



Spectacular **SPA STRUCTURE:** How to Maximize Space, Layout, and Design by Cheryl Whitman

The perfect spa begins to take shape when a great location has been determined, convenient parking has been set up, the lease has been negotiated, and a business plan has been perfected. With a menu decided, unique concept created, name and brand chosen, and signage ordered, now it is time to begin the critically important step of designing and optimizing the spa.

WORKING WITH AN ARCHITECT

Consider the overall space needs. Most successful spas have a minimum of 1,600-square-feet, but preferably 2,500-square-feet. This allows sufficient space for a consultation room with a retail product display, a minimum of four treatment rooms, a waiting and reception area, and a storage and break area for staff. Regardless of the square footage, making the best, most profitable use of it is important.

An architect with spa design experience can be invaluable when it comes to creating a dream facility on paper. The job of an architect is to define exactly what the facility needs, draw the plans, define the material specifications, and possibly provide oversight of the project during construction. To help the architect bring the dream to life, provide them with input. Explain the theme in mind and provide photos of features or environments desired, so they better understand what is in mind.

LAYOUT

Begin with the spa layout. A smooth, intuitive traffic flow through the facility will help enhance the relaxed atmosphere. No one likes busy, crowded corridors or the need to go back and forth. Consider a design where the reception area and waiting room provide convenient access to the consultation room and the treatment rooms. The



treatment rooms then flow into the retail sales and checkout area. The retail space should also be easily accessible from the parking area for those individuals who are not coming for a treatment at this time but are coming in for a product refill.

INFRASTRUCTURE

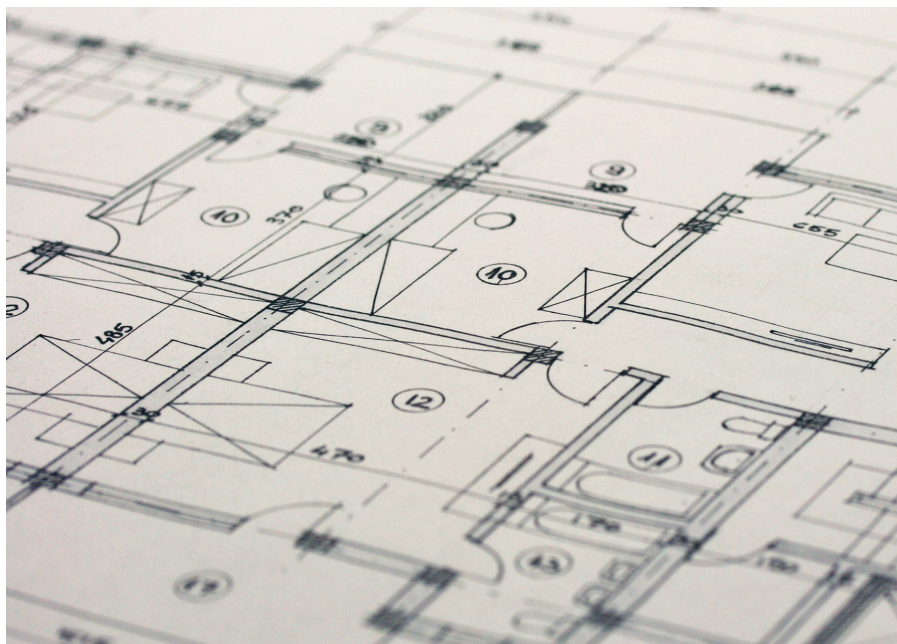
Ideally, the space should offer a relaxing atmosphere and present an upscale environment reflective of the high-quality treatments offered. It must also accommodate the services the professional plans to offer. Plan for necessary

infrastructure, such as adequate electrical capacity to power the equipment being used. The skin care professional will need adequate HVAC for ventilation and temperature control to different areas of the facility, communications and security wiring, and plumbing to provide water and waste service to the sinks in each treatment room, the showers, tubs, steam rooms, on-site laundry facilities, and so forth. Finally, take into consideration structural requirements, such as load bearing (weight) capacity of floors for hydro pools or heavy pieces of equipment such as lasers, waterproofing, and things like ceiling height for specialty equipment. Work closely with a licensed architect with spa design experience who can help with this.

