



THE SPA DIRECTOR

HOW ARE YOU MANAGING?

BY LESLIE LYON

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Spas2b was awarded Top Honours from Day Spa Magazine as the course of choice in their "Real World Results" Business Class Survey.

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As I think back to my days as a Resort Spa Director and onward to my current position as a Spa Educator and Consultant, I marvel at how this position has evolved. I've always believed and continue to see proof that the Spa Director's Job Description is one of the most demanding positions out there. But I also happen to believe it is one of the most rewarding, exciting, mind-expanding, life-enhancing journey's possible! Where else do you have the chance to explore every corner of your creative, leadership and business talents... to make such a difference in the lives of the people you touch, while at the same time living the good life inside the thriving health and beauty phenomenon? This flourishing industry of ours continues to shower us with potions and procedures that bring incredible hope and amazing results and as a Spa Director, it's all in the palm of your hands.

With this demanding position, we sometimes find ourselves in the predicament of needing more support, more guidance and more training in order to perform to set standards. Like any Management position, a successful Spa Director develops with education and experience that addresses both their life and business skills. The Director needs to be "equipped" with the best industry-specific practices and guidelines in order to do the job effectively. Many of you reading this story will be both the Spa Owner and the Director. But no matter what position you are in, you will need to explore many industry resources to fulfill the demands that the job will put on you. This may mean the support from a Mentor; your existing Spa Management team; industry websites; publications; associations; trade events; outside professionals; and training courses. I suggest all of the above. Throughout your career as Spa Director, you will benefit from the ongoing boosts of confidence, self-affirmation and camaraderie that these resources will provide you with.

Spa Director Job Descriptions come in all shapes and sizes. At some Spa's, the Director is expected to be responsible for financial budgets and outcomes, for growing new business opportunities, developing the market, overseeing the human resource department and so on. Other locations require their Director to simply assist in managing the day-to-day operations with no set targets or real accountability

for the bottom line. So depending on the set of expectations that you assign to the position, the Director should of course be paid accordingly. When considering payment for the Director, you may also want to consider the size of the facility. It goes without saying that you will need to evaluate the individual's proven and perceived skills and value; their experience in the industry; your company's philosophy and stability; industry standards and the current cost of living.

In the Spa Industry, there are many available options by which we can pay our staff, but we commonly see Spa Directors paid a combination of fixed and variable pay systems. This may be in the form of an annual salary (paid bi-monthly) and perhaps supplemented with some form of incentive pay, such as a bonus or profit sharing (perhaps paid quarterly). An experienced Director will want to see strong management support, to know pay scales, understand incentives, the job's current description and future potential.

In the Spas2b 4&5-Day Successful Spa Management & Operations course of study, we train existing and potential Spa Directors in 5 fundamental categories. However many of these responsibilities you assign to your particular Spa Director's Job Description, your goal should always be to strive for a realistic balance between your expectations, the Director's abilities and proposed compensation. If you can't find someone to fill every skill required, remember that you can gradually train these individuals on business skills, but you probably won't have as easy of a time changing their attitudes and subsequent behaviours. When recruiting a Spa Director, you may want to consider two scenarios. How important it is to you that this person can demonstrate an exceptional level of professionalism for the staff to emulate, while at the same time being able to create a motivating environment of sincerity, warmth and fun for staff and guests? Very important I would say. Or is it more of a priority for your Spa Director to possess strong financial leadership, marketing savvy and operational expertise? Hmmm - business skills... or life skills. Ideally both, but you may have to choose.

Almost no one can fulfill these criteria as laid out below right off the bat, but rather these responsibilities are gradually and incrementally introduced as you see your Director becoming more proficient at mastering outcomes and proving results.

Here are the key points Spas2b believes you need to consider when developing the Spa Director Job Description:

Financial

- Interpret Financial Reports and provide expertise on (projected) Revenue vs. Expenses.
- Project and maintain acceptable payroll commitments.
- Use financial plans for spotting trends, measuring productivity and monitoring progress.
- Control ongoing service and product margin analysis to ensure profitability.
- Implement opportunities for managing operational costs and boosting the bottom line.
- Develop procedures for accurate inventory control and monitoring.
- Implement full Spa product and service purchasing standards and ensure compliance.
- Administer staff and client scheduling for maximum revenue generation and profitability.

Marketing

- Develop Spa's Marketing Strategy and ensure a consistent image is being portrayed.
- Be proactive in developing publicity opportunities and effectively dealing with media.
- Develop and maintain gracious and efficient front desk procedures.
- Maintain and update all necessary internal and external signage.
- Create ongoing in-house promotions and activities to stimulate sales, staff and customers.
- Guide business decisions by staying on top of Spa industry trends.
- Maintain a strong menu of services with both exceptional artistic and aesthetic value.
- Consistently develop and grow retail sales through training, tools and monitoring.
- Ensure the Spa is always staged for maximum buyer impact.

Customer Service

- Anticipate, identify and ensure customer needs are being met in the best possible way.
- Monitor customer satisfaction with surveys, focus groups and comment cards.
- Develop and deliver credible, competitive, value-plus service to the customer. *
- Guide staff to become caring problem solvers, cooperative, accommodating and fair.
- Exhibit a professional attitude, diplomacy and an ability to handle difficult situations.
- Uphold gracious front desk procedures in the booking and handling of customers.
- Maintain fresh, effective programs to consistently retain and grow customer base.
- Develop and maintain compensation guidelines for customer complaint handling.

Staffing & Human Resources

- Develop a Recruitment Kit for effective recruiting, screening, interviewing and hiring.
- Develop Value Packed Proposals and maintain internal staff retention programs.
- Implement ongoing skills training to ensure service standards are being upheld.
- Develop and monitor Job Descriptions and Staff Goals Planning.
- Create and maintain Staff Contracts, ensuring accuracy and compliance.
- Perform Staff Evaluation Reports with proposed action plans.

- Effectively administer and monitor Staff Scheduling procedures.
- Demonstrate an exceptional level of professionalism for the staff to emulate.
- Create a motivating environment of sincerity, warmth and fun for staff and guests.
- Implement Negative Staff Behaviour and Dismissal guidelines with follow-through.

Operations

- Maintain an up to date version of the Spa Procedure Manual and ensure compliance.
- Develop and maintain Spa literature, documentation and process handling requirements.
- Attend Management meetings and convey all relevant information throughout the Spa.
- Hold regular staff meetings to keep staff up to date on all aspects of the Spa's operation.
- Ensure equipment is maintained in good working order.
- Maintain professional relationships with suppliers and providers.
- Ensure stock and cash items are kept safely under lock and key.
- Minimize or eliminate losses through negligence with monitoring programs.
- Implement a clearly established opening and closing procedure.
- Manage inventory effectively; follow purchasing standards; ensure compliance.

I believe that when we create a Job Description, a Job Evaluation follows right behind it. We lay out our set of expectations, and we base pay increases on tangible results. Just a word of caution, as you attach these expectations to the Job Description, you must hold up your end of the deal with the aforementioned support, guidance, training and compensation. Let's not burn out our Spa Directors, rather let's set forth to deliberately develop these VIP's into the business and human experts we really need them to be.

