

## Chapter 1



# Putting Your Best Face Forward: Create a Spa Experience That Exceeds All Customer Expectations

*“Spas are devoted to enhancing overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit.”*

—ISPA 2004

### **The definition of a spa**

A spa means something different to everybody. Beauty industry professionals may use the word to refer to a destination resort that costs more than \$1,000 a day or a hair spa that sells facials for \$45. The term also has become synonymous with a new breed of spas—the day spa, which is the evolution of the full-service facility that offers hair, skin, nail, massage and waxing services. Everywhere we look, we see variations of the basic premise. There are hotel spas, cruise ship spas, health club spas and a myriad of others that attempt to create the ultimate spa experience.

For the consumer, the word spa connotes luxury, relaxation, meditation, wellness and pampering. These desires are fulfilled easily at destination resort spas. At this level, usually there is a proper business plan in place, and sufficient staff have been hired to provide top-of-the-line service. Destination resort spas typically comprise 10,000–25,000



square feet and include spa services such as wet body treatments, thalassotherapy, massage therapy, facials and fitness facilities.

The average American day spa generally is 3,000–6,000 square feet in size and usually includes four treatment rooms, manicure and pedicure areas, a rest area, a retail area and a reception area.

## **Image is everything**

The first seven seconds of a potential client's initial encounter with your spa is critical to conveying your professional image. The ambiance and a welcoming attitude that says "We are happy to see you!" must be experienced from the moment the client walks through your door.

Although we like to think that most people don't judge a book by its cover, unfortunately that is not the case. We all, at times, make snap judgments and form strong associations about a person or place based on our initial sensory perceptions. The sight, sound, smell and feel of your spa all play a factor in selling your facility to potential customers. When it comes to projecting *your* personal professional image, looks, attitude and personality are as important as knowledge, technical skill and the ability to communicate clearly.

The correct image for a business means different things in different environments. I have visited spas where all the employees have multi-colored hair and sport nose rings, yet they enjoy tremendous success and an exceptional clientele, despite their unconventional appearance. It works! Is what you're currently doing working for you? To be successful, you must find the image that is appropriate for your business.

The first step is evaluating your business and your clients. You may opt to go with the status quo and don a white lab coat. However, no matter what uniform or dress code you adopt, your professional image will be diminished if you and your team are not properly groomed.

An esthetician—whether blue-haired or blonde—should pull her hair neatly away from her face. The hair never should touch the client, and the esthetician never should have to brush it out of her face while in the middle of applying a product. Aside from being unsanitary, it looks unprofessional.

Nails should be short so that they will not collect product underneath them or possibly scratch the client. Polish nails with either a clear shade