

Marketing, Marketing, Marketing....

Marketing and the Search for the Holy Grail

Almost every salon owner I speak with says they want to attract more new clients through the door. I bet many of you are nodding your beautifully styled heads and thinking, "yep, me too". New clients through the door are like some kind of Holy Grail. My question is, "Why?"

Did you know on average it costs 25% more of your advertising dollar to get new clients and keep getting them than it does to take care of the clients you have? Unless you're retaining existing clients, you might as well have a revolving door on your salon and money to burn.

My next question is this, "Why should a new client come to you if you can't even keep the ones you already have?"

Look, I'm no saleswoman. I work as Global Marketing Manager for Nexus Revolution, and I've learned a lot about sales from our Global CEO Iain Horne. Marketing and actual face to face 'sales' are two different things. I can understand why you might cringe when I say you must get your clients to re-book.

Now get ready to cringe (not too hard, you'll get wrinkles). You must get your clients to re-book. Never fear, unlike an Australian Idol judge I won't criticise without helping you. I have some tips for you shy artistic types out there on pain free rebooking procedures.

Give it your all

In fact give great customer service to every client from the minute they phone to book to well and truly after they leave the salon.

Other ways to improve your customer service skills are:

- Have a positive attitude and a bright cheery demeanor. Nothing turns off a potential client like a snobby, stuck up, cranky stylist. Leave your problems and bad moods at the salon door. When someone is in the salon chair it's never about you, it's all about them.

- Treat everyone as a VIP. Imagine how you would treat Madonna or Hugh Jackman or some other high profile hottie if they were in your salon. I'd bet my life if you treated everyone the same way they'd be fervently rebooking every time.

- Never rush a service. No one likes to feel like they're an inconvenience or in the way. If you've been put through the motions as quickly as possible by a robotic stylist set on auto pilot, you're unlikely to re-book. If a 1 hour service only goes for 45 minutes, your client will notice and will feel ripped off.

- Analyse, identify, express, listen and repair. You are the expert. Analyse the hair or skin of the client. Identify their needs and express your opinions on how you can meet those needs without being pushy or mean. Listen to the client's response and their analysis of their needs and make sure you meet them while you repair the damage. Make sure the client looks as fabulous as they possibly could look when they walk out that salon door.

Plant the Seed

So you should have your client all blissed out from the amazing customer service you're giving them. Now they're lulled into an almost hypnotic trance of ecstasy it's time to plant the rebooking seed.

Say something like "Madonna, to maintain the style that I'm creating for you today, I'm going to need to see you again in 5 to 6 weeks to keep it looking great" and leave it at that.

Give the client time to absorb the concept of regular upkeep being a good thing.

Reaffirm

You can reaffirm without being pushy by having a clear plan for the future of your client's style. Saying something like "Your brows are looking great right now, and the fringe I'm giving you will draw a lot more attention to your gorgeous brows and eyes. By the next time we see you they will probably need some tidying up so if you want us to take care of it for you, make sure you tell reception when re-booking. The salon books out quickly so you're better off organising it with us in advance so you don't miss out"

Now you've established two things in the client's mind. One is that you actually care about the overall look and style of the client, now and in the future. The other is that your salon is popular and its best to rebook to guarantee they don't miss out.

Use your Client Profile Card

Hopefully you're using a client card during the service to note what services you're performing for the client, which ones you've recommended they rebook for, what refreshment the client ordered, and any retail you've recommended.

This card will serve you on two levels. One is for your own future reference when a client returns to the salon. Imagine their delight when you 'remember' their dog's name, the way they take their coffee, and the details of their last visit.

The other way a Client Card will serve you is to make the point of sale process run smoothly. Hand the card to reception at the end of the service so they may accurately tot up the client's services. Have your receptionist trained in the final process of rebooking: closing the deal.

Reception & Choices

She should say something like, "Madonna, as Mandy suggested before, to keep your hair looking and feeling great you'll need to come back and see us in the next five to six weeks. We get really busy, so can I put you in the appointment book for five or six weeks' time?"

Some clients may say they are unsure if they'll be available or if they will remember an appointment booked in advance. Your receptionist can offer to SMS a reminder or write the appointment on a card. Never get pushy, impatient or frustrated with the client. If the client is still unsure, leave it at that.

Follow Up

If a client does not rebook then and there, don't look at them as a lost cause. Send a new client welcome letter to them within 2 weeks of their visit. If you still have no response from the client within 6 weeks, send a non-returning client letter to them offering them an incentive to return to the salon. You'll be surprised how effectively this cheap marketing tool can boost your client retention.

A Final Word

David Bowie once said something to the effect of this, "If you treat the normal person as if they are famous and famous people as if they are just like everyone else, you'll go a long way". I'm paraphrasing Bowie to get to this point: For some of your clients, their visit to the salon is the only time they get to feel pampered, special and beautiful; just like a VIP. Give people what they want every time, a beautiful special pampering, and then watch that client retention rate improve.

If you'd like to know more about how you can increase client retention, and how to effectively market your salon see our Client Satisfaction Pack under Business Tools.

Visit www.nexusrevolution.com.au today to see our amazing range of salon improvement products.