

Salon Management

Learning Objectives:

On successful completion of this unit the candidate will be able to:

- ✓ explore how to start and run a salon successfully.

Introduction to Salon Management

Managing a business requires a lot more beyond simply determining the job that has to be completed and delegating tasks to the staff. Although delegating responsibilities is an important job, the actual work involved is quite a lot more.

Before establishing what is to be done, a manager must first determine short and long-term objectives of the salon to formulate a well-defined plan about what has to be achieved. Once the manager has specific objectives in mind, a plan of action can be defined to best achieve these goals. The manager must then communicate with the employees clearly and effectively, all that is expected from them and ways in which their actions will contribute towards achieving the overall goals of the business.

Effective allocation of tasks is perhaps the most challenging aspect of personnel management, particularly if the manager is used to completing the whole job themselves. It is not unusual for a new manager to face difficulties in adjusting to the new role and allow employees to do the jobs that they have been hired to perform. Such managers have to resist the temptation to take on the major part of the task themselves simply because they are sure that it will be done in the way that they like it done. As a manager, you must train your staff to work at each job in the way you like it to be done and then allow them to do it.

The best strategy for training employees to manage particular tasks in a specific way is to explain to them what has to be done, how to do it and why. Then step back, allowing the staff member the space to complete the task. During the next few weeks, the manager should stay sufficiently involved in the process to provide help and practical advice if and when required. To some people, this transition is instinctive and comes naturally, just like breathing or walking. Such people are rare and are born managers, turning out to be real assets for any business. However, most people have to work at it consciously, developing these skills only after trial and error.

In addition to this challenge, personnel management is just one area of a typical tanning salon manager's job. Most small businesses, like a salon, require the manager to carry several responsibilities. On an average work day, a manager may have to placate an angry client, train a new staff member, order new supplies of retail products, update the payroll, deposit the day's earnings at the bank and perform numerous other recurring tasks that are part of running a salon. To summarise a manager's job, if there is anything to be done at the

salon, odds are that the manager would have to do each one of them at some moment in time.

However, management should not be taken lightly as it is not an expertise that everyone can achieve easily. Most professionals who are exceptional at their jobs face difficulties in branching into management positions, even in their own field. One such professional stated, "I like doing my job, however, I don't like making others do theirs." Nevertheless, unless you are extremely lucky while hiring, you are probably likely to have to spend time in doing exactly that. Consider it an investment into the future, because once your staff members have been trained and you become accustomed to the position of a manager, everything will function more smoothly.

As there is a limit to the volume of work that any one individual can do efficiently, people operating salons have to be effective as managers so that they can achieve the maximum success in their salons. The suggestions in this unit are expected to provide guidance in several aspects of salon management.

Hiring and Training Employees

Nearly everything in a salon business is dependent on the competency of its staff members. This is why the strategy for hiring personnel, and ways in which they are hired, are both critical for its success. The secret is to find people who will earn their wages and not simply receive them.

Hiring people with good work ethics and pleasant personalities can truly increase sales. Clients feel secure, happy and comfortable when staff members who are friendly and proficient are helping them. Employees become even more significant if retail merchandise is added to the salon.

Finding Good Employees

The most popular way of finding employees is by placing an advertisement in a newspaper. However, to make sure that you attract the kind of people you aim to hire, your high standards must be stipulated clearly in the ad. The ad must state that you are looking for an inside sales person who can work flexible hours in a pleasant business environment. Adding the word business indicates to a probable applicant that they will require a professional attitude to qualify for this job.

Other requirements that could be wise to include are: good phone skills; excellent rapport with customers; and the importance of having a professional and well-groomed appearance. Although appearance is important in almost every industry, it is even more important in the health and beauty industry to have neat, attractive, fit and immaculate employees, as this in itself can create the image of the salon.

Always be on the lookout for potential employees. Beauty salons and health clubs are good places to look for people who can communicate the image you wish to establish. Many a time employees quit without appropriate warning. Therefore, if you come across a good

potential employee who appears to be interested in working for you, take down their name and number and add it to a file. When the situation arises, you will be able to find the right replacement without having to go through the process of advertising and interviewing.

Business competitors are also good places to look for potential staff members, particularly if the defecting employees can bring a copy of the clientele list with them. In case you come across someone exceptional while visiting competitors, it may be wise to make an offer. However, remember that this may have some disadvantages. If your salon's operating style differs drastically from that of the competitor, there may be unexpected difficulties. If the employee has been trained to work in specific ways, these old work habits may, at times, be hard to change. If the employee has been trained to work on and explain different equipment, their knowledge and training may not be of much use to you.

You must always conduct job interviews in the salon and always allow the potential worker to take a session as a component of the hiring process. Even if you do not hire them, you might possibly gain a client. You will also be able to check out their reaction towards the equipment and how effectively they understand its functions.

Always make sure that you go through your expectations and requirements thoroughly so that the applicant is clear about both, right from the start. Lack of communication is perhaps the most common cause of issues in the employer-employee relationship. Write down a job description that emphasises sales of retail products, as well as add-on and tanning services as the major responsibilities.

Let the potential employees do some talking as this can help you get a feel of their ideas and personality. Also do some role-play where you pretend to be the customer while they try to sell you a product or package. This will give you valuable insights into how well they can function on job at your salon. If the applicant is exceedingly timid during the role-play, it is quite probable that this is how they will behave when it comes to the real life situation.

The Training Process

Once the hiring has been finalised, break in the staff member slowly. If you push too hard, an employee with excellent work potential may get frustrated or discouraged.

Start off by providing the new employee a package of literature from manufacturers of tanning units, copies of your advertisements, customer cards, daily record sheets, fliers and any other forms which they may be required to fill out. Instruct them to review every form step by step, spending the day studying them. Have them do this preferably in the salon so that they can discuss any questions with you at any time.

