



INCREASE REVENUE WITH ONLINE RETAIL

The Ins and Outs of Starting an Online Store

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Once upon a time, salons, medical spas, and aesthetic practices were only able to sell their services in two places: their office and over the phone. Over time, more products were added to the shelves, including a variety of moisturizers, cleansers, serums, toners, and more. But again, these products were only able to be sold when a client walked through the doors or called in their order for pick-up.

As the Internet's capabilities have evolved, so have the possibilities available to the professional skin care industry. Now, clients are eager to order their favorite products and even pre-pay for their favorite services and treatments from the comfort of their own electronic device. Whether that be at 2 a.m. in their slippers at home or on a noon lunch break from their office, online shopping continues to grow.

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FEATURES TO LOOK FOR IN AN ONLINE STORE

Looking for additional ways to increase sales? An online store is a great place to start, but too many choices sometimes leave clients paralyzed and unable to make a decision. Use this list to make sure that the technology chosen is optimal for the client.

Offer more than just products. Clients love the convenience of purchasing the components of their skin care regimen online and having the items conveniently shipped to their doorstep. But do not forget about other options including selling spa services online and allowing the convenience to pre-pay for a neurotoxin treatment, laser hair removal package, or chemical peel. Not only does this ensure that the provider will get paid ahead of time, avoiding cancellations due to clients changing their minds, but some technology also offers scheduling requests as well. This allows for clients to pay for a special offer when it is convenient for them, not just when the facility opens its doors from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. By the time those doors open, clients are already thinking about their workday, getting the kids to school, or an upcoming project. Again, make the purchase convenient for the client on their time.

Mobile Technology

Utilize mobile technology that properly displays on clients' cell phones, tablets, and more. More and more users are making purchases on-the-go. Because clients are busy, they use their mobile technology in the car, on the train, and even while waiting on a friend for dinner. In other words, whenever they have a spare second. Stores without a mobile-friendly website lose a large percentage of their purchases right off the bat.

Search Engine Optimization

Take advantage of search engine optimization (SEO). Loyal clients are often counted on for purchases, but what about those searching for a product online? For example, if

someone searches for “Product XYZ in Atlanta,” the stores that come up will have a strong advantage over their competitors.

Matching the Online Store with the Website

Integrate the online store with the current website. People visiting a website are more likely to make online purchases if the store looks like it is part of the existing website they originally visited. Often, the client becomes uneasy if they feel they are being transferred to a third party. Make them feel right at home on the website, too.

Online Upselling

Upsell clients with similar products and procedures. Think about Amazon’s ability to show other “products you may like.” If a client purchases a cleanser, they will most likely be looking to purchase a moisturizer with SPF as well. Look for technology that pairs treatments with products instinctively helping to

put more items in the client’s online shopping cart.

Communicating Through E-mail

Produce e-mail communications. If a client is about to make a purchase, there are a number of things that could distract them. Choose technology that e-mails clients and reminds them of their abandoned shopping carts, ripe with items they have already chosen. Better yet, look for e-mail communications that let clients know when there is a special on their favorite products and services, or offers a reminder to repurchase a product or treatment of service.

Customize the Online Store

Provide customized buttons. A button that says, “Buy Now!” for instance, is far more likely to get action than something that says “To schedule an appointment...” Make sure



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Aesthetics International Association

Aesthetics International Association has a variety of books and DVDs in our library that can be a resource in your professional archive. Here is a featured video that is on special this month.

Ayurvedic Beauty Care - Face Rejuvenation Sequence by Melanie Sachs

In this video, noted educator and writer Melanie Sachs demonstrates a unique facial massage based on Ayurvedic principles and practices. It includes an explanation of the Ayurvedic body-mind types and how to customize treatments for each type.



For a complete listing of resources, visit www.aiaprofessional.com or call 877-968-7539.

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there is a choice when it comes to putting widgets on the website and choose verbiage that includes a call to action.

Loyalty Programs

Offer heaps of loyalty points and capabilities. Beauty retailers like Ulta and Sephora do a great job when it comes to documenting and showcasing buyers' loyalty points. Skin care professionals are a step above the big box stores, so the professionals do not let the features of big box stores run circles around them. Allow buyers to earn points by re-

ferring friends, making purchases, and encouraging engagement. Be sure to check what state laws allow when it comes to purchasing procedures, referring friends, and anti-kickback laws.

