

## **Vancouver Spa Owner Takes a Deep Breath of Success**

Victoria Carr, owner of Breathe Spa in Vancouver reaps the rewards of her hard work everyday when she sees her clients with glowing skin and big smiles. Being able to observe the direct effect that her business has on her clients is what keeps her driven in a very competitive industry.

"Our philosophy is to treat our guests as we ourselves would like to be treated. My clients are my compass, and seeing how satisfied they are after visiting us lets me know that I'm on the right track with the business," says Carr.

That track started in the UK over 14 years ago when Carr took her training in beauty therapy. She then went on to manage a spa on one of the world's most exclusive cruise lines where she met her husband, who happened to be a Vancouver native.

It didn't take long for Carr to move to Canada with her husband, and it took even less time for her to notice a gap in the Vancouver spa industry. "I'd always had a dream to own a spa and when I saw a gap in the market for a high-end boutique spa, I knew it was time."

When it came down to researching and planning for her business, Carr laughs that checking out the competition was a tough job, "As you can imagine, it was really hard on me to have to go around and test out all the other spas!"

What Carr did find out from her research was that she had an edge over the competition: the years she spent training in Europe. She had the skills and knowledge to provide the highest quality treatments and services to her clients.

It's been seven years since Carr took that first step into entrepreneurship. She started off slowly by offering facials in the back of a hair studio, but over time the quality and consistency of her facials lead to a loyal following. She moved into a small space with two treatment rooms, then demand for her services became so great that she expanded last December into a beautiful heritage building downtown Vancouver. She is now the proud owner of a full spa with three staff members and five treatment rooms.

Carr acknowledges that it was Women's Enterprise Centre who gave her the support she needed to get to where she is today. "Women's Enterprise Centre was hugely helpful during the expansion and I don't think we could have done it without them," says Carr. "After hearing about them from a client and how much support they'd given her, we went right to them for a business loan to expand Breathe Spa to its new location."

Carr says that their experience going through the loan process was a very positive one because they didn't rush. "We had lots of time to put our plan together and pull all the financials we needed to provide. I would recommend to anyone else getting a loan to give themselves time. You can't just rush things that are as important as getting financing."

Her vision for the future of the business is to push it to its maximum potential, having each treatment room fully booked, six days a week, and then expanding to open a second location. With all the press she's been receiving about the incredible facials available at Breathe Spa, this vision doesn't seem to be too far off. "The first step is to know what your vision is for the business, and the second step is to never lose sight of that vision. No matter what challenges come up, keep working towards it."

Carr says that the other secret to living her dream is her passion for the business. “I love what I do, and I love working with people. You have to be passionate about your business and your industry to really be successful.”

*Around the corner or around the province, Women’s Enterprise Centre is helping women start, grow, and succeed in business by offering business advisory services, business skills training, business loans, resources, publications and referrals.*

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