

## SERVICE WITH A SMILE

### Caronlab Australia *in* Salon Management

The face of retail has changed forever. Nowadays, everything is available to us at the tap of a button. We can get packages delivered to our doorstep by drones—it's the stuff of science fiction. But I'd bet good money against anyone ever wanting to get a leg wax from a drone!

While many real stores are dying out purely because they cannot compete with the ease and simplicity of the online world, we are fortunate to work in an industry where hands-on interaction is still the backbone of the business. That interaction starts as soon as the first contact is made—and if your salon is going to be successful, it has to be at its best from the get-go.

#### Getting Good Reception

The definition of a receptionist varies from salon to salon. Some may need multiple staff members fulfilling just that role. Others may not have a designated receptionist at all; instead relying on therapists to multi-task.

But whatever form your salon's receptionist takes, the job remains the same: to orchestrate the smooth, efficient and enjoyable running of everything the business does.

*Customers can hear your smile over the phone. Make it shine!*

#### Phone a Friend

One of the receptionist's primary tasks will be taking phone calls—to book appointments, follow-up with customers, and provide general information. A customer's opinion of a salon will generally form from that very first call; which makes it a factor that can make or break your success.

The best advice we can give about phone calls is to answer promptly and to answer with a smile. The latter may sound silly, but people are savvy enough to work out your attitude with that very first "hello". By presenting a warm and friendly demeanour, you are off to the best possible start.

The rest of the call should be about building a relationship. For new clients, you need to find out all you can about them and note it down as you go. What are the vital details like name, phone number and email? What services are they looking for? What have they had done

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before? Do they have any allergies or skin conditions? You can use this information to grow the business by sending marketing material like text messages, emails, and newsletters.

For existing clients, showing that you already know plenty about them will make them feel special. Having a customer profile for every client can be incredibly helpful—it allows you to have knowledge of previous services they have had, so you can inform them what they may be due for as well as always knowing exactly what they need. Knowing who their preferred therapists are can also speed up the booking process.

This kind of ‘guided’ service, where you are able to provide everything clients are looking for before they even know it themselves, is the mark of what makes for a better salon.

### **Fine Tuning**

Once you have your customers booked in, comes the next phase of the process: the actual appointment.

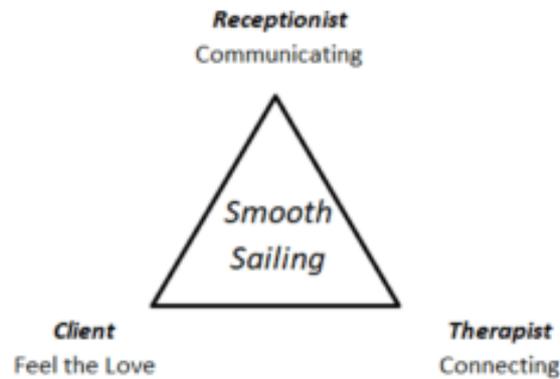
Much like that first greeting on the phone, clients will form an immediate opinion when they come into your salon. A positive and welcoming aura will put them instantly at ease and get appointments off to the best possible start. It is imperative to greet your clients with their names and follow that up by confirming the details of their treatments.

Then you can really start pampering your clients—before their beauty sessions even start! For example: providing places to relax with plenty of reading material (the kind that can also drive sales), and offering coffees just the way they like them (which of course you will have noted down in their customer profiles).

### **The Love Triangle**

A client’s salon experience begins and ends with the receptionist, and because of this, communication is the most important facet of a receptionist’s role.

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*A three-way communication channel is vital.*

This communication is obviously crucial between the receptionist and the client, but have you thought about how vital it is between the receptionist and the therapist? This is something that is all too frequently overlooked. Only through this three-way communication channel can an appointment be at its most effective.

Some of the most important communication the receptionist can do is when the client doesn't even know it is happening. Via verbal communication, written communication, and even visual language, the receptionist should be able to pass on new information to the therapist so appointments run as smoothly as possible. All of this creates a process built on harmony, where clients feel cared for and completely at ease.

Beyond all of this is the communication the receptionist should receive from the therapist during appointments—about recommended products or further treatments. This then allows the receptionist the opportunity to up-sell to clients when their appointments are finished.



*Product knowledge is also essential for salon success.*

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Having therapists who are skilled receptionists can also be advantageous for a successful salon; it means that during particularly busy times, staff can take on multiple roles and really work as a team towards the one objective.

But no matter how many receptionists you have, there are always things you can do to make everyone's job easier. Having user-friendly online and email booking services can significantly reduce the amount of time you need to spend on the phone. You might not be able to provide your treatment with the internet (well, not yet anyway), but you can certainly embrace it to do some of the work for you.

If this is the case for your salon, that shouldn't affect the way the role functions. It is still going to be the first and last point-of-contact for each of your clients, and the level of service should remain the same.

Every salon has a reception, but not all salons are going to have the luxury of a receptionist—let alone multiple receptionists. Many salons rely on their therapists being able to do both roles, sometimes simultaneously.

### **The Bare Minimum**

This is also where everyone's product knowledge can really come to the fore; being able to talk informatively about relevant products, services, and specials while a client is still in the salon means you are far more likely to sell the products that are your business's bread and butter. All of this equals more dollars for your salon.

Another piece of technology you can utilise for your staff is the headset; being able to answer phone calls whilst attending to odd jobs around your salon can be a great way to get several things done at once.

### **The Importance of Aftercare**

*Your clients' treatments should continue well after they've left your salon.*

The receptionist's role at the end of an appointment is just as essential as the prior two stages; this is where you can provide the icing on the cake. For example, giving your clients free samples or information pamphlets is a great way to finish off a salon visit.

You can also take the opportunity to build the relationships into the future. Asking clients for feedback either in-store or online—perhaps with the incentive of another freebie or a

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discount next visit—means you can get an honest opinion on what you did well and areas you may be able to improve.

It's also the best time to get re-bookings from your clients. A great way to ensure they do this is to remind them of upcoming busy periods where bookings may fill up quickly.

**Would you like Supplies with that?**



*Forward planning equals future success.*

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