

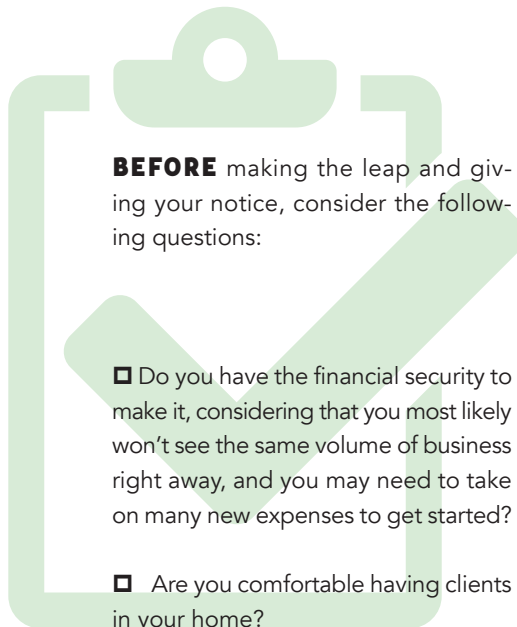
HOME- BASED esthetician?

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All the PROS and CONS to Consider



by Mara Shorr and Jay A. Shorr

AS an esthetician employed by a spa, you're used to having a receptionist and products at your disposal, and not worrying about the operational expenses and responsibilities of your work. Despite these perks, a growing number of estheticians are now building practices in their own homes. Being a home-based esthetician is a different experience than working as an employee for a spa, and there are significant pros and cons to the job.



BEFORE making the leap and giving your notice, consider the following questions:

❑ Do you have the financial security to make it, considering that you most likely won't see the same volume of business right away, and you may need to take on many new expenses to get started?

❑ Are you comfortable having clients in your home?

❑ Do you have a private space in your home to offer treatments?

❑ Is your home a well-kept, clean, quiet place you're proud to show off?

❑ If you share your space with family members or roommates, are they comfortable with clients coming to your home-based spa? If so, are there specific hours when this would be acceptable, and would there be restrictions on early morning or late evening appointments that could negatively affect the business?

❑ Do you have access to running water and a sink for your treatments? Do you have ventilation required for certain treatments?

❑ Is your home handicap accessible?

❑ What type of brand are you looking to create, and what do you want to be known for? Are these visions compatible with a home-based business?

❑ Will anyone else work for you, or will you be a solo-preneur? If it's the former, will they be contractors or employees?



MARKETING

You must decide who your target market will be, how you will promote your business to them and how you will grow.

Pros:

-The channels you utilize and how you do so are completely up to you. You can portray yourself any way you choose through your branding, your logo and your social channel. Want a look that's fresh and modern? Classic? It's all up to you, as is the look and feel of your treatment room.

**TIP: It is important to make sure that all your marketing has the same look and feel to it, maintaining consistency in your branding.*

-Your clientele and boutique experience is more about high quality and low quantity, nurturing the relationships with long-term clients to minimize acquisition hurdles. This minimizes your marketing needs compared to that of a spa looking to grow massive traffic.

**TIP: Aside from print and website marketing, consider networking at local chamber events and hosting "refer-a-friend" events in your home, or include holiday open house parties.*

Cons:

-You are now the one putting in the time and absorbing the costs of branding, including graphic design, sponsored posts, website creation and maintenance.

**TIP: Enlist part-time help for your marketing, so you are not spending endless hours on website and social media updates.*

-Another unique obstacle you may face as a home-based business is privacy, as you may not want to advertise your personal address to the world.

**TIP: Leave your physical address off marketing material, including your business cards and website. Instead, include your general neighborhood or area of your town or city.*

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RETAIL

Pros:

-You get to decide which product line works best for your client demographic and you get to follow your own skin care beliefs. Plus, you don't have to stick with just one line — you may like one line's vitamin C serum and another line's SPF. Another option is to go with both well-known brands as well as a private label line to assist.