Let them listen to inquiries you manage on the phone through an extension and immediately afterwards explain to them why you said whatever you did. Always remember that there is no better way to learn than through hands-on experience. They may not always get the hang of things the first few times—even you quite probably did not either. For the first few days, let them go through the telephone procedure with you for training. Practice makes perfect and is a good confidence builder.

Provide the new staff member a list of questions that customers ask most frequently, along with the answers and a detailed explanation of why the specific answers have to be provided. At the end of the training period, you might want to give them a quiz just to be sure that they are now sufficiently trained to be left on their own at the salon.

Cleaning tasks may be a touchy subject. Therefore, you must be specific about your expectations right from the start. Do not wait until you have hired an applicant before explaining the cleaning duties that are essential. There is a possibility that they may not have been as keen on getting the job if they had been aware of this duty. If this is the case, then hiding this fact will not make them very receptive to this aspect of the job.

Employees should always clean the equipment very thoroughly after every use. Cleaning appears to be a simple task, but you need to emphasize that it should be done very carefully and correctly. Discuss the procedure for tanning units a few times and then ask the employee in training to do it while you watch. Don't hesitate in criticizing anything done incorrectly as it is very important that the procedure is done correctly.

Allow the employees to know that they are expected to keep the reception desk in perfect order as this area is generally the first area that creates an impression on the clients as they enter the salon. A dirty or cluttered reception desk makes the client jump to the conclusion that the entire salon must be the same.

Salon rules must be enforced and the importance of implementing these rules should be communicated to the employees. Inform them that tanning times are never to be extended and clients should never be allowed to tan without protective eyewear. You must ensure that they understand the reasons why this is so important so that they can explain the risks and dangers of such practices to the clients.

The staff's dress code in the salon is at the discretion of the individual salon owner. If you wish to depict an image of individuality within the salon, you should tell the staff to do the same. You could establish some guidelines, such as pastel coloured shirts or khaki shorts, so that you keep a similar general impression. However, it is not always essential. Clothing should be fun, yet never suggestive. Also make sure that the clothing should be comfortable and loose enough to allow convenient movement while cleaning salon equipment.

In case you find an employee who is very efficient, professional and valuable for your salon, and who you feel is likely to stay with your salon for some time, think about taking them along to a trade association training program. The opportunity to gain valuable knowledge, and the prospect of networking with other employees and salon owners, is important. If you are unable to justify travel expenses for your employees, you should still think very seriously about going yourself. You will gain knowledge and a training manual that will be an asset for your in-salon training program. An alternative that may be less expensive could be correspondence training courses that are offered by a few associations.

Employee Relations

Speedy employee turnovers are something every business wants to avoid. Apart from being very expensive in terms of time and money, they also cause issues with client relations and other employees. To minimize such issues, always treat your staff well.

Being generous and considerate towards any staff member will motivate them to do more for you and the salon. Treat them in the same way that you would wish to be treated, with dignity and fairness. However, if a worker becomes negative and does not seem to be receptive towards reconciliation, you should get that individual out of the salon immediately. One individual's negative attitude can get transferred to the other employees—and even to the customers—thus causing a lot of damage to the salon's image and the staff's morale.

Having an open communication policy will resolve most issues well before they can develop into major problems. It is very important to talk to your staff, to provide feedback about their performance and to let them know how you feel. Tell them if they have been doing a good job. If the employees' performances are not up to the mark, let them know that you are concerned and discuss ways in which you could assist them to get back on track.

In case some of your employees are students, school will generally take precedence over their work. You should make every effort for accommodating their special needs. Work towards making a schedule that works smoothly for them. If you don't consider this acceptable, don't employ students. Nevertheless, you should make them aware that your salon has special needs and that since you are running a business they need to make suitable contributions.

A fine line exists between maintaining your authority and being friendly with your staff. Socializing beyond work hours must be limited. Nonetheless, having lunch together whenever possible is perhaps an effective way of bridging any gaps in communication that may be present.

You must try to be present at the salon for the maximum time possible because it leads towards better relations with employees and clients. Staff members are usually more responsible, and your clients generally feel more secure, with the presence of an authority figure. It also contributes towards the creation of a more professional environment.

Allow the staff to tan free as this is likely to motivate them. It also gives them actual experience with the equipment and contributes towards maintaining your salon's image. You could also offer a 50% discount to the staff's family members. Once you have defined a policy for what family members are required to pay, the employees do not keep guessing what discounts are available. Also offer employee discounts on clothing and lotions if you sell these. As they are likely to wear these clothes at the salon, your retail side will get a boost. The customers will probably notice the clothing that the employees are wearing rather than the clothing on the racks.

Motivating Your Employees

Motivation appears to be a big phenomenon these days. A huge industry, in fact, seems to revolve around motivation. A large number of seminars, tapes and in-depth clinics are devoted to the issue. Some organizations help to devise programs that can motivate your sales staff, while others are designed to train managers on how to motivate their staff members. Some experts coach people from various walks of life on ways to inspire themselves. This is obviously not free, as motivational assistance in the form of a person or a tape carries a substantial price. The reason is quite simple, however—motivation means big money as it can help a business by bringing in huge profits.

Irrespective of what business you are in, the fact that motivated staff members are always more productive in comparison to their ambivalent counterparts has been proven beyond doubt. The personnel who want to work, and do their work well, are more likely to do a much better job in contrast to those interested in simply getting work done. Because motivated employees can make your salon money, motivation is extremely important.

Nevertheless, experts advise that a motivation program needs to be more than simply a reward system for customer service efforts and exceptional sales. Rewards should always play a role in the whole program. However, it is critical that the working environment should be motivating in itself.

