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Windflower Spa at Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa

by Serena Rogers

spa | bring your spa to life

WHETHER YOU ARE LOOKING to increase your retail merchandise sales or planning events to engage new and current clients, developing fun and creative spa promotions will have a direct effect on your bottom line and distinguish you from the competition.

Offering innovative guest experiences will keep customers engaged and excited about upcoming promotions.

Every brand and spa director brings their own opinions and points of view to the subject of retail/visual merchandising and events. Yet both of these key elements can benefit from the single refrain: "Bring them to life."

Those four words say it all. There is no one simple answer or solution to creating a fun and dynamic spa environment, but what remains constant is the need to create an atmosphere that engages guests and teams alike. If your attitude is that you have "seen it all" or that it's "all been done before," think again. In the spa field, we are so lucky! If we look at things with a fresh eye, we can see that there are endless opportunities to generate unique and memorable experiences.

Consider the following statement from DDI, a firm dedicated to display and design ideas: "Visual merchandising takes your consumer from the retail

display to the cash register. Encouraging sales through creative color and commercial retail design is a key element to keeping a customer interested."

At its core, merchandising is the activity of promoting the sale of goods at the retail level. It takes many shapes, in-

cluding display methods, free samples, on-the-spot demonstrations, pricing, shelf talkers, special offers and other point-of-sale techniques.

The popular retailer Sephora finds ways to stay relevant among its target market. With categories like "What's New," "Editor's Picks" and a stream of sales events, they have mastered the retail experience by creating a fun and dynamic environment that repeatedly draws in customers.

While spas should not operate like big box retailers, they can adapt and incorporate the methods of various successful retailers in their own way to effectively increase employee engagement, heighten customer loyalty, improve the ratio of retail-to-treatment sales and boost overall revenues. More than ever, spa professionals should be taking cues from our retail partners and applying them to their settings.

According to the American Marketing Association, merchandising incorporates the "planning involved in marketing the right merchandise or service at the right place, at the right time, in the right quantities and at the right price."

We've all seen spa retail spaces that look as if they haven't been touched in years, with outdated products that no longer appeal to even the previous generation—let alone the current one. Keep these tips in mind when creating your visual merchandising plans:

- **DELIGHT:** Create excitement to attract customers into your "world."
- **STIMULATE ALL FIVE SENSES:** Draw guests in not only with sight, but also with smell (use aromatherapy wisely), touch (set up experience stations), sound (if the music in your retail area is too similar to the rest of the spa, it might deter purchasing patterns) and taste (wherever possible, present samples of your spa menu at the reception area and within retail displays).
- **FOLLOW TRAFFIC FLOW.** Set promotional displays at appropriate locations to naturally draw guests into the retail areas.
- **KNOW YOUR DEMOGRAPHICS.** Always keep the "who and what" in mind. Be clear on who you are attracting and what you are selling them.
- **BE INSPIRED!** Visit other spas and retailers, study their environments

continues

and adapt some of their features to your setting as you see fit.

Beyond merchandising, spas have the unique opportunity to create fun and diverse programs and events that encourage more people to get involved. Offering innovative guest experiences will keep customers engaged and excited about upcoming promotions.

Carol Cox, director of Windflower Spa at Hyatt Hill Country, came up with an idea last spring that created buzz for the resort, increased her capture ratios, brought a spike in bookings and improved retail sales over the previous year's figures. She explains her concept:

"Quality time with families is extremely precious. With this in mind we introduced Family Day, a day when guests of all ages would be welcome to experience all that the spa has to offer. A new facial bar service was introduced, which offered a group-style facial class

on the importance of skin care. As a result, parents booked multiple services for themselves, knowing that their children were welcome at the spa."

Instead of sticking with her traditional menu offerings, Cox and her team came up with a creative way to attract a wider audience and engage her target clients. They made it fun and memorable!

REMEMBER: Promotions and events should never come across as an afterthought. When you change the offer, make sure the printed collateral or brand delivery changes too. Otherwise, your guests and teams won't regard the new offer as genuinely unique.

So, as you begin to think more about how to transform your retail environment and create original events, make sure the result is a fun experience that is accessible and interactive. It should be easy and enjoyable to take advantage of your products and services!

Being innovative does not have to be intimidating. No one is expecting fireworks, but a spark of creativity and a blast of fun will breathe new life into your spa promotions for a more impressive bottom line. The sky's the limit! ■

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