Staying Within a Budget

Make it affordable for the business. The last thing a business should do is spend so much money on software that they cannot afford to fill the shelves. Be sure to price out the online store's technology ahead of time, making sure it is something that works within the budget and size of the business. In fact, many online store models offer different pricing structures, allowing for customization and the ability to increase the package when needed.

Customer Service

Be customer service driven. There is nothing worse than having glitches in the system and not being able to get in touch with a company representative. Ask about the customer service policy before signing a contract and before there is a problem.

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HARMONIZING THE ONLINE STORE WITH THE SPA

Looking for specific software suggestions? There are many softwares to choose from. No matter what software is chosen, make sure to ask all questions upfront.

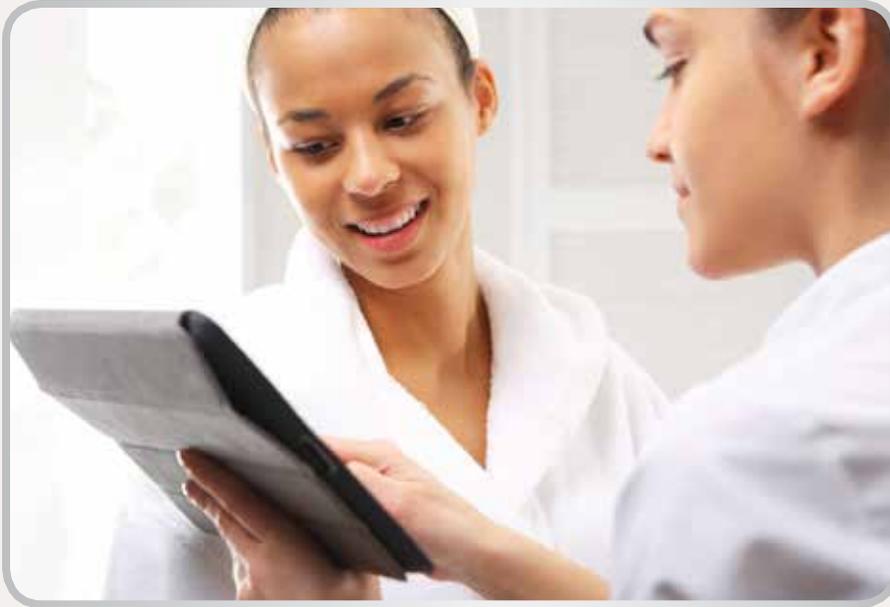
Technology will not do all of the work. After the online store is up and running, be sure to promote this new service.

Pull together a beautiful display where all the clients can see it. Remember, the sparkling new online store does not take the place of a brick and mortar shelf lined with products. Always keep products showcased for clients who come in for treatments. Ideal locations in-



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clude the reception and checkout area, but make sure to put anti-theft tracking systems into place to make sure the product does not get stolen.

PROMOTING THE ONLINE STORE

Continue to promote products to current clients in the spa, but also tell them about the brand new online store. Sell products to clients during consultations and during checkout and be sure to let them know the expected lifespan of the product. Hand them a promotional piece, such as a flyer or brochure, listing the specific website address for your

store. Have a framed sign in the reception area, letting them know they can order products online. Feature a specific item from the store in the e-newsletter. Make sure anyone calling in about new products or services is also made aware that they can take advantage of purchasing them ahead of time. Always promote the store via social media, using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest pages to gain traffic. Although procedural sales are limited to your geographic region, product sales can be shipped across the country, offering an entirely new and expanded customer base. Be sure to check the

sales tax rules when selling online and be prepared to submit these taxes accordingly.

Ask the online store's sales representative how other practices found success, and look to them for tricks as well. Covering the basics is easy, but there is a saying in my office: "I never stole an idea I did not like." Chances are that the software technology has some hidden promotional tools with which to get creative. Use them!

An online store is a great way to increase revenue, through both procedural and product sales, but partnering with the right technology and promotional plan is key. In the end, do research and have a plan ahead of time, and the road to success will be paved in gold. ➡



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