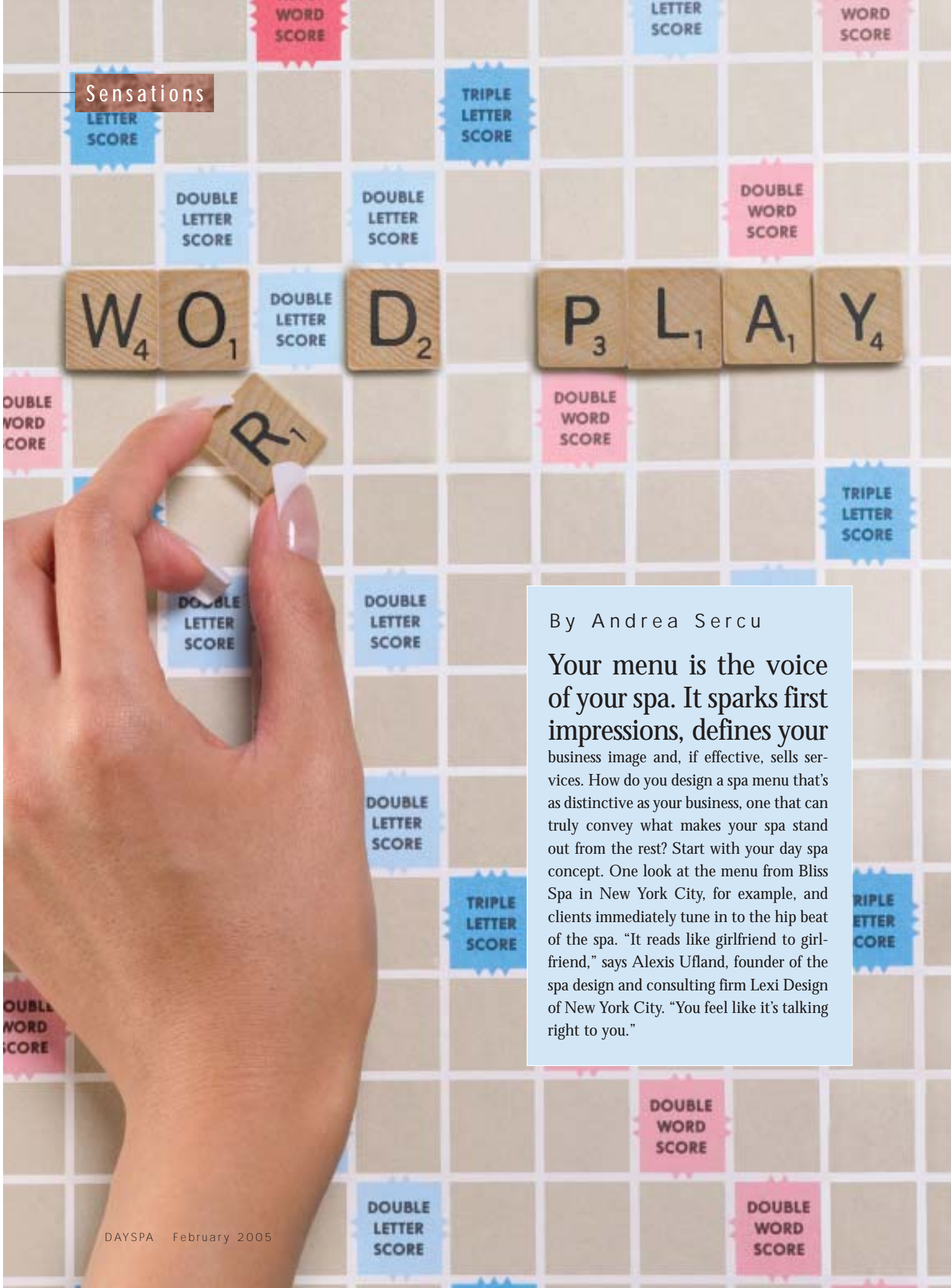


Sensations



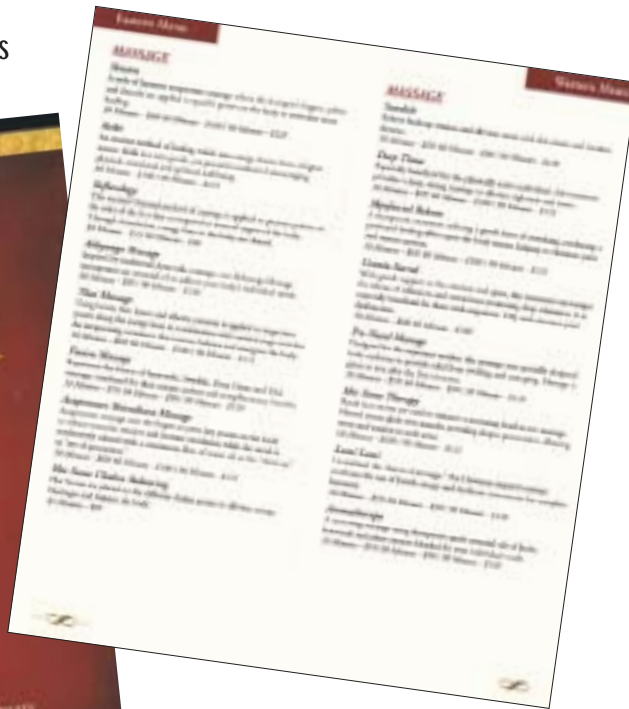
By Andrea Sercu

Your menu is the voice of your spa. It sparks first impressions, defines your business image and, if effective, sells services. How do you design a spa menu that's as distinctive as your business, one that can truly convey what makes your spa stand out from the rest? Start with your day spa concept. One look at the menu from Bliss Spa in New York City, for example, and clients immediately tune in to the hip beat of the spa. "It reads like girlfriend to girlfriend," says Alexis Ufland, founder of the spa design and consulting firm Lexi Design of New York City. "You feel like it's talking right to you."



Courtesy Avia Spa

Avia Spa puts forth its philosophy of East meets West with a menu that presents treatment options from both sides of the globe.



In this case, “she” is Marcia Kilgore, the founder of Bliss and the voice behind this star urban spa’s in-house and online menus. Adopting a cosmopolitan, almost tongue-in-cheek approach to grooming, Bliss’ treatment descriptions—from the Homme Improvement blackout-eliminating facial for men to the trademarked Lowfat Facial—demonstrate a savvy understanding of its sophisticated audience.

Simply Spa, also in New York City, took a much different approach,

deciding to appeal to its clientele’s no-nonsense need for speed and efficiency, while allowing for a bit of creative flair. Clients receive a “sushi card” and check off their

service choices in 60- or 90-minute blocks, all priced at a set rate. The service choices include a variety of massages, facials, pedicures, manicures and add-ons—all familiar core treatments. Conspicuously absent are exotic body treatments and unusual signature services. The minimalist style doesn’t even allow for treatment descriptions.

