

# The Machine Age

Human hands contain magic that cannot be replicated by machines.

Although few can imagine a way of life before the invention of lasers, microchips, electricity and the internal combustion engine, most people always come back to a fundamental reality that human hands contain magic that cannot

be replicated by machines. They possess the unique ability to create, communicate and heal.

With this in mind, examine with caution the current onslaught of gadgets and gizmos that is flooding the skin care industry. It is a sad fact that the profession is being crowded with high-tech hardware that barely has been tested for safety, much less efficacy.

## Choosing wisely

As you contemplate making a major equipment purchase, ask yourself: "Do I need it?" And, more importantly: "Does it work?" Many therapists purchase expensive equipment for the wrong reasons.

Often, inexperienced or simply insecure skin care professionals will, in essence, hide behind their arsenal of devices. Sometimes they even point to the cost of these machines as a justification for their treatment rates—as if their own time, expertise and exquisitely sensitive human hands were of no value in the transaction.

Purchasing equipment will not make you more confident or more secure. The equivalent would be buying a bigger, more impressive car when you are not a skilled driver. If you don't know your destination, the hardware alone will not help you find it.

Another common reason for making such a purchase is the belief that you need to be more competitive. A spa owner you know has purchased the machine in question, and the buzz around town is that clients are clawing at the windows like wild beasts to make appointments. Take a deep breath and step back—these kinds of rumors are no reason to buy anything. It is possible that, at first, a new piece of equipment will generate an increase in bookings, especially if it is well promoted. But what about six months later? Most likely, you'll be making payments



## GOOD HANDS

for the machine a lot longer than that. In the long run, can you really justify the purchase?

### It's all about results

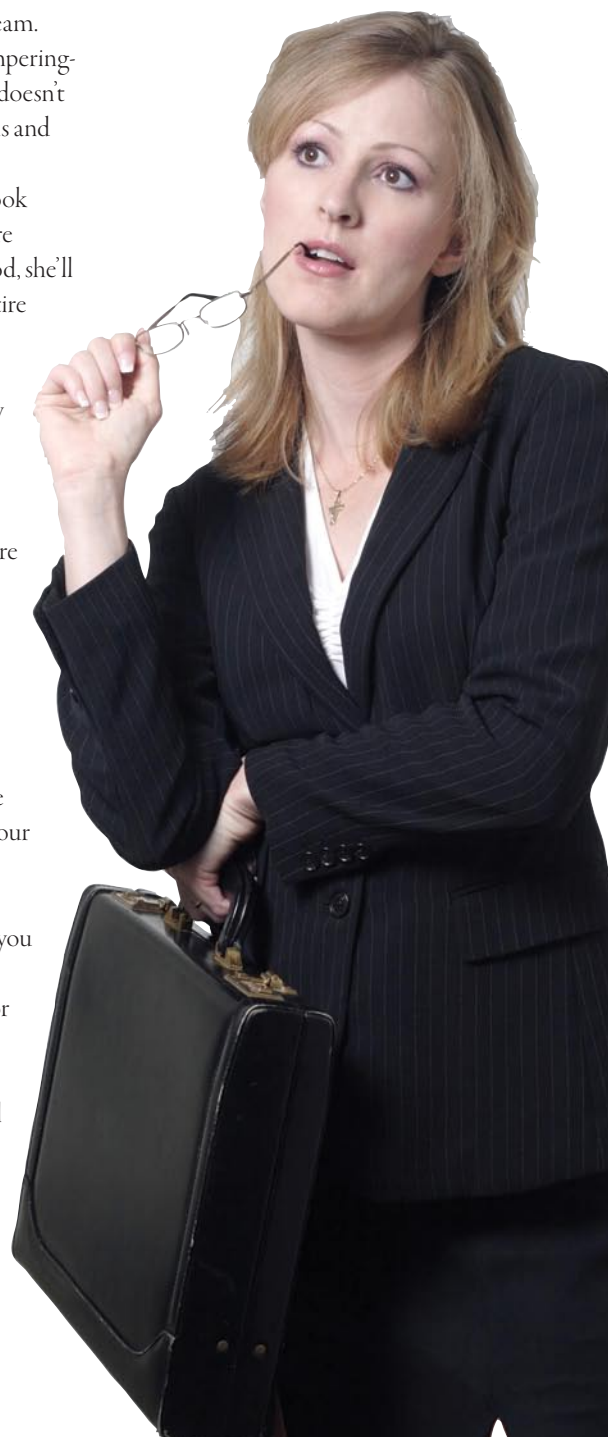
At the end of the day, the only reason to buy anything for your business is that it will produce a proven, positive impact and deliver results. Today's client will not be content with a rub, a scrub and a tub, or a simple steam-and-cream. And she does not buy into the luxury-pampering-indulgence concept of 50 years ago—she doesn't have the time to be strewn with rose petals and play Cleopatra.

Today's client demands that her skin look better as the result of professional skin care treatments. If she simply wants to feel good, she'll book an aromatherapy massage or just retire to her bed with a good book and a pot of jasmine tea. She requires results—not necessarily after a single visit, but certainly after a few. If your treatments are not delivering these visible, tangible effects, you most likely will lose her to the nearest medical spa or dermatologist's office, where her hyperpigmentation and fine lines will be dealt with efficiently, albeit without a healing touch.