One element often overlooked while creating a motivated environment is the presence of a detailed job description. Since it is considerably easier to work at a job once you know what exactly is expected from you, it is important that employees know what they must and must not do. Lack of clarity about what is expected is likely to detract employees from the quantity and quality of the work produced, as will job descriptions which require a worker to be doing two tasks simultaneously.

If your salon offers ancillary services (like day spa amenities, nails, nutritional supplements or hair services), the essential work may be broken down into possibly two or three particular positions. One person is likely to have a tough time managing all three. In any case, one employee cannot be the perfect front desk receptionist, attend clients properly and manage salon program and tour explanations simultaneously.

One very important element that contributes towards creating a positive and motivating work atmosphere is you—the owner of the salon. One of several things you need to do is to be at the salon yourself and set a good example. Apart from being present at the salon, you must make the staff members feel that they are all a part of the company. When they understand how their job fits in the overall functioning of the salon, they are more likely to be motivated to do a good job.

Better than simply letting them see how the salon's overall goals are established and achieved is allowing them to be a part of the process. Avoid the traditional belief which assumes that staff members are working only for the pay check. Remember that feelings of

accomplishment and involvement may actually be more important concerns. Motivation arises from the belief in a product or process. When employees are more involved, they will believe more.

Incentives and Rewards

While designing an employee incentive programme, don't limit the incentives to percentage rewards or cash. Although these can be effective, money is not always the best incentive. Employees should be appreciated in ways that they prefer to be appreciated. Three different kinds of personalities can be rewarded with non-monetary rewards—namely, logical, action and feeling types. A different reward can best motivate each of these personality types.

The first group of people, the feeling type, is most motivated through recognition and a demonstration that makes them feel valued. The rewards which provide the best incentives for these people are things such as employee of the month awards, a plaque on the salon wall, flowers, mention in the client newsletter and other similar forms of appreciation.

The second group of people, the logical employees, prefer to have quantitative objectives to achieve. This type likes to see precisely where they stand, which could be on a graph or board in the office or staff bulletin board. They can then mark their growth against the chart while striving to achieve a well-defined goal.

The last kind is the active type of workers who are not so motivated by money, but instead by what it enables them to do. This means that money is a means for them, not an end. It is only logical that the strategy for getting this worker focused on a goal is to reward this achievement with active and fun things, such as concert tickets, restaurant gift certificates, sporting event passes, mini-vacations and other similar activities.

The secret to all these individual cases is to ensure that the rewards are things that these people value. If the objective and the incentive are not presented in the employees' language and value system, they may either not see it or may perhaps become confused.

You should also be aware that very few people will fit into only one category of personality type, as most people are a combination of more than one type. Spend some time observing and evaluating the kind of people that your individual employees are and, only then, structure your incentive programme accordingly.

However, you must make sure that the employees understand the fact that their pay checks are actually the reward for fulfilling their job requirements. You must ensure that the goals you set for them are beyond this minimum, which means that they would be entitled to a bonus incentive or reward only if they go beyond that which is expected from them in return for their pay checks.

Lastly, you will not be able to motivate your staff to accomplish specific goals unless you have defined the goals for the salon. One of the major problems in the tanning industry is that most salon owners don't define their business missions.

Your salon's objective may be to reach a specific dollar figure in sales of accessories, or a specific percentage of occupancy. You may aim to increase the number of referrals according to specific criteria, or perhaps increase the number of three-times per week tanners to a certain number. Hopefully, your salon's goals will touch each of these areas and, in the course of achieving these goals, you will keep your salon's focus consistent. While adding any new accessory lines, you must make sure that they fit in and do not divert from your objectives.

The significance of devising a detailed plan to motivate your employees at the salon is undeniable. By doing this, you make a statement about the elements that are valued, which may be improved customer service, increased sales, or perhaps even both. The fact that motivated employees are more productive has been proven time and again. Productive employees will always bring an increased income to the salon and that is what it is all about.

Time Management Essentials

The one factor that is an excellent equalizer is the time factor. Whether someone is rich or poor, old or young, tall or short, when it comes to time, everyone stands equal. Everyone has precisely the same amount of time available to them in a day—24 hours. No one has ever been able to figure out a strategy for making the day any longer. Irrespective of who you are, you will get the same seven-day week and the same fifty-two-week year.

You will never have more time. Time is a scarce resource and is being depleted constantly. One of the most important factors which distinguishes the very successful beauty professionals from other colleagues are their time management skills.

Let us now proceed towards discovering the secret to success.

Law I: Schedule Your Time

Developing 'to do' lists for the following day every night is a very good practice. Another great idea is a weekly 'to do' list. These lists will have small and large activities. Therefore, you must prioritize them and include a rough estimate of the time you will need to get each activity done. Now schedule these activities into a daily activity planner. While you can add these activities to the booking sheet at the salon, it is also a good idea to organize a personal schedule book for these activities and others.

To improve your efficiency, you should collect similar activities together. You could plan your phone calls and make them all at one time, run shopping errands altogether and cross things off your lists once they are completed. As you keep crossing things off your list, you will gain momentum. By each day's end, make your list for the next day. By the end of each week, make your lists for the next week. There is a possibility that some incomplete tasks may have to be transferred from one list to the upcoming one. However, you can try to complete the maximum possible number by the assigned deadlines.

Law II: Make Time

Quite frequently, an experienced salon manager or owner tends to get booked so fully that they start feeling a time crunch. Even though they would prefer having sufficient time and effort to invest in long-term plans, they are too occupied in serving customers to the extent that they don't even have sufficient time to breathe. If this starts happening to you, you need to have the self-restraint to refuse clients after a specific number and schedule time to gain the expertise you need. Be adequately disciplined not to give in and make service reservations for the times you plan to be involved in other projects.

