

Relationship Based Salon Marketing

How to get more clients,
visiting more often,
for longer.

attract
nurture
reconnect

by Colin Shove

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2021

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Relationship-Based Salon Marketing method

Despite what we are told about the success (or failure) rate of small businesses most salons do not fail. What actually happens is the owner gives up. They get tired of the daily struggle of getting the right team, building up their clientele and when they do, keeping them. So much so that they power through for a few years and just stop.

Salon professionals like to make people happy, they go above and beyond to continually try to impress. Sometimes to their own detriment. Asking themselves questions like, “what do I need to do more of?” is not always the correct approach. Often it is what you remove that makes all the difference.

On average independent salons have approximately five in the team including the owner. Typically the owner generates more than 70% of the total revenue. So, if you own and work in your own salon the chances are you work 4 times harder than most of your team.

It is quite likely you struggle to find time to focus on marketing (or anything else). In fact, you may make some of your most important decisions in those precious few minutes between appointments.

The internet is full of marketing “gurus” promising easy, quick wins and massive progress. We hear anecdotes about “casting nets” and contacting loads of people.

I recommend a different approach. My clients are just like you and often time-poor. Leverage relationships which I believe are your most valuable asset. So, I created the Relationship-Based Salon Marketing method.

My name is Colin Shove and by way of introduction:

I started my career as a hairstylist and one of my first business ventures (if you exclude the car washing, dog walking and lawn mowing) was a business called Freelance Hair Design.

Some people may have considered this nothing more than earning some pin money by cutting people's hair in their kitchen in my spare time after work, but I like to think of it as My First Business.⁷

It did progress, and after a while I started a marketing campaign, initially, I invested 75p a week by placing a postcard in the local shop window and over time graduating to a lineage ad (a whopping £15) in the classified section in the Evening Argus. I remember buying a couple of dozen cheap styling sprays from my local wholesaler and offering one free with every first appointment.

So I kept trying things and if they worked I did them again. Every time I visited someone's house I imagined opening my own salon and being in charge of my own destiny. I became fascinated by business and in particular the salon business.

One day a client called Sandra said something to me (which I am sure you have been told many times), "you have the most amazing memory, I can't believe you remember so much about me".

She was right, I did remember a lot about her because I liked her. I looked forward to seeing her but hadn't realised at that point how much it impacted the experience.

I remember thinking how brilliant it would be if all of my clients were like Sandra.

From then on I started a file on every client, but not just for colour notes. I would record information important to them, their partner and children names, pets names. If they had a holiday booked I would make a note of when and where they were going. I would send cards on their birthdays and flowers on anniversaries.

Before long I got more clients. The more I "remembered" about my clients the "more like Sandra" they became and in time I even had a number of clients (just like Sandra) who would book an afternoon or evening session every 2 or 3 weeks and transform their kitchens into a salon where I would look after their friends and relatives. A couple of years later I opened my salon in Brighton.

Even with my marketing master plan of the postcard in the shop window, the classified ads in the Evening Argus and the free cheap styling spray, the one thing that accelerated my progress above everything else were those client files. I leveraged relationships.

As a direct result, I built strong client relationships, which enabled me to build a salon business.

I became even more fascinated with how to optimise salon businesses and started a software business.

And today am still fascinated by the Salon Business

Touchpoints

Touchpoints are pieces of information stored in a client profile. They can be used to filter or segment clients into very specific groups so when you create campaigns your message will always be relevant to the person receiving it.

This has two main benefits: the first is that clients receive communications relevant to them which will avoid the “message fatigue” setting and secondly they are more likely to engage and respond.

Examples of some touchpoints are Booking date, service, product and lifetime visit etc. There are many more which we will cover later.

Using these examples You could create a campaign aimed at clients who had their last booking yesterday, had a colour service, did not buy a retail product and have visited your salon more than three times. Translated more clearly to regular clients who had a service where home care would be advisable, didn't make a purchase and are regular to your business.

When clients receive communications like these they know three things:

- It's Personal: it is addressed to them personally by name (it's not junk)
- What's in it for them? What are they going to get?
- Next Steps - What do they do now? For example, call you, book online now, or leave a review.

Make all your campaigns personal, relevant and with a clear call to action routinely and enjoy predictably higher response rates.

The Framework

Attract - Nurture - Reconnect

Separate your campaigns into three groups:

There is more value in creating smaller, more selective marketing campaigns than lumping loads of clients into one. You will get far more value from sending two or maybe three smaller campaigns. Drilling down to ensure that when your client receives your communication they know that it is meant for them and that it is of interest to them.

We use **Attract**, **Nurture** and **Reconnect** as a framework.

Attract - Campaigns in this category are aimed at winning new business and then marketing to new clients who have visited up to two times. Making the most of digital tools like Google Reviews and Facebook Ads to win new clients as well as Personalised Referral Schemes. When new clients visit, implement a New Client Retention Sequence and ensure they return.

Nurture - when a client has visited three or more times we classify them as regular. We create campaigns to ensure regular clients visit more frequently, spend more, stay with you for longer and recommend more clients.

