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## SPA RECEPTION - RESERVATION & PROFITS

### 4 Steps to building a successful R & R team



By Dori Soukup

**D**o you recall the last time you called a spa to reserve a spa experience and the person who answered the phone was so knowledgeable and professional that you said, “WOW” that was a great first impression of the spa!

Or if you operate a spa, when did one of your clients give you a compliment on how well your receptionist and/or reservationist conducted themselves? If it's been a while, maybe it's time to take a closer look...

After a long and busy business trip, I decided to extend my stay and visit the spa for some treatments. My hotel room did not have a spa menu (*mistake # 1*), so I had to call the spa to discover treatment options.

The person answering the phone greeted me with “Hello, thanks for calling xyz spa, can you please hold?”

There was not a hold message informing callers of menu options (*mistake #2*). After holding for a while, she came back and said “Thank you for holding. How may I help you?”

I asked the person (she did not give her name, (*mistake #3*) to tell me about some of their treatment options.

As many receptionists do, the first thing she mentioned is “massage”, facials and body treatments. Then I asked, “What body treatment would you suggest to relief stress and dry skin?” “Probably our mud body wrap” she said.

“Can you tell me a little more about it?” That's when every other word was “um” and “like” and “you know”. Her lack of communication skill and treatment knowledge was obvious (*mistake # 4*). I could tell that this person was not properly trained nor experienced any of the spa treatments herself (*mistake #5*).

Her description and verbiage were not spa driven. She had no structure for handling the call or the ability to describe the treatment benefits to entice the caller to reserve an experience. Her recommendations in selecting treatments and promoting the spa menu were very limited (*mistake #6*).

Who is held accountable for the delivery of this type of experience: the employee or the spa's leadership?

## SPA RECEPTION

## WHEN DID A CLIENT GAVE A COMPLIMENT ON YOUR RECEPTIONIST

**Is your R & R department making or breaking you?**

Sad but true, this is not the first time I've experienced this type of call. I am sure you have experienced the same. Maybe it's time to re-assess your reception and reservation department.

What do your receptionist and/or reservationist contribute to deliver a great guest experience and maximize your reservation rate?

Fact: In most spas, the reception and reservation department is usually regarded as entry level or lower level positions within the spa structure (*mistake # 7*); even though both of these departments are key revenue generating centers.

Shift philosophy and place greater emphasis on selecting and training the team. Recruiting and maintaining skilled professionals will result in maximized revenues and increased profits!

If your R & R Department needs to improve their productivity and increase the reservation and revenue rate, it's time to implement 4 Steps to Building a Successful R & R Team.

#### 4 STEPS TO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL R & R TEAM

##### 1. R & R Role Identification – Finding the Right Fit

First, identify the ideal characteristics and skills required for your R & R positions. Then, create a detailed position description for both the receptionist and the reservationist.

Note: R & R position qualification must go beyond the ability to pick-up the phone and say hello. They must be able to maximize revenue by promoting the spa's services and products.

Stay away from order takers instead, seek achievers. Many spas still do not have position descriptions. (*mistake #8*)

##### 2. R & R Compensation Structure

While conversing with a spa owner recently, the owner expressed her disappointment with her spa receptionists' and reservationists' performance. She went on to tell me "I don't understand why they don't attempt to up-grade services, promote packages, schedule future appointment or increase retail sales... especially when I just gave them all a raise!" I asked her if the raise was based on performance targets and she replied "no". My reply to her was, "What motivation does your team have to improve their performance if their pay is the same no matter what their performance is? What compensation plan do you offer your R & R team?"

In most spas, the R & R department is paid a straight salary (*mistake # 9*). This is one of the biggest faux pas you can make since R & R control revenue generation. Instead, consider a compensation structure based on targets and performance.

Natalie Spencer, general manager for Spa Renaissance in Fayetteville, North Carolina, oversees two spas. Her R & R structure includes receptionists at the spa and reservationists at an off-site call center. Since she adapted a new compensation structure based on performance and targets, her R & R department experienced a 30% reservation rate increase.

