

Holiday Retail Success

by Cherie Sohlen-Moe



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You have a relationship with your clients, and retailing is simply another avenue of supporting your clients in their wellness. Launching a retail component of a massage practice requires understanding some elements of consumer purchasing behavior.

You have time before the winter holidays arrive to begin selling massage and spa products that will augment your sessions and build client loyalty, as well as increase your income.

Ramping up

Many commercial merchandisers start their holiday-buying marketing campaigns in September—then there's the major push with Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday, Kwanzaa and Christmas. Consumers are barraged by these holidays' advertisements, decorations and festivities. As a small-business owner, you can ride the coattails of these promotions to generate additional sales for your practice or expand your product lines.

While some people are savvy shoppers and purchase gifts throughout the year, the majority wait to buy their gifts until the holiday season is in full swing. Whether your clients buy early or shop late, by offering a range of affordable items they can't get elsewhere, you will provide healthy home-care options while making more money for your practice.

Great diversification

Product sales, or retail, in general, is a great diversification method, and profiting from it can defray overhead expenses. It's hazardous—physically, emotionally and financially—to rely on your hands-on work as the sole source of your livelihood, particularly if your work requires intensity, as massage therapy does.

Retail adds value to your sessions, extends the session benefits to home and increases your bottom line. Retail is a natural extension of the standard of care and healing already associated with massage therapy. You have a relationship with your clients, and retailing is simply another avenue of supporting your clients in their wellness.

Many people are over-worked and time management is a problem for them—particularly during the holidays. If you can save them the time of having to stop to buy a product, you've simplified their lives—and that's priceless.

You save clients time when they don't have to make a special trip to buy an item, spend hours researching online, or wait days or weeks for it to be delivered. Most clients would rather purchase products directly from you, their trusted practitioner, than from an impersonal company. Plus, some are willing to pay a slight premium for the convenience.

As a massage therapist, you have access to many professional-quality products that aren't usually available to the general public. For example, there are wonderful topical treatments and self-care tools that your average clients can't find at their local health emporiums or online. Many of these products aren't even directly available to retail consumers; they must be purchased by practitioners and then sold to clients.

The holiday edge

The holiday season can be stressful, and choosing holiday gifts can be mind-boggling—unless you provide retail

options for your clients that make it easy for them to give to friends and family.

Offer gift options in several price ranges: \$10-\$20; \$25-\$50; \$55-\$100; and \$100-plus. Your retail display should offer ready-to-give products that are visually appealing. You can bundle packages with items you might not normally sell during the rest of the year, such as small boxes of local organic chocolates, CDs with instrumental holiday music, mugs, holiday spice blend teas, and hot cocoa mix.

You can effectively generate new clients with these retail packages by including a business card and an invitation for an open house or a complimentary mini-massage to generate interest from potential clientele.

Whenever you sell retail gift packages, include an option to add a gift certificate for a massage or other services you offer at your office. On the flip side, whenever you sell gift certificates, include a product, such as a product sample; a small bottle of something, such as an essential oil, you typically sell in larger containers; custom-blended scented



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oil, lotion or sports cream; a holiday item such as a plant or a candle; or a health-related item such as a stress ball, self-massage tool, book, pocket chart that shows reflexology points, or an eye pillow.

By doing this, you provide a means of instant gratification—the recipient can use the product immediately—plus you plant the seed that people can buy wellness products from you.

Holiday treatments

Holiday retailing need not be limited to gift items clients buy. Keep your practice at the top of your clients' holiday self-care routine by offering unique services and product combinations that meet their holiday needs.

Are clients crunched for time? If so, offer an express service that helps them unwind quickly and get back to their busy schedule; and include a product they can take with them, like a relaxing essential oil or a soothing CD.

Do clients need an escape? Put together a getaway package that incorporates several services, such as stone massage, reflexology and scalp massage, along with spa products the client can use at home. You can keep it simple



Visit massagemag.com/retailwebinar for Cherie Sohnen-Moe's webinar, "Retail Mastery for the Holidays and Throughout the Year," Oct. 18 at 4:00 p.m. EST.

by offering holiday-themed treatments with the scents of the season, like cinnamon or cranberry—and sell items with those fragrances, too.

Product types

There are so many products you can sell. In addition to health care products designed to assist in the relief of pain and promote well-being, it's fine to sell ancillary items that are fun or make unique gifts. It's also appropriate to sell products that help clients feel pampered—and we can all use that from time to time.

I've interviewed many people on the types of products they sell and what seems to work best. The most successful items are those that help clients with their pain issues, home self-care products, and gift items:

Air purifying sprays	Essential oils	Locally produced tinctures
Bath salts	Eye pillows	Relaxation tools
Body butters	Foot balms	Scrubs
Books	Charts	Self-care items
Candles	Hot and cold packs	Self-massage tools
CDs	Lip balms	Slippers
DVDs	Oils, lotions, creams, gels	Stretching bands
Ergonomic devices	Pain erasure balls	Support pillows
		Topical analgesics

Holiday merchandising

Set a festive tone by decorating your office. Include a variety of holiday motifs, such as Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Joyous Kwanzaa, and the broad category of Seasons Greetings. Here are some fun ideas for creating an inviting holiday ambience: Hang posters and signs; apply rub-on window decorations; string colorful lights; arrange holiday plants, such as holly, poinsettias, a miniature pine tree or Christmas cactus; use sheets that have holiday prints or colors; serve hot cider and healthy treats; gently diffuse seasonal scents such as pine, frankincense and vanilla; and play a variety of holiday music.

Attractively present your holiday gift packages. A simple gift box, organza bag, or even a ribbon can easily do the trick. A fun Hanukkah idea is to dress up the packages with a mesh bag tied with a light blue ribbon that contains a miniature dreidel and chocolate gelt. You

can attach a candy cane or even mistletoe to packages for a Christmas theme.

Kwanzaa candle colors are green, red and black. Get one of each, tie them with a colorful piece of material, and attach it to one of your product displays. When you have product bundles that are already pre-wrapped, you save your clients even more time—and that alone can increase your holiday sales. You can also stock wrapping supplies and offer to supply them for clients who purchase other items for gifts.

Spotlight products

Put your holiday items in a focus area in your waiting room or on a tray in your office. One of my clients put up a Christmas tree and placed several presents (of differing prices) under the tree that her clients could see. She had additional stock behind the counter ready for purchase. You could even attach a gift certificate to a holiday plant or decoration.

Make a sign about the special product(s), and mention these products in your promotional materials. Use products throughout your office building. For example, if you sell holiday-scented items such as soaps, lotions or air sprays, place them in the bathroom for your clients to experience. Post a sign describing your holiday gift items next to the toilet and to the side of the sink.

Merchandising tips

For those of you who do mostly on-site work, you can still create a holiday environment. Assemble a kit of items in a small box. The box becomes the stand. Drape a piece of colorful material over the box and display your items, such as candles and a small silk plant.

An effective visual way to inform your on-site clients about your holiday specials is to take pictures of your holiday packages and make a small poster with a heading such as "Healthy Holiday Gift Ideas," attach the print to a cardboard picture frame, and unobtrusively place the frame on your display box.

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Read "Effective Holiday Marketing for Massage Therapists," by Cherie Sohnen-Moe, at massagemag.com/holidaymassage.