You don't know all of your clients but all of your clients know you - there is only one of you so it's easier for them to remember. Ensuring all of your clients feel like they are known is a crucial stepping stone to building a big clientele. Everyone likes to be remembered and this is where "touchpoints" make it possible for you to speak to everyone like they are your favourite client. Remember it is the clients who know you and you don't yet know who will have the greatest impact on your clientele.

We are often told that someone visiting the salon for the first time must be unhappy with their last salon experience. More often though they were just a bit bored and wanted to try something new, and associate you with what they have always had. So go somewhere new to get something new.

Reconnect - inevitably some clients stop visiting. A Reconnect Sequence will entice many clients back before they establish a relationship elsewhere. As the saying goes “it costs less to keep an existing client than to win a new one”.

You will read about how contacting your clients at the optimum time can trigger a good proportion of returns when they have gone elsewhere.

Occasionally when I talk with salon professionals about enticing clients who have moved on back to the business they express concern that this will negatively impact their brand or reputation. Making them look a bit needy or even desperate. My response is that you need on average 280 clients per team member to be operating at capacity and if you are at any less than that get over it. A client returning to your business is one client closer to being fully booked. Contact, incentivise and roll out the red carpet.

Part I

Attract



How to Attract New Clients

The following processes will demonstrate how to attract new clients to your business. A constant flow of new clients is a crucial element to ensuring your clientele is continually replenished and continues to grow.

1. Google Reviews

Google is the most powerful search engine on the planet with over 70% of all searches done using it. So if 70% of all people looking for a salon in your area use Google it makes sense for you to rank well.

Google reviews are simple to implement and they enhance your local online visibility exponentially. Put simply, not using Google reviews will drive new business to your competitors (who do use Google) and away from you.

It feels great getting a 5 star Google review. It's social proof, an endorsement to the world that you are good at what you do. They are a marvellous motivator.

Yet on average, UK based salons have less than 25 Google reviews on their Google profile, so there is plenty of opportunity for many of us to thrive using this simple and free tool.

You might have received a 1* rating. This could have been justified and if it is used it is an opportunity to improve, but often it can be from what I refer to as a "Reviews Hooligan", a person with a trail of 1* reviews behind them. These people might get some pleasure from slating businesses online but It's upsetting and damaging. A typical response is to ask our best clients, friends and even relatives to leave glowing reviews and restore our profile to a respectable level. At this point, the Google profile is left alone until the next time.

In addition to a good review being a morale booster. We took two sample groups of salons and ran the same numbers against each. The first sample group was inactive on Google Reviews and the second group routinely requested Google Reviews after a client visit.

Sample 1

- The average percentage of new clients was 7% (1 in 14).
- The average new client retention rate was just under 15% (1 in 7)

Sample 2

- The average percentage of new clients was 17% (1 in 6)
- The average new client retention rate was 47% (1 in 2)

So as well as reviews making you feel good they increase new client rates almost 2.5 times and can triple new client retention.

When a potential client is looking for a new salon and they google something similar to “salon near me” or “hair or beauty salon {city/ region} they are probably going to select one of the first businesses in the list. If they see a stack of 5* reviews this too will drive more people to select that business. Also when your team knows that their clients will be asked to rate their experience with them and they see those reviews going live there is a good chance most of us would ensure that we offered the very best experience we could.

When the most powerful search platform on the planet starts listing your business before your competitors, things change. And the filter behind this has nothing to do with location or ad spend, it's based on what your clients say about you and your team so you can compete on a level playing field against competitors with deeper pockets and higher profile locations.

How to get Google Reviews

Option 1. Ask

Why not just ask? The truth is that we all fear rejection - what if they say no? Or post a bad one?

When Google reviews are organic (we wait for them) you get two types.

- People who think you are brilliant and cannot wait to share it with the world
- The client who had the worst experience (or might just be that “Review Hooligan” in their spare time).

When you routinely ask clients for a review you’ll appreciate how happy most of your clients actually are and how pleased they are to help you.

If it feels uncomfortable, prepare and rehearse a script so you make it easy to confidently tell your client how it will help you to promote your business.

Something like:

“If you are happy with how you have been looked after today it would help me enormously if you would be kind enough to leave a 5* Google review. I am working to grow my clientele and Google reviews help me to attract more new clients”

Option 2. Automate

Doing this manually means relying firstly on your team members routinely asking your clients, and then for your clients to remember to find your google profile and leave a review. Obviously, this is going to be less consistent than an automated system.

Set your software to text or email clients just after their visit requesting a review. Include your Google review URL and make it simple for a recipient to click straight through to your Google profile. If you have the facility, use text as the open rate will exceed an email significantly and time the request to be sent to your client within an hour of their appointment. More people will engage when their visit is still fresh in their minds. This number is increased further when the team member has also mentioned to the client that they will be asked. The easier it is for your client to leave the review the more likely they are to do it.

On average salons doing this consistently see 30% of clients when asked to leave a review and over 90% of reviews left were 4* and 5* ratings.

