



BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

WHEN YOUR BRICK AND MORTAR IS CLOSED



by SOFIE PAVITT
Licensed Esthetician

Sofie Pavitt is rethinking the facial experience for modern women who want to get real about skincare and leave the whispered concerns of past spas behind. A licensed esthetician and certified acne specialist, she helps women reset their skin to tackle concerns ranging from cystic acne to fine lines. Sofie offers a highly personal and intimate experience that empowers each client to have the best skin of their lives.

March 12th was the day I realized, before the government announced it was mandatory across New York state, that I needed to close my facial studio in Chinatown for the safety of my staff and clients due to COVID-19. Soon after panic set in: "What will I do?". Cancelling appointments for the month of March? Will we be stable in April? The situation both professionally and personally was overwhelming. I spent that first weekend deep cleaning the studio and listening to podcasts, not entirely sure of how to proceed.

Prior to making the change into full-time skin care and the opening of the Sofie Pavitt Studio, I worked in fashion for many years. The industry can be chaotic, stressful, and is entirely dependent on a yearly calendar that dictates when everything is produced. I learned a great deal about myself during that time of my career. The biggest strength I brought from my experience was the ability to pivot and adapt on a very fast turnaround. On that very weekend of deep cleaning, having time to think, I realized I had to bring my services to my clients. My business is based on clients coming to see me, but I had to turn it around and take myself to them this time. But what would that look like, and would it be successful? The following weeks of quarantine were spent really experimenting with what worked and what didn't.

Now eight weeks in, I'm averaging 3-4 consults a day with most purchasing products, which are shipped twice a week, and making enough money to keep up with the studio bills and sustain myself until we can resume in-studio facials again.

Here's what I've learned since being on lockdown in New York City:

1. Prepare

There are two streams of revenue I identified that were available for me - virtual consults and retailing products. I made sure to set myself up by ordering enough shipping supplies, retail stock, and setting up my calendar to prepare for clients to book virtual consults and purchase product.

2. Connect

The hardest part was having to cancel appointments - I love my time with clients. When cancelling, be sure to send a small, personal message to each client. Keep the line of communication open let them know how they can reach you during this time for consults, product, etc.

If your booking platform has newsletter or marketing capability, take time to thoughtfully reach out to clients. Ask them how they're doing, remind them you're still here. Along with personal outreach, Instagram is a very useful tool. It's where I receive most of my exposure. I made it known very early on, through these methods, that I would be offering virtual consults through video appointments and product retail to everyone - not just my existing clients. Amazon deliveries can be temperamental right now and people want to support small businesses, so you might be surprised on how many orders you'll get.

3. Gift cards

Gift cards are a great way to create business during this time as well. For us, unfortunately, our booking platform offers gift card purchase but we don't see that money until we actually have a

purchase in-studio of either a service or product. Instead of advertising we were still selling gift cards, we pushed the online consults. Online consults are priced at \$100 and formatted a quick reply for Instagram enquirers. When doing this, I suggest outlining pricing and how the consult will work; going through their home routine, lifestyle, recommending products and edits to their routine, problem areas, skin goals, etc.

4. Social posts

Keep social fun, but don't over post. I like to post a facial or skin care tip once a week to keep people interested in what we're still doing. Followers will reach out to you with questions and this is a great chance to promote your virtual consults. Offer them a pointer in your reply to their initial question, then mention that you can offer a full skin care evaluation for them via video consult if they're keen.

And share some of your experience during quarantine. What are you doing for your skin care? People want to learn from your expertise!

5. Collaborate

Make 'virtual' friends with estheticians in your area, or on the other side of the country. Compare notes! I recently teamed up with a local, small beauty brand to post a giveaway. Joining forces and collaborating with other beauty specialists is a great way to connect and feel supported during this time.

6. Motivation

Every morning I have a small routine to get me ready to start my day. I have a ten-month-old, so my husband and I share responsibilities in the daytime giving us both time to work. Again, collaboration is key here! I also always have a to-do list written out so as soon as I have time to work, I can get cracking immediately on what needs to be done.

Stay safe and healthy out there and remember that these times will pass; everybody is ready for a haircut, manicure, massage and facial after lockdowns are eased. My Instagram is @sofiepavitt if you want to reach out!