



Our experts answer an array of questions about every aspect of running a successful salon or spa business

How do I enforce cancellation fees when working as a home-based therapist?

When clients don't show up it can have a huge impact on your livelihood. As lovely as your customers are, they won't spare a thought for your business if their priorities change and they can't make an appointment. However, there are four ways you can reduce cancellations and no-shows in your business:

1. Have a non-refundable booking fee

This secures the client's appointment. It could be a percentage of the treatment or the whole value, it's up to you. If clients don't comply with your policy then they forfeit the fee. However, do not use the word "deposit" because you have to refund these.

2. Put a cancellation policy in place

Make it clear on your website, price list, social media and when taking a booking over the phone that you have a cancellation policy. It's at your discretion how far in advance they need to cancel but anywhere from 24 to 72 hours is advisable.

If the client cancels their appointment within your policy's time frame then the booking fee can be transferred across to their next treatment or refunded. If they cancel after the time your policy states, then they lose their booking fee and will need to pay it again when they make their next appointment.

3. Send SMS and email reminders

You could argue that it's not your responsibility to manage clients' diaries,

but a quick text or phone call can help reduce no-shows considerably. It's also your chance to potentially upgrade a treatment with an add on.

4. Create a rule that serial offenders can only book in on the same day

Life happens. Sometimes clients will have to work late or their children are sick, so be mindful of this.

However, if you have a client who constantly cancels last minute, tell them they can only book in on the same day due to their busy schedule. That way they won't be charged if they can't make the appointment.

Kerry Beavis is owner of home-based salon The Revive Company in Wixams, a Professional Beauty Regional Awards judge and winner of PB's Therapist of the Year 2016 award.



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What's the best way to boost customer loyalty in my salon?

The fastest and easiest way to increase client loyalty is by improving the quality of the service your salon delivers. When you take care of your clients, they tell others and this has a ripple effect for your business – it's then that you know you have delivered on the quality of service.

When you do this every time, with every client, you'll see loyalty, retention and referrals seriously escalate. A new customer develops an impression about your business in the first seven seconds they are with your therapist and will judge them in 11 ways – cleanliness, courtesy, credibility, confidence, friendliness, helpfulness, knowledge, professionalism, understanding, responsiveness and how they present themselves.

These “judgements” determine whether they will do business with you again, affecting how likely they are to become a repeat client. The decision they make based on these judgements can go one of three ways: they like your employee and therefore like your salon; they dislike your employee and therefore dislike your salon; or they are indifferent.

The last two conclusions are death for your business. Obviously, dislike is bad, but so is the indifferent client because this means they are a temporary customer. Once you make a great first impression on a new

client, you must do everything you can to ensure they leave feeling happy, looking forward to returning and willing to recommend you.

Remember, outstanding customer service is the key to customer loyalty.

Liz McKeon is a beauty business consultant, seminar speaker and author of *30 Days to Beauty Business Success*.



How do I avoid lashes sticking together when applying extensions?

There are a few simple tricks you can do to stop your lash extensions sticking together during application. Firstly, make sure your adhesive is in date as an old one will affect the application process and results of the treatment.

It's also worth contacting your supplier to find out how long the adhesives are suitable for use once opened. You should also wipe the nozzle and close the lid correctly after each use to avoid blocking the opening of the bottle.

Another trick is to check the conditions of your working environment. If the temperature or humidity in your salon is too high or low then the drying time of your adhesive can be altered, affecting application.

Ideal room conditions are in temperatures between 18 to 22 degrees, with humidity levels between 40% to 70%. Use a hygrometer to help you work out the room temperature in your salon and alter it accordingly.

Also, think about how fast you're working. If you're using an adhesive with a drying time of eight to 10 seconds but finding that your lashes are sticking together, then you may want to try a glue with a faster drying time.



Natalie Piper is business development manager for The Eyelash Design Company, which manufactures brands including Lash and Brow Perfect, Hi Brow and Lash FX.



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My tanning clients aren't buying retail products. What am I doing wrong?

A targeted retail strategy can help boost your revenue as well as making you stand out from the crowd. Selling at the end of a spray tan treatment doesn't have to feel pushy, give advice to the client in the same way you would do a friend.

If you have a salon, my top advice is to get creative with how you display your products. Displays should be clean, not crowded, and showcase your bestsellers. For mobile therapists, carry one of each product in your tanning bag ready to present to clients at the end of treatment.