When a constant stream of 4* and 5* Google reviews are added to your profile every week and Google gets behind your business, the number of new clients visiting your salon will multiply.

2. Referrals

The difference between a “walk-in new client” and a “recommended new client” is huge.

When a client well known to you recommends someone new, they will often tell you about this person ahead of time, sometimes sharing stories about the new client and how they know them. They even overlap their appointments so they can come in together. The new client will be looking forward to meeting you and have confidence that you are a professional and going to meet if not exceed their expectations. It will be easy to have a conversation because even though you haven't met before you have at least one contact in common. If you make recommendations they will be received as good advice and considered appropriately. In short, there is a high possibility that the first appointment with this client will be a good one and a pretty strong chance they will come back.

A client arriving for the first time with none of these assurances and without the same level of confidence is a different prospect. You will have no more information than a name and what they have booked in for. You probably won't have many people in common and if you do you won't know that yet. They will have chosen your salon based on several factors but are probably still a bit nervous about the result they will get today.

They may well be happy with your service and result at the end but it is far more tenuous than the recommended client arriving with comparative excitement and enthusiasm.

You have probably been doing this job long enough to have experienced both situations many times and therefore already know that the referral will be more pleasant and easier to work on. So why not start filling your diary with recommendations?

How to Get Referrals

Option 1 - Ask.

People do business with people they like, which means many of your clients will be delighted to help you.

Asking for something new can feel uncomfortable, it may be helpful to create a script or pitch and rehearse it until it feels familiar and you are confident saying it. Explain that you are keen to attract more clients and would be very grateful to your client if they recommended you to a friend, relative or colleague.

Most (if not all) appointments begin with you asking your client what they would like done? Because this is so routine it feels completely normal. The only reason asking for a referral does not, is because we do it so infrequently. Introducing a referral request into your normal conversation will feel just as natural once it too has been included in your routine. Also, the satisfaction of receiving referrals feels great.

Something like: "I am working on increasing my clientele and I would be so grateful if you were happy to recommend someone to me. Would it be ok for me to give you some cards to pass onto anyone you think might enjoy me looking after them?"

Make it clear what you would like your client to do and also why it is important to you.

Option 2 - Automate

Use software to ask for referrals by text and email.

Configure your software to send a message requesting a referral periodically, sending a request after every visit will lose impact quickly and clients will start to ignore it. Whereas the same message sent every few times will return better results.

Some salons get a higher number of referrals when they incentivise both the existing client and the new one. Something like “Recommend a Friend and when they visit us for the first time we’ll give them X and when you come in next enjoy Y”.

Make your incentives something that would be attractive to the recipient. If you are uncomfortable giving incentives then it will be better just to ask for the referral and remember to say thank you.

Option 3 - Signage

The salon and reception area. Sometimes teams struggle to ask for referrals. If this happens in your business, display something like “Ask me about our Recommend a Friend Offer” on the mirror and get the clients to ask them. Flyers and cards are also well tried and tested.

Option 4 - Say Thank you

We all like being remembered, ensure you store the name of the clients recommending you and send a message or card thanking them for their recommendation. Make a note and repeat this verbally when your client next visits.

Option 5 - Tags

Add tags to client records to make it simple to send thank you messages and to display to the team member that your client has recommended you.

Option 6 - Make it public

Add your referral scheme to your social platforms and regularly create posts thanking and tagging clients for recommending you.

Add a section to your website to promote your referral scheme and include a form for clients to add contact details of clients they recommend. You can then either call the recommended client or send a “you were recommended by -----” type message.

Create “Ask us about our Referral scheme” email footers and signatures, add information about it on your price lists, business cards and till receipts.

Make your referral scheme very public, keeping it front and centre in all communications. Each action may have a small impact but the combined effect will add to your warm recommended clients and see your client numbers grow.

Facebook Ads

Facebook Ads are a powerful tool to attract new clients.

You can create Ads to reach an audience within a small radius of your salon address which enables you to keep costs under control and affordable for most businesses.

Your audience can be specified by many factors including gender, age, location and interests. They also have the facility to create “lookalike” audiences. If you have a database of clients you can upload that database and ask Facebook to create an audience of people just like the rest of your clients. If you are promoting to potential new clients you are then able to exclude people already in your client list from seeing your ads.

When you create a Facebook ad it will give you the opportunity to link your Instagram account as part of the process and distribute ads across both platforms.

Lead Ads

Lead Ads are a powerful way to get client details and reach out to them. For example, you could run an offer on Facebook promoting a product or service and your “leads” would need to complete a short form with their contact details to receive the promotion. This enables you to then add those contacts to your database, tag them (another touchpoint) and follow up.

Brand Awareness

Create brand awareness by promoting content about your salon.

Share images and videos of your work. If you align your business to a charity, share the contributions you have made and why you support it. Promote whatever you would like to be known for.

The beauty of these types of ads is that they can be run at a very low cost per day and just keep a steady trickle of awareness on potential clients feeds.

Engagement

Like, Comment & Share Campaign

Competitions are a fun way to generate engagement. Create an ad that looks good and has a very clear call to action in the image (as well as the text). Along the lines of, like, Comment “yes please” and share this post for a chance to win £250 at Your salon!

