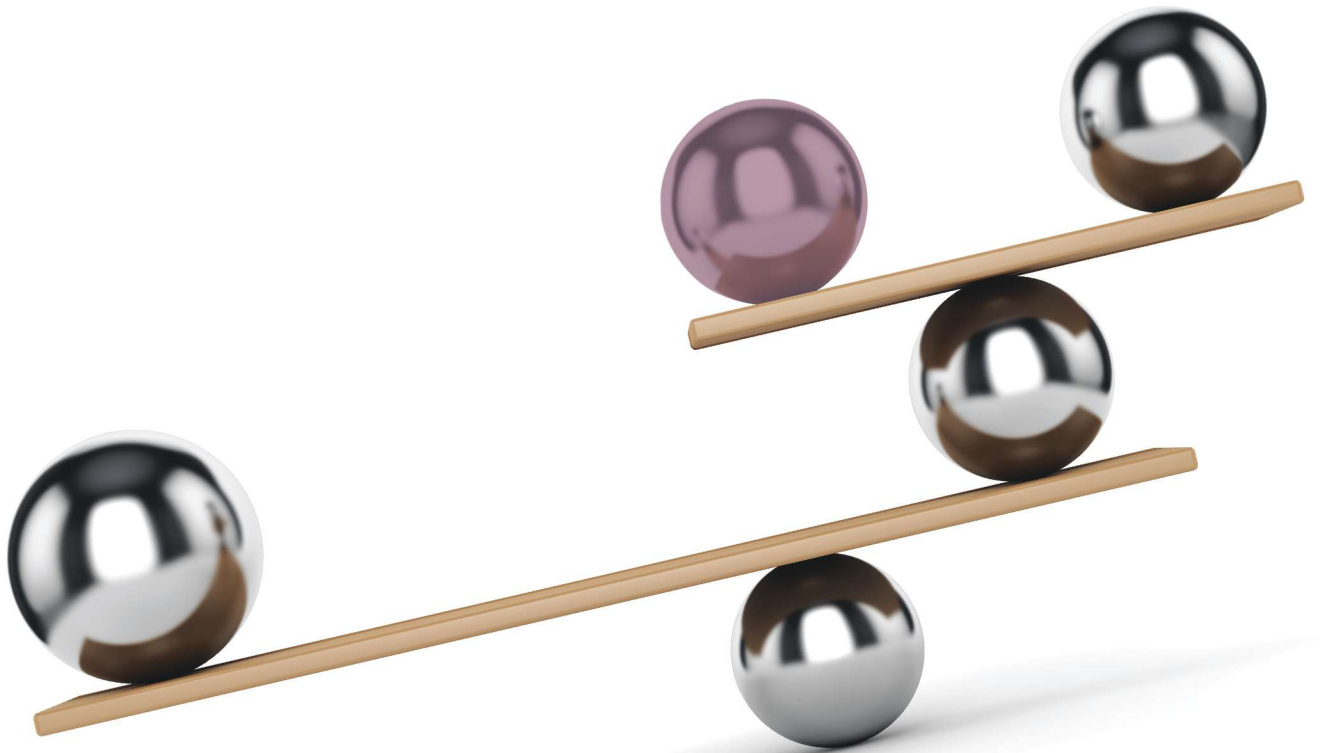


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Balancing Act

Increase job satisfaction—and staff retention—by prioritizing your employees' emotional health. **by Tracy Morin**

FINDING, TRAINING AND RETAINING quality employees can be a challenge for any business owner—especially those in the spa industry. Amid booming demand for beauty and wellness pros, a recent survey by the International SPA Association (ISPA) found that more than 30,000 positions remain unfilled nationwide. Meanwhile, the Global Wellness Institute reported last year that polling firm Gallup estimates “employee disengagement” to plague a shocking 85 percent of the world’s workforce.