Across the country in California, a desire to fuse the Zen influence of the Eastern world with the advanced technology of the West is evident on the menu at Avia Spa in Santa Barbara, 100 miles north of Los Angeles. Each service category listed offers Eastern selections on one side of the menu and its Western counterparts on the other. While one client suffering from backaches might select the Hot Stone Chakra Balancing Massage from the East, another may opt for the Western-style Deep Tissue Massage.

Find Your Focus

“A menu needs to go beyond the ‘grocery list’ approach,” says Carol Phillips, creative director and founder of Encompass One Marketing Group in Manassas, Virginia. “It needs to answer the question, ‘Why should I pick this service?’” To provide that answer, spa owners must know their clientele. “Take a hard look at the services being requested,” suggests J. Elaine Spear, a former full-service salon owner, editor at large for *DAYSPA* and head writer for Santa Fe, New Mexico-based Writers On the Edge, a writing agency specializing in spa materials. “Surveying your people regarding what they would like to see on your menu is critical to growing your company. You wouldn’t want to load your menu with exotic offerings such as Thai massage and yogurt and goat milk body treatments if your clientele is more interested in European facials and Swedish massage.



Courtesy Salon Nordine & Day Spa

A separate price list enables owners to update price info without having to reprint the entire menu.



"The right picture gives customers a certain measure of comfort."

Concentrate, instead, on making those basic services more memorable."

The age range of your clientele can help you further target services. If you attract a large number of baby boomers, you'll need plenty of antiaging treatments. If your clients tend to be younger, your services need to cater to that age group, perhaps by emphasizing waxing services.

