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Inspiring Champions

Consultations That Create Success

Going Beyond Customer Service

By Jenny Hogan

As a professional working in a salon, hair replacement center or wig atelier, customer service has a special meaning in your business. You are more than a hairstylist. You are also considered a professional beauty care advisor, confidante and friend. No doubt you have heard many stories from clients about their hair loss, possibly linked to disease or a chronic condition. Your clientele has specialized needs and you are in the unique position to advise them on what they can do to achieve their ultimate look. 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 grow their careers and businesses while also helping clients see the possibilities of what they can become. She shares some of her secrets for immediately boosting retail and service sales, all while providing clients with greater value and service.



clients. You will sit with them and fill out the forms yourself, first asking permission and clarifying that you want to determine their needs. Gartland notes, "Your consultation should include a thorough list of meaningful questions. Instruct the client that the purpose of the consultation is to identify their needs so that you can offer the best solutions." 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 do so? Ask what the one thing they most want to improve is and what would make the day's experience a '10' for them? Always be clinical, non-judgmental and do not ask leading questions or offer your personal opinions.

"By asking detailed questions that really describe what the client wants, you might uncover some desires even they weren't even aware of before! Asking 'Do you want your hair to whisper, talk or scream?' provides a telling answer to their preferences. Talking about hairstyling can be very subjective, so these types of questions help to identify your client's personality and clarify your terms. 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. "The most important thing a hairstylist can do is to learn how to ask the right questions and then listen to the guest's answers," Gartland notes. "The consultation should be full of the right kind of questions that will give you the clarity you need to hit the mark with every guest every time."

Connect With Their Imagination

Part of your role during the consultation is to help your clients see the possibilities for their hair and their total image. Ask your clients for three words that best describe what they want their hair to say about their personality. They may say, 'healthy, natural and down-to-earth,' or 'sexy, youthful and fun.' When clients give a subjective answer to a question at the consultation, clarify what they mean. 'What does healthy hair mean to you?' Write down their answers and repeat them back; then keep on asking 'what else' until the client has really been heard. Now you have identified their challenges. You want them to identify as many challenges, needs and desires as possible, so that you can offer a series of professional wig, hair replacement and haircare solutions! You will then be able to give them your professional recommendations for services as well as additional products that you can provide.

When recommending services and products, go beyond their technical descriptions to connect with clients on an emotional level. "Remember that the journey to the heart is through the imagination," notes Gartland. Your imagination asks, "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. You see how simple it really is?'

Create Self Awareness

Remember that most people buy emotionally, then justify it logically. People will buy experiences and solutions, not just services or products. For hair replacement clients, this may be especially true. They have specific requirements for their hair loss that need solutions and they may also need a little extra TLC. Gartland notes, "Customers will exchange their hard earned money for two things: solutions to problems and good feelings. This is what will keep them coming back."

Don't be afraid to offer additional services that will enhance salon visits, even if clients did not explicitly express a need for them. For instance, it is probably a given that stress is part of their lives as hair replacement clients. Why not offer a relaxing head massage, hand and foot treatment or aromatherapy? Other add-on treatments that would give your clients an additional self-esteem boost could include a makeup touchup, eyebrow shaping or a lesson on creating upstyles for special occasions. "Do not worry about clients saying 'no' when you offer additional services or products. A 'no' today could be a 'yes' tomorrow," Gartland notes. Often you are just planting a seed for a service that a client may want at a later date, such as haircolor, highlights or hair extensions.

If the idea of retailing or upselling makes you uncomfortable, remember that your goal is never to pressure your client into unwanted services. Your goal is to create self awareness, by showing your clients a vision of what they can become. It's a win-win for everyone, as you are giving them enhanced results with a small price increase while greatly increasing your own income over time. Gartland concludes, "Creating an extraordinary client experience will be the driving force for the guest wanting to return for more. Conducting a thorough consultation will ensure that your clients feel listened to, taken care of and know your commitment level. They will not only get added benefits but will learn about possibilities they hadn't even thought of before!"

Inspiring Champions is a business and coaching company offering live training camps, coaching and mentoring services, webinars, audio tapes and educational resources. Jenny Hogan is Media Director at a full-service marketing, advertising and PR agency specializing in the professional beauty business.



800-496-9305

www.InspiringChampions.com