

# Meeting Medical Spa Challenges in 2008

By Cheryl Whitman, Founder and CEO of Beautiful Forever

According to Business Communications Co., Inc. (February 2005), the anti-aging market is projected to reach approximately \$72 billion by 2009. If you make the right moves now, you could help set the "gold standard" by which all medical spas will be judged in 2009. And, you could stay in business for years to come – but only if you can face some of the biggest challenges head on.

## IS BUSINESS WAR?

While there is some argument on this point, there is no doubt that solid comparisons can be made between business and war. Both require a unified strategic doctrine (a company-wide language and decision-making system), as well as a clear definition of victory.

Like war, business competition

is an ever-changing landscape of opportunities and potential pitfalls that requires fast thinking and adaptability. Conventional approaches, which include business and marketing plans, are necessary but just part of the strategy needed to excel – especially in the medical spa and aesthetic practice industry in 2008, which hasn't been completely mapped. Some important tactics include:

### Choosing the right mentor/ coach/consultant

There are successful and knowledgeable advisors who can help ease your transition to medical spa or aesthetic practice owner.

Finding the right guide is the key for many physicians who are entering an unfamiliar business, or expanding an existing practice, a landscape that is highly competitive and requires a different mindset and approach from conventional medicine.

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### Watching your competition— and your step

Do you know whom you are up against? If you don't have a clear picture of your competitors, how will you stand out from the crowd?

## Remaining compliant

Not only must you follow current compliance regulations, but also prepare for new policies and laws that are on the horizon.

## Purchasing or leasing the best equipment at the right price

Whether you purchase new, lease and pay as you earn from procedures, or buy used through trusted brokers (especially those who deal in items from practices that closed shortly after they opened their doors), make sure you are choosing the equipment that will give you the best return on your money (ROI) – and provide the services your target market wants. When choosing technology, be sure to consider each item's efficacy, cost per treatment, initial costs,

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and usage. Before deciding on the best equipment for you, know your patients and their needs.

## Controlling cash flow

Exaggerated revenue and growth projections are common in the excitement of a new business, so meeting expenses can become an issue for new medical spa and aesthetic practices. Plan your work and work your plan to keep finances in line.

The real lesson of war, of course, is about teamwork.

"It is so important to keep your staff apprised of your goals and expectations while making them part of the process from the start," says Dr. Dawn Hunter, DC, consultant and former medical spa owner. "The point is to create the team spirit you need to succeed. Each member of your staff should be able to answer the following about your business: How do we compete? Where do we compete? How do we conduct ourselves? How do we know whether we're winning or losing? If you can do that, you can keep on top of the market."

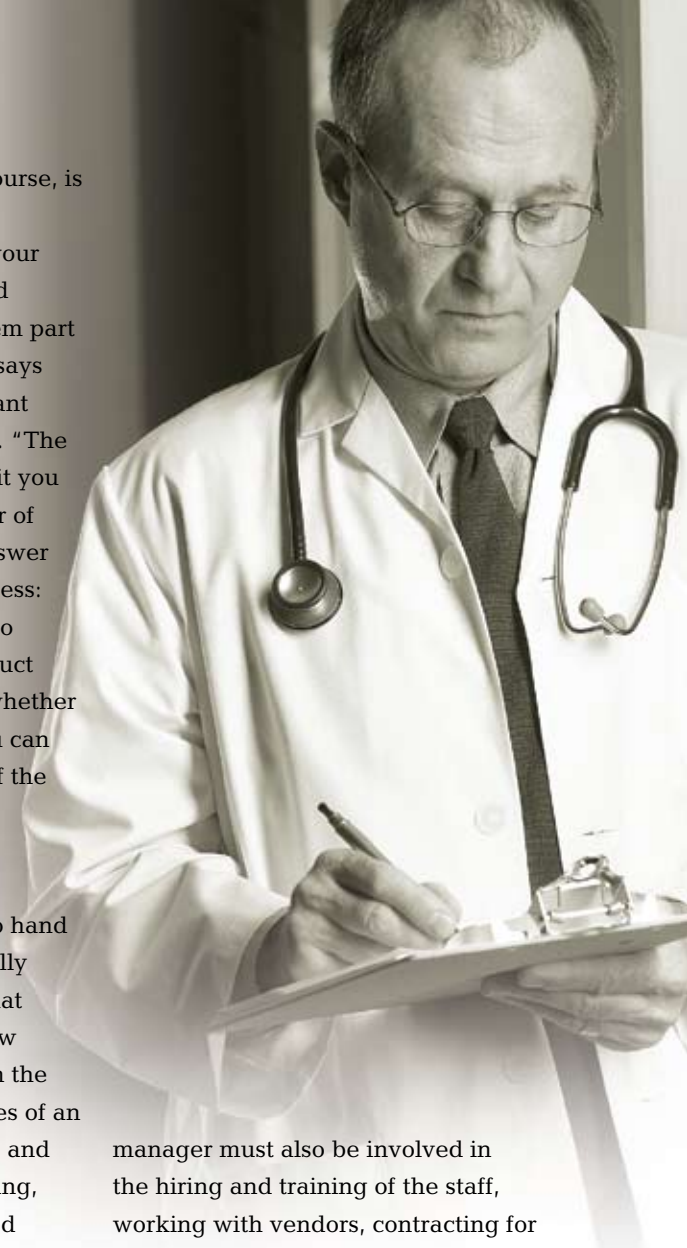
## YOUR GREATEST ASSETS

Success and adaptability go hand in hand, especially in an industry that continues to grow and change with the needs and desires of an ever-expanding, and continuously aging, market. You need several things in place to help you meet those needs and desires, including:

