

★ Retail Superstar

The star: M'lis Instant Meal in Vanilla Cream

The spa: Alternative Health Spas in West Hartford, Connecticut, and Easthampton and Southwick, Massachusetts

Why it flies off the shelves: "We exclusively use M'lis products in our diet and cleansing programs. We have clients who will only drink the M'lis meal replacement and we're their go-to retailer," explains owner and operator John Hoime.

"They love it because it's an inexpensive meal, it tastes great and it satisfies by making them feel full. As their health advisor, I like the powder because it's high in protein, loaded with nutrients but low in calories. It can also be used in a variety of ways—even as a late-night snack by turning yogurt into a seemingly decadent pudding—but it helps balance blood sugar, which makes it easy for clients to lose weight and get their body healthy."

How it's promoted: "We include the instant meal in our dietary programs, especially those geared toward people struggling with diabetes and fibromyalgia, but I actually recommend it to every single one of our clients," says Hoime. "I emphasize that I've been working with M'lis's founder Linda Nelson for 15 years. She helped me in my own struggle with candida, and her company is dependable, knowledgeable and accessible. I personally vouch for M'lis because I know its dietary supplements are 100% pure and packed with calcium, essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals. I don't have to worry about anything in them."



JOHN HOIME



The New Stone Age

Frustrated by the time-consuming activities of cleaning, changing and manipulating hot stones for his clients, Arizona-based massage therapist and esthetician Dominic Orlando felt there had to be a better solution, and he was determined to find it.

After three years spent researching and experimenting with various types of materials and technology, the first Sassi Stone prototype was born.

Designed for use during services ranging from a pedicure's calf rubdown to deep-tissue massage, Sassi Stones have a built-in battery-powered heater and are made of **crushed stone and clay that retain heat for up to 90 minutes**. Rechargeable through a port on their backside, the stones turn on automatically when they are unplugged from their charger and heat up within 60 seconds. Unlike real stones, they're meant to be continuously in motion—and not used as a placement stones.

"The stones are a great way to generate revenue because they turn on instantly and heat up so quickly," explains Orlando, who designed the devices in the hope that massage therapists could sell more add-on services for their spas.

"Whenever you add heat it creates a better experience for clients," he adds. "And when you give a better experience, you're going to have happier clients, who will book more follow-up appointments."

For further details and instructional videos, visit universalcompanies.com.

Smartphone Savvy

It's no secret that your clients are continually on their smartphones, so it makes sense that by obtaining "real estate" on these devices you could really boost your business. Many spa owners rule out developing an app because they don't have the coding skills or are put off by the perceived cost.

BuildFire is one company aiming to ease those concerns. The newly launched mobile application creation platform **allows business owners to build their own smartphone apps**, no coding knowledge or big budget required.

"We developed the technology with the idea that anybody, whether they have

some technical skills or none at all, can build an app and also maintain it," explains BuildFire co-founder and CBO Nathan Keating.

The purchase of a basic package enables business owners to use the web-based service to design their own mobile application, adding custom features, logos and menus. They can even create customized pop-up messages with advertisements or specials. The BuildFire team takes care of finalizing and launching the app into the Apple and Android application stores.

"A spa-goer is not going to download 10 different spa apps," says Keating. "But if



you can be the one that they go to, you've likely got a repeat customer, and a higher conversion rate with push notifications."

The web-based service also offers a free tool to help business owners make their websites mobile or tablet-friendly.

Find out more at buildfire.com.