Even after you've established the appropriate content, your menu must continually reflect your clients' changing needs and desires. Here's where add-ons and updates can help. Take inventory of your most popular and requested services on a regular basis (at least annually) and adjust your menu accord-

ingly. "Don't just keep adding to your menu without also flushing out what's not selling," warns Ufland. "Use the menu as a guide that's always evolving."

To find that "inner spa voice" for your menu, you must first identify what is unique about your spa. Then you can package it using four basic elements:

Images. Clients who've never been to your spa will question whether it's a place they'd like to visit, and images can help provide the answer. Some of these people may never have visited any day spa before and may need reassurance in the form of a professionally shot photograph showing a safe, welcoming and beautiful place. "The right picture gives customers a certain measure of comfort,"

says Larry Oskin, president of Fairfax, Virginia-based Marketing Solutions, a full-service marketing agency specializing in salons and spas.

If you can't afford to have a photographer shoot your spa, a second choice would be to include professional photos of spa services from a stock agency. "Many of these can be found on the Internet," suggests Kay Moroz, founder of Spa Advisors, Inc., a Phoenix-based consulting agency with a client list that includes Canyon Ranch SpaClub at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas, and Miraval Resort in Tucson, Arizona.

Descriptions. Focusing on benefits will help your treatment descriptions sell services. For instance, the menu at Salon Nordine & Day Spa, with three locations in Virginia, clearly notes that the spa's Algomask facial helps reduce redness, while the Gentleman's Executive Facial "helps alleviate ingrown hairs and razor burn."

Another nice touch is the inclusion of helpful educational information and stand-alone "tips" designed to help clients get more out of a service. The menu from Canyon Ranch at the

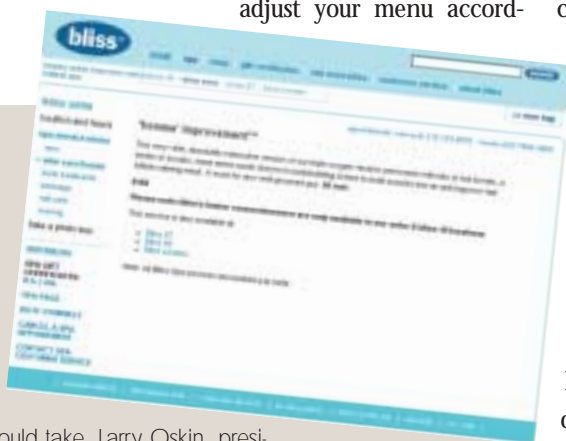
Online Menus

In an age when the Internet often serves as the Yellow Pages, every spa needs to have an online menu that gives clients all of the information they seek.

Consultants have varying opinions on the exact form the online version of your spa menu should take. Larry Oskin, president of Marketing Solutions, Fairfax, Virginia, believes the online menu should mirror the printed version in appearance, sporting the same look and presentation, but need not be identical in content. "You might have multiple pages for massages in a printed menu but have all of the same services on the same page online," says Oskin.

Alexis Ufland, spa consultant and founder of Lexi Design of New York City,

believes it's a good idea to go into detail in online menus. J. Elaine Spear, head writer for Writers On the Edge, a writing agency specializing in spa materials based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, agrees. "Unless the printed menu is entirely too wordy, it can be reproduced verbatim," Spear says. "In fact, having a menu that reads well on the Internet is a good acid test for your print menu."





Courtesy Canyon Ranch

Beautiful photographs speak volumes about your spa.

Venetian in Las Vegas, for instance, features informative sidebars on such topics as how to receive a massage and the principles of ayurveda.

As you take pains to craft your descriptions, don't neglect basics such as the prices and lengths of your services. Clients should never have any lingering questions after viewing your menu. Also be as upfront as possible; Moroz notes that many spa menus indicate that a service takes one hour, when in fact it lasts 50 minutes.

Lastly, keep your retail products a central focus of the menu. "Everything on menus that I develop leads to a retail sale when the service is completed," says Moroz, who consulted with Essentiels Spa in Boulder, Colorado, when that successful spa first opened. One of the first day spas to have a Vichy shower and hydrotherapy tub, Essentiels continues to integrate its skincare company's marine-based products in its menu.

Format. While the content of your menu can be as individual as your spa and your clientele, the sequence of certain elements is universal. Placing gift certificate and spa package information up front where it will catch new clients' attention makes sense. Your core services, such as massages and facials, will do just as well in the back.