During periods when your time is especially sensitive, do not make the blunder of skipping planning. Additionally, you may need to find sufficient blocks of time when you need to make substantial progress. An hour here and half an hour there may be okay for smaller tasks, but a full day or half day scheduled for and devoted to important projects may be essential. In this way, you will ensure that whatever time you invest in long-term goals yield the maximum results.

Law III: Respect Your Time

Do not allow others to waste your valuable time, be it co-workers wanting to ramble on about their problems, or clients wanting to linger long after their services have been completed. Have a strategy in place to remain in control of your time.

Law IV: Energize Your Time

Be prepared mentally to work efficiently and effectively. Being in the right mental state of mind will enable you to focus on improving your productivity. Your self-discipline, goal lists and affirmations will be useful in achieving this.

Law V: Enjoy Time

A workplace should be fun. In particular, a salon should have a very happy environment. Make sure you find time to enjoy yourself. People are generally in a relaxed state-of-mind when they visit a salon and the creative environment has several interesting people looking to have a good time. Always remember that you should work wholeheartedly at work time and unwind in your leisure time. You have to train yourself to be where you are when you are there. Don't lose focus and start thinking about fun and play while at work. Similarly, while at play, learn to focus on that and stop thinking about work.

Law VI: Use Time Efficiently

The key to using time effectively is to complete one task before starting the next one. By doing this you can avoid creating clutter in your minds. One of the major time-wasting habits is taking a simple task, starting it, and then leaving it, and then starting another one and leaving it incomplete too. You will end up with several tasks being half done. Clients and co-workers don't like muddling through others' mess as it only slows everything down and even causes our thinking process to get disrupted.

When clients reach your salon, they are unhappy with their image or looks. They believe that they do not have their desired look and are visiting you with the hope of getting the image which allows them to feel fully represented. For them, dissatisfaction with their looks is more uncomfortable than the expense of money, time and effort they will make by visiting the salon. Remember that, in general, people are unhappy with the way they look. For instance, if you took a poll about how people feel about their hair, you would discover that most are very dissatisfied about their hair. Those with straight hair would like it to be curly and the ones with curly hair would want it to be straight. The ones with brown hair prefer blonde, while the blonde ones want red. Longer, shorter, thinner, thicker—the list goes on and on. The bottom line is that people are nearly always dissatisfied with what they have now and want something completely different. Mostly, whatever they have and have settled for is not what they actually want.

Always Communicate Delicately

You must avoid saying anything negative about work done by a previous cosmetologist because that is quite unprofessional. It may also be potentially insulting for the client. Remember that you are not only criticizing another professional's work, but also the customer's hair that you are talking negatively about.

Appearance Dissatisfaction

The way people feel about their appearances has a tremendous effect on their life's experiences. You already know this is a fact based on your own personal experiences. The psychological impact that our appearance has on our personal self-image can be gleaned from our feelings about the way we look whenever we look in a mirror or when we interact with others.

Appearance Dissatisfaction Compromises Quality Of Life

Research about the brain has revealed that a conscious mind can only think one type of thought at one time. If people are experiencing negative thoughts related to their appearance, they cannot be in a position to feel joy and happiness. Appearance is greatly connected to the way we feel about ourselves, particularly as it connects to our need for acceptance by the society and community. People who are unhappy about the way they look fear ridicule, condemnation and rejection. This influences the quality of life very much. It holds an impact on the entire life experience. People who are uncomfortable with their feelings about their appearance may start turning the ridicule and anger inwards towards themselves and literally start hating themselves. As people disown and reject themselves, they find themselves in the midst of a critical amount of unhappiness.

Transforming Client Fear into Hope with Empathy

In spite of being unhappy with appearances, you will discover that the same people will resist change naturally. They will simply avoid moving out of their comfort zone, in spite of the fact that it may be to their overwhelming advantage to do that. Therefore, only because you are willing, ready and capable of helping them does not mean that the client will let you

work your magic without resistance or anxiety. Most clients experience fear in change, or perhaps feel that they may make a mistake. As a salon professional, you will need genuine human relation skills to dissolve these fears and to inspire and prepare them to proceed. The ability to lead people is the way that you will be able to make the biggest difference in your clients' lives.

The best way to guide people through the process of change is through effective use of empathy. Being empathic expresses gentle reassurance and kind understanding by placing focus only on the customer. Demonstrating empathy requires emotional and mental effort and symbolizes real giving. In spite of that, the answer may still be no. In such situations, you need mental strength and a sense of understanding in order to avoid feeling disappointed.

Attracting Salon Clients

As a salon owner, you need a steady flow of new clients to keep coming to you. Some people move away or move on while others pass away. These must be replaced with fresh customers. Additionally, it is wise to continually keep building a demand for your salon's services. If you are comparatively new in the business, or have initiated some new type of services, you will need an abundant supply of clientele to enjoy financial success. To achieve all this, you need to have a fresh flow of clients that keep coming your way.

Cultivate Your Family, Friends, and Associates

The most economical and simplest way of gaining new clients is through cultivation of your friends and family. In case they expect you to offer free services, you can explain to them very simply that this matter is not in your hands. You can say that due to your salon's strategy, you do not have the authority to change policy. This will take the heat away from you.

Encourage People You Do Business With To Visit

Business is a game of numbers. If you discuss your salon and services with ten people, you may get two or three to visit your salon. So the secret is to talk to the maximum number of people that you can and allow the law of averages to complete the rest of your work.

