

Expanding Possibilities

Fill in your spaces and your purse

by Janet McCormick

If your appointment book is showing more unused openings than you'd like, consider filling the gaps by offering clients new services. Whether you're an esthetician considering learning massage or a nail tech interested in spa treatments, now might be the perfect time to enhance your repertoire.

Esthetics and nail technology credentials are called "specialty licenses" in the cosmetology industry. This means license holders have been trained in a specific specialty-skin or nails-rather than relying on the brief overview they get on these topics in cosmetology courses.

The nail and esthetics specialties sprang from cosmetology license courses, called the "full license" by cosmetologists. That term indicates the course fully trains all cosmetology skills (hair, skin, nails), though most students still find a strong focus on hair design. The courses often offer as few as eight hours of class time in esthetics and/or nails; in some states, it's 32 hours. It's definitely not enough. For that reason, students with these interests are seeking more training.

In separate specialty courses, students attend many more hours in skin and nails than typical cosmetology courses. While the cosmetology industry once considered these "peripheral" services, they are now seen as separate professions and are respected for their focused training.

Multiple License Combinations

More and more, skin and nails are separate specialty courses, with their own skill and hour requirements. Nail technicians only do nails and skin care professionals only do skin. Recently, however, the trend is toward licensees doing both sets of coursework.

Encouraging multiple specialty licenses started with salons wanting to add services without adding employees. Lynelle Lynch, owner of Poway Academy in Poway, California, continually receives calls from spas asking for multiple-licensed professionals and uses these calls to

encourage students to add specialties. She believes this is the way the industry is going. "Not only does it fill the spaces in the schedule for the professional and fulfill more needs for the clients, it also reduces the need for multiple employees," she says. "Who wants two employees unhappy because they have open hours in their schedule, when one who has added licenses can have a packed book?"

In the 1990s, the most popular combination of licenses was nail technology and esthetics. It was popular for professionals who worked in leased stations or on their own. Karen Hodges, Morning Glory Nails & Skin Therapy in Key West, Florida, has been a nail technician for 10 years and went back to school for esthetics after four years. She knew that a manicure meant care of the hands, not just a half-inch or so of fingernail. It occurred to her that she needed to address her clients' skin, as well as their nails. Hodges wanted to offer a larger range of services to her clients-facials and

waxing seemed natural extensions. "Getting my second license was the best thing I ever did," she says. Her service tickets expanded dramatically, even without marketing, as her nail clients already trusted her and moved easily with her into skin care. Retail tickets also jumped to new heights. "They trusted me to suggest appropriate products for their skin and purchased what I suggested," she says.

Esthetics and massage therapy are another natural combination of specialty licenses. Jessica Rom, JEM Skin Care, Saratoga, California, added massage therapy to her esthetic license after she went out on her own. "I had lots of gaps in my schedule that first year and decided to go to massage school to make use of the free time," she says. "It really filled in the gaps." She also feels massage therapy allowed her to better serve her skin care clients. "When a client is masking and I perform a neck and shoulder massage, it's not just a light, feel-good massage-it's therapeutic, it works out the kinks, and it relieves muscular tension," she says.

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Gloria Luna, of Plaza Skin Care in Copperopolis, California, also added massage as an expedient means to more income as she was building her esthetic practice. She thought massage was the specialty most consistent with esthetics. "I had no interest in doing nails. Massage skills added a lot to my learning proper touch and pressure," Luna says.

"A blossoming specialty for estheticians in our area is electrolysis," says Ida Antoniou, owner of Anton Aesthetics Academy in West Palm Beach, Florida. The school offers massage, skin care, electrolysis, and nails. "Many students go from the esthetic program into the electrolysis program and quickly pick it up because they have a foundation in skin training and hair removal," she says. "We encourage estheticians to add this specialty, since electrologists can perform laser hair removal in Florida." At Anton Academy, students are strongly encouraged to get multiple licenses with the advice it that helps them stand apart in these difficult economic times.

Adding a License

"In former years, students would initially take the one (course) they loved most and then later come back to add another specialty," Lynch says. "Now we encourage students to do that immediately. We are having a good response." Lynch respects the fact that students will focus on the specialty they love, but encourages added skills. "Adding another specialty supports their growing clientele more quickly," she says.

Elizabeth Nila, licensed holistic health massage practitioner and esthetician in San Diego, California, agrees that hiring multiple-license professionals is the trend. "When I was looking for a position after esthetics school, many of the spas appreciated the fact that I had both licenses." She says others who did not have both were having more problems finding positions. Laura Wilson of Pacific Skin Care in Santa Cruz, California, is a massage therapist who added esthetics, and believes massage therapy and skin care are different, but complementary. "My clients always comment positively on the massage portion of their skin care treatment," she says. Wilson added esthetics at the encouragement of her spa's owner at the time. "It was a time in my life when I was open to anything, so I went for it and now love it," she says.

Enhancing Value

Professionals need to continually add to their skill value, Lynch says. Poway Academy offers many added-value skills within specialties for students, as well as postgraduate courses that enable licensees to enhance their skill versatility. For example, the academy lengthened the hours and added spa treatments to their nail technician course. It enhances nail graduates' hiring potential beyond what routine coursework provides. Poway also added an advanced nail technician certification program for graduates, developed by the Medinail Learning Center. It's designed to set technicians apart and above their competition by training them in techniques that will attract referrals from physicians who know their clients will receive these services somewhere and want them to receive the best.

Poway also added a 600-hour master clinical esthetics program was added at Poway as a postgraduate course that trains estheticians to work in medispas and physicians' offices and postgraduate advanced makeup course that prepares graduates to provide makeovers. Esthetic graduates are also encouraged to add massage to their esthetics program through a combination course. "Our academy has historically seen a high percentage of students taking multiple and enhanced courses to improve their earning potential, as well as their professional expertise," Lynch says.

Becoming a Beauty Therapist

Denise Fuller, an Australian-trained beauty therapist and esthetics and body-wrap instructor in West Palm Beach, Florida, points out that education in other countries is similar to multiple licensing here, but is taught in one comprehensive course, Beauty Therapy. (The student does not have the option of choosing one specialty only.) Fuller attended Verona Therapy and Beauty Academy in Queensland, Australia, a school accredited by Comite International D'Esthetique et de Cosmetologie (CIDESCO). She graduated as a beauty therapist with skills in skin care, nail care, massage therapy, and body therapy. "The courses are much longer than the ones in the (United) States," she says. "They create a very well-rounded therapist who can perform all treatments a client may want. The clients don't have to jump from room to room, or treatment table to treatment table; they can just stay relaxed with one therapist who can truly meet all of their concerns and needs."

When Fuller worked at The Dome Retreat in Brisbane, Australia, she could spend a half day or more with the same client. "I would start with a body wrap and then assist the client to the hydrotherapy tub or Vichy Shower," she says. "Then I might perform a massage, facial, and manicure on her. I never felt rushed, had plenty of time to listen to her requests, and was able to recommend additional services, programs, and products."

To become a beauty therapist in the United States would mean taking separate massage therapy, skin care, and nail courses. Is it worth it to you? Many think the potential efficiency and monetary value are worthwhile. As a fully trained specialty professional, a beauty therapist can add value to her skills and enhance her income dramatically. By adding treatment capabilities, she expands her career possibilities.

"As a trained beauty therapist who has been cross-trained, I can tell you it really does benefit the therapist, the spa he or she works in, and the client," Fuller says.

Imagine how relaxing it is for the client to stay in one place and receive services from fewer professionals. SD

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