

SPA ATTIRE: CLOTHES THAT SHAPE THE SKIN CARE PROFESSIONAL

DON THAT GARB! WHAT TO WEAR AND WHY

ACCORDING TO SMALLBUSINESSNOTES.COM, an information resource for small business owners, 70 percent of clients do not become repeat customers due to the poor attitude or unprofessional appearance of a spa or its employees. The problem is easily avoidable if you understand what your client wants and then communicate it to your employees by identifying the image and behavior standards you want them to portray.

As a skin care professional who specializes in inner and outer image, I have been asked many times by spa owners and managers to address the issue of “what to wear” for their employees. The most significant concern I hear is how to get staff to wear clothes that convey a look that is professional and enhances the environment of the spa. “I do not like the way they have been showing up to work,” spa managers say. Their complaints are usually that clothing is too casual or revealing. They think that the problem is just about outer attire, but what they do not realize is that it goes beyond the surface. ➔

BY LINDA BERTAUT





etiquette standards

- Welcome all clients when they enter the spa.
- Show your appreciation by saying "Thank you." It is amazing how many people don't thank customers anymore when they purchase a product or service from their business. "Here you go" and "Have a good day" are not the same thing. Make sure your entire staff is aware of how this simple action will make clients feel appreciated so they will want to come back.
- Be gracious, respectful, positive, appropriate and caring to clients.
- Remember to periodically talk with (and listen to) your customers about your image—a proper assessment tool to make sure that your customers view the business the way you want them to.
- Ask, "When would you like to come back for your next appointment" when clients are paying and getting ready to leave. Avoid asking "If" they want another appointment—the answer might just be "No."
- Request referrals: "Since (not "If") you enjoyed our services please tell your friends. Our business grows through referrals."

Do you want your clients to describe you as successful, accomplished, credible and great at what you do?

You are what you wear

When determining what to wear, there are two key factors to consider: the individual's personal image and personality and the spa's image and personality. Ideally, these images are compatible. However, the image of the workplace is superior to personal preferences when choosing the best work attire. What does this mean to you? If you are reading this article, then you have obviously chosen to grow your career in the skin care and spa industry. Therefore, your appearance is the best representation of your work and (hopefully) shows that you practice what you teach. Portraying such an image means applying makeup, maintaining a current hair style and wearing clothes that flatter you and complement the environment in which you work.

Despite the advice not to judge a book by its cover, we are all human and it is in our nature to do so. Personal image creates trust—or lack thereof—at first sight. It is your first chance to establish credibility with the people you meet. The attention you pay or don't pay to your appearance speaks volumes. Ask yourself, "If I walk past a mirror right now, does my reflection accurately represent my personality and business environment? Does it convey who I am, both inside and out?"

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It does not matter if you are going to the grocery store or to work—your ideal clients are everywhere, so you need to be ready for them at all times. When you take care of yourself it shows. People appreciate when you take the time to look good. It tells them that they matter to you. They feel more important and you get more credibility. When you look credible, people believe you and listen to what you say. Your clients are able to pick you out of a crowd because you radiate professionalism and the uniqueness that is you.

Define your personal image

Do you want your clients to describe you as successful, accomplished, credible and great at what you do? What is it about you that attracts and keeps them? How can you weave your best personal traits and goals into your professional image so that you feel authentic and fit into your work environment?

As you consider these questions keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Wear colors that flatter your skin tone.
- If you have high contrast features (dark hair and light skin), you can successfully wear vibrant colors as well as black and white.
- If you have low contrast features (similar coloring between hair and skin tone), your appearance will be more flattered by soft colors and muted tones.

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photograph by Juan Manuel Garcia



dress and behavior code

acceptable

- Sharp apron, vest or jacket
- Black or brown pants (or other colors that fit into and support your environment)
- White to off-white top, cap sleeves or longer sleeve length
- Shoes with rubber soles preferred—comfortable is okay as long as they are stylish, not clunky
- Black (or other appropriate colors) dress sandals or open-toed shoes are okay if toes are manicured and polished
- Nails that are manicured and an appropriate length for services
- Wear daytime makeup to create a credible image

not acceptable

- No lab coats—too medical for the environment
- No sloppy or inappropriate clothes, including tank tops, sleeveless tops, jeans, wild patterns or revealing attire
- No gum chewing—mints okay (and encouraged)
- No perfume
- No excessively bulky jewelry
- Long hair pulled back with elegant hair accessories
- No foul language, drama or gossip
- No food or drinks in public areas—water is okay

- Follow the theme of your work environment. If the colors are soft and neutral stay away from bright stimulating colors such as red, orange and yellow unless they are just used as accents.
- Comfortable does not mean sloppy. Anything that you wear on the couch to watch TV at home is too casual for work.
- Trendy is not suitable for work unless your spa is about the latest trends and caters to that clientele. If you would wear it to the newest hot spot with friends on a Friday night, it is probably inappropriate for work.
- Want to wear a uniform? Make sure it still has a new, crisp look to it. Once it looks tired, so do you.
- Wear clothes that fit. Clothes that are too tight or loose are not flattering. Just like with color, identify what works and repeat it.
- Shoes can make or break your look. Comfort is fine but stay away from casual shoes such as flip flops, Crocs and even Birkenstocks. Style and comfort can coexist.
- A nice haircut and makeup is a must. It comes with the territory so go with the flow.

Set standards for staff

When developing your spa identity, image and credibility go hand in hand. Here are three key steps to develop your spa identity: Focus on your ideal client, identify your optimal spa environment and desired experience and create your menu of services accordingly.

Let's take a real life example of a wellness spa in Northern California. The owner wanted to attract clients—mainly professional women over 40 who needed a tranquil place to gather, replenish and build community. She wanted to offer rejuvenating services to help women discover their best self—both inside and out.

Step one: We defined the wellness spa's ideal client as Denise,* a 50-year-old fashion designer described as attractive, professional, stylish, vibrant, comfortable, friendly and energetic with depth and substance. Denise is a creative entrepreneur with an income of 80K per year. She is well traveled and committed to being healthy.

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photograph by Juan Manuel Garcia

Step two: We designed an environment and experience to attract Denise using earth tones and natural colors that are warm, inviting, comfortable, serene and subtle. The experience created was an oasis for Denise and her friends to gather and replenish—a complete mind, body and spirit approach.

Step three: We created a spa menu offering state-of-the-art facial treatments plus wellness therapies including massage, Reiki, gemstones, a detox foot bath with reflexology and guided visualizations. Products target mature skin and include other innovative items such as an aromatherapy mood bar and an herbal aroma bar to make sachets and personalized tea.

With the first three key steps complete, you are now ready to create appearance and behavior standards. Appearance standards for a wellness spa include a dress and behavior code (see sidebar on p. 120).

When your outer style radiates your personality to reflect your true self, the book matches the cover. In reflecting your inner being outwardly you become credible and the best advertisement for your business.

Knowing who you are and authentically expressing it on the outside is your best selling tool. Whether as an individual or a representative for a business, take time to create an image that matches who you are, both inside and out. Your clients will appreciate your transparency and you will inspire them to choose and come back for your services. ■

**Name has been changed.*

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