As you work towards promoting your salon, it will provide excellent practice for introducing yourself as a professional and approaching people. Have great pride in your work and what you do. Remember that you must have confidence in yourself and the value that you will bring to the lives of others. Initiate conversations, step up and always introduce yourself very confidently. Communicate your wish to serve.

You must make sure that you have your business card. It is absolutely essential that it contains all basic and relevant information including your name, the whole salon address with the state, city and zip code and your telephone number with the area code. Furthermore, you could also add a complete list of services provided by your salon. The card could also include your regular salon timings with an additional line stating that services can be available by appointment beyond business hours. In this way, if people wish to contact

you beyond your regular work hours, they will not be discouraged. If you or your salon holds a membership or distinction that you would like to announce, you could add it to the business card.

Client Referrals

Encouraging client referrals is your next strategy for attracting new customers. You could invite friends, family and current clients who visit your salon to send in their friends, family, social associates and colleagues. Because client referrals can provide you a consistent stream of new customers all through your career, it may be worthwhile to gain expertise in generating them.

Referral Programmes

Several salons offer clients the incentive to take part in their referral marketing program. It would be a good idea to offer an incentive immediately with the first referral to encourage the client or friend to continue making additional recommendations. This incentive could range from a complimentary bottle of shampoo, a free hair revitalizing treatment, a complete haircut and styling, or even a future value gift voucher.

Making an Effective Introduction

If someone compliments your hair colour, you could respond by saying: “Lisa has done a great job as always! She appears to be attending every advanced colouring class available! Her experience and training, added to the additional time she takes with each hair job to design a beautiful look, make her results excellent each time.”

Everyone at the salon can coach each other in ways to make the strongest recommendations. In this way, whenever a client makes an inquiry, everyone at the salon will know how they can respond effectively.

If someone asks about a nail art service, your staff could say something like: “Hasn’t Nancy done a fabulous job? She is such an expert at doing nails! It’s because of all the classes she keeps attending that she’s becoming a real specialist. Her work can be described more appropriately as art! And she’s very good at recommending the right type of nails to fit with her clients’ lifestyles perfectly. She’s very talented!”

Once you have completed the service for the customer who remarked about your hair, make it a point to take her over to the colleague and introduce her. You could say something like: “Why don’t you come along with me so I can introduce you to Lisa. She’s the one who did my hair. Lisa, this is Mrs. Smith. She just complimented me on my hair colour and I’ve told her how amazing you are. Mrs. Smith, why don’t you discuss what you have in mind with Lisa and let her wave her magic wand? I know Lisa will be able to come up with some excellent ideas for your hair. I will leave you both together.”

This is an excellent example of how this situation can be handled properly. While coaching your staff on making suitable introductions, you should set up a procedure that should be followed consistently. They should start with introducing you both and bring up the customer's interest. The staff member should pay you a compliment and then have the customer sit down so that you both can discuss the services and offer a consultation.

Transform Telephone Inquiries into Clients

Every salon receives practically dozens of phone calls every month from potential customers who wish to inquire about the services. A large proportion of these calls are usually mishandled, causing a great amount of value to slip through. Out of every ten calls, seven or eight should get converted into appointments.

The people who call are doing it for one reason only—because they are looking for salon services. We have on offer what they want to buy. We lose many of these opportunities because we are not completely aware of the opportunities we are being presented with and how we should take advantage of them. It is very important that we learn to consider the phone call as a buying signal. The callers will ask questions that are buying signals, the most common probably being, “How much will this cost?” Some salon staff have, unfortunately, linked this question with rejection. People ask for the cost simply because they have no idea about what else they could ask.

Respond To the Price Question with Confidence

The best approach for dealing with price questions is not to disclose it before building value for the service first. The fact is that people have to be informed about the true measure of value of what they will receive for every dollar they spend. Simply throwing out a number without understanding what will be received in exchange is like giving inadequate information. Since the client has incomplete information, they are most likely to say no.

If you have developed the habit of telling the price for any service without building value appropriately, the majority of your conversations must have ended unproductively. This means that you have placed yourself in the information booth role, instead of which you should take on the role of appointment setter. Use techniques which can make you an effective appointment setter.

While dealing with a client inquiry on the telephone, ignore the price question the first time. You could pretend that you didn't hear it. Acting as an efficient appointment setter, you may need to get some information. Ask questions and create an impression. The fact of the matter is that the caller's primary concern is not the price. Their main concerns are how they will be treated, whether they will be comfortable and how friendly are you and the staff. Just blurting out the price does not get the job done. You have to engage the client in a conversation, build up a rapport and get their defences down.

Transform Walk-In Visitors into Clients

Another very important thing is to turn walk-in visitors into customers. Your goal has to be that every nine out of ten people walking into your salon must make a transaction before leaving. Unfortunately, a large proportion of walk-in clients are lost due to mishandling of the interaction. Since these people are actually looking for products and services, it is quite disappointing that they walked into your salon and then left without availing your services. You couldn't possibly ask for a stronger buying signal. Walk-in customers represent the opportunity to increase income, build clientele and improve your methods with prospects that come your way.

Increase Walk-In Traffic

Since you want to encourage potential customers to walk in, work towards increasing these numbers. While some places are more naturally appropriate for attracting walk-in business, several very simple techniques can be used to increase these numbers. Something as simple and uncomplicated as keeping your salon door open can encourage people to walk in. Another idea that has proven its effectiveness is setting up a sandwich board sign in the hall or on the sidewalk announcing, "Complimentary image and hair consultations available today." Add the words 'walk in' with an arrow. You may want to place such a sign in a place where people on foot have to actually walk around it.