**TIP: Attend industry conferences and try samples to find the products you love.*

-You keep a larger portion of product sales, meaning an increase in your net revenue.

**TIP: Make sure that no client leaves without purchasing something from you for their home care regimen so you are taking full advantage of this perk.*

Cons:

-You are now responsible for all decisions, including product lines, initial quantity, how much to keep on shelves and when to reorder. This initial process can be overwhelming and requires significant back and forth correspondence with sales reps.

-You must be comfortable negotiating with your vendors, or you risk paying a high price.

**TIP: Study the competition to find out what a fair retail price would be for the same or comparable products in your market.*

-If you are not a natural salesperson, you must grow this skill FAST. You won't sell retail if you don't effectively convey the benefits of the products to your clients.

PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT

Pros:

-You can choose the equipment and tools that you love as your own boss. Whether it's your microdermabrasion machine of choice or the massage table you've been coveting, you can now go with the piece of equipment that makes your job as easy as possible.

Cons:

-Working out of your home often comes with limited space and room for equipment.

**TIP: Take careful measurements of the space you will utilize and ensure that any equipment you order can be moved and fit into the space with room left for you to work.*

-The potentially hefty price tag of equipment completely falls on you.

**TIP: Utilize a negotiation professional to get the lowest price possible, including warranties, additional pieces to certain devices, shipping, repairs and more.*

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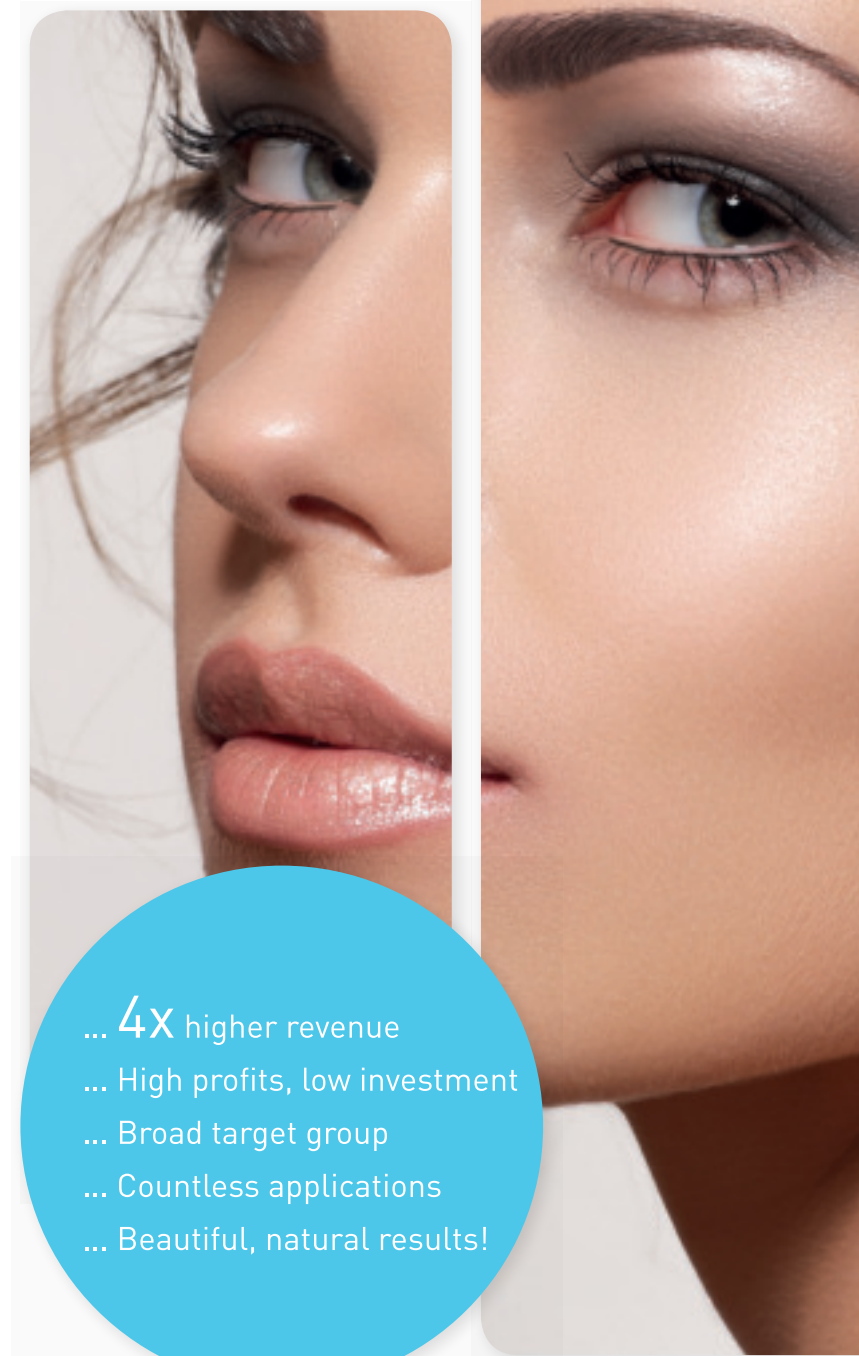
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PAYMENT OPTIONS

