Facelift for the Spa: How, Why, and When a Spa Should Be Rebranded

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When skin care professionals create their spa's image, they are often convinced that it could not possibly be more perfect. They agonize over every detail they can think of, usually convinced that they have perfected every inch of their brand. Often times, professionals end up realizing that as time passes, their branding is no longer the perfection they once thought it was; they find that they cannot continue to run their business like they have in the past.

As times change, skin care professionals need to move ahead with new products and services to keep up with the competition. The brand determines the spa's identity and what services are provided to the client. Branding differentiates a spa from its competitors and is often guided by its reputation or lack thereof.

To Rebrand or not to Rebrand

When thinking about rebranding, the first question that should be asked is: why? What are the determining factors that are contributing to the decision to move ahead with the tedious task of changes that have not been thought of in the past? The most important step of all is not to fix what is not broken. If the professional's spa is successful and remains profitable, they should stick with it until they see the need for change.

The shift of the paradigm should always be embraced without fear to do so. Professionals should think of all of the upcoming necessary steps when considering rebranding the spa and be sure to have a plan. Remember, failing to plan is planning to fail.

Reasons for Rebranding

The day spa has now become a medical spa with the oversight of a medical director. This change may have taken place because the skin care professional decided to add services that require physician oversight, including dermal fillers, neuromodulators, lasers, and more. In this situation, the professional may have realized that their competition will put them out of business unless they have the ability to compete.

The spa has moved or added additional locations. In this scenario, the professional probably started out as a listing in the Yellow Pages; as the spa grew, the amount of clients they now have – and the clients' own personal request for services – has required the professional to not only add services, but also increase the size of their location. More than likely, the existing location was too small, requiring them to move to a larger space and rebrand the spa. The professional may also have received requests from potential clients in another geographical area, prompting them to add an additional location inside a practitioner's office or at an independent location.

The spa has been around for some time and the logo is due for an update. Even well-known brands, like Starbucks and professional sports teams, have updated their logo and branding. As styles and color themes change over time, revamping the spa's unique, identifying image becomes so important in order to remain known in the marketplace. Keep in mind that the spa is not Nike or McDonalds, companies where everyone knows the name of the business simply by seeing the logo. Therefore, it is extremely important to brand the spa with a name that is catchy and somewhat easy to recognize and remember.

The spa's audience and target demographic has changed. As age, gender, and nationalities change in neighborhoods over time, it is important to market to the clientele that surround the spa. Certain areas go through overhauls – such as road construction, accessibility, and trendy, new restaurants and fashion stores – that create a rebirth and insurgence of a new and potential client

base. New construction, which can include high-priced homes, condominiums, and combined rental and retail establishments, can force professionals to rebrand the type of products and services they need to offer. This rebranding may be a completely new way of doing business, hopefully for the better.

The spa added new providers with additional services. If the skin care professional's business was an insurance-based dermatology practice that has decided to add fee-for-service procedures or a plastic surgeon, it is now time to rebrand the type of practice to what it is about to become. In the past, patients only knew the practice as an insurance provider. Even then, most patients do not really know all of the wonderful services the practice has to offer. Adding the services of a mid-level provider, physician's assistants and nurse practitioners, can significantly increase revenue.

The spa has merged with another company and has tweaked or changed their name. Rebranding may be an easier task for the professional if they decide to join forces with an already-existing spa, medical practice, or corporate entity that provides spa and/or medical services. Corporate entities may be a franchised operation or a managed group entity where there is a corporate overhead or management fee associated with the business. In this situation, the professional's new name may be beneficial since there is already an existing brand that is shared with all of the common owners or franchises associated with the group.

Seeking Advice

Always seek the advice of industry professionals, including independent business consultants, accountants, and attorneys, when deciding to rebrand. They may bring attention to matters that may have otherwise been overlooked and could save a lot of time, money, and unnecessary headaches.

Speak with the existing clientele. The only way for professionals to know what clients really want, versus what the professional thinks they want, is to ask. Clients in any industry are the voices that can make or break the business. The simple and robust word-of-mouth referral is the strongest advertising method and form of internal marketing; it also usually costs the least. It minimizes the actual cost of client acquisition and, over time, generates multiples of revenue.

Ask the staff for their opinion. More and more often, employees are the ones in the trenches each and every day; they can easily see the upside and downside of the skin care professional's future planning. They often hear what the clients are saying and can be valuable resources. They also have an interest in the spa's success because the more profitable the business is, the more leverage they have for increased compensation.

Rebranding Goals

What is the spa trying to accomplish by rebranding and what sets it apart from its competitors? This question should be answered by a business plan, which must consists of operational, administrative, financial, and marketing plans. All of these components are essential to the spa's future success. Once the plan is in place, it is never truly finished. The professional should tweak it over and over again, consistently comparing the actual results to what the pro forma plan was and readjusting it as time goes on.

Professionals should also have a budget in mind prior to initiating the process of rebranding the spa. Budgets are a constant work in progress. Everything takes time and time is money. How much will it cost to complete the rebranding process? When the answer to that question is known before the process begins, the ride is much smoother. There will always be hiccups along the way, so prepare for additional expenses, price increases from the original plan, and new additions to the spa in order to continue to keep it more profitable.

The rebranding process is never truly finished. Once professionals think they have the process completed, it just may be time to revamp it again. External conditions, such as new products and services, will be a constant invasion into the spa's pocketbook. As soon as they make an expensive capital equipment purchase, a newer one will come onto the market, causing them to, once again, rebrand themselves in order to stay ahead of the game.

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