Run the campaign for ten days, and when the promotion is finished pick a winner.

Get your winner to pose for a great photo when they visit, you could even have a super-fast video of their transformation and use that as your next ad.

Message all of the other people who entered your competition to message and offer a “consolation prize” of a voucher or gift to redeem at your salon in the next 4 weeks.

This type of campaign can be reused over and over again and is a great way to create a buzz around your business.

How to Retain New Clients

Once you are routinely attracting new clients to your salon your job is to ensure that the highest percentage are retained and become regular clients, staying with you for years to come.

A new client is still very vulnerable and the most likely to not return. Once enticed through your door you need to work hard on that first experience ensuring everything that should be done is done. Even then the relationship is tenuous making retention campaigns vital.

Consider a client new until they have visited for the third time. Up until that point, use Attract campaigns to maximise new client retention.

Your Tone of Voice

The tone of voice (in these terms) means to adopt a tone appropriate for the relationship stage your client is at. Ensure any content from your references that your client is new to the salon and adopt this tone.

For example: “Hi Jane It was wonderful to meet you this afternoon” is preferable to “Hi Jane It was wonderful to see you this afternoon” because the second message (albeit with only one different word used) has a completely different feel and could be sent to anyone whereas the first example clearly shows your client is new.

This may sound like semantics but will actually make a world of difference. It will not feel like just another text or email blast, it will feel relevant and be obvious it is intended for the recipient.

Email or Text?

According to recent research by Mailchimp, the average clickthrough rate of an email is 1.92%, translating to less than 1 in 50 of your emails being opened and read.

While that is nothing to sniff at if your goal is to keep a huge database of thousands of people warm, if you're a salon owner promoting to a client base of hundreds and looking to fill next week's diary, it might not be good enough.

The statistics look very different when we compare this with text messages:

Research shows The average open rate of a text message sits at about 99%, with 97% of messages being read within 15 minutes of delivery. And this makes sense, doesn't it?

You may well leave unread emails for some time, but if you get a text, you probably read it, and so do most of your clients.

Given that our aim is to interrupt clients to win attention, text messages will trump email in most cases.

The good approach is: if you are looking for a quick response from your campaign ie; fill space in the next few days use a text message and if you are looking to share information in the longer form with less urgency around a response use email.

Regardless of which communication method you opt for, the priority is that you make a start and retain more of your new clients. Anything is better than nothing and until you start implementing a new client retention strategy your clients will be in charge, and they are far less qualified to run your salon at its maximum capacity than you.

Ideal Message Content

Personalise - What's In It For Me - Next Steps

Messaging used correctly will elevate your clients experience with more of your clientele being impressed with how you operate as a business and want to do business with you.

It's essential that when you do contact clients you make your communications contain three elements.

- Personalise - insert your clients every time
- Clearly state what is in it for them - why is your client being contacted. Is it relevant?
- Include their next steps or call to action in every message.

Ensure your selections are specific, selective and relevant, for example; make certain that if you say you are looking forward to a client rebooking that they have not already done so. "It was lovely to meet you" is a lovely touch to a client you just met but sending the same content to a client who has previously visited appears sloppy and will have the reverse effect.

Our message templates are available for free at thesalon.app for you to either copy or edit. Start sending messages to your clients and track responses. Try different wording or offers to see which approach gives you the best outcome. When you hit on the right formula for you, repeat.

New Client Retention Sequence

Here is the new client retention sequence we recommend. It is a simple six-part process:

- **Follow up immediately after Visit #1**
- **Follow up and Remind 28 days after visit #1**
- **Follow up, Remind and Incentivise 90 days after visit #1**
- **Follow up immediately after Visit #2**
- **Follow up and Remind 35 days after visit #2**
- **Follow up, Remind and Incentivise 90 days after visit #2**

We classify clients who have visited less than three times as new clients. Our data shows that unless proactive action is taken on average less than 15% of clients visit more than twice, meaning that more than 4 out of 5 new clients never become regulars.

Implementing the New Client retention sequence increases this to almost 50%, more than triple the number of clients becoming regular and going on to become part of your core clientele. The obvious benefit here is that the lifetime value increases from one time your average bill to many times that.

In fact today (2021) the average lifetime of a client is 15 visits and the average bill in the UK is £39 making a regular client worth £585 as opposed to a walk-in visiting just once having a value of £39.

Step 1: Follow up immediately after Visit #1

The follow-up message is sent soon after (within an hour if possible) of your clients first visit. Personalise the message by using their name, thank them for choosing your salon for the first time. Give them contact details if they need to speak to you before their next booking and reintroduce the team member (or members) who looked after them.

Send this to all clients, even if they rebooked their second appointment before they left. Use this contact to form a strong client relationship more quickly from the start, demonstrating what clients can expect from your business.

Step 2: Follow up and Remind 28 days after visit #1

Firstly exclude any clients who have either revisited or rebooked since their initial appointment. Trigger this message 28 days after your client's initial appointment, but only to clients who are yet to rebook or visit. Remember we are demonstrating that we are specific and relevant so avoid reminding a client it's time to book when they have already done so.

