



Q *How long would it take to create an own-label skincare brand for the salon?*

A Since I've been mentoring small businesses I've found a lot of them are not doing the background research and sourcing they should have before deciding whether launching their own brand is going to work for them financially.



It entails competitor analysis and a lot of research into costing. A lot of therapists are "kitchen pharmacists" in that they create their own products in the treatment room but when they try to upscale and commercialise that they usually have to completely rethink the formulations.

If you have the budget and are confident you have a product that people will buy, you can have it made bespoke. A formulator will create your products to a brief but be prepared that it will take a minimum of nine months to a year to get them to market. After you've briefed the formulator, they've made it, you've trialed it, and they've adjusted it, it needs to go through microbiology testing, which takes a minimum of 12 weeks. Then, depending on whether it passes, it may need reformulating and re-testing.

The other option is private label, which is very popular at the moment. You can take an existing spa product and repackage and rebrand it. That can take about six months but if you want to change any part of the formulation – even just to add a signature fragrance, it will need to be retested, which adds a lot of time into the process.

Kim Lahiri is managing director of product development and marketing consultancy Simple Essentials, with which she is hosting several workshops on product development over the next few months. She began her career in the hair and skin research department of Unilever and has also previously run two spas.

Q *How can I plan my marketing promotions for maximum profit?*

A The first and most simple step is to make sure you know which treatments are most popular and which give you the best operating margin.

It is not always the most popular that drive the most profit and often spa managers have an idea on which is which but don't know the exact numbers.

We've devised a simple Excel document that helps to work out profitability. Then based on that, I suggest that they change the order in which they recommend treatments to each client.

Obviously a receptionist or therapist should still ask questions about the client's



lifestyle and requirements to determine which treatments are most suitable to suggest but there are likely to be four or five treatments that could work for one client. Get your receptionist to suggest those five in order of how much profit you can make from each.

You need to get the receptionist fully on board otherwise they carry on recommending what is easiest to describe over the phone or what the therapist tells them she prefers doing because it is less tiring.

You can do as many clever marketing activities as you like with SMS or targeted emails but your team is your most important tool in directing enquiries in the most profitable direction.

Jean-Guy de Gabriac is chief executive of spa coaching firm Tip Touch, a consultancy that coaches spa managers in marketing, management and communication, as well as designing and producing training tools.

"GET YOUR RECEPTIONIST TO SUGGEST FOUR OR FIVE SUITABLE TREATMENTS IN ORDER OF PROFITABILITY"

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