

The Ultimate Multi-Tasker

Challenges of Being Both Owner and Practitioner

By Mara Shorr

There are few things that serve as a more frustrating balancing act as a business owner than having to work **ON** your business while also working **IN** your business. This is true across all industries.

Narrowing this down to business owners in the esthetic industry, you've most likely opened your spa because you LOVE what you can do for your clients as a provider. Nothing makes you happier than watching them walk out of your office post-facial with a glowing complexion, and a revamped home care protocol to reduce their break-outs or turn back the hands of time on their skin. When you dreamed up the delightful vision that is your facility, the sugarplums dancing in your head probably didn't include human resource headaches, invoice payments or dealing with equipment warranty issues.

Below, we address the main challenges faced by spa owners who are also "employees" or providers in their own business.

► *1. How do you find time to treat as many clients as possible while taking care of business operations?*

Spend most of your time and energy in areas where you are strong. If your greatest strength lies in treating your clients, the "business" side of your business should be handled by a manager with a track record of success. This person can be in charge of running financials, doing payroll, filing taxes, ordering supplies, paying vendors and so on. Set aside time each day to meet with them and answer the questions that will inevitably need to be decided by you and only you.

If you don't yet have an actual manager, designate these tasks to another strong member of your team. If your business is a one-person operation, enlist the help of a consultant or accountant.

► *2. How do you know when it's time to hire a manager?*

If your day is already fully booked with appointments, then the answer is NOW. The other aspects of your business cannot wait. Even if you're not fully booked, a capable manager can help take your business to the next level and bring in more clients. If you're a solo empire, consider a part-time employee or a consultant.

► *3. Once you decide to bring in help, how do you find the perfect employee?*

Ask for recommendations. Reach out to your colleagues for advice, as well as vendor representatives, as they always have a good grasp on who's looking for a new opportunity (and who to steer clear from that may have just left another location). If you have employees, ask for their recommendations as well.



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Post the job on relevant sites. Post a listing on LinkedIn in the appropriate user groups, as well as more mainstream sites. Check applicants' credentials, references and public social media posts, in addition to performing a background check.

If the process seems daunting, don't go it alone. Consider a consultant or a headhunter. This is, after all, their specialty.

► 4. How do you get your employees to respect you as "the boss", when they see you as a co-worker and "one of them"?

As hard as it may be, you must draw the line between a work relationship and a friendship. Ultimately, you must remember that your employees are not your friends, which makes it easier for you to deal with issues that inevitably arise. It prevents the staff from taking advantage of their familiar relationship with you and disregarding your authority.

► 5. How do you find time to evaluate your expenses, so you know how much you're paying for supplies, client financing programs and credit card processing fees?

Delegate these tasks to the aforementioned manager. However, always keep a close eye on your own expenses. There are, after all, two things that affect your bottom line: the amount of money you bring in and the amount of money you spend. If you don't hire a full-time manager, consider hiring a consultant to help you stay on top of your costs.

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Benefits of Being Both Owner and Practitioner:

► 1. You're on the frontline

Spa owners who spend the bulk of their days providing treatments at their facility know the ins and outs of the business, the building, the team and the equipment. They know when the copier needs its toner changed, who to call and what's included in the monthly maintenance. They know how long the warranty lasts on their new microdermabrasion equipment, what it covers and who to call to get a new glass jar when one breaks.

in the door, you can greet her by name and ask about her daughter's recent wedding. You know the neighbors in your complex, and can build strong affiliate programs with them. By spending time in your business, you're building relationships that benefit your business.

► 2. You stay connected

You've built a long line of strong connections with your vendors, employees and clients. When a client walks

► 3. You have firsthand experience

When an employee has an issue with a treatment, you know exactly how to help them. As a provider yourself, you've been there before. No textbook takes the place of real world knowledge!

• See our upcoming article weighing the pros and cons of bringing on contractors versus employees by Dori Soukup in the December 2015 issue of LNE & Spa!



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