

## **How to choose your skincare range for your salon**

It's a minefield out there. There are dozens and dozens of skincare ranges to choose from and it's easy to get data overload so I thought it might be helpful to produce a cheat sheet. This is by no means a comprehensive list of things to consider, but it goes some way in assisting you to choose the range which will work for you and your business.

### **What are you looking for?**

Are you going to specialise in skin? If so you might want to look at some of the specialist skincare houses rather than the wholesalers like Capital, Ellisons etc. While the wholesalers are convenient, they generally don't offer higher end, salon exclusive ranges, or ongoing education and support.

### **Salon exclusive?**

Even the higher end brands are rarely salon exclusive. So what? In order to earn a decent living without working 24/7, and killing yourself in the process, you really need to sell retail products to your clients.

This fulfils two roles.

One: you're making free money: you buy stuff at one price, and you sell it for more, and it should make up at least a third of your takings. Selling product takes up far less time than carrying out a treatment, and can, in some case, be left up your (appropriately trained) receptionist, freeing you up to carry out the technical stuff like a facial.

Two: you're providing an end to end service for your clients. As a professional it behoves you to treat your clients correctly and comprehensively, and that includes how they take care of their skin at home

Think of it this way. If your clients continue to use the same products that made their skin needing your attention in the first place, they will see little or no improvement. As the only thing that's changed is the fact they've had a facial with you, guess what they're going to blame? By recommending the appropriate skincare for their skin issues, they're carrying on the good work you have done in the salon. After all, they wouldn't visit a dentist every six months and not clean their teeth twice a day at home, would they?

If you take on a mass market brand, available online, or on the high street you run the risk of your clients buying their products elsewhere. It's convenient, and very often it's cheaper than you can sell it to them. Yes, it may very well be a well known brand which your clients have heard of, and that might be what draws them to your salon, but if you cannot retail to them, you're losing valuable income.

### **Results Driven or Cheap and Cheerful**

Are facials going to be something you want to be known for?  
Why should you care?

Generally, people haven't really taken of their skin over the years. Years of too much sun, too much fun, medication or illness shows in the skin, and one day, a lady will see a photo, or look in the mirror and realise that they look 10 years older than they would like! You have a ready made potential client base of these ladies, and if you wow them with your treatments they will want to ensure that they do their utmost to slow down the march of time with really effective products too. You can only do this with a results driven range.

If facials are just something you want to be able to offer, as a relaxation treatment, or a pampering session, then cheap and cheerful is certainly one option. These products are very often the ones available from the wholesalers, and almost certainly don't have high quality, effective active ingredients in them, and as such, you won't get the results of a higher end range

## **How much have you got to spend?**

The cheap and cheerful ranges available from wholesalers won't have a big start up cost associated with them. Very few of the higher end ranges have low, or no, minimum order values. Unless you have a couple of grand lying around you'll find that you're very limited in the choices you can make. As well as a high opening order, some of the ranges have a minimum spend, and, or monthly/annual targets. So unless you're absolutely certain that you're going to be busy with facials all the time, you might find yourself taken off their salon finder, lose access to special offers, or even have your account closed against your will.

## **Training**

Don't be fooled by the term "free training". Very often the skincare houses will use this as a tool to suck you in. There is no such thing as free, sadly. The ranges which offer so called free training absorb the cost of providing training into every single product they sell you, so you'll find yourself paying over the odds on everything you buy once you've had your initial training. Does the brand insist on you being trained with them? You may have worked in a salon where you've used the range you want in your own salon, but some companies will insist on you undertaking training with them before you open your own account. You may employ a therapist who has undergone the training but doesn't have a certificate because the previous salon owner has kept it. Will she need to undergo the training again? How long is the training? Where is it held?

If you have to accommodate either yourself or your employee taking time out of the working week to attend several days of training this is an additional cost to you, both in lost revenue, salon coverage, and incidental costs like hotels and travel expenses.

## **Shipping charges**

Like the "free training" discussed above, there's no such thing as "free shipping". Those costs have to be paid for somehow, and if a company offers "free shipping" then the price of every product has been increased to cover them. Some companies will offer "free shipping" if you buy more than a certain amount, or if you purchase via their website, but if you ARE charged shipping it makes sense to order in bulk less frequently to lower the additional cost per product.

