

Expert Advice

The Value of Salon Service Add-Ons: Extras That Count

Victoria Thomas for Beautician List



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Today's salon-customer is most likely a relentless bargain-hunter. You're lucky to have a solid core of loyalists. But many more of today's first time cut and color clients and mani-pedi customers are walk-ins with a coupon.

Is this a bad thing? Not at all. Here's the opportunity: get her to cross your threshold by any means necessary. Then win her repeat business with excellent service and the "something extra" that distinguishes your salon from a million others.

1-On the subject of coupons, groupons and discounts, a word of advice: don't. Once a service is discounted, it's devalued – and it's very difficult to climb back up. However, a raffle, gift certificate or partnership promotion are ways that may attract a customer at a lower-than-full-ticket fare. One technique which maintains the value of your service but extends your reach in terms of new customer acquisition is partnering with one or more other businesses in your area. Consider forming a creative collective with a couple of other like-minded businesses – a fragrance shop, an artisanal bakery and café, a florist, a fabulous card and papers merchant—high-end, specialty retailers who attract quality-conscious shoppers searching for something special.

Then, collaborate to create a “Buy One – Get One” arrangement between all of your businesses. Invite customers to join the collective by sharing their Twitter handles, IM or email addresses to receive special offers (i.e. : “Hey, everyone at Mia’s Nail Salon – stop by Franny’s Cup and Saucer for a free latte refill, today only!”).

2-Don’t give away meaningless tchotchkes—like magnets, low-end pens or scratch-pads—leave that to the real estate agents. No one really wants that stuff. Instead, reward a deluxe service with an extra such as an aromatherapy scalp and neck massage using genuine essential oils and a hot steam towel. When a client is willing to book a few gel or fill appointments in advance, include an extra like a free polish change for a friend.

3-Offer client education –In the case of the above, scheduling regular visits also is an opportunity for education: many clients don’t realize that allowing a nail enhancement to overstay its recommended shelf-life—meaning how long the manufacturer recommends keeping the gel or other enhancement in place on the nail—actually endangers the health of the natural nail, although the client may rationalize this as a money-saving strategy. Why? The long the product stays on the nail, the more difficult it becomes to remove. Encourage your clients to receive regular service so that you may keep an eye on the condition of the natural nail and make any needed safety and health recommendations.

4-Create an immersive experience. You don’t need a huge waiting area. You don’t need to offer a buffet—in fact, we recommend that food and drink not be part of your daily equation. Save the refreshments for special events, and then make them deluxe.

Instead, strive to create a consistently professional and luxurious experience. One thing to consider (and this may surprise you): wear a uniform, and have a team uniform. Consider all-black or all-white. Even if it isn’t technically a uniform, a matched, monochromatic team look communicates integration of purpose and mission. This creates a very different effect than everyone showing up in their random hoodies and team jerseys.

Begin the service with a hot steam towel spiked with deeply refreshing essential oils (Peppermint or Lavender are always winners). Remove the television from your space. It’s distracting and frankly trashy. We recommend offering your client eye-protection during most services, and you should be wearing the same. This may seem like a clinical departure from the disco salon culture of the 1980s—and it is. This level of safety and super-cleanliness is what differentiates a high-tech nail salon from a spa, and what distinguishes your salon from all the others.