In this communication, welcome your client again, ensure they are happy and remind them that to get the best from their service now is the time to book their next appointment and re-confirm the team member who took care of them.

Very few clients visit a salon again after their initial visit (15% on average) which makes this a crucial part of this communication. There is little connection with your business after just one visit so reminding them who you are and that you would love to see them again will increase retention.

Step 3: Follow up, Remind and Incentivise 90 days after visit #1

Exclude any clients who have either revisited or rebooked since their initial appointment. Note that we have avoided any type of incentive or offer in our previous communications. In this case, however, we are leaving approximately 3 months before sending our message and some of your new clients will have visited another salon during this time. An incentive at this stage will see far greater engagement than another pleasant courtesy message.

New client retention is a numbers game. There is nothing to be gained from just letting a client go without at least attempting to entice them back to your salon. Some salon owners (and team members) are “Offer adverse”; they feel it can devalue their service. Remember if you convert this client to a regular the lifetime value will be increased from just £39 to £585. What is to lose?

When contacting Include a “great to meet you” welcome, remind them that their appointment is now overdue and incentivise them to revisit within a certain timeframe. Adding a timeframe is important as it will add an element of urgency to your offer and avoid your offer being redeemed at some random future date.

Running these three campaigns after your clients first visit will positively impact clients revisiting, but your work is not yet done. Clients sometimes still need some reassurance that you are the best place for them after their second visit. It can take time for relationships to establish and for trust to be built. This is why we expand the engagement process after your client returns for the second visit. It will demonstrate you are serious about providing excellent customer service, it is part of your business DNA.

Step 4: Follow up immediately after Visit #2

Send your communication soon after (within an hour if possible) your client's second visit. Personalise the message by using their name, thank them for returning to your salon. Remind them they can speak to you before their next booking if needed and that you are looking forward to seeing them next time. This is one of the few exceptions where we leave out a call to action. You are demonstrating that by choosing your business your clientele can expect the very best attention to detail. That they are valuable and you will look after them.

Send this to all clients who visited for the second time even if they rebooked their third appointment.

Step 5: Follow up and Remind 35 days after visit #2

Trigger your follow up and reminder communication 35 days after your client's second appointment and exclude clients who have rebooked or visited since their second appointment. Keep your messaging accurate and specific.

Thank your client for revisiting, ensure they are happy and remind them that to get the best from their service now is the time to book their next appointment and re-confirm the team member who took care of them.

Even clients who have visited twice will often feel little or no connection to a business. Ensure you remain in their consciousness when they plan their next salon visit.

Step 6: Follow up, Remind and Incentivise 90 days after visit #2

As before we are waiting approximately 3 months before sending our message and your client may have visited another salon during this time. Therefore introducing an incentive after the second visit will see a higher number of clients returning for the third time.

Exclude clients who have either booked or revisited since their second appointment. Personalise, give a clear what's in it for me the incentive and a call to action where your client is required to book within a timeframe to benefit from your offer.

If it took a year to double your income, when would you start?

Do you think that if you were to start collecting **5* Google Reviews**, implement a **referral scheme** and run a **Facebook Ads** campaign you might attract more new clients? I am hoping that your answer is yes.

Running **New Client Retention Sequences** increases new client retention by more than 50%.

When you have **15% new clients** and **retain 50%** of them the total number of clients visiting you would increase by **50% in one year**.

If you take **£1000 a week** now you would be taking **£1500 per week in a year**.

Play your best team first.

New clients are valuable assets BUT also the most likely not to return. Often they will be walk-ins or passers-by and will be looked after by the next available team member. The team members with the most free time are often more junior or sometimes new to your salon and sometimes (dare I say it) do not have the best attitude.

So our best opportunities for growth (new clients / walkins) are often served by our least experienced staff, which when you look at it objectively seems incorrect.

Consider making new clients a reward? For example, Identify team members with the highest 5-star team members with a 50% rebooking rate are awarded, new clients.

Make New Clients something to aspire to as opposed to being seen as an interruption. Reward your team for being excellent as opposed to available.

Part II

Nurture



Nurture

You may not know all of your clients but they all know you.

Regular clients are the lifeblood of your business. Salons exist and thrive because of repeat business, without it they fail.

Many team members leave because they fail to establish a strong enough regular clientele. They may never admit to that but it's true. A team member who is full or close to it most days will spend their day looking after clients who they like, and who like them, they will have more presence within the business, be listened to more and let us not forget they earn more.

There are two types of people in a business. People who are functional and people who are vital.

Functional people might do a fine job, be reliable and not cause any problems. Sometimes, especially at times when it is difficult to hire the right talent, we tolerate this, accept mediocrity because it is better than nothing. The truth is however that if we could replace these people with people that can do either the same job for less or perhaps a better job we would swap them with little thought.

Vital people are different. They are vibrant, in-demand and not easily replaceable. They build strong regular client bases, rebook like professionals, advise clients on the most appropriate retail, recommend new services and look regularly. They love coming to work because they get to do what they love all day and get well rewarded for it.

