

MANAGING A COMPLAINT

How do you feel when you receive that dreaded phone call from a client stating that they were not happy with the treatment/service they received in your salon, spa or clinic?

- Disheartened by the poor performance of your staff or yourself?
- Disappointed that the client did not say anything before leaving the salon?
- Clients can be hard to please at times?

The best approach is to transform grievances into gratitude. If an unhappy client does not share their grievances with you, who will they tell?

- Ten of their closest friends
- Colleagues and other coworkers
- Family and friends

The list could go on, so it is far better that you receive the complaint, rather than others who may be one of your clients or potential clients.

Knowing how to manage a complaint will help maintain long-term loyal clients.

The following guidelines may be helpful when managing a complaint:

1. Give the client the opportunity to air their grievances fully by being attentive and letting them take control of the conversation. Empathise with them by saying "I understand" and let them tell you everything without interrupting them.
2. Thank them for taking the time to let you know how or what they are unhappy with and for giving you the opportunity to try to resolve it. You now have some control over the situation again.

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3. Get as much information from the client as possible without being aggressive or overly assertive. Instead, maintain good eye contact with the client.
4. Identify the problem and offer a solution. The client may seem reluctant after their experience, so it's important to use a reassuring tone.

Some examples:

What if I were to.....

Would you be willing to allow me to.....

Our head therapist is XXXXX, and I'll make sure XXXXX takes care of you during your next visit. Of course, there would be no charge as we would like the opportunity to make it up to you.

5. Whenever you hand over the client to another staff member, it's vital you stay involved as the client may still be fragile. It also shows they are still important to you and you are still interested in pleasing them.
6. Follow up after the complaint has been resolved. This could be a phone call or inviting them back into the salon.
7. Rather than creating a complaint form, create a feedback form that includes all the necessary information in case you need to refer to it in the future.

Feedback could include:

- Service was poor, client kept waiting
- The staff did not listen
- Indifference
- Lack of perceived value
- An unsatisfactory service
- Overcharging

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The client may not always feel 100% satisfied, so it's important to address their dissatisfaction and correct it, otherwise the consequences can result in not only a loss of the client, but also a bad reputation.

SOME HELPFUL TIPS

- Always stay calm and avoid getting angry.
- When a client expresses anger, counteract it as soon as possible, since anger between two parties will end in disaster.

You must never admit liability. I suggest you get guidelines from your insurance company as to how they suggest you manage this for a complaint of a serious nature

For complaints that might result in an insurance claim, there are some procedures that need to be followed. Here are some situations that may occur in your salon or spa:

- Diamond earring washed down the drain
- The spill of hot wax in the eye
- Reaction to a product
- Slippery surface results in client injury

As a result, you should document the incident in writing and contact your insurer. Businesses that do not have comprehensive coverage for professional indemnity, treatment risks, and public liability are putting themselves at unnecessary risk.

It's important to be grateful for any feedback you receive from a client, as they have come back to tell you, giving you the opportunity to improve.

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