



MARKETING SOLUTIONS

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Team Spirit! It's Time For Sports Marketing

By Larry H. Oskin

Spas, skincare clinics and full-service salons really need to make a special focus for targeting athletes and career professionals with health, fitness and exercise as part of their daily regimen. Besides offering the proper specialized services with a well-trained team of spa professionals, this type of target marketing requires balancing a creative marketing, advertising, promotions and PR program that will help you recruit and retain these special interest clients.

As every level of our industry is looking to provide more total wellness services, it only makes sense that we create marketing, advertising and PR programs directed towards athletes, sports teams and anyone interested in fitness as an essential element in building their personal image. Athletes and sports enthusiasts have special skincare and bodycare needs. We must begin to provide specific massage therapies, special sore muscle treatments, skincare treatments, acne treatments, 'mechanica', hair removal, wet treatments and any other unique or new services that you can direct towards their personal needs. We spoke with several spa owners that are nationally recognized for their focus on athletic spa-oriented programs.

NuYu ~ Focus On Spa Sports Services

Athletes have very special skin and body needs. We asked Merlisa Lawrence Corbett of NuYu Salon & Spa in Alexandria, VA to share her expertise in this area. As a former professional sports writer for Sports Illustrated Magazine and other major publications, her day spa salon offers a series of unique services and marketing programs targeted to athletes.

Merlisa Lawrence Corbett noted, "The most popular special massage therapy services currently provided to athletes and sports teams need your attention. The 'Sport Massage' or the 'Athlete's Massage' should be able to correct minor, nagging aches and pains for your clients. Common disorders such as ankle sprains can be corrected by regular visits to a massage therapist, trained in sport massage. It's important that your massage therapist be specifically trained in sport massage because some deep tissue or Swedish massage techniques, when applied to a sport injury, can actually increase discomfort." Corbett continues, "Chronic sports related injuries, such as a rotator cuff, can often be corrected by sport massage, which may include some forms of stretching as well as massaging ligaments. The rotator cuff controls range of motion in the shoulder, or rotation. These muscles are strained in activity in which the arms are repeatedly over the shoulder, such as in throwing motions, serving in tennis, pitching and sometimes even rowing. The most common complaints we hear from our clients deal with shoulder pain. A massage therapist can use ice to reduce inflammation and perform some stretching and massaging to reduce soreness in these muscles."

Corbett adds, "When I covered college and professional sports for the Pittsburgh Press, I had the privilege of interviewing Dr. Freddie Fu, the leader in the sports medicine field. Dr. Fu has been the head team physician for the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics since 1986. He also was instrumental in the establishment of the Sports and Preventive Medicine Institute in 1985. I learned from Fu how athletes are more prone to repetitive type injuries, which if left untreated, can become chronic. That is why promoting regular visits for massage is essential for the athletic client. During a consultation for an athlete's massage at NuYu Salon & Spa, our massage therapist asks each of their clients, if they want treatment before activity or after. She then goes on to explain that the sports massage technique is different. She uses more rapid technique to warm muscles up, to get ready for activity and a slower motion for cool down or post activity." Depending on the type of injury for special sore muscle treatments, the NuYu Team uses cold or warm pack applications that are great in sport massage.

For athletes that require hair removal services, NuYu offers back and shoulder waxing. Corbett notes, "Some male swimmers are very self-conscious about visible back or shoulder hair. Many competitive swimmers believe that shaving body hair can help them shave seconds off the clock."

Merlisa Lawrence Corbett markets their NuYu spa services to individual athletes, rather than to teams as a large group. Corbett points out, "We changed the name of our sports massage to 'Athlete's Massage'. We did this because of our unique Cameron Station location. We are located within a private neighborhood that offers our residents a gym and jogging trails. There are many people who are athletic, but don't participate in sports. These include people who jog, walk regularly, do yoga or Pilates. None of these activities are considered sport. In our description of our athlete's massage, we stress that the massage is great for active people. Most people consider themselves active. We do not market to the professional athlete because most professional sports organizations have physical therapists; massage therapists and sport doctors on staff and on call. What we want are loyal clients. We always offer our clients a 'series program' with our spa services. If they purchase a series of six (6) massages, they get 20 percent off the entire series package, by paying for it all up front. This gets them into a "routine". We want our clients to consider massage as a maintenance program, vital to their physical well being. We use the words "therapeutic" and "healing" instead of pamper and luxurious to describe

our massage and body treatments. People splurge on luxuries. Splurging is sporadic, while maintenance is consistent. We want to build our business with very consistent, regular clients.”

