



Q I've been approached by a number of companies about selling vitamins and supplements in my spa. I cater to a very health-conscious clientele and think many of my clients would appreciate having them available. I certainly have the retail space. Should I be concerned about anything in particular when it comes to selling vitamins and supplements? Is it a profitable move? And are there certain vitamins or supplements I should definitely stock or stay away from? —*Excited to Expand Retail*

A Dear Excited to Expand Retail: My answer to your question would be different if you started out by saying, "I've been approached by a number of customers who want vitamins and supplements to be

included in the retail offerings in my spa." If that were the case, I would suggest a different set of options. However, it was the vitamin companies that approached you, implying that they are looking for additional retail outlets for their products. This sets up a dynamic that begs a number of questions:

- Are the vitamin and supplement lines truly something your market wants?
- Are they the best use of your retail space?
- What type of reputation do they have in the vitamin and supplement industry?
- Will their inclusion enhance, detract, or confuse your current customers?
- Are vitamins and supplements in line with your spa's market position and core business?

You believe your clients are health conscious, and this is probably true, given that they are already spending their income on enhancing their lifestyle at your spa. However, that hunch is not good enough to invest

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“The quality of your vitamins **should be comparable** to the rest of your spa’s goods and services.”



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your time, retail space, and your spa’s reputation. Before doing so, you should take the following seven steps:

- 1. Do a detailed analysis of the demographics of your core clientele.** Supplement that with an in-house survey to determine a basic level of interest among your staff.
- 2. Juxtapose that information over the demographic profile provided by the vitamin companies.** There needs to be significant overlap between your research and that of the vitamin companies. Remember, you will be competing with hundreds of potential vitamin/supplement outlets, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, health food stores, fitness facilities, and online retailers.
- 3. Find third-party or consumer advocate-based research regarding the quality and reputation of the vitamin company itself.** If you are going to include a line in your spa, ensure that it is a quality line, compatible with your targeted market segments such as pregnant women, active seniors, acne-challenged adolescents, or everyday body builders. Spa consumers are very savvy. The quality of your vitamins should be comparable to the rest of your spa’s goods and services.
- 4. Verify that local, state, and federal laws and especially local zoning codes will allow you to sell vitamins and supplements now and in the foreseeable future.** This is especially true if you need to expend capital to modify your retail space and storage areas to accommodate these sales.

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Selling Supplements

As spa professionals, we have to take the blame for not being good at selling retail in the spa environment and for not having the confidence to tell our consumers what they need. “Most spa owners will make a huge investment in a vitamin and hope that clients will buy it,” says spa consultant Douglas Preston. “Selling is an active process that includes everyone on your staff making a conscious effort to push retail items to every client.”

Here are some helpful tips for selling vitamins and supplements:

- Do your research and pick a simple, straightforward supplement line that supports your spa’s goals and will appeal to your clients.
- Provide your staff with some basic product knowledge, support material, and brochures.
- Encourage your staff to take the supplements. Give them a free one-month supply. They will be more likely to recommend something they use.
- Ask clients during their consultation, “Would you like to hear more about our new wellness program involving daily supplements after your treatment?”
- Set sales goals for each department and give constant feedback to your staff on how they are doing. Don’t forget the front desk staff. They should have weekly sales goals, too.
- Provide ongoing sales training to ensure your staff understands the importance of selling to your clients.—*Keith West-Harrison*

Keith West-Harrison is a motivational speaker on wellness and healthy aging. He is now part owner of Preston Spa Business Solutions, where he trains spa owners and therapists on how to be financially successful and emotionally satisfied in their careers. For more information, visit www.prestoninc.net.

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5. **Ensure that this is the best use of your retail space.** The products you sell should reflect the focus and tone of your spa.
6. **Ask yourself if these vitamins and supplements will extend your brand.** Or will they make your guests subliminally associate your spa with the discount pharmacy in a nearby strip mall? What other goods could you sell and what would be the net volume and related profits of those versus that of vitamins and supplements? The math will speak for itself.
7. **Evaluate if your staff has the skills necessary to sell the proposed lines.** As the adage goes, a little knowledge can be dangerous. Your spa will lose credibility if your salespeople are not knowledgeable about the lines that you sell.

If you still believe that selling vitamins and supplements will make money and enhance your operations, you must then take into account:

- The order minimum required by the supplier to place and order
- The velocity of sales—vitamins and supplements

have expiration dates, and you do not want to be sitting on expired inventory

- Whether you have the space and proper conditions to store your new vitamin and supplement inventory, as excessive temperature and humidity can render some products impotent, or at best, shorten their shelf life considerably.

If you can navigate all of the issues cited above and still feel good about including supplements and vitamins as part of your retail sales, then you need to add them to your retail lineup. Select a specialty line that is targeted to your market and go for it.—*Peter C. Anderson and Michele A. Chandler*

Anderson and Michele A. Chandler

Peter C. Anderson is a principal at Anderson and Associates, a spa consulting firm based in Santa Monica, CA. He is also on the board of advisors for the Medical Spa Program at the University of California-Irvine. Michele A. Chandler heads up the Toronto office of Anderson and Associates. She brings 20 years of financial, operational, and water-treatment managerial experience to the firm. You can email Anderson at peter@anderspa.com and Chandler at michele@anderspa.com.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:

IS THERE A DEVELOPMENTAL, EQUIPMENT, FINANCIAL, OPERATIONAL, OR OTHER SPA QUESTION THAT TROUBLES YOU?

Email questions to q&a@americanspamag.com. Your question and the answer may appear in an upcoming "Problem Solvers" column.

Resource Guide

Considering retailing supplements in your spa? Here is a roundup of potential contacts:

Activa Derme
(800) 263-8888
www.activaderme.com

Elemis
(800) 423-5293
www.timetospa.com

Murad
(888) 996-8723
www.murad.com

Revival Soy
(800) REVIVAL
www.revivalsoy.com

Adēeva
(888) 251-1010
www.adeeva.com

Eva's Esthetics
(800) 765-7597
www.evaskincare.com

Naturopathica
(800) 592-7995
www.naturopathica.com

Set-N-Me-Free
(800) 221-9727
www.set-n-me-free.com

Amber Products
(800) 821-9188
www.amberproducts.com

Intelligent Nutrients
(800) 311-5635
www.intelligentnutrients.com

NutraOrigin
(800) 71-NUTRA
www.nutraorigin.com

Suracell
(800) 792-7136
www.suracell.com

Avancé
(800) 777-7546
www.avanceskincare.com

Jan Marini Skin Research
(800) 347-2223
www.janmarini.com

Phytomer
(801) 487-2832
www.phytomer.com

Tend Skin
(800) 940-8423
www.tendskin.com

Caudalie
(866) 826-1615
www.caudalie-usa.com

Kemin Health
(866) 536-4666
www.luteininfo.com

Prothera
(888) 488-2488
www.protherainc.com

Thalgo
East, (800) 228-4254; Midwest and West, (866) GO-THALGO;
www.thalgo.com

Dr. Baumann USA
(800) 507-9272
www.dr-baumannusa.com

The M'Lis Company
(800) 548-0569
www.mlis-online.com

Pure Inventions
(732) 842-5777
www.pureinventions.com

Vital Remedy MD
(800) 770-4360
www.vitalremedymd.com

Elementals
(877) 359-9528
www.elementalshealth.com

Mountain View Labs, LLC
(888) 876-3240
www.trielements.com

Repêchage
(800) 284-SKIN
www.repechage.com

Zila Nutraceuticals
(602) 266-6700
www.zila.com