With such glum numbers—not to mention the often demanding nature of the wellness business itself—it’s no surprise that more spa owners are striving to take better care of their staff. “Retaining qualified and loyal employees in a competitive job market is becoming more important than ever,” notes

Shane Evans, cofounder and president of Massage Heights, headquartered in San Antonio. “What attracts them to an organization is company culture, and self-care is not only vital but improves the quality of their work.” Here, experts share simple solutions for boosting your workers’ wellness.

TAKE AN INTEREST

Sure, money talks, but it’s just as important for employees to feel heard. Felicia Brown, LMT, spa and wellness business consultant and owner of A to Zen Massage in Greensboro, North Carolina, ensures her staff members feel respected, cared for and appreciated with small steps: greeting by name; asking questions about them, their family or their day; remembering small details about their

lives; expressing concern for how they're feeling; and thanking them for being part of the team. "Let them know when you receive a compliment about them or when you see them doing something well," adds Brown, who also makes a point of acknowledging special occasions. "Celebrate birthdays with a cupcake and a card, or give them a complimentary service—something to make them feel special."

EMPHASIZE SELF-CARE

To prevent burnout, Evans tells employees to take time for mental breaks, as well as to exercise or meditate daily. "Offer reimbursements for gym memberships or meditation materials, or cover alternative healthcare benefits—chiropractors, physical therapy, mental health," she advises. Flexibility is key: Reimbursements for various wellness activities allow employees to choose what suits them best, notes Evans. She points out that encouraging staff to brainstorm workplace improvements, offering flexible hours, providing family leave for new parents (regardless of gender) and offering healthy meals at work can all boost motivation in addition to staff wellness.

Tracy L. Whynot, LAc, owner of Place360 Health+ Spa in Del Mar, California, helps employees practice self-care by giving them 50 percent off in-house spa services. She also

recommends an incentive program, such as gifting staff a free product after they receive four health-boosting services, or some sort of bonus for taking continuing education classes aimed at improving personal health, from body mechanics and healthy eating to stress relief.

"Self-care is not only vital but improves the quality of employees' work."

Brown suggests bringing in an instructor for weekly or monthly classes on stretching, meditation, time management or other health-oriented topics. To find the right mix, she recommends polling your team on most-desired benefits, such as wellness leave, lunch-and-learns, health assessments from neighboring professionals, or free or discounted spa services. At A to Zen, Brown allows her staff to recharge with the spa's infrared saunas and ion cleanse foot baths for free, when available. "We ask them to tell us when they need breaks or if they need to adjust their current services or schedules due to fatigue or pain," she adds. "We also provide 30 minutes between appointments to allow therapists to rest, eat or stretch."

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“Place personalities in specific roles that optimize their strengths.”

BUILD TEAM SPIRIT

Brown hosts a Facebook group for employees to easily keep in touch, but she points out that in-person activities are the cornerstone of staying connected. During the holiday season, the spa held a Thanksgiving potluck, followed by a group outing to paint pottery. “Do whatever you can to build community, collaboration and communication,” says Brown. “As a team, we took on three charities to contribute to for the month of December, one of which will be a year-round project.” To encourage coworker kudos, Brown shares clients’ positive reviews with all team members and has a brag board where they can post compliments about each other.

PLAY TO STAFF SKILLS

If you’re more focused on job titles than individuals, your employees’ potential may flag. Of course, it’s important to hire smart by clearly conveying your company goals, mission and culture. But you should also consider tailoring a position to the person, not the other way around. “When creating a dynamic team that leads to employee fulfillment and happiness, place personalities in specific roles that optimize their strengths,” suggests Whynot. “Our mother hen-type employee is in a supportive role so she feels a sense of community, while another who’s skilled at budgets and finances assists with scheduling and hitting team milestones—even though their positions are technically the same.”

Here, it’s crucial to listen: Encourage staff to share their interests or career plans, then see how they can complement your business while helping them reach their goals, says Brown. You might discover new services to add, or tap into training and educational opportunities. “Capitalizing on different strengths encourages growth and allows for mentorship,” agrees Evans. “It starts with helping them get tuned into their goals—asking where they see themselves and what they really love doing.” After all, when employees love what they do, and they do it well, everyone in the workplace wins. 🍷

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