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ATTENTION GRABBING PROMOTIONS!

GOING BEYOND PRICE CUTS

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SALES promotions are those that add extra value to your offerings. When your clients witness this added value for themselves, they are more likely to make a purchase that they would not have otherwise. Some have even argued that promotions are more important to a brand's reputation than advertising! The reason being is that your reputation is reinforced through your clients' experience—what they feel, touch, smell and do. Positive experiences create engagement and interaction, and promotions drive interaction between the client and

your business. Sanjay Gupta, M.D., Harvard professor and Emmy winning CNN medical correspondent, speaks of this phenomenon in terms of a simple mathematical equation. Often, with our promotions, we seek to create value by putting two things together and discounting the price. Dr. Gupta refers to this practice as $2+2=3$. When we create real value in a promotion, however, the equation becomes $2+2=5$. We have then engaged with our guests in a meaningful way, one that enhances our image in their eyes and creates in them a sense of true loyalty to us.





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Reinforcing a brand is not an easy task. An article that was published in *Brandweek* magazine in September of 1998 titled “Branding and Promotion: An Uneasy Cohabitation,” the author argues that promotions must support the overall brand strategy. For example, a good promotion will justify its own existence by holding a celebration, introducing a new product or service or opening an additional location. Also, the promotion itself should tie into your brand’s persona, the manifestation of who you are, what you do and why you do it. Finally, have a solid rationale for holding the promo-

tion—including its very existence and timing—the reasoning should in some way benefit the brand.

All of these factors demonstrate that building successful promotions takes a lot of work, sometimes putting more effort into developing a single promotion than some practices may put into a year’s worth. However the result it will have on your practice and brand will be well worth it.

Your business will not be the sole beneficiary of a well executed promotion. A paper presented in the October 2000 edition of the *Journal* continues

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of *Marketing* by Pierre Chandon, Brian Wansink and Gilles Laurent explored the various benefits that customers derive from sales promotions. The findings of their research showed that customers derive two primary types of benefits from sales promotions. The first benefit is the enjoyment of the promotion itself. That includes the opportunity for customers to use the promoted item or service as an expression of their values or for the purpose of exploration or pure entertainment. The second benefit addresses the practical side of a promotion: the savings, the

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ability to trade up to a higher value product and the improved shopping convenience. The results of the authors' research points to the value of combining the enjoyment and practical factors in the creation of highly successful sales promotions.

There are also benefits from incorporating sales promotions into your marketing. First, you can be highly targeted with your promotional activity. Sales promotions generally serve one of two purposes—encouraging the trial of a product or service or rewarding patient loyalty. Trial activity can take a couple of different forms. One type of trial promotion is targeted to potential new patients to whom you want to introduce your existing products and services. Other trial promotions may introduce a new product or service to your existing client base.

Second, sales promotions are easy to measure in that they can give you up-to-the-minute results. In addition, the promotional activity in and of itself—how many clients purchase the promotion and whether they are new or current—can give you immediate



feedback as to how strong of a promotion it actually is. Third, promotions give you the opportunity to learn more about your clients and what is important to them. You can increase the value to your business by collecting more information about your guests, including their likes and dislikes.

So, how do you make the most of your promotion opportunities? In our industry, we as caregivers aim to deliver healthy skin to our clients. To achieve this we must create an experience that meets their needs, sells products and provides services that work and brings them visible results. We are, in effect, forming an agreement with our clients. If the client does what is required in the promotion, we promise to deliver something of value in return. It is an opportunity for us to deliver a positive experience, exceeding their expecta-

tions and reinforcing our brand at the same time.

For example, suppose you wanted to create a new signature experience for your clients and get vital feedback before rolling it out as a regular service. You might want to reward your most loyal clients by offering it to them first. As part of your promotion, you also may want to give your clients a special gift, something that creates a positive experience and is seen as valuable. It could be a discount on their favorite product or some other token of appreciation. The gesture will truly enhance the experience for them. Instead of simply applying the discount at checkout or handing the token over, present it tastefully in beautiful wrapping paper. This creates a higher level of engagement between you and your client.

continues

When designing your promotions, however, there are some pitfalls you must avoid. First, you want to run your promotions only for a limited time, especially if it is based on a price reduction. Long-term discounts tend to turn into everyday low pricing, which cheapens your offering. As a follow up to that thought, avoid relying exclusively on promotions involving monetary sav-

ings. These often are the simplest to design but do nothing to help build your practice. At best, you can expect a small increase in immediate sales volume from price-conscious shoppers. They will not remain loyal to you as they seek the next deal they can find.

Because you want your promotions to tie back to what you are ultimately trying to achieve for your clients—

healthy skin—you should design promotions to deliver that message. That is what dramatically increases the promotion's value. Conducting a promotion that offers a coupon for the ice cream parlor across the street misses the mark.

One final pitfall to avoid is creating a promotion that does not create value or offer some real benefit to your clients. Companies often use promotions for the sole purpose of reducing excess inventory. That undermines the true purpose of a promotion, because it fails to reinforce the brand strategy and disregards the client's role in the activity. Unless there is truly something in it for them, the client simply will not participate.

Our practices exist, at least in part, to deliver visible results to our clients' skin by improving their skin's health. That is what we do and why we do it. In short, it is who we are. We represent this through the respective brands of our practices. We reinforce our brand through the promotions we offer. Those promotions will be most effective when they extend value to our guests, increase engagement and interactions with our clients and add value to our practices. By creating successful promotions that focus on your clients' experience while still supporting our brand strategy, you can build a successful business. ■

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