The irony is we all have the choice between making ourselves functional or vital. When you identify the elements that separate both categories there are few. To name just a few:

- **Professional consultations to every client**
- **Rebooking clients before they leave**
- **Asking for referrals**
- **Asking for 5* reviews**
- **Keeping up to date notes about things important to your client**
- **Suggesting new services**
- **Demonstrating and recommending retail**

To summarise, if a team member were to emulate the owner and do most of what you do, most of the time they would soon become vital.

It is easy to take some regular clients for granted. We rarely mean to but not all clients have an equal impact on us, some are easier to forget things about, “you know their face you just can’t recall their name” type of impact. These clients may have visited a few times and still not be recognised?

I remember visiting a salon for a meeting. I was early and waited in reception for the salon owner to be available. It was a nice salon with tasteful furnishings, lovely products and the standard of work appeared high. There were a few stylists working and reception was at the front by the door and on this day there was no receptionist. Nothing unusual. It was raining heavily and I was pleased to be in the dry. Soon after I arrived a client walked in for an appointment. I saw the first stylist look over and then continue with his client (clearly not his turn to greet), I then saw the second and third team members do pretty much the same. The last team member called some vague greeting saying she would be long and the client waited. Not for that long, maybe a minute. But a minute can sometimes seem quite a long time.

Shortly afterwards another client walked in. This was a person who felt very comfortable in the salon, saying hello to everyone quite loudly and shaking her umbrella. No sooner had the door closed behind her and two team members excused themselves from their clients and walked overtaking her coat, bags and broly. They addressed her by name and while one seated her the other disposed of the wet coat and set about making a coffee (just how she liked it) and getting the most recent magazine.

Then the team member greeted and smiled at the initial client, took her coat, offered a drink and said she would be seen soon. The lady may have only been waiting twenty seconds longer than the well-known client but in those twenty seconds understood very clearly where she stood in the pecking order.

She was not greeted poorly or kept waiting particularly long but nothing was done to make her feel fantastic and this is why many clients graze from salon to salon until someone treats them like a well-known client.

How many times might a client experience this in your salon? If you are the owner managing a column it will happen less; you know your clients well and are well established but are you sure that everyone in your team is as efficient?

Like the lady in my example, these clients are probably not receiving bad service levels or poor quality work, but they too might be looking to be impressed. It could be the smaller misjudgement or memory lapse, or perhaps they have been coming for a couple of years, always had the same style and fancy a change so look for someone new to get it?

What can you do to make this a rare exception?

Keep it fresh.

Nurture campaigns help you find reasons to speak to your clients about new things and to remind them how important they are.

Use “micro-campaigns,” be very selective and contact small numbers of clients with very specific content which increases response rates significantly. Below I have listed Nurture campaign examples. Give them a try or implement some of your own, but ensure you track the results and if they work do them again.

The goal is to keep regular clients feeling continually appreciated, increase frequency, average spend, client lifetime resulting in referrals.

Remember you might not know all of your clients, but all of your clients know you. Giving the appearance that you do goes a long way towards building longer-lasting client relationships. Be vital!

Nurture Campaigns

Appointment Due Reminders:

How many times has a client arrived for a booking and told you they have been meaning to come for weeks? You can help them to remember to prioritise this with a reminder to your client when they are almost due but have no appointment made yet.

It is a gentle touch and a professional courtesy to your clients. If you have the ability through software to identify how frequently a client visits, contact your client when they are about 90% due. This would be at about 7 weeks for a client with an average frequency of 8 weeks.

The benefit is that you are able to pinpoint exactly when they are due to make an appointment. If you do not have this facility contact clients after seven weeks as this will be a decent catch-all timeframe. Keep your tone light and informal. It is just a quick reminder that it's time to book your next appointment.

Implementing this will see your client feels valued and “known” and your client frequency will increase.

Team Member Holiday Notifications

Re-booking is a crucial element to running a successful column and despite team members knowing this it can still be a challenge to make progress here. We invariably know we are taking annual leave some weeks ahead of time and this is a great way to persuade clients to re-book before leaving.

This campaign uses scarcity to encourage your clients to book ahead. Just like at Christmas when more clients want the same appointments the same is true before and after a team member has a holiday. Contacting clients due to visit around a team members' annual leave will fill their diary before they go and also when they return.

This is a high standard of service to be offering your clients and will also reduce the financial impact of key team members being away.

Contact clients who had their last appointment over the last three months and who have no future bookings in the run-up to and over the dates of the booked holiday.

Birthday Greetings:

Most of us enjoy being remembered on our birthdays. Storing client birthdays and sending a message or even a card goes some way to cementing positive client relationships. This is a very simple process and done consistently will prove to be a valuable tool in your marketing kit. Some salons find offering a gift or reduction adds weight to the campaign, although I have heard from some salon owners that some clients can start to expect a discount and will sometimes even ask if they can use it early.

