



Do you find that staff, clients and suppliers get the better of you at work, that you're always the one who draws the short straw and ends up doing things that you would rather not do?

Does this end up making you resentful or unhappy because you feel unable to confront the situation?

Excellent communication skills are the lifeblood of a successful salon or Spa. A good style of management, combined with a positive approach to communication, ensures that therapists and managers understand each other, are more effective, leading to greater productivity, a good working environment and most of all, happy clients.

Assertiveness is an approach to communication that honours your choices as well as those of the person you are communicating with. It is not about being aggressive and steamrolling your team into submission. Rather, it is about seeking and exchanging opinions, developing a full understanding of the issues, and negotiating a win-win situation.

Ask yourself these questions to determine your level of assertiveness:

- Do you feel 'put upon' or ignored in your exchanges with your staff?
- Are you unable to speak your mind and ask for what you want?

Get your message across

Business expert Liz McKeon looks at communicating assertively in your business

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- Do you find it difficult to stand up for yourself during staff meetings?
- Are you grateful when a staff member seeks your opinion and takes it into account?

If you answer 'yes' to most of these questions, you may need to consider becoming more assertive.

Step One:

Recognise different communication styles

- Aggressive - where you win and everyone else loses.
- Passive - where you lose and everyone else wins.
- Passive / Aggressive - where you lose and do everything you can to make others lose too.
- Assertive - where everyone wins.

Step Two:

Condition others to take you seriously

- Always take responsibility for your communication. Use the 'I' word. 'I would like...','I don't agree...','I am uncomfortable with this...'
- Become aware of non-verbal communication signals, which can help you build rapport.
- If someone is talking over you, you can hold up your hand signalling 'stop' as you begin to speak. 'I hear what you

are saying, but I would like to put forward an alternative viewpoint...'

Step Three:

Use positive body language

- Stand tall, breathe deeply and look people in the eye when speaking.
- Instead of anticipating the negative outcome, expect something positive.
- Listen actively to the other party and try putting yourself in their shoes so that you have a better chance of seeking the solution that works for you both.
- Use open questions, allowing others to give you a full response rather than just 'yes' or 'no'.
- Don't let people talk down to you when you're sitting down. If they're standing, stand up too.

Until you get used to being assertive, give yourself time and space to rehearse your responses. For example, you may find it hard to say 'no' to staff, so instead say 'I'd like to think about this first. I'll get back to you shortly'.

An added bonus from learning assertive communication is your confidence levels will be dramatically boosted. Speaking positively and using positive body language will encourage others to take you seriously, allowing you to attend to the business of running a profitable salon.

Liz McKeon is a Business Consultant, Coach and Trainer, specialising in the beauty industry. For further information on upcoming seminars and programmes call **086 386 1243**, www.lizmckeeon.com or see Liz's advert on page 86.

