

By Pam Stellema

# Me? Sell? No way!

“Why won’t my staff retail to their customers?” This is a question that I hear many times over from frustrated salon owners looking to improve their profitability.

Even though it seems to be one of the most pressing concerns expressed by salon owners, the answer is really quite simple.

The solution lies in four areas. All four need to be addressed and if any are left out, your mission to increase retail sales will probably fall far short of your desired outcomes.

They are, in order of importance:

1. Your ability to understand the mindset of your therapists and why the idea of selling is so off-putting to them.
2. Your willingness to maintain motivation on a daily basis.
3. Your proficiency in making sales fun for your staff.
4. Your enthusiasm to reward your staff financially and generously when they reach achievable sales targets that have been set for them.

As you can see, it is really all up to you and how much work you are prepared to invest in your success. Let’s take a closer look at each of these four levels and how you can make them work in your salon.

## Create the right mindset

With each salon team I have been involved with, I ask each team member to undergo a simple personality profiling test that enables me to better understand the individuals in that team. By doing this, I am able to approach their sales training from the right direction and to see what selling really means to those therapists. In 99 per cent of cases, therapists self-select the profile that we will call ‘Relationship Builders’. Relationship Builders have a genuinely caring nature and will do whatever it takes to be

loved by their clients. Ask any therapist why they got into beauty and nearly all will tell you that they like to care for people and make them feel good about themselves. This is why the selling activity often brings them into conflict with their personal core values, as they will often see the act of selling as quite a ‘slimy’ activity akin to something that should be undertaken by a used car salesman, and most definitely not something that a caring therapist should be enthusiastically engaged in doing. Wow – what a conflict this creates in them! These caring therapists need lots of team support, personal positive feedback and to feel like they have been listened to. What they will resist at all costs is getting to the point – as in closing a sale or doing anything that might be perceived as undermining their relationship with their customers. Their biggest challenge is overcoming their fear of offending their customers and they often have difficulty in completing the task at hand, such as closing a sales conversation and asking for the sale.

Is this starting to sound familiar to you? Chances are, back in the good old days before you were a salon owner and responsible for paying landlords, wages and suppliers, you too had these same difficulties. No wonder salon owners are having difficulty in getting their staff to sell enthusiastically when their therapists believe that it goes against who they are at their core.

The big question, then, is how can you change this mistaken perception of what selling is all about and make



***Your mood will set the atmosphere in your salon so it is up to you to lead the way and set the mood you are looking to achieve.***

them see that by retailing quality products to their clients, they are in fact building a stronger relationship, rather than destroying it? This is the key issue and if you don't overcome this, your attempt to get your staff to sell more is pretty much doomed.

What I hear from most therapists is that when their employers talk about selling more products, what they are hearing is, "I want you to make more money for me". This is about as appealing to them as a holiday at the South Pole! What your staff needs to hear and understand is how selling the right products to their customers after a treatment is going to benefit their customers.

This is what I call Relationship Retailing and it works by changing their ideas about who gets the major benefits. If they fail to understand this concept, then all they will be operating on is the fact that they have to ask their customers for even more money at the end of their treatment (this is another issue that needs to be overcome, as many therapists think that because they may not be able to afford to purchase desired products, that their customers can't afford it also), rather than seeing it as a way to ensure the customer's long-term results. If you want your staff to sell to their customers, they must genuinely believe that it is absolutely for the customer's benefit. This aspect of their training needs to be built into every team meeting around sales and is equally as important, if not more, than fantastic product knowledge.

#### **Daily motivation**

"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing. That's why we recommend it daily." – Zig Ziglar.

I loved this quote when I read it because it made so much sense to me. So many times, employers say something like, "But I have sent my staff to retail training – twice – but within a few weeks it seems to be back to the bad old days." Motivation really is a daily thing and as the team leader, it is vital that you take the time out at the beginning of each and every day to spend a few minutes with each team member discussing what your expectations are. More importantly, it is part of your job to help them discover how they can meet your expectations or possibly even exceed them. As the boss, you know what it takes to up the spend rate of your salon customers. More products and more services sold. It's really as simple as that. Your team members, however, don't necessarily see this as part of their role.