Get Out From Behind the Desk

As soon as anyone walks in asking how much your services cost, understand that they are there to acquire services. Work towards increasing these walk-ins and converting most of them into sales. Discussions about prices for various services and products from behind the reception counter are not very effective. While answering a walk-in client's questions, you need to move away from the desk or counter and take a position beside them. Use similar techniques to those used for telephone inquiries. Ask them if they need the service for themselves. Is this their first visit? What prompted them to visit your salon? When you have some basic information to start with, you have succeeded in making the client the centre of attention and are building a rapport.

Your next goal has to be to get the potential client into the salon section for a consultation. Say something like, "Please accompany me to the consultation area so that I can discuss some excellent ideas that will create the image and style you want."

Advertising, Marketing and Promotion

Salon Marketing

Marketing is often misunderstood as a term. In its wide-ranging definitions, marketing includes every aspect of running a business. Some of these aspects include decisions about selecting the location, choosing the kind of services on offer, interior decorating, employee hiring, buying products and equipment, planning advertisement and setting prices. In short, your marketing plan includes everything which goes into providing services to your clients.

When you started your salon business, you must have believed that you could offer a desired and much needed service to your community. You also must have expected people to pay a suitable price for your services. This simple and uncomplicated scenario is the foundation for all principles of marketing.

The first step must have been deciding which services you would be offering to your community, the best possible setting for excellent performance by your staff and the appropriate pricing of these services—which would be good value for their money for customers. To make certain that the community members use your services and pay for them, you ensured that their expectations should be fulfilled in a satisfactory manner so that they would come again in the future. If all your decisions at every stage were successful, you must have made money.

An inherent part of basic business operations are simple marketing procedures, such as those you practice in your salon. Nevertheless, to make your business successful, you must pay special attention towards the complete marketing plan. You have to be aware of all the things you are doing, and what you aren't doing, for enhancing the environment where your services are offered.

The Marketing Plan

Based on all marketing principles, the basic points to take into consideration while devising your marketing plan may be divided into four important areas, namely the four Ps: price, product, promotion and place.

The Product

Before you place a product in the market, you must conduct extensive research into developing the product and related accessories. Comprehensive product planning includes the whole investigation process that must take place during the development of a new product.

The essential steps include the following:

- a survey of consumers' needs
- design
- meeting the buyers' expectations
- determination of final needs
- the brand's name
- packaging
- services which complement the product

Your product is not only a physical object for a client, it is also a physical product that completes a need and suits a purpose. Numerous fantastic products fail because, although they are clever products, no-one needs them.

Product development involves an ongoing process. Manufacturers have new products, those at the height of their maturity and other products that are in decline. All these products experience lifecycles which start and end quite quickly.

In the tanning business, quartz lamps were the first tanning systems used very widely. They were initially used to treat diseases, yet later they were selected for beautification and recreation. Like many other products, Quartz lamps went through an era where they were very popular and then went towards a decline. The modern tanning equipment started with the use of UVS lighting systems being introduced. These products have passed through many phases since then. Refinement of old ideas and new models are continually being added to new tanning equipment. With the passage of time, these systems become more reliable and efficient. Just as a toy is the product at a toy store, a plant is the product at a plant store, at a salon, your product is what you sell—a tanning session or other types of ancillary services offered by your salon. Although a service is not a tangible or concrete product, it is nonetheless a marketable product.

Any large corporation that decides to start production of any new product conducts extensive research to establish the features that will attract the desired consumers to buy it. In the next step, the corporation sets out to design the product that will incorporate the features which can be attractive to its target market.

One very important element of product marketing is selecting the age group and profile that you are targeting. Are you offering services to the under-30 age group, women between the ages of 30 and 50 or retired women? Perhaps you wish to attract professionals on their way home from work or on their lunch breaks. It is quite possible that you plan and offer services to all these various people in one facility. However, the wants and needs of every group are likely to be quite different.

The people in the younger age group are likely to be receptive towards tanning and other beauty and fitness services. However, you may have to perform extensive personal selling to get them hooked onto other ancillary services available at your salon.

The second group, namely the professionals on lunch breaks, are likely to be pressed for time. If they do come in, they won't have time to avail services on the spot, so don't push for that. They are more likely to make appointments well in advance for tanning sessions. You may offer them other services that require shorter time spans. For those on their way home, time constraints may not be an issue. After a usual busy work day, many of the professionals may consider a stop at the salon to be a good way to unwind. While a 10-minute bed or a quick tanning booth could be the best option for people with a time constraint, a slower bed accompanied by some good music could be the right product for those looking for end-of-the-day relaxation.

While putting together and re-assessing your salon's product line, you must visualize the potential customer for each product and service and then find ways to customize it for each audience. Some services may be attractive for a specific audience while others may not.

Price

Price is one of the most important factors for companies because it represents the power of the marketplace and logic. Every product has to be sold at a sufficiently high price for the company to earn a profit, yet suitably low to attract consumers to make a buying decision. A producer usually takes a number of factors into consideration while structuring a final price:

- production cost
- consumer attitudes towards price
- the competitors' pricing
- laws governing fair pricing
- pressures in the industry

One basic rule for financial success is not to sell products regularly at prices far less than the costs. This does not mean that you should never offer free promotional sessions for boosting your potential customer base, but it shouldn't be done too frequently.

There are several ways of attracting clients into a salon. While figuring out what every session will cost, add all the costs to be incurred during a month and then divide the amount by the number of sessions to be offered. Take into account every possible cost, such as space, utilities, rent, maintenance, payments for machinery and payroll. This will give you a fairly accurate cost per session. Add the desired profit amount and the outcome is your target price.

There is a possibility that your target price may not be achievable due to several market conditions. Your competitors may be charging a lower amount for similar or identical services and you may have to distinguish your salon's services to make the desired profit. During the early boom phase for tanning salons, price wars were very common and literally drove many salons out of business. The marketing rule at work was that the more the volume of business was offered at a below-cost price, the greater was the harm caused by it.

