



After working for 12 years in the telecommunications industry as a marketing executive, Erika Mangrum was in need of a change. Stressed out from the multiple pressures of going to school to earn her MBA, working full-time and nurturing a new marriage, she was pushing her limits both personally and professionally. In search of a respite, she scheduled a massage—an act that later would spark an interest in the spa industry. “I went for a massage and thought it was really nice. I decided to use the spa concept for my final project,” she recalls. From there, her class assignment blossomed into a successful business venture that would take the industry by storm.

To complete her MBA at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mangrum interviewed a cross section of clients about what they were looking for in the ultimate spa. What she found was a clientele seeking expert information, as well as a way to escape the daily grind. Clients wanted an educated professional

who imparted knowledge and really good information, and they wanted their experience to feel spa-like, says Mangrum. After a few years of research and networking with other industry professionals, the Iatria Day Spa brand was born with its first location opening in September 1999 in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Iatria, which means the art of well-being in Greek, focuses on relieving the overworked, weary client with nourishing treatments. As with many new spas, its first year in operation was difficult. “The hardest thing was to try not to be all things to all people. You *want* to appeal to everyone, but you really can lose your brand. However, we knew we had something that people really wanted, she says.

Now the spa has grown to four locations—three in Raleigh and one in Cary, North Carolina—and has won several awards, including *Triangle Business Journal's* 2004 and 2005 Top Women-owned Businesses list. Mangrum credits this tremendous success to forward thinking. “If you only focus on the inside of the business, you risk being passed by because there are a lot of players in this industry,” she says. Looking forward to the next two to five years will keep you ahead. Ask yourself where you want to go and what you want to be, so you can put that plan into motion.

HELLO
my name is

Erika Mangrum

Iatria Day Spa,
Raleigh, North Carolina

In addition to her responsibilities at the spa, Mangrum teaches spa marketing and retail management for the University of California, Irvine, as well as spa and hospitality management for Cornell University. “This combines my two loves: teaching and marketing. Students get exposure to the business side of the spa industry, learn a way to market more effectively, understand who their clients are and discover ways to measure a successful marketing campaign,” she notes.

Mangrum has been named the 2004 Woman Business Owner of the Year by the National Association of Women Business Owners. In addition, she has made several television appearances on MSNBC, CNN, ABC, NBC and CBS; has appeared on the cover of *Business Leader* magazine; and has been featured in *Entrepreneur* magazine four times.

Opening Iatria has been one of the most rewarding decisions Mangrum has ever made. “It’s also amazing to have my 5-year-old daughter see her mom succeed in everything she does,” she says. However, the most rewarding thing to me is when a client feels better, receives the results they wanted and is in a better place. ✕