My preference would be to send a message (or even better a card) wishing your client a happy birthday. A very simple gesture that demonstrates goodwill as opposed to attempting to gain a sale can go a long way. This also avoids clients becoming accustomed to receiving an incentive and “waiting for the offer” before booking. A simple classy gesture goes a long way.

Ratings and Reviews:

As we saw in the Attract section earlier reviews have a really positive impact on your online reputation increasing how many new clients come through your doors. Periodically asking regular clients for a review goes a long way to boosting numbers and maintaining frequency.

Asking your client face to face is brilliant and is a valuable step that will increase engagement when you follow up digitally with a text or email. Ensuring your review URL is included in these messages makes it simple for your client to click straight from their phone.

Typically when salons implement the in-person request followed by a digital follow-up they will see around 30% engagement which is astonishing and again demonstrates the power of a good client relationship.

Thank you for your review

52% of people leaving Google Reviews expect a reply. Google is the most powerful marketing platform on the planet so it pays to play the game. A sincere thank you with a short piece of context is better than a “thanks very much” for good reviews and it is important to be prompt, ideally responding within a couple of days.

For poor reviews regardless of how bad or untrue it is, always respond in a polite and congenial manner. Your reviews are in the public arena as are your responses, make sure they are truthful and show that you genuinely care about reaching a resolution.

Bad reviews with good responses on your part can show in a positive light and you try to fix things if problems arise. A response from the salon owner or another senior team member will carry more weight than a generic emoji.

After Care Message

Some services or treatments may need advice or special care when your client is at home. A simple example of this could be a client who has a colour service and would benefit from using specific aftercare products. Creating a sequence that when a client meets this criteria ie: Has colour + does not buy the selected product will trigger a personalised message recommending the correct aftercare to your client.

These types of campaigns could be applied to several services and treatments and contribute to offering your clients excellent follow-up aftercare and at the same time boost retail sales.

No Show Follow Up

We all forget things. Some Clients will “No Show” & when they do the chance of losing them skyrockets.

No-Shows are infuriating and it's only natural to be annoyed by them. But let us be honest, it is easy to miss an appointment, things happen. If we miss an appointment with someone we have no relationship with we may feel bad but we get over it pretty quickly (sometimes by just going elsewhere). But if we let someone we know down it feels dreadful and can be embarrassing.

As I have reminded you several times we don't know all of our clients but they all know us. Clients feel embarrassed when they let us down. So much so that in some cases they may rather not face us and go elsewhere. If a client misses an appointment follow up. Ideally, call and check they are OK or follow up with a message.

This simple act could win you a client who may well visit many more times (dwarfing the short term cost). As frustrating as this is, there is more to gain more by taking a more empathetic approach.

Client Anniversary

Celebrate client loyalty by remembering their “saloniversary” Create standard emails and or text messages reminding your clients that it’s been another year that they have been visiting and thank them for their ongoing support. A small token, maybe a branded gift card sent through the post is an opportunity to remind your clients how important they are to you.

Cancellations

Things crop up and people need to change things from time to time. Managing cancellations with a follow-up and a reminder to reschedule increases client frequency. When a client cancels and has not rescheduled a booking after two or three days contact them thanking them for letting you know they couldn’t make it and remind them to rebook. This simple message sees almost 50% of clients make the appointment after being reminded and keeps frequency higher.

Appointment Reminders

Cancellations and no shows are a real frustration and can easily make a good day bad. Even a handful of no shows in a month can impact your sales considerably, especially if the bookings are for high-value time-consuming services and treatments.

Appointment reminders sent 2 days prior to a booking reduce last-minute changes and no show rates hugely. They also add a level of professionalism that reflects well on you and your team. Text messaging has the most significant impact as these tend to be read immediately. The reason for sending 2 days prior is that if a client receives it and realizes they need to change you have two days to fill the space.

Appointment Confirmations

Use confirmations to supplement reminders. Send them when an appointment is made. They are the digital equivalent of writing the booking details down on a card and work best as an email. Share some additional information about your business while doing this. For example links to your website and social pages, opening hours and cancellation policy.

Thank you for recommending me

When clients take the time to recommend you make a habit of following up with a thank you. Most of us enjoy helping others but receiving recognition compounds these feelings. Often clients that recommend you can be new to your salon. You must have had a situation where a new client tells you they were recommended and when you ask for the name of their friend you cannot place them regardless of how hard you try. This comes back to all of your clients knowing you even if you don't know them. So following up with a thank you adds rapport and familiarity.

Courtesy message

A thank you message sent to clients after each fifth or sixth visit demonstrates to your regular clients how much you appreciate them. Remembering that one of the key reasons clients move on it's because they feel you have lost interest as opposed to receiving poor quality work or bad service.

Sending a simple thank you every several months is inexpensive, not very time-consuming and can really cement ongoing relationships. This is also a good opportunity to arrange a consultation to discuss potentially changing services and making your clients aware of what is available to them, avoiding them feeling the need to go elsewhere to get something different.

Bundles

Bundling up services, treatments and or products is an excellent way to increase average spend and give clients the opportunity to easily try new products and services. Find services and products which complement each other, package them up and sell them for one simple price.

