



Perfect Consultations

Taking the time and consideration to provide consultations to your salon or spa clients allows you to go far beyond traditional customer service. When you complete a thorough and meaningful consultation, you will help clients see possibilities for their looks and lifestyle that they might not even be aware of yet. Lauren Gartland is the founder of Inspiring Champions, a business training and coaching company working in the professional beauty industry. Gartland regularly instructs beauty professionals on how to conduct the perfect salon and spa consultation. "Clients don't buy products and services – they buy solutions. You will be able to recommend services and products to your clients that will help provide solutions, while increasing your service and retail sales revenues. You will also be increasing client loyalty and trust, attracting new guest referrals and raising your client relationships to an entirely new level," Gartland notes.

Ask Meaningful Questions

By using a set script to perform a salon consultation, you can go way beyond your normal service and retail expectations. First, prepare a detailed questionnaire to review with each of your clients. Practice with your coworkers or friends until you are comfortable with your technique. Always conduct the consultations for every new client and explain to your current clients that you are beginning a new salon system to improve their service. You will sit with them and fill out the forms yourself, first asking permission. Instruct clients that the purpose of the consultation is to identify their needs so that you can offer the best solutions. Gartland instructs, "Your consultation should include a thorough list of meaningful questions. You will cover all the basics but also you will engage their imaginations to help them see their full potential."

First, hairstylists will have clients rate the condition of their hair, their current haircut, haircolor and hairstyle on a scale of 1 to 10. Have

them rate the performance and results of their current haircare products, as well as their styling tools. List their specific challenges or concerns and rate the effectiveness of their past treatments. Have them rate their level of commitment to addressing these concerns. Ask if they are able to duplicate their hairstyle at home and what it would take for them to be able to? Ask what is the one thing they most want to improve and what would make the day's experience a 10 for them?

Communicate Effectively

Always be clinical, non-judgmental and do not ask leading questions or offer your personal opinions. Remember that hairstyling terms can be very subjective. When identifying haircolor or highlights, always look at color charts, swatches or stylebook photographs to make sure that 'auburn' means the same thing to your client as it does to you. When talking about how much length to cut, hold out your finger and measure the length visually instead of giving a numerical value.

When clients give a subjective answer to a question at the consultation, clarify what they mean. If they stated they want

a 'sophisticated' look, ask them to describe what sophisticated means to them? Write down their answers and repeat them back; then keep on asking 'what else' until the client has really been heard. Every salon and spa professional should use this type of questionnaire to enhance their service. Estheticians, massage therapists and nail technicians need to tailor the questions for their own clients' special needs.

Discover What Clients Really Want

By asking detailed questions that really describe what clients want, they might discover some desires they weren't even aware of

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Continued

before! Ask them *'Do you want your hair to whisper, talk or scream?'* This will really give you some insight into their psyche. Have them list three words that best describe what they want their hair to say about their personality. They may say, 'polished, professional and confident' or 'sexy, youthful and fun.' "Part of your role during the consultation is to help your clients to see the possibilities for their hair and their total image. Answering these types of creative questions will help you to provide them with the right services and products," Gartland notes.

Now you have identified your clients' needs and challenges and discovered some desires. You want them to identify as many as possible, so that you can offer them solution. You will then be able to give them your professional recommendations for services and products. Go beyond technical descriptions to connect with clients on an emotional level. Subconsciously, your clients are asking, What is this? Why are they recommending this, how is it going to work and what will I love or hate about it? While giving your recommendations, use trigger words like What, Why, How and Love.

First, state your recommendation: *'What I recommend is our special deep conditioning treatment.'* When describing why, use the client's own words from the consultation. *'You noted earlier that your hair*

was dry, so this will provide extra conditioning.' When describing how, be precise in your language. *'It will take 10 minutes and be applied at the shampoo bowl.'* Do mention price, but do not linger there – go directly to the love. *'This is \$20 and you will absolutely love the healthy shine it will give you! You're going to walk out of here with hair that is...'* Now use the three words they used to describe their ideal. This way, you have connected with their imaginations to really provide them with answers in an engaging and compelling way.

Repeat the consultations on a regular basis, two or three times a year for haircare clients, so that you can keep up with changes in your clients' lives and needs. Don't worry about your clients turning down your service or product recommendations at the consultation. Often, you are just planting a seed for a service they may want at a later date, such as haircolor, highlights or hair extensions. If the idea of retailing or upselling at the consultation makes you uncomfortable, remember that your goal is never to pressure your client into unwanted services. Gartland concludes, "Your goal is to create self awareness, by showing your clients a vision of what they can become. Conducting a thorough consultation will ensure that your clients feel listened to, taken care of and know your commitment level. They will get added benefits and results, while you will successfully grow your business."



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