Pros:

-You are now in charge of the payment options with which you do business, so you can make sure you offer ones that are most beneficial to your business and your clients.

Cons:

-With so many payment options to choose from, you may be overwhelmed and intimidated.

***TIP: Do diligent research on all options available to ensure you take advantage of each one wisely:**

- Cash. This one is easy. However, make sure that you're reporting ALL of the cash you accept to the tax man and not pocketing a little here and there. That's illegal.

INSURANCE

Liability is a concern in any type of spa treatment. Anything and everything can go wrong, including damaging a patient's skin if the incorrect chemicals or improper laser settings are used in treatments. In many states, estheticians can work without the direct supervision of a medical director, but this comes with risks. If an esthetician is allowed to use a laser, and the patient has a herpetic breakout and needs an anti-viral medication, they are unable to legally prescribe the medication, and need a mid-level practitioner or physician to intervene.

Obtain independent professional liability insurance to cover the services you perform. It covers the costs of legal defense and any potential settlement assigned in a judgment. Research all of the personal responsibilities covered prior to purchasing the insurance because there may be exclusions such as specific services and individual claim deductibles, which may be financially crippling.

*Laws differ by state, so check with your local carrier and lawyer about what is needed.

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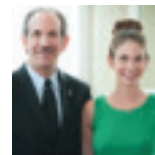


accept credit cards, which is not advisable in the 21st century. While something as simple as Square might do the trick, note that their processing rates are typically higher than other credit card processing options by as much as 1.5 to two percent. Get an additional two quotes for your credit card processing rates, and educate yourself on how credit card processing rates are issued. Cards with points have more fees associated with them, as do credit cards that are issued over the phone.

- Checks. Generally, older clients may write more checks than your younger client base. If you have a younger client base, you may go weeks without seeing a single check. However, it's advisable to utilize remote capture banking, which instantly deposits checks into your bank account and saves you a trip to the bank. The quicker the check goes into your bank, the less chance that it will bounce.
- Credit cards. Some spas still do not

- Third party financing options. As an esthetician, CareCredit isn't an option for you unless you have a Board Certified Medical Director as the supervising physician. However, look into other options for third party financing, as this comes in handy when you want to sell pricier packages and bundles of skin care. Ultimately, starting a solo practice in your own home on your own terms is an exciting journey, but not one to be taken

lightly. Educate yourself, and seek professional consultation about anything you don't understand. It's better to dismiss the option with proper knowledge of the advantages and risks rather than face legal repercussions later. ■



Jay A. Shorr is the founder and managing partner of The Best Medical Business Solutions, assisting esthetic businesses and medical practices with their operational, financial and administrative health. He is also a professional motivational speaker, an advisor to the Certified Aesthetic Consultant program and a certified medical business manager.

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