

Before You Buy: A Strategic Guide to Adding a Skincare Line to Your Practice

By Davina Isaacs, MBA, SHRM-CP

I was recently in a practice doing a consulting visit when I opened a storage closet and found over $14,000 worth of skincare inventory, boxes still sealed, some products past their expiration date, others close to it. The owner had no idea the practice had tied up that much money on retail that wasn't moving. "We sell some," he told me. "Just not enough."

I've seen it more times than I can count. A practice owner attends a conference, gets inspired by a compelling brand rep, places a generous opening order, and three years later half of it is still sitting there, some of it expired, some of it damaged, all of it a drain on cash flow. The intention was right. The strategy wasn't.

Adding a skincare line can be a meaningful revenue stream and a genuine extension of your clinical care. But it has to be approached like any other business investment: with clear eyes, honest numbers, and a plan for execution. Here's what to think through before you sign on the dotted line.

KNOW YOUR REALISTIC CAPACITY

One of the first questions I ask a practice is: how many treatment rooms do you actually use consistently? Not how many you have, how many are actively running services. Your skincare inventory should align with that reality. Stocking for eight rooms when five of them sit empty on most days means you're tying up capital in product that won't move. Start lean. You can always reorder.

This also applies to your patient volume and appointment mix. A high-volume injector practice has a very different sell-through rate than a boutique surgical practice where patients come in quarterly for a post-op check. Be honest about your numbers before you commit to a minimum purchase agreement.

WHO WILL ACTUALLY SELL IT?

This is the question most practices underestimate. Product doesn't sell itself, people do. If your front desk team isn't trained, incentivized, and genuinely enthusiastic about the line, it will sit. If your providers are too busy to recommend homecare at the end of every appointment, it will sit. If no one owns the role of product champion, it will sit.

Skincare retail isn't a passive revenue stream. It requires intention, training, and accountability to perform.

Before you bring on a line, map out exactly who will recommend it, who will handle inventory, who will track sell-through, and what happens when someone goes on vacation or leaves the team. If you can't answer those questions clearly, the line isn't ready, and neither is your practice.

UNDERSTAND YOUR MARKET AND YOUR PATIENT

Geography and demographics matter more than most brand reps will tell you. A luxury medical-grade line priced at $300 a product may perform beautifully in certain markets and barely move in others. Before you commit to a brand, ask yourself: what is my patient already spending on skincare? What are they buying? What price point feels like a natural fit for what they're already willing to invest in their appearance?

Similarly, consider who will actually use the products clinically. Are your providers incorporating professional-use items into treatments, or is this purely a retail play? Some lines are built around a clinical-to-retail pipeline that genuinely supports your outcomes, others are primarily retail with a clinical story layered on top. Know which you're buying into.

DO THE MATH BEFORE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH A BRAND

Every brand partnership comes with financial terms worth scrutinizing before you're emotionally attached. What is the opening order requirement? What are the ongoing minimum purchase quantities to maintain your account in good standing? What is the return policy on damaged or short-dated goods? Is there exclusivity in your market, or could a competitor down the street carry the exact same line?

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE ANY OPENING ORDER

- What is the minimum opening order, and what does that buy me in unit count?
- What are the ongoing monthly or quarterly minimums?
- What is the return or credit policy for expired or damaged product?
- Do I get exclusivity in my zip code or market?
- What training and sales support does the brand provide?
- What is my realistic sell-through timeline based on current patient volume?

The goal isn't to find a reason to say no, it's to go in with your eyes open. A skincare line that fits your practice volume, your patient base, your team's bandwidth, and your cash flow can absolutely be worth it. But those factors have to align. Enthusiasm alone doesn't move product.

THE SHELF IS NOT A STRATEGY

At the end of the day, a beautiful display of skincare products is not a revenue strategy, it's a starting point. The strategy is the training, the scripting, the incentive structure, the patient touchpoints, the reorder system, and the accountability that turns that display into consistent, predictable income.

If you're considering adding a skincare line, or reevaluating one you already carry, take the time to ask the hard questions first. Your cash flow will thank you, and so will your patients.

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