Compensation structure should be based on your overall monthly budget. Assign each person a target and base a higher compensation rate when they reach it and lower the rate if they don't meet or exceed the target. The compensation structure should include a mix of salary, commission, bonus and benefits.



## SPA RECEPTION

**“HELLO, THANKS FOR CALLING XYZ SPA, CAN YOU PLEASE HOLD?”**

A compensation structure that promotes stretching, goal setting, performance awareness, results in elevated income opportunities for the team and the spa.

It's a win – win. The team will have the opportunity to increase their income and the spa will only pay the higher level of compensation when the team achieves their targets.

Change your spa's R & R compensation plan from straight salary to a compensation mix and witness a performance transformation while generating a new level of success.

**3. R & R Structure and Positioning**

Depending on the size of your spa, you may want to differentiate between the two positions. The receptionist's responsibilities should include guest relations and tending to the front desk.

The reservationists' responsibility should focus on phone calls and communication management. It is ideal to separate the two by moving the reservation dept to an offsite call center or to a different location within the spa. This allows the receptionist to focus on guest relations and the delivery of a great spa experience. The off-site call center can focus on converting callers into guests and maximize the spa's revenue.

If separating the two is not an option due to your spa size, then consider having two or more people (depending on your guest flow) at the front desk: one to focus on calls and one to attend to the guest reception.

All spas strive to deliver a great and unique spa experience. When your receptionist and reservationist positions overlap, it makes it difficult to perform their functions and takes away from the overall guest experience. Not differentiating

between R & R positions creates confusion and low productivity (*mistake #10*).

**4. R & R Department Training**

Training and coaching the R & R department is an essential component to retaining a professional and successful team. When your reservation and reception department is trained and skilled, they are able to maximize reservation rate while increasing overall revenue generation.

Not having a training manual (*mistake #11*) is like building a house without a blueprint: you can do it, but it will tumble in time. Having a training manual can make everyone's job a lot easier. It can be the difference between working smarter instead of harder. By investing the time in creating a manual, you are investing in the future of your business. The R & R manual should include scripts, operating guidelines, systems, structures, reservation management steps, software hints and shortcuts, marketing your services and products, treatment benefits, do and don'ts, and more.

By implementing these 4 steps, you will transform your R & R department from order takers to movers and shakers! Find the right fit, train them, implement a performance driven compensation plan and maximize your revenue while enhancing your guests' experience. Don't delay; seek professional advice to assist with your spa's transition. You can choose from many options:

- Hire a consultant or a coach to assist with training and transition
- Purchase a proven effective compensation plan
- Attend a reservation and reception seminar

Keep in mind; the guest experience begins with the first “hello”. Ask a friend to call your spa, listen to your R & R department and discover where you stand. Take the following assessment and improve performance.

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## SPA RECEPTION

## "CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS SPA TREATMENT?"

SCORE CALCULATION:

**4-Strongly agree**                      **3-agree**                      **2-somewhat agree**                      **1-disagree**

1. *The R & R department has a very clear knowledge of the spa's services and products.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

2. *The R & R team has experienced some of the spa's services and uses spa products.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

3. *The R & R department is clear on their performance expectations and targets.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

4. *The R & R department has a training manual and scripts to assist them with their position.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

5. *The R & R department is able to professionally communication with guests and the spa team.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

6. *The R & R team has guest relations experience and sales experience.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

7. *The R & R team is skilled and proficient with the spa's software program.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

8. *The R & R team portrays a professional spa image.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

9. *The R & R team tracks call source and marketing efforts.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

10. *The R & R team realizes the importance of their contribution to the overall success of the spa.*

Strongly agree                      agree                      somewhat agree                      disagree

SCORE SCALE:

31 - 40: Congratulations! Your team is highly skilled!

21 - 30: Your team is average.

With some additional training, they could move from good to great!

11 - 20: Your team needs improvement and professional coaching.

10: Evaluate your current team and make necessary changes.