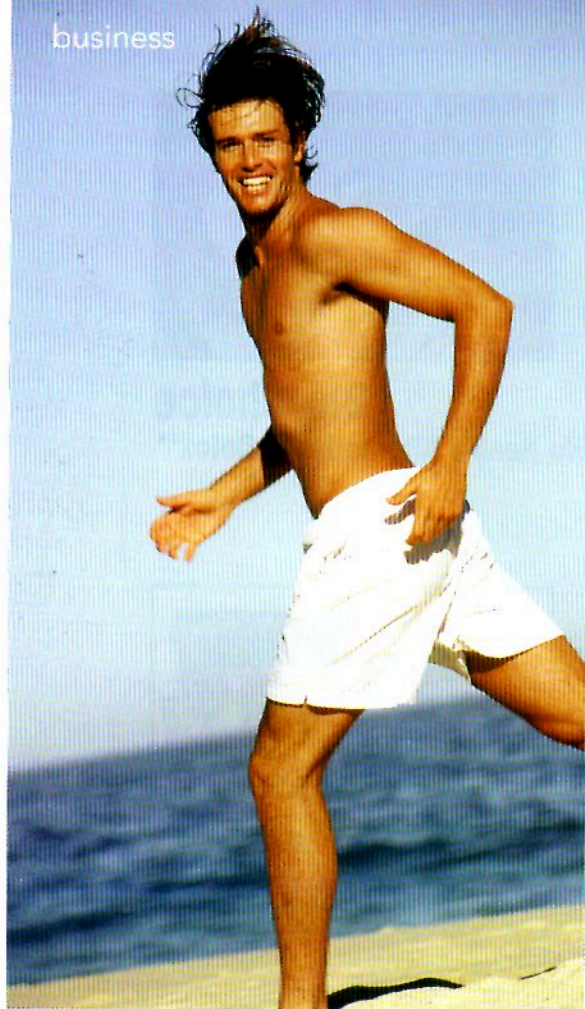
When devising a male service menu that targets female clients, consider using taglines such as: "Is your man's back as hairy as his chest?" or "Does his tattoo say Jane but your name is Jenny? Erase the ex today with laser tattoo removal." Not only are these slogans humorous, but they clearly call attention to popular male skin concerns, ones your client might not even know are treatable.

Menu makeover

Holidays, special events, birthdays and anniversaries are all perfect opportunities to recommend your just-for-men treatments. Encourage your female clientele to forget the Father's Day ties and consider a spa package as the perfect gift. With a successfully established female clientele, it makes little sense to overhaul your entire spa menu as a means of attracting more male clients. Instead, give your existing services a makeover. With slightly altered phraseology and selling points, spa treatments can be just as popular among men as they are with women.

To get a head start, here are a few examples of how the hottest treatments can be tweaked to make them more appealing to men.

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Capitalize on the demand for hairlessness with affordable packages that advertise the convenience of ditching the razor.

The mani-pedi: For most men, manicures and pedicures conjure images of high-gloss feminine nail polish and girl talk. This is not something a man would typically want to do at a luxury spa. Before ditching this service, consider a man's needs and add some creativity. Men are well aware of the corporate world's demand for well-groomed employees. Consider introducing an "Executive Manicure" for the sharp businessperson and incorporate a deep tissue hand massage so that men will not feel as if they are "getting their nails done."

Facials: In the past, sunscreen application and the occasional aftershave were about as far as men would go in the skin care regimen department. In today's market, men are more educated

about the benefits of newly developed topical skin treatments. To best cash in on the male market, create facials with masculine ingredients. Consider maple, beer hops, barley and even organic root and bark extracts. Much like other spa services, the word "facial" is mostly considered a female service, so invent new treatment names like "The Stress-Melter Cinnamon Mask" or "The Gent's 30-Minute Fix."

Laser hair removal: Hair removal is only as gender specific as your spa makes it. In reality, countless numbers of body-conscious men choose to shave their arms and chest to gain a sleeker, smoother look, accentuating muscle definition and skin tone. Body shaving is also popular among athletes, who notoriously opt for hairless bodies for enhanced performance.

Unfortunately, shaving is only temporary and comes with a long list of unpleasant side effects, including razor burn, cuts and ingrown hairs. Capitalize on the demand for hairlessness with affordable packages that advertise the convenience of ditching the razor. Emphasize how laser hair removal improves the look of the male physique, which makes them more attractive to their partners. With a higher price point than waxing and shorter treatment times, add-

ing laser hair removal services to your lineup is an easy way to boost revenue and address your clients' needs.

While many esthetics professionals have heard of laser hair removal, there is a lot of confusion regarding who is able to perform this procedure. Contrary to popular belief, having a medical background is not a prerequisite to becoming a laser hair removal specialist. While training requirements vary from state to state, the industry gold standard of certification is through a 14-day program of combined didactic classroom education and comprehensive hands-on clinical practice on multiple laser platforms. Before choosing a laser training school, inquire about how much hands-on experience you will receive and how experienced your instructors are, both in the real world and the classroom. This will not only ensure better treatment skills, but also warrant the highest level of safety for your clients.

Re-evaluate

Use these suggestions as a jumping-off point, a source of inspiration to add male clientele to your already successful spa business. Do not stop here. However, before spending any money advertising or creating marketing materials, perform some tests. Ask male and female clients what they like and what they would change about your promotional campaign. They may just have some amazing ideas you never considered.

While men do not always realize it, they can benefit professionally and personally through spa services. Implementing a few of these practices will go a long way towards getting them through the door—your first and most daunting challenge. Once they have seen how great a day at the spa can be, your only challenge will be getting them to leave. ■

Louis "The Laser Guy"

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