

Marketing Straightening Services

By Cindy Van Steelandt

Straightening services have become one of the most popular and lucrative salon offerings of the past 18 months.

In fact, in an economic period when most salons' sales have been flat at best, straightening services have been a lone bright spot.

Thanks to strong demand, primarily through clients sharing their love of the service with one another, stylists who have developed an expertise in straightening have remained busy. In fact, many have grown a specialty that fosters regular visits for professional salon services.

The good news is that if you have not yet added straightening services to your menu, there is still time, as demand for the carefree hair lifestyle continues to fuel growth for the category. Once you begin to offer straightening services, you will need to develop a high-octane marketing program to get the word out about your new offerings.

There are a variety of straightening systems available. Step one in your marketing campaign is to work with companies whose practices are consistent with what your brand represents. This is important because it helps set up the story you will share with your clients regarding ingredients, features and benefits. Be curious and be educated. For example, if your business is environmentally friendly, green and / or chemical free, you will want to look for a straightener that fits that message.

Straightening services are lifestyle changers. Whether your clients are looking to calm a bit of frizz or completely straighten out-of-control curls, you are giving them more than straighter hair. You are teaching them faster styling and low maintenance techniques, which means they have more time every day for things that matter more.

Moreover, you need not market straightening services as an all-or-nothing service. You can create a whole menu of straightening services from the full head of long curly hair to a simple bang or beard defrizzing. You can create a package consisting of the primary service and subsequent retouches, as well as the required maintenance products, and charge for your time and expertise accordingly.

Here are techniques to help build external awareness and traffic for straightening services:

Ring in the Holidays

This is the perfect time of year to launch a new service or kick an existing offering into high gear with a new twist and to a larger audience. The reason for this is that, over the next three months, chances are you will see most of your clients for their holiday services, even if you have not seen them all year. This is the perfect opportunity to create interest in your straightening services and products.

Mention them in all of your holiday

promotional materials. Create signage for your counters, retail shelves, styling stations and even the restrooms to open up a dialogue about the benefits. Keep your message simple, "Want faster, easier styling this holiday season? Ask us how today!" For clients who are not willing to try something new for the holidays, encourage them to add it to their New Year's resolutions. They can even add a salon gift certificate to their holiday wish list.

The bottom line is to have conversation with your clients about your straightening services at every opportunity between now and the end of the year. Add it to the script your receptionists use when answering the phone, add it to your on-hold messaging, have assistants discuss the benefits at the shampoo bowl and stylists talk it up at the station - all within the context of solving a problem the client raises during the consultation. Take one final opportunity when you call or email two days after the service to make sure your clients are satisfied with their results.

Chances are you will also have a variety of charities asking for donations for their holiday fundraisers. Take the opportunity to do good by offering gift certificates for your straightening services, effectively broadening awareness to an audience outside of your usual network.

Network with your Neighbors

Participate in local events where you will meet potential clients. Some of our stylist friends from New York shared that they had great success networking at their communities' farmers' markets or street festivals. They were able to set up a tent, hook into power and do mini consultations and swatch tests on the spot, followed with mini treatments, such as cowlick correction, bangs only or facial hair only straightening. When people saw immediate results, it created a huge buzz and they were ready to book full services immediately. The point is that you are having actual conversations with people and there is a real value in that interaction.

It is also effective to select high-visibility people at neighboring businesses that target similar customers and offer to straighten their hair at no charge, provided they tell their customers who did their hair. Bank tellers, restaurant hosts, personal trainers and even church choir directors or members are in the public eye more than ever at this time of year.

Communicate Regularly

Depending on your community and the demographics of your current and targeted clientele, print ads, flyers and direct mail postcards might still help build awareness of your business.

Yet, what is even more affordable and quick to execute are online communications - on your website, via email and social media networks. When your clients come in, collect their email addresses and have them sign

a form granting permission to email them information about your services and products. At the same time, give them an updated business card that includes all your online info - website, social media addresses and blog links and invite them to connect with you.

Next, stay in touch regularly. Whether it is a simple email announcement about the benefits of a new service, a custom designed "virtual postcard" or a full-blown newsletter, make sure to share valuable information and tips with them. The key is to offer more than just a sales message if you want clients to open the next email from you.

Have a Personal Conversation Online

Savvy salons are using social media, like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn to market and share their information and expertise with people who have connected with them to hear what they have to say. Support and continue the conversation on

your website, in personal blogs, as well as by commenting on blogs and websites covering similar topics.

Never underestimate the power of a satisfied client. People talk and share experiences very quickly. Send happy clients out with a fistful of your business cards and offer them a discount on future straightening services for "x" number of referrals.

Think about it from the perspective that each satisfied customer and each successful hair straightening accomplished strengthens your marketing plan. Marketing is just another word for selling your skills smartly, ethically and with clear passion for your clients' well-being.

Cindy Van Steelandt is Director of Marketing and Training for Zerran International, manufacturer and distributor of 100 percent botanically based and paraben-free vegan products and professional services for the salon industry. Zerran REFORM is the company's patented method for straightening hair safely, permanently and naturally, without harsh chemicals.