The NuYu Salon & Spa has an aggressive marketing, advertising and PR Program using special cross promotions with area gyms and health clubs. Corbett notes, “We have a full-color wall advertisement on a kiosk displayed at the local YMCA. This YMCA, in Alexandria, VA, has an upscale clientele and a full gym, swimming pool and racket ball courts, besides everything else for the health enthusiast. This advertisement is there for the entire year. We leave our menu of salon and spa services along with our special brochures about sport massages. We also post our menu of services in the Cameron Club, a private health club located across the street from our spa. We offer a 20 percent discount to the personal trainers at the health clubs, in return for their personal referrals to our spa and our massage therapist. We also have brochures displayed in our salon and spa that carefully explain the benefits of our sport massage services. We are actively recruiting therapists with training in sport massage.”

NuYu has plans to refine their marketing, advertising and PR programs over the next few years to more athletic related services, while promoting them more aggressively in the spa as well as through the local media.

American Leisure Sets A Fast Pace In Spa Service Marketing To Athletes

Steve Kass, CEO and Wendy Bosalavage, President of American Leisure Corporation in New York, are nationally recognized for their company’s expertise in this area. American Leisure has long been considered the leading experts in fitness, wellness, spa and lifestyle consulting management services.

Athletes Are Everyday People: Steve Kass shared, “Most of your athletically inclined clients will be everyday people, even if they are weekend warriors. We offer some very specific spa service treatments for our athletically inclined clients, even though most of this targeted group will want the same type of services you offer to all of your spa clientele. You will need to create and market some new specialty sports-related services, while working with the athletes and their teams to help you define your future spa service programs. We have learned about their needs through our consultations. For example, we have learned that we must work with our athletic clients to help them get certain muscle groups into condition through specific sports massage therapies, Reiki and Shiatsu. We integrate traditional services, with whirlpool services, hydrotherapy and rehabilitative hot tub treatments. Some clients may need a special body part worked on like a leg, arm or elbow. We assist with specialized skincare for athletes with rough skin condition and overexposure from the environment or sun. We offer restorative treatments like our Vitamin C WHOA Mask, which allows professional athletes and sports enthusiasts to rejuvenate and treat their skin between spa visits through a retail program, even if they are traveling on an airplane. Since most of our athletic clients are exposed to the wind, sun and other harsh elements, we begin by taking those challenges into consideration with sun screens and other rejuvenating products.”

Client Education Is Critical To Your Success: Wendy Bosalavage emphatically notes, ‘Client Education’ the most important key to our success with athletic clients. We teach each client how to treat their bodycare needs and skincare challenges with specific service treatments and products. We always professionally recommend a series of holistic moisturizing treatment products, with special body creams and body oils. We teach them what we are using, why we use it and how they should continue using the same product regimen between spa service visits. For example, we may teach them to use lavender body oil that will help to melt away body tensions, as will many aromatherapy services. We use treatments like hot stone massage therapies and acupressure massage for athletes with bruised muscles to give them instant relief. Our facials directed at athletic clients all utilize a series of anti-oxidants to protect the skin from free radical damage. In some cases we utilize cosmeceutical and holistic products for the treatment of athletes with acne. We treat some sports injuries and needs like Rosacea, where their capillaries may have broken from stretched and bruised skin. We even use Pilates and yoga services to help our clients stretch and warm their muscle groups. Throughout any service treatment, an educational consultation remains the key to our success with athletes”

Create A Man’s World: Steve Kass notes, “There is a bit of a selling job to get the male athletes as regular spa clients! We have special marketing targeted directly to men. We promote a professional skincare line targeted to men, which offers solutions for razor burns.” Bosalavage adds, “Men are often mistaken thinking that skincare routines are just for women. Thus, we make sure to offer some skincare that is properly packaged without flowery or overly fragrant scents. We engage some select skincare products that will help tighten pores and heal scars, which appeal to men. As part of your marketing program, you need to teach the men that they need to begin regular skincare routines. We use special shaving balms and facial toners for men, while educating them on the various benefits like improved elasticity, and moisture. We teach the men to use special scalp tonics that will treat dry scalps and dandruff, which are problems often associated with male athletes. We educate them on how to nourish their hair follicles and scalp while preventing any potential hair loss. We even teach the men to take care of their nails with sports manicures, hand detailing and nail oils – for their brittle, dry nails”

Kass adds, “With male athletes, we really address their mind and body conditioning. We help them understand that a sound mind and body will add agility and flexibilities. We teach them that we have spa treatments to support their special needs. In fact, we offer a scientific presentation. Further, we offer spa treatments for men as a feel good element, while using our services as a reward for any individual athletes as well as for the entire team, by working with their coaches. Some men feel that spa treatments are a bit too feminine. To help in our marketing approach we attempt to many little things that will make men more comfortable. For example, we offer the men different bathrobes and spa wardrobe accessories that are larger and in more masculine colors.”

American Leisure Corporation safely targets both men and women in their advertisements by having ad copy that is not feminine. The copy is always generic unless it needs to be gender specific.

