

# WWD

## PCA Skin Pumps Up Professional Skin-care Sales

Massage Envy is rolling out daily care and three services from PCA Skin.

By [Faye Brookman](#) on August 23, 2017



PCA is a leader in peels for all needs.  
Jeff Alexander

For 27 years, PCA Skin has quietly racked up sales and built client loyalty. But the professional skin-care line, known for its chemical peels and daily care products, isn't so silent anymore.

The company's growth does the talking with Michael Larrain, PCA's chief executive officer, noting sales have expanded 40 percent year to date over 2016. "We don't want to be the best-kept secret in skin care anymore. We have something worth telling and that's why we are shouting from the rooftops lately," added Larrain, who joined PCA in 2015 from his role as former president of the Active Cosmetics Division of L'Oréal USA.



Michael Larrain

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Others also tout the brand's escalating success. Research firm Kline recently identified PCA Skin as one of the fastest-growing brands in the physician dispensed channel, a segment of skin care posting 4.4 percent gains, according to Karen Doskow, director of consumer products for Kline. Professional expansion, she said, outpaces growth in the general skin-care business. That's fueled by consumers flocking to dermatologists and spas if they find retail items don't live up to promises.

The company concurred there is movement to professional skin-care brands. "What we hear from consumers is they are looking for a solution in a complicated maze of skin care. They've been told something can be treated in four days, but when they don't see results, they get disappointed. That's bringing people to professionals and when they see improvement they stick to your brand because it changes their life," said Chris Payne, PCA Skin's chief marketing officer and also a former L'Oréal executive.

It also doesn't hurt, he added, that Millennials are starting procedures earlier as preventative measures — and they aren't afraid to share what they've had done with peers. "Twenty years ago, Macy's, Neiman Marcus or CVS was where you went for skin care, now many go to dermatologists or other professional outlets," said Payne.

To enrich PCA Skin's existing client base of professionals, Massage Envy recently added 20 daily use items and three services to its spas as an avenue to broaden its reach beyond massages. PCA Skin is certifying 3,000 of Massage Envy's aestheticians (everyone who sells PCA Skin must be certified by the company) opening the door for the professional skin-care brand to reach Massage Envy's 1.7 million members. "I am very impressed with PCA Skin and feel they'll be a good fit and help us build our skin-care business," said Joe Magnacca, Massage Envy's ceo. He sees fertile territory, with skin care only accounting for 7 percent of the company's business to date but with budding demand.

One catalyst for that growth, said Magnacca, is chemical peels. Peels, according to The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, mushroomed 26 percent between 2015 and 2016.

The non-surgical procedure is the hallmark of PCA Skin, which accounted for 1.2 million peels worldwide last year, and are up 74 percent year to date, according to Larrain.

There is a peel for every skin concern, whether for acne treatment, skin discoloration or anti-aging. Peels can be accomplished during lunch or extended into multiple sessions dependent on the patient's skin care goals. And what PCA Skin is finding in the case of Massage Envy, 40 percent of clients are getting their first chemical peel — therefore ushering in a whole new group of customers.

“Chemical peels are having a moment as people take a more holistic way of looking at skin care,” confirmed Payne. There's transaction-building opportunities because people see chemical peels and daily care items as a complement to other procedures.



The Hyaluronic Acid Boosting Serum.

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“Botox can improve or prevent a wrinkle, but it can't treat the texture or tone,” Payne elaborated. That helps explain the uptick in demand for PCA Skin's lineup such as its Hyaluronic Acid Boosting Serum, on track to be one of its biggest launches ever. Unleashed in April, the company said it already sold a year's supply in six weeks. Recently, PCA Skin set out to make retinol more shoppable with R-OH Retinol Solutions, the brand's condition-specific retinol franchise with formulas for aging, acne, discoloration, hyper-pigmentation and even one for sensitive skin.



## R-OH Retinol Solutions.

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Founded by an aesthetician, the company's path has been slightly different than that of many professional brands. PCA Skin's product assortment isn't linked to one ingredient like antioxidants or hydroquinone. Instead, said Larrain, skin conditions are recognized and the team then identifies a list of ingredients to best solve that specific concern with the greatest results and efficacy.

"The other unique part of our platform is that every single one of our formulas has a case study and [is] treated on real live patients in an actual dermatology practice that is literally connected to our business in Scottsdale," Larrain said. "If it [an item] doesn't have the results on skin we don't launch it. Consumers are demanding efficacy on their skin care products." Another notable differentiating feature is that PCA Skin's sales force consists of trained aestheticians.

Now PCA Skin is beginning to mimic marketing efforts of strictly retail skin care. In addition to working with professionals who help introduce the brand through treatments or at-home use products, PCA Skin bolstered its digital and social efforts using influencers and bloggers who can help educate people on the difference between retail and professional products. Since PCA Skin isn't found in Ulta Beauty, Macy's or other major skin care retailers, word of mouth from physicians, public relations efforts and bloggers is paramount.

Recently PCA Skin activated #PCAProsKnow on Instagram and Twitter. The use of the hashtag not only allows PCA Skin Certified Professionals to share skin care tips and tricks, but also connects them with potential new clients via social media. #PCAProsKnow grew 162 percent year to date, resulting in an overall increase in both professional and consumer engagement with the brand.