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THE ENTREPRENEURIST



Face to Face NYC founder Enrique Ramirez

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When Enrique Ramirez decided to open a day spa in the already crowded New York City market, he only had to look in the mirror to find his target customer: men.

Ramirez opened his spa, [Face to Face NYC](#), in Manhattan's Flatiron District in 2004, and to stand out from the many beauty [businesses](#) already lining the streets and avenues of New York, he decided to cater to a male clientele.

Ramirez started out as a massage therapist in Chicago before moving to New York City. After five years of giving massages, he decided to enroll at a local school for

aesthetics to educate himself, as he says, in all things beautiful.

After graduating, Ramirez began working for a corporate spa, which he explains, is a bit like working in a factory where the final product is a pretty face. Ramirez says he felt suffocated by the corporate environment, with its emphasis on selling products and reaching quotas.



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"I felt as though I was losing the human side of [business](#)," he said. "I had gone into this business because I like working with people."

It was this desire to focus on relationships with his clients that inspired Ramirez to start his own business.

His years as a massage therapist and aesthetician allowed Ramirez to observe that some people prefer to be treated by someone of their own gender.

"It was easier for me to target men," he said. "Just in my location, there are at least two other salons. It helped to find this particular demographic."

Of course, [starting a business](#) isn't as simple as choosing which customers to woo. It also requires quite a bit of [startup capital](#), too. Luckily, Ramirez says, he had started [saving money](#) for his business as soon as he realized that working for others didn't work for him.

It also helps if the aesthetician already has an established clientele. Ramirez had been steadily building a loyal client base for years while working out of his home.

For Ramirez, who had no experience owning his own business, the process of starting up was a bit intimidating.

"I was afraid of the business side of business," he said.

Ramirez says he learned as he went along. And he stayed focused on his original vision.

Ramirez quickly realized that the key to success lay in how well he marketed his services to prospective clients.

He decided to exploit his niche in the spa industry with a head-turning marketing campaign. The ads for Face to Face NYC feature bare, beautiful men and women looking waxed, plucked and otherwise flawless – nothing like the tranquil images that usually come to mind when one thinks of a day at the spa.

"I had to figure out a way to stand out from the rest of them," he said. "But not everyone was ready for that."

While this unorthodox [marketing plan](#) garnered much attention for Ramirez and his spa, not all the feedback was positive. Ramirez says he spent the better part of a year wondering whether to replace his ads with a softer image. He changed his mind once his provocative approach caught the attention of media giants like The New York Times and MTV, who have both featured Face to Face NYC in pieces on men in the beauty world.

Ramirez has done well for himself by exploiting what he knows and trusting the vision that he has for his business. After nearly a decade of serving New York's under-pampered male set, Face to Face NYC is still thriving.

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