



Entrepreneurial SPIRIT

By Ashley Laabs

Name: Hawaiian Beach Tanning

Locations: Lardner, BC

Owner: John Holmes

Website: www.deltatan.com

Equipment: Mystic, Ergoline, Sonnenbraune, Kwikfit, Sun Capsule

Lotion: Mystic Tan, Australian Gold, Private Label

For almost 40 years, John Holmes has been an avid businessman. Back then, he worked for Shell Oil doing advertising and sales promotion. His career was on the fast track, which meant future transfers to Winnipeg then Toronto. But concern for the effects on his family made him decide to go another way.

"At my age, I decided I didn't want to end up there with my four kids. They are all into hockey and figure skating," says Holmes.

Instead, Holmes bought an automotive service station and started up several convenience stores. Once again, change was on the horizon – and it wasn't working in his favour. The landlord for his auto

shop discussed raising the rent to what Holmes considered an "intolerable level," so he decided to look at other options.

At the time, his oldest son seemed to be doing well with a tanning salon, which inspired his youngest son to enter a partnership for his own salon. Holmes agreed to finance his son's portion of the partnership, but things didn't go exactly as planned. The other partner backed out of the deal after Holmes already verbally negotiated with the salon's current owner. While he was on holiday, his son decided to refocus his efforts in the nightclub business – the deal seemed to go bust. But, like a true entrepreneur, Holmes saw an opportunity to enter the tanning industry himself.

Instead of walking away, he made the bold decision to venture into an industry he did not know for the sake of making good on his word with the owner. "I made a moral commitment to this lady by asking her to give me the first offer for her business. I didn't feel right backing away from it," says Holmes.

Upgrading

In 1998, Holmes took over Hawaiian Beach Tanning and immediately made it his mission to make it a success. Previously, the salon had six or seven rooms, but only three had beds. Holmes was eager to bring more equipment into the salon, which quickly paid off.

"We got so busy that we had to do some remodelling," says Holmes. "We were splitting rooms in half to make room for vertical beds. We loved seeing people so happy."

It got to a point where the salon was experiencing enough traffic that an

expansion was in order. When Holmes got word that the landlord was having problems with the restaurant next door, he jumped on the opportunity to claim the space. Not long after, the location was his. In 2004, the salon doubled in size, creating the potential for new services.

What people want always seems to be on the forefront of Holmes's mind. So, as the salon became bigger, he didn't rely on that alone to make the salon better. Taking note of the small things has helped the salon come a long way.

"We try to upgrade the feeling people have about us," says Holmes. "I thought, 'how can I make it obvious that we care every time they walk in?'"

After dwelling on his personal experiences with little luxuries, Holmes decided that the bathrooms could make a big statement about the salon. His salon attendants make sure to fold the toilet paper into a point and remove splash marks from the mirror throughout the day. Using quality toiletries and diffusing a clean scent have helped make this small space make a big statement.

Doing It First

Much like when Holmes owned his auto service station and convenience stores simultaneously, he felt that it was important to provide a wide range of services and diversify his revenue sources.

Hawaiian Beach Tanning was the first salon in his area to offer a sunless spray booth. In 2001, it became available to his clients, and has remained a successful part of the business since. He was heralded in his community for offering a UV free alternative to tanning.

"I like to be at the sharp end of things rather than a follower," says Holmes.

In 2006, Holmes added another first: an infrared sauna. "I saw a lot of potential when I put in the infrared sauna," says Holmes. "There wasn't anything like it in the area, so I could create a niche for it." Athletes and people going through physical therapy enjoyed the relaxation

and relief they could get from the unit's dry heat. Holmes made sure that the sauna room felt like a little oasis by painting a scene of cactuses and the Grand Canyon. At the end of their session, customers are given a water bottle with the Hawaiian Beach logo and information on it, a tactic that creates the potential for salon exposure as clients take the bottle with them through the day.

But in May 2010, Holmes added body vibration to the growing list of services available - a move that would revolutionize the culture of his salon.

"We put in the body vibration machines to appeal to another section of the population that wasn't necessarily tanning," says Holmes. "I put two in the front sales room so they are visible to everyone. By the time I returned from holiday, my staff told me we needed to buy more."

Holmes had the idea to give clients a free trial on the machine. By placing them in the lobby he was able to use these trials as advertising to passers-by and clients waiting in the lobby. Very quickly, the service took off. After adding two more machines to the sales room, the vibe surrounding the service became very social as women chatted away while they vibrated into a better figure. Best of all, his "jiggle machine" clients were in a prime location to witness the results of his happy tanners.

"A lot of the older people see young people come out of the rooms happy and tan, and they consider starting to tan again," says Holmes.

This tactic also helped create a buzz when Holmes added red light therapy to the menu a few months ago. The social atmosphere in the lobby was a huge advantage as the clients talked about their results. "It's a big ticket item compared to our tanning beds," says Holmes. "It's a time-consuming sell but when our customers are on the vibration machines, they see people come out and have conversations about losing their wrinkles."

Knowledge is Power

But, Holmes knows that nothing sells itself

fast facts

about the salon

Hawaiian Beach Tanning

Locations: 1

Staff Members: 7

UV Units: 10

Top-Selling Lotion:

Private label products

Most-Used Bed:

Sonnenbraune Klassik 732

Per Person Average: \$10.78

Services and Products

UV Tanning

Sunless Spray Booth

Airbrush Tattoos

Red Light Therapy

Vibration Machine

Infrared Sauna

Advertising Methods

Website

Facebook

Newspaper

Online Deal Site

Local Hockey Team

Web Exclusive

Check out www.smarttan.com/hawaiianbeach to discover how Hawaiian Beach Tanning has faced their challenges with creativity and poise.