The length of your menu will be influenced by your clientele. If you list 35 facials, and the majority of your clients still select the basic varieties, you would be well advised to list five or six facials at the most, with each one serving the needs of a different demographic: an acne facial for teens, an antioxidant facial for women in their 30s and an anti-aging facial for the over-40 set.

If your menu runs more than 10 pages, consider a one-page table of contents. This single page can help sell services. DePasquale the Spa in Morris Plains, New Jersey, turned its table of contents into a clever "wellness index" in which clients can find the best services for their needs at a glance. Remedies for acne, scarring, aging, dry skin and sinus conditions are all listed up front in this index.

Front and back covers. The cover of your menu makes that critical first impression and should never be treated as an afterthought.

"Wording is second to photos, but the third most important element on the spa menu is the cover," says Oskin. "The cover sells the piece. Its impact has to be strong."

Include your logo and beautiful photography on the front, and telephone, fax, e-mail and website information on the back. Make sure that area codes are included for the sake of out-of-town clients.

In addition to contact information, the back cover of the menu might also include hours and important spa policies on cancellations, whether children are welcome, credit card acceptance, and tipping procedures.

Get It in Print

A spa menu can be beautifully conceived and written, and still fail if it's poorly executed. First, make sure you consult



Courtesy DePasquale the Spa

The Wellness Index at the front of DePasquale the Spa's menu helps guests pinpoint the services they need.



with your staff and proofread every word on your menu carefully before printing it. Then, focus on concerns such as paper and design. The presentation of your menu is critical and, fortunately, high quality doesn't have to cost a fortune.

Compare the new 12-page, full-color, photo-laminated menu at Salon Nordine & Day Spa, which cost \$1 each to print, to the old menu, a folded, two-color single page printed on thick stock with a gold hot stamp on the cover at \$1.60 apiece. Why the savings? For the new menu, marketer Oskin

bumped up the print run, providing enough menus to last a year instead of the four- to six-month supply originally purchased. "It doesn't pay to print a smaller quantity," he says.

What happens when you raise your prices? A good way to avoid outgrowing your menu is to create a separate price sheet. "You have to print your menu in large quantities, but by using a separate price sheet, you can modify prices and run promotions," says Moroz. "A separate price list lets you make price changes without having to reprint the entire menu." Canyon Ranch tucks a price list in a front pocket of its vertical menus, while Salon Nordine's menu includes a stand-alone square price sheet.

If you're planning on adding a service that requires a significant equipment addition, such as a laser or sunless tanning unit, try to synchronize the reprinting of your menu with this investment.

Remember that multicolor logo designs can add costs when it comes to marketing materials like business cards, letterhead, towels and robes. "If you

want to cut costs," says Ufland, "minimize colors." For more savings, dispense with the onionskin paper and the fancy embossing. Instead, opt for a simple, elegant feature, such as a unique fold, die-cut or shape that enhances the piece without pushing up costs.

Another way to cut paper costs is to explore "gang runs," in which you partner with another printer client using the same paper stock. You might have to wait a few weeks to coordinate print runs, but you could save 20% or more, says Oskin.

Regardless of the shape, size or grade of paper, make sure the finished menu will fit inside a standard-size envelope. "You may even want the menu to be small enough to fit into a wallet or purse," Oskin notes.

Once you're ready to print, figure out how many individual clients (not counting repeats) come into your spa per week or month, then multiply by 52 or 12, respectively. Then, add 10% to 20% for extras, promotions and sendouts with gift certificates. If you want to expand the mailing, figure more. Also, consider the cost-efficiency of a larger print run. You might spend \$2,000 to print 5,000 copies, but to print 10,000 pieces, it might cost you only \$200 more. "The incremental cost to jump up to that next level, once the menu is on press, might make it worthwhile," notes Oskin.

Once you've settled the matter of supply, demand and cost, resist the temptation to photocopy your menu once the quantity starts to dwindle. "The menu represents you," reminds Ufland. "Don't skimp on it."

"A beautiful spa menu is truly worth the extra investment," says Oskin. "Dress it in a wrapping that represents you well." ♦

Andrea Sercu is a contributing editor for *DAYS SPA* magazine.



Courtesy Lush Beauty & Wellness

A simple yet attractive cover on a menu sends a message of taste and elegance, and invites spa visitors to check out its contents.

Opt for a simple, elegant feature, such as a unique fold, die-cut or shape.