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OCTOBER 2017



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THE NOW
(STUDIO CITY, CA)

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BIZ

advice on building your business

108 HR TIPS
Planning With Purpose

110 SUCCESS STORIES
The Now (multiple locations)



The design of The Now (multiple locations) is inspired by the raw, natural beauty of Mexico.

Natural wood, exposed beams, and succulent plants are design elements of all The Now spas.

instant GRATIFICATION

A design-centric massage studio in Los Angeles continues to grow as it transforms the way people experience massage. **BY HEATHER MIKESSELL**



The interiors for The Now were inspired by nature and the raw, idyllic beauty of Mexico.



STRIKING A CHORD AMONG LOCALS, THENOW, a massage boutique in Los Angeles, recently opened its fourth location in Studio City, CA. The first location debuted in West Hollywood in November 2015. Since then, cofounders Gara Post, a jewelry designer, and Erica Malbon, a digital marketing executive, have been focused on growing the brand and concept. “Our goal is to be accessible to a broader demographic and to be able to offer massage as a wellness service not as a luxury service,” says regional director Leland Raymond. “With that in mind, we seek to keep our prices affordable, which means that the volume of business is key to our success. Fortunately, in our

established locations, we run an 85 percent room utilization on average.” In addition, the boutiques feature a streamlined menu with curated enhancements, such as Aromatherapy, Heat Therapy, and Crystal Healing, that make it easy to customize each massage. “This has resulted in a substantial increase to the bottom line with an average of 40 to 50 percent enhancement-to-service sales,” says Raymond. Design is another way the brand differentiates itself. According to Post, a soothing, yet minimalist, aesthetic was key. Each location features The Moment Room, where therapeutic massages are provided. Also, most of the locations include The Journey Room, where seated massages are performed. It is a more social and open space with four to six stations. The formula seems to be working. “Thanks to our rapid success, we were able to open four locations within a year and six months, with each boutique only taking five months on average before turning a monthly profit,” says Raymond. Here, Post shares more on what makes the concept tick.

[Q+A]

TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THE NOW'S SUCCESS OVER THE YEARS?

We strongly believe in the power of touch, and when we saw a gap in the marketplace for affordable massages in a luxurious environment, it inspired us to open The Now. We are all looking for a place to relax and recharge in today's fast-paced, technology-driven society, so we set out to create this as a haven to escape and unwind—even if you only have 30 minutes.

WHY DO YOU THINK THE BRAND HAS BEEN ABLE TO SUCCEED WHERE OTHERS HAVE FAILED?

The Now receives a lot of attention for its aesthetic, and we get many emails and calls asking about different design elements we feature and incorporate in our boutiques. A great, high-quality massage is essential to the experience, but the soothing white-washed walls; high ceilings with sounds of ocean waves on a loop; and all the elements of nature,

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plants, and crystals that we incorporate definitely enhance the experience and set us apart.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE LOCATIONS?

Our goal has always been to serve all of Los Angeles. West Hollywood was first, and then we opened Santa Monica to serve the Westside. Silverlake was a move east for us, and finally, Studio City for the Valley. No one wants to commute after receiving a relaxing massage. We look for centrally located spaces with the right energy and light.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE DECOR HAVE IN THE MASSAGE BOUTIQUE'S SUCCESS?

Without a doubt, our design plan plays a large role in our success. The interiors for The Now were inspired by nature and the raw, idyllic beauty of Mexico. When people want to relax, they turn to the outdoors, and we are all about creating a soothing environment for relaxation. We wanted to incorporate as much nature indoors as we could and to make each space feel connected but divine in its own way. The themes are the same: sheepskin throws, a carefully placed cactus wall or gallery—these details have become our trademark and are synonymous with our brand.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN EXPANDING AND GROWING THE BUSINESS?

Like all businesses, we experienced growing pains when we went from two boutiques to four. We strive to hire the best massage therapists and front desk attendants and still keep our prices and philosophy where we started, which is not easy. But we continue to find really skilled bodywork practitioners and individuals who are committed to massage as a healing practice. It's the art of touch, not just a rubdown. Anyone who has had a really great massage can attest to that.

HOW DO YOU ATTRACT NEW AND REPEAT CLIENTS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO VISIT?

Most of our business has been word of mouth. We received a lot of great press and have definitely had some notable guests come in. Because we are



located in Los Angeles, it's not uncommon to have a celebrity stop by and post about their visit. We encourage repeat business by working hard to stay consistent, maintaining the boutiques, and periodically upgrading our services and menu.

HOW DO YOU USE DIGITAL MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO BOOST BUSINESS?

Our social media channels are consistent with our philosophy and include inspirational design and destination shots as well as informative and educational clips like our "Now You Know" series, which provides wellness info to our audience. Luckily, our design aesthetic was embraced by locals and globe-trotting influencers alike, and we were noted for being highly Instagrammable. It has all been very organic, which is true to who we are as a brand.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR STAFF MOTIVATED TO SELL?

We don't encourage our staff to sell as much as train and encourage them to have the right energy and tone. We consider how people want to be greeted. What makes someone feel at ease and comfortable? You want to leave feeling rested, like you were on a vacation, even if it is a short one.

WHAT PLANS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE FUTURE?

Of course, we are always considering expansion plans and will be looking to the East Coast and beyond. Right now though, our focus is on the recently opened boutiques in Los Angeles and making sure that we stay on brand and keep everything consistent with the same style and service that has been so successful to date. ●



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: An elegant reception desk, The Moment Room treatment area, and a welcoming exterior entice guests.