INTERIOR DESIGN

In addition to the basic infrastructure, include design features that impact the ambiance and functionality of the spa. Features such as sound systems, sound proofing, lighting, and sound system controls for each room, ample storage space, and an upscale retail sales area are all critical to the future success of the spa. Once the layout is decided upon, the interior design phase begins.

The interior design of the facility is important. It provides the first impression to the client as they enter the spa and plays a significant role in their decision of whether or not to do business



with the spa. A well-designed interior will enhance the flow and environment the architect has designed. The colors, furniture, window treatments, fabrics, and overall design should be visually appealing and welcoming to clients. The sounds, smells, and small details should enhance the client's spa experience. The décor should create a calm and relaxed feeling for clients.

Peaceful, quiet spaces are a key element. Room size is also important. Rooms less than nine-feet by 10-feet take away from the luxury feel, so if possible, plan for calming, quiet, well decorated, larger rooms to increase ambiance. Privacy is also important. Having more than one spa bed in a room

decreases privacy; however, if planning to offer couples treatments, having two beds in a larger room makes sense, especially if the beds can be separated with a portable wall for privacy when not being used to treat couples.

Scents and aromatherapy are also conducive to changing behavior. Even the placement of the furniture, pictures, and equipment are important to achieving a particular experience. Like a complex jigsaw puzzle, the elements of the spa should all fit perfectly together to impress the spa's mission upon clients.

Finally, all areas, including the front entrance, restrooms, treatment rooms, and exit, must be kept meticulously clean. Watch for dirty corners where

mops do not reach or fingerprints on doors or dust on retail display shelves. Cleanliness of the highest degree is a necessity throughout.

THE TREATMENT ROOM

The design process can be overwhelming. Let's focus on a couple of specific opportunities for optimization and profitability: the treatment room and the retail sales area. First, the treatment room.

Medical spa architect, Nicole Migeon, talks about treatment room design: "I start the design of a treatment room by determining with the spa owner and spa consultants what is the actual program for the room (whether it is a medical or spa treatment room, medical service, or massage). Once the program is determined, I decide what infrastructure, such as plumbing and electrical, is needed in the room. This information helps to determine the size needed for the treatment room. If it is a multifunctional treatment room, we design a relatively large size room and add in most

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of the essential items, so many types of medical or spa treatments can be performed in the room. The materials for the room also depend on what services are performed in the room. If it is more medical, we have to select certain durable and easily cleanable materials. In a beauty spa, the materials need to be durable but the choices are greater. Regardless, the materials must provide the proper atmosphere, as well as functionality. Lighting is also determined by the services offered. In a medical room, we add more lighting, but make it dimmable. The key take-away is that the program drives the functional design of each room. Finally, we consider the budget as we address the aesthetic design of the treatment rooms.”

One of the biggest mistakes in planning a spa design is failure to focus on a concept or program for the spa. Trying to be all things to all people often results in not providing the desired atmosphere and functionality necessary for long-term success.

Treatment rooms are the heart of the spa. They must be both functional and aesthetically appealing. As explained above, they should be designed for a specific purpose and they should be designed with growth in mind. Think about future equipment requirements or future menu offerings and include the necessary infrastructure to accommodate growth during the design phase.

Keep in mind the needs of both the professional and the client. Maintain a common, branded color scheme or theme throughout the spa.

Within each treatment room, there should be one or two retail items displayed with shelf-talkers or product information, as well as supporting literature available on the counter. These products should be a natural complement to the type of services being offered. This allows the professional providing the treatment the opportunity to soft sell the product by mentioning it casually during interaction with the client. Do not overwhelm the client by trying to display everything in each treatment room. Avoid clutter. Consider evaluating the use of touch screens with icons for different provider treatment solutions. Educate instead of engaging in hard sell tactics. Those are counter-productive tactics, but make no mistake, sales of retail products start in the consult area and continue in the treatment room.