## **Sales reps**

There's no denying that some sale reps can be incredibly useful and supportive, but their primary role is to meet their sales targets, and the way they do that is by persuading you to buy more. They also have to be paid for, and guess who's paying their salary - you are! If you have really good central support from the manufacturer or distributor then arguably there's little need for an army of regional sales reps, with their company cars, popping in every month to gee you up to sell more product, and taking up your valuable time.

## **Home/mobile vs commercial premises**

Several of the higher end ranges will simply not supply home or mobile therapists. Their argument is that it "doesn't fit their brand profile". Some will supply only commercial premises, and then only if you have x number of treatment rooms, x number of therapists, and a dedicated retail area.

## **Minimum orders**

We've already discussed opening order values, but some of the ranges require that you purchase a certain number of individual retail products. Check that you're not required to buy 10 each of their products, or if you are, that you are certain sure that you're going to sell them before their expiry date. Some companies will also insist that you buy their retail display stands too. It's all about the branding. They want a consistent look and feel across their entire network of stockists. The stands rarely come "free", and if they do, you'll be paying for them within the price of every product you buy, long after the actual cost of the stand has been paid for.

## **Marketing materials**

These are an essential part of your toolkit in getting the word out to your potential clients.

Some companies will charge you for absolutely everything, from leaflets, to posters, branded bags to samples, and beyond. Those which offer “free” marketing materials will have absorbed that cost into the price of every product. Some will offer a “free” entitlement, that is, buy £x worth of product and we’ll give you £x of samples, flyers, leaflets etc. Check what’s included in your opening order too. And check what the deal is with training materials. Can you get printed copies of the training manuals? Can you get personalised posters with your salon details on them, or will they give you the base documents so that you can have them printed yourself?

## **Images**

You will need images of the brand, and the products, for both your online presence and in printed media like flyers, posters and leaflets. Some companies will charge you for access to their image library, and some will be very slow in getting back to you when you ask for images, or supply them only in low resolution, which is suitable only for online use.

## **Radius clauses**

We’ve all seen it. Every high street now looks like every other one throughout the land. Some skincare houses have no problem in there being half a dozen salons using their range within a mile radius. While this is great for their brand recognition, it’s not so good for you when you need to stand out from the crowd. If you offer the same as every other salon in your area then your client has little reason to choose you over the others, and if they cannot get the appointment they want, or buy product from you they will go elsewhere to get it.

## **Returns and replacements**

Sometimes you’ve ordered products and then realised that you’ve ordered the wrong thing. Some companies won’t accept returns, and then you’re stuck with it. Some will charge you a restocking fee. While this might feel unfair, there is a cost to the supplier in accepting a return, in terms of the admin costs in checking that the product is in date, has not been tampered with, returning it to the warehouse, and entering the information onto their accounting system. It is unlikely that your return shipping costs will be reimbursed, unless the mistake is theirs. Sometimes you may find that there is a problem with a product you have bought. There should be a returns policy in place, and most companies will not accept a return, for whatever reason, without a returns number. You can’t just send it back and ask for a replacement without you’ve discussed it with them first. Some companies will insist that the product is returned to them for inspection, and some will accept a photo as evidence.

## **Lead Times**

Part of running a successful business is being really well organised. That said, sometimes things catch you out! How long does it take from order to delivery? Some companies take longer than others to get your order to you, and you may need to bear this in mind when choosing which brand to go with. Ask them how long on average their lead time is. If it’s next day then great, you don’t need to worry so much. If it’s a week then you may need to put process in place to ensure you don’t run out of stock. This is especially important where retail products are concerned. You could lose the sale if you don’t have stock when a client wants to buy. With regard to professional products you don’t want to have to compromise on what you can offer because you don’t have everything in stock.

## **Online ordering**

Running a business often means working late into the evenings and on weekends. Having access to an online ordering site means that you can order at any time, day or night. If you are restricted to office hours ordering you will need to schedule that into your no doubt very busy diary.

## **Company Ethics**

Does the company you're considering share your own ethics? Do they test on animals? Is it vegan? Do they use sustainable, ecologically sound packaging. Does this matter to you?

## **Company reputation**

Ask around, ask anyone and everyone! What is the company like? What's their support like? How helpful are they? How supportive are they? Has anyone had any problems with them? How do they deal with customer issues? Will they deal only with the account holder rather than your staff members? It's all but impossible to please all of the people all of the time, and we're all human so mistakes will happen, but it's how those mistakes are handled that makes the difference.

The process of choosing a skincare range is an exciting one - good luck with the journey! Hopefully this cheat sheet has helped you to be better informed while you choose.