

Taking It to the Streets

There's a new way to introduce your products and services to prospective clients. Behold, the power of the pop-up.



There was a time when spa owners had to wait for new clients to walk through the door before they could dazzle them, but that's no longer the case. These days, spas are heading straight for the places where potential clients roam, giving them a tantalizing taste of their brand on the spot. That's right: The "pop-up spa" is a thing. For those unfamiliar with the concept, a pop-up is an event where businesses bring their products or services to a temporary location for a limited time. Although the scene has recently been dominated by retailers, the concept has

increasing—and equally lucrative—potential for beauty and wellness businesses.

A pop-up spa is not only a fun way to spread brand awareness, but it also creates the perfect opportunity to test the demand for your offerings and boost revenue. "My most profitable pop-up event generated \$2,000 in retail sales and appointment reservations," says Liliana Aranda, who has held many successful events for her Oakland, California-based spa, Faces by Liliana. Here, Aranda and others share their insights and advice on planning the perfect pop-up.

COURTESY FACES BY LILIANA



DEFINE YOUR GOALS. Pinpointing your reasons for hosting a pop-up event is crucial. Do you want to introduce the spa to a new demographic? Push a particular product or service? Enjoy a bookings boost? Increase your public profile? Setting a specific goal makes it easier to shape the

actual event and more accurately measure its success. became clients to boot. However, when the goal was to enhance holiday sales, the spa held a pop-up event at a retail store. “We created gifts-with-purchase, featured sales promotions, and focused on customized consultations to determine the best treatment plans for attendees,” says Werbowski. As a result, the spa gained new clients and generated revenue to the tune of more than 12 times the cost of the pop-up event itself.

PICK THE PERFECT PARTNER. Although it’s not absolutely necessary, partnering with another business for your pop-up multiplies your potential for success. With the right alliance, you can double your promotional efforts, form a broader range of connections and referrals, and target a niche market that might otherwise be difficult to reach. That said, not all willing partners will be good ones. “A poorly chosen pop-up partner can be detrimental to your brand image, and waste time and money,” explains Werbowski. So make sure you’re on the same page in terms of your business practices, target demographics and goals before you commit to working together.

Skin Spa New York typically partners with businesses that focus on beauty, wellness and balanced living, from gyms to meditation studios to companies that make all-natural bedding and furniture. “Having like-minded partners creates a well-rounded event that encourages increased brand loyalty, not only

COURTESY SKIN SPA NEW YORK

For instance, when Skin Spa New York partnered with the New Era Lounge to provide facials and chair massages for models during New York Fashion Week, the objective was increased publicity, so they didn’t need to create any custom packages or bring products for retail. “We focused on the experience,” says the spa’s senior manager, Katie Werbowski. The event garnered the buzz the spa had been seeking, the marketing team was able to create valuable content for social media and a few celebrities

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Managing the Logistics

Pop-ups may appear effortless and spontaneous to the outside observer, but it takes meticulous planning to make them run smoothly. These pro tips can help:

- 📦 **Set up early.** Have supplies and equipment delivered to the site at least four hours in advance, in case anything is overlooked or you need time to retrieve more items.
- 📦 **Take stock.** Pack products in groups of six: one to display, two to sell and three more for backup.
- 📦 **Streamline your systems.** Have a simple, mobile point-of-sale process in place for retail transactions.
- 📦 **Bring your A-team.** Your staff should be well prepped on the services and products featured, and reflect your brand identity and values at all times.
- 📦 **Keep in touch.** Have plenty of business cards readily available, as well as a digital or written log where clients can leave their contact information.



for your services but also for a complete network of complementary brands," Werbowski notes.

Aranda also recommends partnering with consummate professionals who can contribute their own effective promotion techniques and understand your needs at their site. "Lack of promotional efforts, low visibility or locations that aren't well known or highly trafficked are big red flags," says Aranda, who has created pop-ups with retailers, wedding and event planners, and food vendors, among others. "The more experienced and professional the host, the better."

MARKET LIKE MAD. Because pop-ups tend to occur at unexpected times or places, you must use multiple means of communication to get the word out about the event, including social media, e-newsletters, press releases and branded materials. Good visuals paired

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with an enticing promotion can help attract participants. “Social media was our best friend,” says Jaimie Allums of V-Spot Body Lounge and Spa in New Orleans, who used Facebook and Instagram to promote the spa’s services at a recent pop-up in a busy nail salon. “We offered pre-purchase options on Facebook with snazzy visuals so the clients could book in advance, and voilà—the calls came in and the invoices went out.”

Don’t forget to ask others to help spread the word for you too—especially colleagues and existing clients. “Collaborating with local bloggers and digital influencers is another great way to create online buzz,” adds Samantha Bressi, senior digital coordinator at Image Unlimited Communications in Boston. She suggests passing on information about the pop-up and asking these tastemakers to post teasers on their social media channels.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. You may be tempted to try to recreate a complete spa experience at the pop-up, but doing so could doom the event. “Quick, efficient and thoughtful are my requirements for a pop-up spa menu,” says Aranda. “It’s not the place for in-depth education.” She typically administers hand treatments, neck and scalp massages, brow services and makeup, and she also brings a selection of retail items.

Skin Spa New York keeps pop-ups uncomplicated by offering only two services and limiting customers to one option each, unless time allows for more. “Although it’s tempting and sometimes essential to feature the latest and greatest in laser and beauty technology, you should always plan to provide one classic universal treatment, like a massage, that will entice and relax attendees,” advises Werbowksi.

MAKE IT MEMORABLE. Showcasing simple services doesn’t mean that you can’t also blow clients’ minds! A poll by the marketing company PopUp Republic finds that most pop-up customers are looking for an experience they can’t get anywhere else. Therefore, consider ways to create something that goes beyond

the quality of the products and services themselves—with ambiance, for instance. For V-Spot Body Lounge’s pop-up, Allums says she “transformed the heck” out of the nail salon’s space, kitting it out with chandeliers, decorative drapery, couches and even a bar area, which made a deep and favorable impression on the guests. How you interact with

customers can have an equally lasting impact. “I think the personal connection makes the difference,” says Aranda, who adds that she usually stands in front of her table (not behind it), and makes an effort to shake hands and be engaging. “I show passion for what I do and clients notice—and that makes it a memorable experience for them.” ☺

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