The maximum price for any service or product varies according to the region. Generally, the market price stabilizes at the value established by the community collectively. If all salons in your neighbourhood are charging \$7 per session, it may be quite difficult for your salon to charge more, with the only exception being if your service is perceived to be special or better than your competitors in some manner.

An example could be first-rate services offered in a very elegant environment. If you are able to communicate your product's unique value to the right clients, it may be possible to convince them that the difference in your offerings is worth the higher price.

Pricing Strategies

There are several ways to set prices of products and services. Loss leaders usually accept loss on some products in the expectation that consumers will come in and buy other products which will allow the retailer to earn a profit. Some salons try this for the short-term and offer low-priced services, later making up on the shortfall with expensive packages.

Sometimes the unit cost of a product is negotiable, which is known as flexible pricing. This means that the manufacturer can sell their product to various levels of buyers at various prices. An example could be if the manufacturer sells equipment to the wholesaler at a lower price, but at a higher one to a salon. Therefore, the same product is available at two different prices, but one pricing exists for each market.

Multiple product prices are similar to quality discounts because the more someone buys, the lesser the price they have to pay per product. Penetration pricing and skimming are two effective strategies for pricing. Skimming is gaining more profitability from one item or with less competition. Such pricing policies change very quickly if the demand for a product decreases or if a competitor enters the market. Penetration pricing involves charging a very low price with the expectation of making up with dramatic sale volumes. A lower profit margin offers substantial benefit to the consumers and discourages competitors.

Both strategies, penetration and skimming prices, have been used in tanning salons with varied results. Initially, there weren't too many salons and little competition. Therefore, these salons gained benefit from skimming prices and maximized profits. As too many competitors entered the industry, they were forced into competitive pricing wars. The new salons tried penetration pricing, yet they found it quite difficult to retain heavy client loads while maintaining sufficient profit margins.

Place

When a manufacturer has decided what they will manufacture and the relevant pricing, they must get their product to a place where potential buyers will buy it. Some of the considerations for product placements include the following issues:

- Where are customers likely to shop for this product?
- What is possibly the best location?
- Does the location influence the quality of the product's appeal?
- Will consumers be aware of where to look for the product?
- Is there another location that has been overlooked and could be suitable for this product?

The location chosen by the manufacturer must have one main quality—it should meet the clients' expectations. Consumers tend to buy products similar to the ones they bought previously by looking for them in the place where products are grouped by category.

While going through the process of choosing a location for a tanning salon, the owner has to make a difficult decision. The location should be such that attracts the largest number of tanning clients. Point of purchase exhibits and attractive display shelves inside the salon will signal to the customers that they have the opportunity to buy these products. Many a times, manufacturers provide their products to wholesalers who then distribute these to various locations that can get them the maximum attention.

Ease of availability is very important for consumers. If they do not consider a product or service to be important for them, they are not likely to go out of their way to buy it.

Therefore, once you have selected your primary target customers and what is likely to attract them, you now have to offer your products and services in a location which is convenient for them. Such locations could be near their workplace, home or other places that they visit frequently.

Another important element is that the location should blend with other elements of your marketing plan. A very high rent will increase the cost of your service offering beyond the reach of your target audience, irrespective of the convenience offered by this location. In another scenario, if your salon is located in a seedy downtown area and your target customers are young female professionals, irrespective of its close location to their work place or low pricing, it is not likely to attract them.

The specific requirements of your services must also be taken into consideration while selecting a location. The minimum requirements for space must be fulfilled. If you foresee a successful future for your business, you should ensure that you have sufficient space for expansion.

If your salon's services are unique or are perceived to be more desirable in comparison to those offered by your competitors, you might be able to succeed even while operating from a less convenient location. If your potential clients know about your salon and the special elements of the services you offer, your less convenient location might not cause you any disadvantage.

While selecting your salon's location, you must also consider the overall image you would like the salon to represent. If the salon must look elegant and upscale, it should be located in a similar environment. The décor and style should be correspondingly tasteful. If you already have a salon, you need to be aware of how well the location is contributing towards selling your products. As with any service industry, your salon must always be attractive and clean. It should promote the kind of atmosphere you would like the salon to convey.

Promotion

Creating an interest in the products and services offered by your salon is known as the act of promotion. Several excellent products suffer due to the lack of suitable promotion. Since they are never able to gain the public's focus and attention, they never reach a wide client base. Particular means of promotion consist of the following:

- packaging
- advertising
- personal selling
- branding
- sales manuals
- coupons and premiums
- dealer cooperation, such as displays, rebates, etc.

Salons sometimes don't have a provision for promotion at all, while others have very limited budgets for promotion because they try to make sure that their few dollars are spent very wisely.

Instead of placing an ad in the local newspaper, stop and think about whether the clients you aim to attract actually read it. Also, consider which section would be most suitable for the ad to reach them in the most receptive frame of mind. Think about the most appropriate wordings for the ad that can make them interested in visiting your salon. Perhaps one of the local radio stations could be a favourite for the desired clientele. Another good idea to reach clients would be fliers distributed at the local mall. Direct mailing can make excellent payoffs if you can get hold of a sufficiently specific mailing list.

The fifth most important 'P' that is inherent in decision-making for the other four Ps are the people. The important marketing decisions should always be made after taking the desired clients into consideration.

The four Ps are the basic foundation for any successful marketing plan. Their efficient and effective interrelation may or may not bring about success. However, it does go a long way in the right direction.