Athletic & Medical Partnerships: Steve Kass illustrates, “We partner with the local rehabilitation centers where athletes go for sports therapy. This type of cross-referral program is very valuable and it helps to get the athletic clients into what they would consider a warm and comfortable environment. We also partner with swim teams to offer special spa, hair and nail service programs to athletes that are subjected to chlorine and water for seven or more hours at a time.”

American Leisure adds 'Nutrition' to some of their educational seminars for athletes by partnering with nutritionists and registered physiologists. They also use a physiatrist – a Doctor of Physical Medicine to help instruct on pain relief for sports injuries and pain management. Their partnerships become a win-win-win situation for their spas, the medical partners – and best of all, for the athletes!

Marketing & Promotion Tips: Kass declares, "Our sports marketing efforts are always directed specifically to the coach or the assistant coach and not to the individual athletes. We find this approach to be much more effective! We do make team presentations; where we explain our services, offer incentives, group discount rates, special marketing service brochures and sample products supplied by our supportive manufacturer partners. We offer special introductory packages as well as gift premiums with services. We close each of these educational seminars with a special offer. This may include a special discount or price on one treatment. For example, it may include a 'Free Mini-Facial with any other Spa Service Treatment'. Or, it may include a special 'Free Skincare Analysis'. Once again, education is key! Attempt to have the opportunity for group presentations to the athletes with their coaches at a team meeting. Fully explain the benefits of massage, steam facials, your protocols, what to wear and what not to wear (the option of getting naked). The same can be done with professional athletes, cheerleaders, women's groups, sororities, fraternities and any athletically-oriented group that you are targeting."

Kass adds. "Direct your initial marketing efforts to the decision makers for the team. The players will always look to their coaches for inspiration and as their trusted leaders. Don't bother trying to do a spa evening for the entire team at once – especially if you don't have the space. Allow each athlete to come in on his or her own terms and at a time that's convenient for them. It will also be easier for you to properly staff your spa for these appointments, even if the services are slightly discounted."

American Leisure will also work with high school athletic programs to offer the incentive of a point reward system that will help the school earn a new piece of equipment. The student athletes earn points by the number of spa visits and services that they receive. They always select something related to health and fitness, like stretch bands.

American Leisure participates in an array of charitable and community-minded programs that builds their namebrand awareness, while educating the area clientele on their service advantages. When the Special Olympics were hosting an event near one of their New York facilities, they pre-planned an event with the organizers of the Special Olympic Event. They offered a free 'Day Of Beauty' to all of these athletes. Not only did they do something nice for the athletes and the event, they received a tremendous amount of free publicity by also working in tandem with the Special Olympics to garner the local media.

They targeted one unique program in Long Island, NY for women with breast cancer. They organized an evening filled with free spa services and feel good holistic treatments as a retreat at one woman's home. Thus type of an event could also be done in the spa. It helped the women feel better psychologically as well as physically. They also organized an event for women to take advantage of free spa services by donating their long hair to a charity that was making wigs for cancer patients. It's amazing what positive word-of-mouth referrals can come from a good-hearted event like this. Best of all, it build positive energy and pride within your spa team.

They have even created promotional fliers, marketing devices and spa brochures targeting special athletic groups and neighborhoods with introductory discount offers.

The Pros: American Leisure also operates and manages various spas within health clubs, resorts, hotels and casinos. They created and operate the Bally's Spa in Atlantic City, NJ which caters to numerous celebrity athletes from the New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania area teams like the Yankees, Mets, Jets, Giants, Philadelphia Bruins, the 76'ers and the Nets. For celebrity athletes, their marketing and service programs are taken to another level. Here, they offer special 'Spa Suites' where these well-known athletes can take advantage of a variety of private spa and skincare services without dealing with the general public.

Get A Jump On More Sports Marketing!

To effectively build your spa business, you really do need to make a future marketing focus directed towards athletes, whether they are professional, high school athletes or merely sports enthusiasts. It doesn't matter if they are teens, career professionals, male or female, as long as you know whom you are marketing to and what their needs may be.

New Marketing Materials: Be prepared with new spa services and special brochures targeted to these athletes. Carefully craft your skincare and spa service packages to appeal to their needs.

Advertising: Do advertise! Don't be afraid to advertise your sports related services in the sports sections of your local newspapers and magazines. Your targeted radio and TV commercials can certainly appear over sports programs to a very select audience.

Direct Mail: Solo direct mail will be important. Begin to collect the names, addresses and contact information for all of your clients who will be interested in sports related services and products. Create and mail a postcard, newsletter or letter to them at least four times per year. Make your letters and marketing materials 'education oriented'. Rather than to hard sell a service or just offer discounts, take the approach to educate your clients on the benefits of your services. Don't be afraid to include an introductory gift certificate as a special offer, rather than to use a coupon. Promote new services, series programs, gift certificates and spa service packages.

