

selling with samples

Liz McKeon looks at using product sampling to your best advantage

The definition of sample is to 'take a small part or quantity to show what the whole is like'. Are you using sampling to your best advantage and to increase sales?

Or, are you using sampling to replace sales and increase your competition's revenue? If you recommend a retail product to a client and don't ask for the sale, the chances are she will purchase, just not from you! Sampling is a fantastic tool to assist you in selling, providing you have a strategy.

Providing clients with a free sample may be exactly what it takes to turn them into loyal and paying clients. One of the most effective ways to sell new products is to give them away first, especially if it is going to result in repeat purchases or referrals.

Samples can make clients more comfortable with their purchase decision, particularly when you have a premium priced skin care product. Skin care companies provide samples because they recognise that their brands can all be effectively sold through a sample programme.

developing an effective sample process

- **Calculate your cost per sample.**
Track clients receiving samples and the expense involved. Know how much revenue that effort involves against how much revenue it ought to produce. Then compare it to other marketing techniques to determine how effective and productive a sample programme is for your salon.
- **Give an adequate supply.**
Be sure your sample supply is large enough to allow the prospective client to fully appreciate the features and benefits of your product.
- **Be sure the client knows how to use the sample!**

There's no point in your client taking a sample away with them and not knowing how to apply or get the most from the product.

- **Combine samples with other salon marketing.**
For example, you may want to give a sample along with a coupon for a discount on a future purchase. The coupons will allow you to measure your sales results prospects who received samples.
- **Samples can also work for non-tangible products.**
A free trial for a service that will later be purchased on a regular basis is essentially a sample.
- **Don't restrict your sampling to new clients.**
Include long-term clients, for example give samples of items you have been selling a while that they haven't purchased before. This will give them a risk-free chance to try something from you that they may begin buying.
- **Check that samples are converting to sales.**

don't kill sales with samples!

Giving away skin care samples in your salon may be costing you money. They can be retail sales killers because therapists may substitute making a sale to your client with giving a sample if they can. This satisfies their need to be helpful and to have made a product recommendation, but it doesn't make you any money.

Clients love samples and some may come back and purchase a product they received a sample for, but most samples end up unused in the bathroom cabinet. If you are committed to retailing to your clients, don't encourage therapists to go to

the samples first. Instead, teach them how to sell products to their client. Get the sale first, then give samples for the products you want them to purchase on their next visit to your salon.

Record both sales and samples given, then be ready to discuss both products purchased and samples next visit. Presume if they liked the samples, these are the products to purchase next. By doing this you will make more sales, create some profit and have happier clients because they have products they can use that will reinforce their results when they get home.

Samples have a place in your retailing strategy and are great when used properly, for example, samples are the perfect way to overcome a client's objection based on them having 'sensitive skin' or 'allergies to lots of product'. Simply offer to give the client a sample or two, if necessary, of the product when she makes her purchase, and assure her that if she uses the samples on her skin and finds the product to be inappropriate, she can bring her purchased product back into the salon for an exchange or refund.

Educate your clients. Always support every skin care treatment with a written prescription sheet so they are more likely to continue purchasing with you in the future. Remember, the client will buy anyway, you just want her to buy from you, not your competition.

When making Christmas gift sets, include samples to introduce more products and to promote full size purchases in the New Year. When asked to provide spot prizes for local events, use sample packs combined with your salon brochures to reach greater numbers of new clients and to promote your services.

Use the samples that your suppliers provide you wisely and make sure that they help you to increase retail sales at every opportunity.

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