Creating an Image

The one most significant resource at a salon is its staff. You may invest thousands of dollars on equipment, décor, freebies and advertisements to attract clients into your salon, yet if they do not receive the right treatment, they will never return. No salon can subsist without repeat clients.

There can be no better promotion for a salon than helpful, attractive and courteous employees who ensure that every client has an enjoyable visit. We've all been to restaurants with waiters who ignored us, or stores with poorly informed sales staff. Neither of these leaves a favourable impression, and this is not what you want your clients to feel about your salon.

Having the perfect staff begins with the hiring process. Choose the staff for your salon very carefully, selecting only healthy, friendly and attractive looking personnel. The business at a tanning salon is based on vanity. The more appealing your staff is to your clients' sense of beauty, the more helpful it will be for your business. Let your employees use the tanning and other salon equipment for free. This holds two advantages: firstly, your staff will look more attractive; and secondly, they will become more efficient about how the equipment works. Both factors will provide immense benefit to your salon.

Hire well-trained staff or provide sufficient training to ensure that your staff members have the required expertise for the services they provide. Most of your clients may not have detailed information about how the services work, or what any of the services are expected to do. These clients will have a greater degree of comfort if your staff members are able to answer all their questions confidently and correctly.

Finally, you must offer incentives to your employees to promote your salon's services. Try offering a commission of a few dollars for each new client introduction into the salon or for getting an existing client to use a new service. This is one of the most economical ways of increasing your cash flow.

The salon's existing clients are another excellent resource for promotion. If you have not been doing it so far, offer them incentives for referring acquaintances and friends to your salon. You are likely to be missing out on an extensive network of probable clients.

Salon Location

Your salon's location is one of the most critical decisions. Industry experts state that the location of a salon is perhaps the single most important element that contributes towards its success or failure.

You may have heard all about the significance of location. Being aware of this, companies like Burger King and McDonald's invest huge amounts of money on conducting research to provide them with information that they require before reaching a final decision.

Most of us in the salon business do not have the luxury of spending huge sums of money on conducting a study to choose the location for a salon. So then, how should a future salon owner decide the venue for a salon? Is a busy commercial avenue more advantageous for your new salon? No one has the answer to these questions except you. The answer depends on your own objectives, goals and situations.

Nevertheless, there are some guidelines which can help you to make these very important decisions. The goals contained in this section will provide you with all the essential guidelines to ensure the success of your new salon.

Remember that your salon's services are attractive for people who wish to look better, or for those who wish to improve their impression with others and for themselves. Looking good is at the top of their priority list. The better your salon looks, the more confidence these clients will have in your services. They will feel they are going to get the maximum value for their money.

The five elementary factors you must look for while choosing your business location are:

1. The population density – You need to look at the total number of people in the general population of the area, and the proportion of these that are your potential clients.
2. The population income – Of course, the people who are likely to form your client base includes those with high disposable income. People with higher disposable incomes are likely to have more free money, and probably more time, to enhance their appearances.
3. Competition – Although it is unlikely that you would select a location right next to another tanning salon, there is no rule which says that a competitor may not open a salon a few blocks away. As indoor tanning gains popularity, increased competition is

unavoidable. The best protection against any number of competitors is having a well-respected, ongoing business that has a firm foundation of outstanding equipment and exceptional service.

4. Target your audience – If your goal is to attract an upscale clientele, your location has to be in a classy neighbourhood. If your target clients are students, you should choose a location near several high schools or a local university. Just make sure that you are certain about your potential clients and it will be comparatively easier for you to choose the site with an abundant number of these people. Remember that your location is your key factor for the success of your salon.
5. Choosing, leasing or buying a building – While determining the building size, you will have to consider the amount you are willing to invest. You also need to take into consideration the quantity of equipment you will require to operate profitably. Before you lease, buy, or build your salon, always contact the appropriate local offices for verification of all building codes, zoning ordinances, etc. Before signing a lease, it would be wise to acquire legal assistance.

Salon Layout and Design

The retail world pays an immense amount of attention towards the packaging and presentation of the products. You may be aware of the fact that snack manufacturers spend huge amounts to determine the perfect look for their bag of chips by determining exactly how much air should be used to puff up the bag. Clothing manufacturers generate tons of display tools every year to sell their brands successfully.

The interior and exterior décor and design of your salon influences the buying decisions of every client just like the packaging of a consumer product influences its target audience.

As a client walks into your salon, several elements will contribute towards creating that very important first impression. Nearly every element in the salon will play a part in discouraging or encouraging initial business from every probable client, and also on the possibility that these customers will come again. While determining your facility's features, make choices with a sense of purpose. Whether you are planning your salon from scratch or remodelling it, select materials for particular reasons. Some very important things you must take into consideration for the salon's design include the layout, space utilization, furnishings and décor, use of colour, lighting and environmental control. A successful fusion of all the factors will result in a salon which presents a positive image of tanning as a pleasant and healthy way to feel and look better.

Your salon's first and best feature should be space. The appropriate use of space can help clients walk through the salon, improve their mood and enhance their overall perception of the facility. Misused space will hinder their passage, make their mood worse and reduce the level of comfort—creating a negative impression with them regarding the efficiency of the salon, perhaps even without them being aware.

The complete layout of the salon must be planned to facilitate movement within the facility. One effective layout is the island arrangement, where the reception is located in the centre

of the salon which enables clients to access the front desk quickly and easily. This setup also makes it easy for the manager to monitor and observe operations.

Salon reception areas must always be planned keeping in view the accessory displays. The waiting sections have to be very comfortable and have some kind of diversion, such as newspapers, magazines or a television.

Suggested Further Reading

- ✓ *Successful Salon And Spa Management: :Published by Delmar Cengage Learning (2011-02-11) author Tezak, Edward J.*