Don't be afraid to attempt some cooperative and marriage mail approaches like Clipper Magazine, Val Pak and Money Mailer. With resources like Clipper, you can effectively reach everyone in your targeted neighborhoods with upscale full color glossy advertising designs for less than four cents per home. Solo direct mail is extremely important for you, yet can cost at least fifty cents to one dollar per targeted home, when you add up the costs of artwork, printing, labor and postage.

Partnership Marketing: Work with physical therapists and medical professionals that specialize in sports to create some cross marketing programs. You can offer the other business's introductory gift certificates for each other's new first-time clients and patients. Make your offer strong enough to get someone into your spa the first time. For example, offer a free hand detailing service with a one-hour sports massage.

Email Marketing: It's important to collect email addresses from your clients. Send special email notes and email newsletters to your athletically inclined clients on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis per year. Place a small bowl at your front desk asking for email address and contact information, in return for one complimentary sports massage therapy treatment each month. You can do the same thing at local health clubs, gyms, fitness centers and sports facilities. Just create a professionally designed colorful poster to place next to your bowl or box, asking for their business cards.

Point-Of-Purchase Materials: Many health clubs and gyms have advertorial boards on display where you can rent an 8 ½" x 11" space to promote your spa throughout the year. Create something exciting and change your small point-of-purchase poster every month or two. You should create other window and in-spa point-of-purchase signs, counter cards, shelf talkers and visual materials to promote your seasonal services and special products.

Professional Cheerleaders: Day Spas like Currie Hair'Skin'Nails in West Chester, PA have been the 'Official Hair Designers & Spa Professionals For The Philadelphia Eagle Cheerleaders'. Most every professional sports team's cheerleaders and dancers partner with a salon or spa. These cheerleaders are truly athletes in their own right – plus their game day image is very important to them. You can often barter free services for PR. With advance planning, these men and women will also be available to pose as models in your photography sessions, fashion shows and to help at charitable events. You need to start early, by contacting their coaches and instructors through the team office.

Membership & V.I.P. Programs: Create annual Spa Membership Programs where you can sell 'A Year Of Services' for \$1000, \$2000 or even \$3000. Offer at least three to five different programs. These clients are used to signing up for a year's membership at a time – with health clubs and gyms. Don't be afraid to sell a package of 12 sports massages, 12 manicures, 12 pedicures and 12 facials, while also creating other clever package programs. Promote these as gifts throughout the year for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and for the year-end holidays!

Create special V.I.P. Programs for athletes and cheerleaders that are associated with any local team, whereby they are eligible for a discount on select services throughout the year. These can be promoted at the local high schools, colleges, gyms and medical clinics.

Lecture Demonstrations: Set up lecture demonstrations for all of the athletes in your area through their coaches. Attempt to get a half hour or a full hour time slot before one of their practices. Create a PowerPoint presentation and/or video to illustrate your special sports-related spa services and products. Give spa menus, massage brochures and fliers to everyone attending with an introductory discount or promotional offer. Educate the athletes on what your spa offers as well as the benefits for each sport's related service.

TV Talk Shows & News Segments: Write and call the producers of your local TV talk shows as well as the news shows. Offer to create special segments offering their viewing audience, tips and techniques on spa services for athletes, sports teams and fitness enthusiasts. Give them several different options to consider. Offer to create the segment live in their studio or taped in your spa.

Public & Media Relations: Target your local sports writers and editors! Send special press releases and media kits with a cover pitch letter to offer your help with articles for their athletic-minded readers. Once again, be ready to educate their readers with numerous tips and techniques on spa services and products for athletes, sports teams and fitness enthusiasts. Give them several different salon and spa service options that could become featured in the story. Offer to write a guest editorial for free. Offer to create a photography session in your spa, with their models or ones that you can supply.

Olympic Inspirations: The international Olympics offer a powerful inspiration to athletes and everyday consumers interested in their health, fitness, image and well-being. Take advantage of the Olympic inspirations by tying your promotions, PR and marketing into an Olympic theme!

Targeted marketing to athletes can really pay off for your spa, salon or medical spa. It can help you to stand apart from the competition with many new and unique services. It will certainly help you gain a wonderful reputation with athletes and sports enthusiasts that will last for years to come. Get your entire spa team involved, brainstorming all of the many concepts shared here as well as those that you can dream up. Now is the perfect time to get a jump on sports marketing!

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EDITORIAL NOTE: Larry H. Oskin is president of Marketing Solutions, Inc., a full-service marketing, advertising, PR and consulting services agency that specializes in the professional beauty industry servicing salons, day spas, skincare clinics, medical spas, medical facilities, manufacturers, distributors and associations. Located in Fairfax, VA their team can be contacted at 703-359-6000 or via email at LOskin@MktgSols.com or visit: www.MktgSols.com.

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