

StraightTALKING



Keep marketing - keep going

Liz McKeon discusses the benefits of ongoing marketing

Times are changing and there is much talk about the credit crunch and the economic downturn - however, everything goes in cycles and so will the economy.

Economic downturns are short lived. There has always been money to be made in downturns, so instead of looking out for answers, look inwards: look at your business and how you manage and drive it.

Nothing is missing; it's all just changing. Changing times have prompted salon/Spa owners and managers to explore the structures within their business, and more importantly how they will secure new business in the future.

Many businesses go into a siege mentality when the economy tightens. They cut back on marketing and advertising, and generally batten down. Yet, history shows, companies that maintain (or increase) their marketing during such times are more likely to win a healthier share of the market and come out with even healthier profits.

This is not a time to be unwise with your marketing spend,

instead it is a time for aggressively using 'creative' marketing to accelerate your acquisition of clients.

- Do you want to introduce new clients to your business?
- Do you want to enhance the relationship you have with your existing clients?
- Do you want to increase your 'word-of-mouth' business?

If the answer is 'yes' to these three questions, then start a referral marketing campaign today: all the clients you require for your salon are probably already known to your existing clients!

Chances are you already get new clients by word-of-mouth, but it is probably coming to you randomly and sporadically. Excellent salons and Spas with a Referral System will multiply the outcome, and the business will reap the benefits of growth, at little or no extra cost.

- A Referral System has to be exactly that... a *System*. Systemise the process, measure, and have consequences... keep it going.

- Make it easy for your therapists and receptionists to ask for referrals, as initially asking for referrals is difficult for most people: they feel awkward, uncomfortable, and even fear rejection. So, have a 'prop', such as a script, to take the pressure off.
- Make it easy for the clients to give referrals and the leads will flow. For example, give every client a few business cards for her purse, then she always has your contact details to hand to pass to friends or work colleagues.
- Make sure all your staff know what to do with incoming referrals, treat them like pure gold, never lose a potential new client, or the goodwill of an existing one.
- Acknowledge and thank the clients that send you new business.

Finally, learn to 'market on a shoestring', but do keep marketing. Take action now, be rigorous and smart - optimise your marketing to take advantage of the opportunities that the current climate presents.

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