

## The retail view

UK-based Sheridan & Co retail consultancy managing director Michael Sheridan on:



### How beauty retailing will evolve

The economy is pushing brands to think about how they do things. We're seeing a real energy with new brands, as opposed to the big players that have been promotionally driven and blasted their way through in the past few years by offering more for less. Retailers are forcing brands to create something different and exciting—last year we were asked to build more counters than usual. Personality and creating identities will become more important. The internet and retail will eventually fuse. In clothing, for example, this could mean that the shopper does everything online and just goes to the store to try on the garment and the purchase is sent to her home.

### What needs improvement

A lot of companies outside beauty have been forced to make the customer's visit as good as possible. The recession has been tough for restaurants or take-out food stores, but they've managed by doing more with customers. For example, having the manager interact with customers in the queue, either by asking if they want to try something or if they have questions. Retail needs good on-site leadership. Many stores have great teams, but it's hard to be in the store all day, so they need to be driven with enthusiasm and to be motivated. A lot can also be done with personalization. In beauty, personalization is too much of a process—you buy a product, you give your details, you are on a mailing list, then you get an email suggesting a product—it's all too long. Apple does this right: they mix a music selection tailored for you while you are there. It is a great added service and they are thinking about your needs before you do.

### Who's doing great retail

Apple, as I mentioned. But good retailers are those that have staff who have the same experience as the customer—for example in a mountain bike store you would have staff who do mountain biking and know about what you need and can give good advice. Selling from experience is every effective.

## Wellness focus

### Spa consultants



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Has spa consulting become a free-for-all? The number of self-professed, and not necessarily experienced spa consultants has mushroomed along with growth in the spa industry. "Consultants have gotten owners to spend millions of dollars on spas that will never make money. This trend will hurt the industry for many years to come," bemoans one spa manager. Consultants with solid industry experience are facing an increasingly crowded marketplace, but the recession may weed out less experienced players—many consultancies have had to shut down while increasingly business-minded spa operators are more demanding.

Another challenge is the fact that consultants may have experience in the hospitality sector, but not specifically in spas, which Thermarium Spa Financial Consulting coo Roger Allen sees as an obstacle to financial growth. "We'll start to see a change once we have more spa-savvy consultants within the hotel consulting market. The first people to go in and do a feasibility study are hotel consultants—there is no clarity on the spa as an individual performing division," he explains.

A more regulated sector may come from the consultants themselves. The US-based Institute of Management Consultants inaugurated its Spa Chapter in February, with a code of standards and ethics for members. This move is in reaction to project delays, major cost overruns and operational mishaps due to "inexperienced advisors," notes founding chapter president Deborah Evans. Such initiatives will help structure the consultants' offer, and give charter members more weight. However, the industry should be mindful; if professional accreditations flood the market, it would do more to confuse than to reassure spa operators.