### The right spa director/manager

Your manager oversees the business operations of your practice. This includes supervising everything that happens in your office, including office management, implementation of procedures, case management and processing, records management, collection and reporting of statistics, and accounting functions. Your

manager must also be involved in the hiring and training of the staff, working with vendors, contracting for cleaning services and the removal of medical waste, ensuring compliance with various regulatory agencies, and renewing any licenses required for the personnel and office. Further, your office manager must have excellent communication, organizational, and management skills, along with good business sense and the ability to handle multiple priorities. The new emerging customer who pays cash for services is more demanding and has more choices of places to go for similar services.



## The right staff—and the know-how to keep the rest from making it through the second interview

As you and your office manager work to build your team, be sure to build multiple interviews by other employees into the process. Because your staff will need to work together as a cohesive team, their input during your hiring process is extremely important. Not only does this give you another perspective on a candidate's appropriateness for a specific position, but also begins the process of building relationships between your employees. Providing an excellent benefits package that includes full medical coverage, 401k, even tuition for continuing education, will be some of the perquisites the best applicants will be expecting.

"I have found that the more involved our staff is in evaluating prospective employees, the more responsibility they feel to help the

new hire succeed," says Heather Rogers, Office Manager at Brevard Plastic Surgery and Skin Treatment Center. "My goal as a manager is to hire top-notch people who are service-oriented, as well as friendly and courteous. Having input from the whole staff helps make sure every member of our team fits."

## Training, training, training

Institute continuous education and training so your staff can keep up with trends and new technology, as well as understand what to do when things don't go as planned. Take the time to teach your staff about contraindications and how to handle them. Provide an employee manual – a key item you should develop and maintain from the very beginning. In addition to training for your staff, you will need to keep up on the latest techniques and business practices. Poor training and oversight are the most common shortfalls. Because it takes experience before you can recognize

potential trouble, consider having a professional assessment done every year so you can correct as you move forward.

The best assets you have are the people who are working with you to achieve your dreams of success. Do not leave this to chance.

## "DISTINCT OR EXTINCT" – TOM PETERS

What are you offering, and why is your practice the best place for it?

"My name is my brand," says Dr. Marcy Street of Doctor's Approach Skin & Hair Care. "I have worked very hard to establish myself in my

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medical practice, and I have set very high standards for myself and my staff. My patients know this and have very high expectations for my aesthetic practice – and they know I will do what it takes to exceed their expectations. Plus, they will tell all their friends."

Your brand is what will – or should – draw patients to you. Build a unique niche that drives the demand of your target market. Keep the following in mind as you continue to build your spa/practice:

## Your biggest challenge is attracting and retaining patients

There is no doubt that word-of-mouth is the most effective form



of marketing for your business. However, include internal marketing using your current database to begin the rest of your marketing efforts because it is lower in cost than other marketing strategies and can be extremely effective. Determine all other forms of marketing you will use and create a marketing plan that is reviewed quarterly, with attention to tracking all of your leads.

### Know why patients should choose you over the competition and get that point across

Show your target market the uniqueness and benefits provided by your practice. Consider sharing patient testimonials to get more attention for your services. Don't forget holding an Open House to generate buzz and attract media. The

be customer service-oriented and marketing driven.

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most important element will be the benefits you can offer your current and potential patients.

### Customer service is king – treat your patients like royalty

Because your new patients and target market are very likely to be more demanding, be prepared to roll out the red carpet. You are now providing a luxury service, so you will need to present yourself as such every inch of the way. This is a retail business that means it must

### BE READY TO ADAPT

Charles Darwin said it best: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." It is no secret that the aesthetics industry is in a state of constant flux. Whether it is emerging technology, shifting trends, the economy, or a combination of everything, you must be ready to adapt. Your response to the challenges ahead is what will help you set the standard for your success. 



**Cheryl Whitman** is recognized internationally as a pioneer in the field of medical spa business

consulting. She is a published author, a popular speaker, and has been a beauty-industry consultant for more than 20 years. As founder and CEO of Beautiful Forever, Cheryl spearheads a successful team of medical spa consultants and business professionals. In addition, Cheryl developed the Medical Spa Success System, a revolutionary program that provides a turnkey educational success system and consulting services package to help clients jumpstart brilliantly successful medical spa businesses. For more information, please call 1.877.SPA.MEDI or go to [www.medicalspaconsultant.com](http://www.medicalspaconsultant.com) or [www.medicalspasuccess.com](http://www.medicalspasuccess.com).