

Exclusive tips from the *American Salon* Better Business Conference

# IN THEIR SHOES

Marketing your salon is all about creativity and analysis, agreed panelists at *American Salon's* Better Business Conference.

To run successful businesses, salon owners must put themselves in the customers' shoes, advised Colin Caruso, owner of Caru, a salon in Hoboken, NJ, at *American Salon's* Better Business Conference. According to *American Salon* research, the top-performing salons know more about their customers than other salons; a survey revealed they all collect client email addresses, compared with 79.1 percent of others. Here, conference speakers share their best marketing tips.

"The key is meeting people in 'disruptive' ways."

—Patrick McIvor

## Reaping the Benefits

Rewarding customers for their business goes a long way in ensuring they return, Caruso says. At his salon, he offers guests a blow-out punch card with different blow-dry options and even posts a visual of these services on the salon wall.

This program not only helps gain repeat customers, but it also provides a chance to sell different hair products. At Caruso's salon, the staff makes sure to care for existing customers just as well as new ones. "We reward customer retention," he says. During the recession, Randy Currie, owner of Currie Hair, Skin & Nails in Delaware and Pennsylvania, says his salon gave gift cards to 975 nurses at the local hospital to increase clientele. Currie says the gesture was picked up by the local news station, generating even more interest in the salon. While hairdressers look at what they do as art, Currie says they must also remember it's business.

## Technology is on Your Side

Salons like Caruso's use software programs including Demand Force to send thank-you emails and appointment reminders. Client retention stems from a combination of human interaction and help from technology, Caruso says. His salon also uses Demand Force to contact customers who haven't been back in awhile. If guests don't return within eight weeks, they're considered not retained, he says. Caruso also keeps in touch with guests through Millennium Software, which provides online marketing support, automated messaging and online appointment

services, as well as a salon appointment book that alerts the salon's front desk staff when there's an opportunity to increase revenue.

## Tips of the Trade

Styling tips are effective in keeping customers coming back, panelists agreed. Robert Reed, founder of Ergo Research Inc., stressed the importance of staff members consulting with their customers and providing styling advice to gain customer retention and referrals. Guests need tangible tips to take away from the salon, which they can share with their friends and family, in turn expanding the client base, says Artistic & Techniculture Director for Goldwell and KMS California Patrick McIvor. In addition to styling tips, pampering guests from start to finish of the appointment will make them more likely to recommend the salon. McIvor suggests that when guests check in, they're given sample products, which starts the conversation about which ones are best for them. Outside, face-to-face marketing is also crucial, he says. For example, your salon can have monthly external marketing initiatives such as showing guests how they can incorporate hair into Halloween costumes, or giving free blow-outs at the gym. "The key is meeting people in 'disruptive' ways," McIvor says. ☞ —Corie Russell



FROM LEFT: Randy Currie and Patrick McIvor lead the panel "Winning Marketing Strategies" during the Better Business Conference.



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP:** Conference attendees learn tips from industry experts during the two-day Better Business Conference; Amber Muhammad, owner of Rasa Salon, and Robin Miller, co-owner of Escape Salon & Spa; Maria Rodrigues, co-owner of Escape Salon & Spa; Heather Bagby, senior director of development at Summit Salon Business Center and conference moderator, with Liza Wylie and Nicole Peck of Questex Media, the parent company of *American Salon*, and Cheryl Griggs, owner of Wink Salon; Colin Caruso and Robert Reed discuss the importance of customer retention in “The Customer is King”; Rita Sanders of Tousled Hair Salon.