Displays should be changed up periodically and replaced with different product offerings, so they are always up to date and fresh. Take advantage of holidays or changing seasons to make displays timely.

THE RETAIL AREA

This brings us to the topic of retail sales. The spa should generate any-

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Instead, use design lighting that shows off the display rather than detracts from it. Maintain the display by dusting the shelves, replenishing displays as necessary, straightening products, and refreshing the appearance to reflect the season.

While optimizing the spa design, do not forget to take into consideration the business aspects. The spa will need office space, space for storage of supplies and retail products, an employee break area, and room for reception staff to answer phones, set appointments, maintain files, operate computers, make client calls, and more. Appropriate practice management software will also be needed. Taking shortcuts in these areas can hurt profitability down the road. 

where from 10% to 30% of its bottom line from retail product sales. Here are some suggestions on how to grow that bottom line.

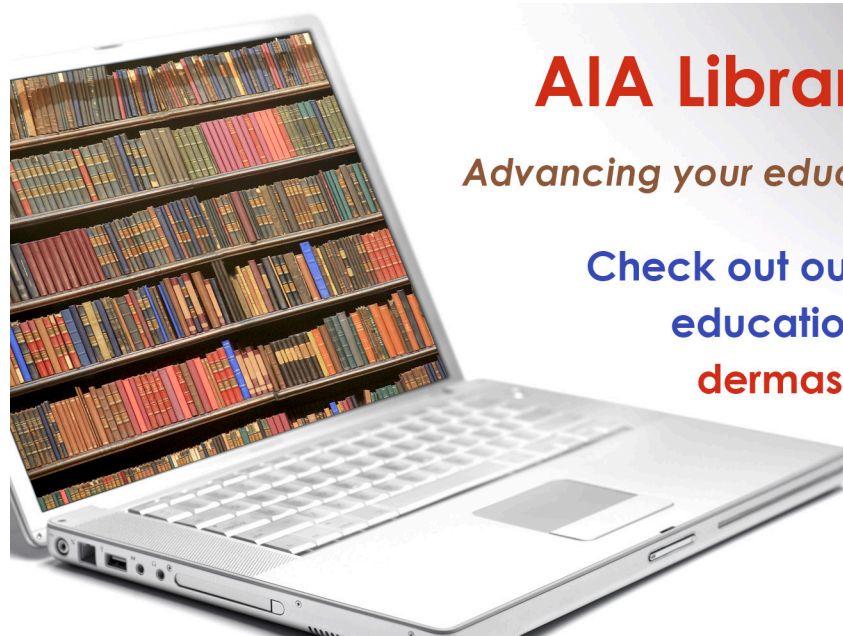
Plan for a retail sales area in the spa design. Ideally, the primary retail area will be adjacent to the spa check-out area, because this area is usually staffed at all times, and this is an area where a staff member routinely engages the client one on one. This provides an opportunity to educate the client about the products the spa offers, which complement the treatment the client has had. Clients do not want to be sold

products, but they want to be educated about what products are available to help them maintain the benefits of their treatments, so they can buy them.

Another consideration is the retail product display strategy. Plan how to display products properly to achieve the best return on investment. Display products at eye level, especially the hero products. Clients should also be able to reach and test the products easily. Lighting is extremely important. Display lighting or sun coming in a nearby window may get so hot that it causes discoloration or melting of products.



Cheryl Whitman is founder and CEO of Beautiful Forever, an aesthetic business consulting firm specializing in assisting physicians to identify and execute new business strategies aimed at improving their bottom line. She is the author of "The Aesthetic Medical Success System, the Complete Educational Guide to Building, Managing and Marketing your Cosmetic Practice or Medical Spa." Her second book, "Beautifully Profitable Forever Profitable," an effective management and marketing guide for aesthetic practices and medical spas, is now in its sixth edition. cheryl@beautifulforever.com or 561-299-3909



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