This could be a pamper day? Include hair, beauty and retail in one salon experience. You could Create “Luxury Colour Bundles” which could include toners, styling and even retail. These are simpler to sell rather than asking a client if they would like a toner, some Shampoo, conditioner and styling product is replaced with “Upgrade to our luxury colour bundle which includes everything you need today and at home”.

You might create courses of the same service so for example blow-dries or gents cut and blowdry or even cut and finish could be purchased in a course of five or ten for the price of 4 or 5. Making it easy for your clients to commit upfront and make a small saving down the line.

Often clients with prepaid services will visit more frequently and enjoy visiting knowing there is no bill to settle at the end of every appointment.

VIP Club

Create a VIP club to reward your best clients. Invite VIPs to open evenings and product releases. Offer them advanced booking options at the busiest time of the year. Make your clients feel special and enjoy their increased loyalty.

These clients could be invited on an individual basis, and they could also be added when they meet certain criteria. More established salons might have the 100 clubs or 50 clubs when a client is tagged as a VIP when they pass that number of bookings.

Appointment Upgrade

A weekly appointment upgrade campaign is a super simple micro campaign. It works by selecting clients booked for service in the following week and contacting them with an incentive to upgrade that booking. For example, Contact clients booked for a Cut & Finish in the next seven days and incentivise them to upgrade to a colour service.

These are micro-campaigns sent to very few clients who have a good chance of engaging. A few minutes each week could add several upgraded appointments to your diary.

Part III

Reconnect



Reconnect

Have you ever bumped into a client away from your salon and realised they have been somewhere else? It feels a bit awkward, doesn't it?

Inevitably some clients move on. Sometimes they may be dissatisfied with you, but other times they may well just fancy a change. They may well have seen someone with something they liked the look of and gone to the stylist who created the look for their friend.

Your regular client then becomes a new client of the new salon, which is not great, however, this means that they are in that vulnerable state of not really having a relationship with the new salon and feeling uncomfortable about returning to you.

Contacting your client when they are overdue and could have potentially been elsewhere with an incentive will entice a good percentage back to your salon, giving you the opportunity to start fresh. Consider your incentive carefully, ensure it will seem attractive to the recipient and make them welcome even if they would like to try another team member.

Use Frequency

If you are able to track clients average frequency use this touchpoint to time your first Reconnect campaign for when your clients are 50% overdue. This is extremely effective and stops you from sending a campaign to a client who just visits infrequently and may benefit from a reduction when they were not actually at risk of not returning. However, if you don't have this information in your software contact clients after 12 or 14 weeks and exclude clients who have a booking made in the future. You may well catch the odd client who was intending to book anyway but the overall benefit will outweigh the cost.

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On average salons running reconnect campaigns will achieve an average response rate between 30% and 40% reducing the rate you lose clients significantly.

Start with small “crowd-pleasing” incentives to secure strong response rates. Product will often outperform discounts. This allows you to give a greater perceived value as your client will be receiving a gift at retail value and you will be gifting at cost. Sometimes clients fancy a change so make it clear that not only would you be delighted to see them again but they are welcome to swap team members without any awkwardness. The goal is to get your client back into your salon.

Some staff members can be resistant to offering incentives to non returning clients. It's crucial they realise this is an opportunity to reestablish a very profitable client relationship.

Create a “red carpet” policy for returning clients. Tag them so everyone can see they are responding to your invitation and ensure they get your best. This approach can be utilised for clients several times. Sometimes the time just isn't right for them, so incentivising after a long period away from the salon can still work. In my experience, your incentives need to be more generous the longer it is that a client has not been back to you.

The reality is that if you win your clients business back and then convert that into a longer-term client relationship with them visiting multiple more times in the future it really does not matter what they pay for the initial rebooking.

Reducing the cost of a service or product can enable your client to experience something new (and ideally luxurious) that they might otherwise not try. This too can result in future full price purchases for the rewarded service or product

Vouchers and Gift cards are often popular rewards. Clients sometimes "gift" them which can lead to new clients.

Conclusion

So, you don't know all of your clients but they all know you. Implement relationship Bases Salon Marketing and use tools to make your clients feel that you do (even if you don't).

Run Attract campaigns using tools like Google ads and Facebook and Instagram campaigns to attract potential clients geographically close by. Upload your client list to Facebook ads Manager and build a lookalike audience just like your clients. Then exclude your current clients so they will not see your ads.

Run a referral scheme and get your team to support it. To give them a helping hand use signage around the salon and advertise referral schemes and gift cards.

When new clients visit, enter them into your New Client Retention Sequence. When they have visited more than three times, select and implement your Nurture campaigns and run them routinely and systematically.

When some stop visiting, follow up and invite them back. Fill your salon with clients who like, know and trust you and your team. Train and coach your team to do most of what you do most of the time. Then sit back, have fun and watch your business become the business you dreamed of the day you opened.

Thank you for your time. If we can help you can reach us via thesalon.app.

Or join our Salon Marketing Academy Facebook group and enjoy free weekly marketing webinars.

Good luck

Colin