Therapists will often tell me that they believe that as long as they are delivering an outstanding service to their clients, then they have achieved what should be expected of them. It is up to you to help your staff to understand your expectations and to help them to achieve them. If necessary, ask your staff to come in 15 minutes earlier each day so that each team member can be individually helped to prepare their action plan for that day. Remember, each person must

be dealt with as an individual so don't be tempted to do this as a team talk. If you do this, those that don't want to hear your message will just tune out.

### **Make it fun**

There is nothing more depressing than having to go into work every day and be subjected to a moody and demanding boss. Not only is it bad for staff morale, but we all know that our staff will treat their customers in exactly the same way that they are treated. Your mood will set the atmosphere in your salon so it is up to you to lead the way and set the mood you are looking to achieve. It is vitally important that your salon has an enjoyable mood so that your employees actually look forward to coming to work each day. This is not to say that you have to relax your standards or expectations of your staff, but simply help them to achieve their targets in the most fun way possible. Most people respond well to a challenge, especially if it involves having a good time or getting a deserved reward at the end. I believe that, just as motivation needs to be given daily, so does reward. If you believe that a once a month bonus should turn your staff into raving sales enthusiasts, you may need to rethink that. A month is like a lifetime, especially to your younger therapists and before long, they will have lost their enthusiasm, no matter what the prize may be at the end. For this reason, I am going to suggest two simple methods of keeping things fun for your team.

1. Find your staff doing things **right** and when you do, praise them for it generously. Don't just say, "Thanks for today", when you could say something like, "I noticed what a great job you did finding out what Mrs Jones needs were before you sold her those products and I just want you to know I think you did a fantastic job on that. I know Mrs Jones will be thrilled with the products you sold her because you obviously took so much care". We all like to receive recognition when we do good things and generally we will repeat those same things in the hope of further praise.
2. Practice 'instant rewards'. This is a fun way to reward each team member for their efforts and because it is instant, it has a real impact on the person receiving it and acts as a great motivational tool. A fun yet simple way to implement instant rewards is to nominate what you would like your team to focus on selling for the day. It could be a package of services or a high end product and then each time one is sold, give your staff instant praise and a low value Scratchie. Make a point of giving sincere praise at the same time as the Scratchie and watch the rest of your staff move into competitive mode. I have seen this technique have amazing results and the great part of it is that you can run it daily and change the service or product to ensure that boredom doesn't set in. For a very small comparative outlay, you can make excellent returns. Try it for yourself and remember to keep it fun!

### **Reward your staff**

You may have already tried financial rewards for your staff in the past and had very little success. That is not really so surprising if you have not incorporated all four aspects of successful retailing techniques that I have outlined in this article. Financial rewards alone may seem a great idea, but until you have changed the mindset, learnt the art of daily motivation and made your salon a fun place to be, you will not enjoy long-term success. Rewarding your staff is only fair as without their additional effort to increase your bottom line, your salon is not likely to enjoy the additional profits that you would like to achieve.

The first step in rewarding your staff is to determine what an achievable target is for each individual team member. The key word here is individual as each team member may be contributing to the salon's income differently. For instance, in some salons, you may have staff who can deliver high-end treatments such as IPL or microdermabrasion whilst other staff may not yet have these skills. You need to take this into consideration when setting your targets, along with how your staff members are currently performing. If you have a team member who is generating an average of \$3.50 per client in retail sales, it would not make sense to set her new target at \$10 straight away. This is something that would need to be worked towards gradually. Be prepared to achieve small positive changes at first, and when your employees make even small improvements, let them know you have noticed and are happy. This will keep them moving in the right direction. Targets should never be set in concrete and must be reassessed regularly as improvements occur. One of the most important aspects of setting targets is to make them achievable for the individual. There is nothing more likely to erode a person's enthusiasm than never being able to reach their target. Targets should stretch your team member but still be realistic and achievable.

A favourite quote: "The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary." – Mark Twain.

**Pam Stellema specialises in working with small and micro businesses to motivate business owners, managers and their key staff towards maximising productivity and profits, excellence in customer service and client retention. Pam can be contacted by phone on 0431 975 515 or 07 5529 6467, or by email at [ask@pamstellema.com.au](mailto:ask@pamstellema.com.au). Visit her website at [www.pamstellema.com.au](http://www.pamstellema.com.au).**

**Disclaimer:** While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this journal, Pam Stellema, and any related suppliers or associated companies, accepts no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.