



blue sand
MARKETING

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROFESSIONAL
beauty
incorporating spa and nails

Send your letters to the editor on anything that excites, irritates or frustrates you about the industry or something you've read in *Professional Beauty*.

Send your letters to **Professional Beauty**, emap retail, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ. Email: professionalbeauty@emap.com

AVOID DISCOUNTING AT ALL COSTS

I read in The Insider, March issue that the second most popular January promotion in spas was a 20% discount off a brand's treatments. This news surprises me because I wouldn't advise discounting as a promotional tool at all, especially at quiet times such as the New Year.

Discounting may be an easy way to administrate a promotion but what you are really doing is losing your profit margin and January is when you can least afford to. If you cut the price of a treatment by 20% then you will have to attract 20% more business to make up for your loss in revenue, and that's at a time when footfall is traditionally slow. The Christmas/New Year holiday is not a trend you can buck.

Secondly, you are inviting your customers to re-negotiate their relationship with you. Discounting devalues what you were offering. Your customers will start to think that if you can afford to give them

20% off for a whole month, then why can't that always be the case? And how much is 20% off worth? It's easier to understand the value if you are comparing the price of soap powder from one supermarket to another but I don't believe you can do this with spa treatments. There is so much more – ambience, standard of service, skill of therapist – that goes into a treatment that is not accounted for if you just look at its price.

My advice is don't discount, but add value to your service. Offer an extra 15 minutes of treatment time (add a head massage to a facial) or a free consultation on a recently launched treatment or product. If your spa is quiet, you have time to do this and it introduces your customers to new things. Ask your customer to recommend a friend and reward them with a "tea for two". This way, you have another treatment booked and you are giving away food and drink, which is

less of an operational cost to you. If you must promote based on price, turn 20% off into a £20 voucher to spend on the client's next treatment. Your customer will have a much better understanding of the value of what you are offering and you have already secured yourself another booking. You could also put together a new promotional treatment package, give it a fixed promotional price and then state what it would "normally" be.

Having worked for a product house, I can tell you no brand likes to see its treatments discounted. Use the resources and expertise at your product house to come up with promotional ideas that will promote the brand and encourage customer loyalty rather than devalue it. Whatever you decide to do, aim to make more money out of a promotion, not less.

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