Exclusive discount offers such as a "product of the month" is another great way to showcase your range and get clients into the buying habit. Loyalty cards also make customers feel special and like they are getting more for their money. For example, clients receive a stamp after each treatment and when they accumulate 10 they get to take home a complimentary product of their choice.

Bundling products together, like a gradual self-tan with tanning mitt, at a discounted price is also a good way to shift stock and tempt clients into investing in homecare. Retailing isn't about the hard sell, it's about building that relationship – that like and trust factor, which will keep your clients returning for many years to come.

How do I inform a client about a waxing injury?

It's enough to make any therapist's heart sink; you pull a strip of wax off and realise with horror that it has left behind a nasty bruise or graze. Accidents happen, but it's important to know what steps to take in the event of a mishap.

Firstly, take a deep breath and point the injury out to your client because pretending it hasn't happened won't make it go away. Acknowledging the issue allows you to tackle it head on, preventing problems down the line and stopping your customer worrying unnecessarily.

Calmly explain what's happened and outline what the client can expect to see over the next few days, such as reddening or peeling of the skin. Offer advice on how to treat the injury at home and, most importantly, let them know they can contact you if needed.

I would follow up with a phone call or email a few days later to see how they're doing. In most cases, everything is fine, but this contact is your opportunity to address any lingering issues before they become problems.

Also, note the incident on the client's record card, along with any specific advice you gave them. Your

insurance provider or membership organisation is also a useful port of call for guidance and support.

If something goes seriously wrong or an injury doesn't improve as expected, advise the customer to seek medical attention and notify your insurer to be on the safe side.

Andy Rouillard is owner of Axiom Men's Grooming Salon and The Wax Academy, both in Basingstoke. He has collaborated with Just Wax on a new range of waxing products.



Nina Warden is owner of Be Beautiful Hair & Beauty in Berkshire, which she launched in 2013. She has a passion for spray tanning and has worked in the industry for more than 15 years.



How can I help clients choose essential oils that are right for them?

Essential oils can trigger emotions and memories and are, therefore, very powerful when it comes to daily wellbeing. Ask your client to fill out a detailed questionnaire, giving you as much information about them as possible, before determining which oils are appropriate for their individual needs. Remember to also cover their goals for the session and find out about any allergies or sensitivities.

To help clients understand the physical and mental effect aromatherapy can have, explain how the oils enter the body via three delivery systems - aroma, which goes directly to the brain; by being massaged into the skin, which allows the oils to become absorbed into the bloodstream via hair follicles; and through the respiratory system, as they inhale it.

Offer clients a scent test, allowing them to choose the oil they prefer for their treatment. People are naturally drawn to the scent that will help them most at that time, and allowing customers to smell the oils is also the best way to help them understand how beneficial they can be.

It's also a good idea to give clients a homecare plan, showing them that aromatherapy can fit into their lifestyle in a holistic way - for the wellbeing of their mind, body and soul.



Sharon Hilditch is co-founder and managing director of Crystal Clear and aromatherapy brand Quartz Spa, which she developed in partnership with spa consultant Linda Hall.



I'm a salon owner. What childcare choices are available for my therapists?

Whether you're looking for reliable and affordable childcare so you can get back to running your salon, or you need to advise your therapists about what's available, there are two options you should be aware of: tax-free childcare and 30 hours' free childcare.

To qualify for either scheme, each parent must be over 21, working and earning at least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage for 16 hours per week (that's £125.28 if you're aged 25 or over).

Parents need to open a childcare account and for every £8 they pay in, the Government will pay £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year, rising to £4,000 for a disabled child. The child must be under 12, or under 17 if disabled. Funds in tax-free childcare accounts can only be used to pay childcare providers who are signed up to the scheme.

Three and four-year-olds in England get 15 hours per week (570 hours per year) of free early education or childcare, whether their parents are working or not - schemes vary in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Up to 30 hours' free childcare is available to eligible working parents, but you may have to pay for extras like meals, nappies and trips.

Do you offer childcare vouchers to your therapists? This scheme closes for new entrants in October 2018, but employees already on it can stay on the scheme or switch to tax-free childcare, depending on what's best for them financially.

Hilary Hall is chief executive of the National Hairdressers' Federation, a trade association for beauty, hair and barbering salons.



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