### What you really need

To successfully integrate technology into your spa, you need reliable workhorse equipment that delivers results and that your team is comfortable using. It's easy to get seduced by a new touch-screen feature or some other gleaming innovation, but are you absolutely certain that it's right for you?

For instance, a solid galvanic system for desincrustation and product penetration, and electric brushes and vacuum suction for deep cleaning are tools that are crucial to completing a great professional skin care service. When combined with the proper products, the results can be significant, although the equipment is noninvasive. Direct high frequency as a germicidal application after a treatment



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is a simple, but powerful and useful, nonmanual element of ultimate skin care. The peltier—with one side deliciously warm and one side refreshingly cool—is another example of a simple, versatile tool that is highly effective. For instance, a peltier placed on the cool setting is fantastic for calming rosacea or resurfaced, irritated skin, especially when used in combination with anti-inflammatory products.

These devices have been on the market for a while. They are not flashy. Although they don't promise the moon, they perform consistently and never get you into trouble. All of these assets make these machines sound like model employees!

Microdermabrasion is among the most popular and lucrative procedures in the industry today. There is a wide array of equipment offered for this service. Microdermabrasion is a prime example of a relatively new procedure that has spawned many varieties of devices. To select the best equipment for your needs, you must educate yourself and proceed with caution.

### **Buyer beware**

Before you invest in anything more complicated than a cotton swab, make sure that the state in which you practice permits the professional use of the device you are interested in purchasing by personnel who have the credentials that you possess. Certain pieces of equipment may be operated legally in some states only by physicians. Others simply are not permitted for use in your state by anyone. To put it succinctly, do your homework. The manufacturer may or may not care about whether or not you can safely or legally operate the equipment after your check has cleared.

Once you've made the leap of faith and decide to buy, it's time to assert yourself. You must be given an owner's manual, and there should be

regular updates and upgrades to the equipment. Your team has to be trained immediately by a company representative who has received extensive education by the manufacturer.

Most importantly, the maker and trainer must be responsive and answer every question, address every concern and deliver the real facts about how any machine actually works. You must feel highly knowledgeable about how the technology impacts the skin. You have every right to ask for independent studies and clinical data if the manufacturer makes certain claims that appear to be too good to be true.

Read the fine print. If decoding warranties isn't your strong point, show it to someone who comprehends legalese. Make sure that you understand the terms, and establish that the manufacturer is prepared to cover repairs in a responsive, responsible manner. What will the company do if your machine breaks down and you have eight appointments booked for the next day? If no one from the maker's sales office can explain and verify the warranty, and cannot or will not answer your questions, move on. You do not need that piece of equipment, no matter how exciting it may appear at the tradeshow.

**EXAMINE** with caution the current onslaught of gadgets and gizmos that is flooding the skin care industry.

WHEN DECIDING how to  
augment your treatments with technology,  
don't be intimidated by geekster jargon.

Before you purchase any type of equipment, confirm that the manufacturer meets the following criteria.

- It is registered with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If a company states that because they do not make medical claims, they are exempt from FDA regulations, they are mistaken. Beware, and don't deal with it.
- It carries product liability insurance. This coverage protects you in the event of a product or device failure or malfunction that may cause damage or harm.
- It is ISO 13485:1996 certified, meaning certified by the International Organization for Standardization. This is an official recognition that further safeguards you. Most manufacturers of Class 1 devices are not inspected consistently by the FDA; however, ISO inspects twice a year.
- It provides training, including ongoing technical support.

And, likewise, make sure that the device itself meets the following criteria.

- It carries the correct specifications. The specifics sheet for the device must declare its product code and class, as well as identify its commercial name. Most skin care devices fall into the Class 1 category, which means that they may be used by a skin therapist without a physician's supervision. Some Class 2 devices also may be in this category, but check your state board's code of regulations carefully.
- It is Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) safety certified. The organization is a trusted worldwide source for product compliance.

- Specific FDA submissions or registrations may be required, depending on the class and the specifics of the device. Be prepared to research thoroughly in order to comply fully.

## Protect yourself

We live in litigious times and, no matter how remote the threat of a lawsuit may seem, it can and does happen to skin care professionals with alarming frequency. Protect yourself and your business by examining the following insurance options.

***General liability insurance.*** This covers damage to property and injury to people.

***Business income loss insurance.*** This covers expenses if your business is unable to operate for a period of time.

***Professional liability insurance.*** This covers injury from services rendered.

***Workers' compensation.*** This covers employees who are injured while working.

## Enhance your power

There is no turning back from the fast forward of high-tech skin care equipment. And although human hands remain the most essential element of truly great skin care treatments, their power may be enhanced significantly by the equipment revolution. When deciding how to augment your treatments with technology, don't be intimidated by geekster jargon. Your clients demand results of you, so you must expect the same from equipment manufacturers and distributors in order to preserve and nurture the integrity and client trust around which you have built your skin care practice. ✂