



Spaformation, guided by founders **Robert and Julie Cass**, was formed to service the many fascinating and exciting areas of the spa and wellness community. Spaformation is a full service firm assisting clients from creation to finish of new spa projects and helping with the growth of ongoing spa operations.

Spaformation conducts intensive professional Spa Management Training and numerous operational courses such as Reception training, Customer Service, and Retail Sales.

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Spa Reception

THE FORGOTTEN ONES

BY **ROB & JULIE CASS**

Peace, relaxation, wellness and serenity; those are the things we strive to offer our guests. What we know from a business perspective is that the spa world is a fierce one! It seems on every corner, there opens a new spa with the latest and greatest concepts, innovations and treatments. In the face of ever-stiffening competition, existing spas cannot afford to fall behind. Clients' expectations are also on the rise as they become more and more educated. When it comes to choosing a spa today, consumers have so many choices and have rightfully come to expect a first class experience, from the initial booking, throughout treatments, to the moment of departure.

Spas invest a tremendous amount in training their service providers, improving the treatment quality, and staying innovative to keep ahead of the game. However too frequently, one of the most fundamental components of the service is neglected - the spa reception team. In reality the reception team is critical to running a spa successfully, but are the expectations placed on them equal to the time and resources we invest in them?

We call them *the forgotten ones* because more often than not they are thrown into their job and left to sink or swim. They are essentially forgotten, that is unless there is a problem, such as a booking error, an inquiry not sufficiently responded to, or some other mistake that results in guest dissatisfaction. Only then do we tend to reception, and by that time we are already frustrated. We need to spend more time with them in the beginning and on an ongoing basis to help mitigate our frustration and solidify their sense of worth and of being part of the team.

Expectations of the Spa Reception Team:

- Share the Spa Vision with guests
- Set the standards for the rest of the staff
- Answer and manage multiple phone lines
- Make efficient bookings
- Respond to email inquiries
- Up-sell products and services on the phone

- Provide expertise in the spa services offered
- Administer guest check in
- Facilitate check out and payment
- Sell products in the reception area
- Cope with customer and staff complaints
- Operate numerous administrative duties and monetary transactions
- Manage the staff flow throughout the day
- Etc, Etc, Etc.....

Typical Investment in the Spa Reception Team:

- Lowest compensation
- Least training investment

Operational Impact on Spa Reception

- Highest pressure
- Highest turnover

What is wrong with this Picture?

Clearly our expectations are unrealistic given the lack of investment we make in the reception team. We demand highly functional staff members but provide them with neither the information nor the skills training required to deliver superior results. To achieve outstanding customer service, solidify customer retention, increase sales, and improve overall efficiency in spa management, significant investment in our reception team is essential.

Positive Changes you can make:

This list of easy tactics and policies can be implemented to maximize the potential of your reception team:

The Hiring Process — It all starts with the quality of staff you hire. Owners and managers often struggle to find “good” reception team members. Is it the people interviewing or the interviewing process? Ensure a minimum skill set before hiring. Integrate basic spelling, math and typing tests as well as a mock phone call into the initial meeting. Look for direct and transferable skills. Be thorough – simulate difficult situations to see how they naturally react.

As critical as it is to find personalities adept to the



human needs of your guests, it is equally essential that they can effectively perform the necessary tasks. Is this person the right “fit” for your spa? Look around your spa and evaluate what types of people succeed in your environment? Look for similar qualities in the people you are interviewing.

Without exception, do reference checks. If you are uncertain after the first one, do another. Do not call their current employer without the candidate’s permission but don’t be afraid to call an employer listed on their employment history but not listed as a reference. You might learn some important information.

Orientation Training — Spend time with new recruits when they are first hired. All company policies and procedures need to be made abundantly clear at the onset. Have a separate reception manual that outlines all of the spa’s expectations, including telephone protocol, booking procedures, greeting guests and so on.

Product Training — It is imperative to include your reception team in all product training, including refresher courses. Most often they are your closers, especially in retail sales.

Treatment Training — How can receptionists effectively communicate and sell services when they have never themselves tried them? This is where so many spas go wrong. You need to have your reception team experience all of your services. Not only is this a great job perk for them, the payback for you will be tenfold. In fact why not build it into their compensation plan? You want them to be excited and knowledgeable when talking to your customers.

Spa Reception (ONLY) Meetings — Hold separate and specific meetings for your reception. Your reception team needs to be on their toes with respect to everything from marketing initiatives, to operational policies, to special events. Inefficient or lack of communication will only facilitate mistakes. Separate reception meetings will allow pertinent information to be outlined and understood. They also clearly demonstrate that they are an important part of the business and that you care about them. Moreover, this is a great opportunity for you to get them involved in the decision making process by encouraging them to share their ideas. Empower them by delegating the responsibility of certain tasks that take them out of their daily routine. But remember, you need to offer them support and guidance through the process.

Outside Training — Send your team to outside training sessions. They can attend reception training courses, customer service courses and even leadership courses. Give them the chance to learn from industry or skill-based experts. The more skills they acquire, the better they can serve your business. This is not only for the newcomer to your business but also the seasoned veteran. Grooming a

good team member to become a great one is always a good idea, no matter how long they have been with you. It will also help keep experienced team members from picking up bad habits. When you send the reception team to outside training, you better balance your high expectations with support and training they need to succeed. You will also be setting an example and the standard in terms of investment and excellence, which will assuredly guide your business to success.

Compensation Check — It may be time to look at the way your reception team is being rewarded. Is your compensation package competitive with other spas in your area? After all, you are competing with them for quality team members. Make sure you know where you stand. Once the standard is confirmed, ask whether your compensation plan rewards the right behaviours. Do you reward them just for doing their job or do they have the incentive to do a good job? Does exceptional performance receive recognition? Is customer service and selling a part of their evaluation? Does your evaluation clearly outline the behaviours you support and the ones you don’t?

The best plans tie this all together so that the reception team members know what is expected of them, and are compensated accordingly.

Lead By Example — Spend a day working alongside them. Put yourself in their shoes. It does not have to be the whole day as much can be accomplished in a short time. Not only will you become aware of operational inefficiencies in the business, but it will also show the reception team that you are willing to look at challenges from their point of view. Do this as often as you can - even if it is just once or twice a quarter, you will reap tremendous benefits from both a morale and an operational point of view.

Remember, your reception team is ‘the face of your business’ and it is in your best interest to set them up for success. A motivated reception team will deliver outstanding customer service and be sure to greet every guest with a smile. When you invest in your reception team, they will in turn invest in your guests making them feel comfortable and welcome.

Starting today, spend some time with your reception team, continue to communicate, give them positive reinforcement, and start to do the checks and balances to review their performance. After all they have the power to make the best first and lasting impressions on your guests.

By following this outline and **investing** in your reception team you can, and will, generate a tremendous return! Differentiate and innovate in a way that truly matters - transform your spa reception team from the *forgotten ones* into the *memorable ones*. ♦