



MARKETING SOLUTIONS

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Impulse Retail Buyz!

Creative New Salon Retail Marketing Programs

By Larry H. Oskin

“Nailcare Retail” is not an oxymoron! You really can improve your earnings and salon profitability through a creative year-round retail sales program to meet your client’s beautycare needs, desires and impulses. Start to energize your regular and your impulse retail sales programs, by paying close attention to it in the future. Here are some old and new ideas that will get you started.

CURRIE HAIR’SKIN’NAILS of West Chester, PA has proudly achieved all of the last three annual NAHA Nailcare Awards. They have been acclaimed for their nailcare achievements in many professional beauty trade and consumer magazines alike for many years. Owner Randy Currie, shares some of his thoughts with us for you.

Currie notes, “To be successful with impulse retail you must carry a wide assortment of products, starting with nail polishes, files, candles, potpourri, bath gels and bath crystals. Carry plenty of merchandise, not just a few of each item so you make a very strong visual statement. Constantly move your retail products around the salon, especially those items with high impulse capabilities. Plan to promote seasonal nail colors, pastels, brights, metallics, glitters, files and home maintenance products for professional support between salon visits.”

Currie Hair’Skin’Nails is a full service day spa salon of 6,000 square feet within five storefronts of an upscale Brandywine area shopping center. They creatively work very hard to manage their retail sales and as a result have a full-time Retail Manager on staff, who handles everything from inventory control, distributor relations, purchasing and merchandising. Their retail manager moves the products around the salon on a very regular basis from wall units in the nail area, nail stations, front desk, makeup area, and the retail boutique to other salon and spa areas. This keeps it fresh, new and inviting. They work hard to keep everything clean and well dusted on a daily and weekly basis. They also make sure that each individual product inclusive of each nail enamel is professionally priced on the bottom, so clients aren’t embarrassed asking for the price.

Currie recommends that you strategically consider where your regular and your impulse retail displays are positioned. For example, they know that the clients have plenty of time to look at the wall and tabletop display units during each nailcare visit. So, they position their retail merchandising, products and professionally printed point-of-purchase devices in the direction clients will be looking during a salon service.

Currie strongly recommends that you take advantage of your manufacturers and distributors seasonal retail display units, as they are always upscale, attractive and focused on the impulse buyers. “They are always on target with the very latest seasonal fashion shades! Nailcare Companies like OPI and Creative Nail have great displays and merchandising gimmicks to attract clients for those last minute add-on purchases.” He adds, “We use gift wrap and gift bows in our impulse retail displays to send an instant message of gift giving for others as well as for yourself. For example, we use year-end, Valentine’s, spring, summer, prom season, Mother’s Day and back-to-fall fashion as some of our merchandising themes. We tie our impulse nailcare retail closely with matching lipsticks and makeup.”

This salon adds many extras to help achieve successful impulse retail sales. The Currie salon also promotes products in their seasonal newsletters, which are mailed to regular clients, as well as new homes in the area several times per year. Their retail manager has the responsibility of regularly visiting clients during nailcare, spa and salon services to offer personalized introductions on select products and seasonal retail promotions. She offers a sampling of new skincare lotions to any salon client. She also offers a free first time makeup application to any new or haircolor makeover haircare client. This approach always helps to set up a strong impulse retail sale.

Randy Currie notes that, “One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to not devote enough attention to retail. You must dedicate time, money, energy, lighting, space, marketing direction and a team effort to make your retail programs successful. You and your salon team must be consistently focused on retail for it to become a highly profitable center for your salon business!”

HAIR PORT SALON & DAY SPA of Sterling, VA has a very successful nailcare department, retail Gift Center and a booming year-round retail business. Krista Jones, Master Nail Technician and the salon’s Nailcare Department Manager is also an educational salon consultant for Creative Nail. Krista first suggests that to increase impulse retail sales, you must put out plenty of colorful products in the nail area, on the front desk, in the reception area retail displays, in their gift center, in the makeup center and throughout the salon.

She begins, “We put all of our nailcare and related seasonal retail boutique items in well merchandised and maintained displays in strategic high traffic areas of the salon. We always display our Home Maintenance Kits as they are the easiest to sell during and after any nailcare service. Our regular kits include oil, cuticle cream, basecoat and a topcoat. Some of our kit assortments also have hand creams, polish remover, cuticle creams, professional mini nail files and their favorite nail enamels. We have Foot Maintenance Kits with special foot creams, cuticle creams and oil. Each kit sells for \$15. to \$25. We display all of these as Home Maintenance Kit Collections. We encourage each client to maintain their nails between salon visits and to keep their Home Maintenance Kits updated.”

Hair Port works very hard to have beautifully decorated merchandising displays for every season and holiday. They work very successfully with the manufacturer and distributor deals, as well as their available point-of-purchase materials and display units. During

holidays like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Christmas, they retail special lotions, creams, travel kits, seasonal enamels, boutique products, makeup and trial sized nailcare products ... all of which work wonderfully as last minute add-on sales. This salon's Gift Center is well lit, clean, well stocked and beautifully decorated to match the next upcoming gift-giving season. They always display the season's hottest and newest nailcare collections in prominent eye-catching displays. They work very hard to make sure these retail displays are elegant merchandised like any department store display – yet not overwhelming, gaudy or tacky.

Krista continues, "Pre-planned word-of-mouth retail promotions works very well for our staff, as we personally recommend something extra to everyone during each nailcare visit as well as in their closing nailcare consultation comments. Our nailcare staff members actually fill out a small Retail Prescription Card for each client, addressing their personalized needs before explaining the features and benefits of each product – while having the client hold these products as they are explained. We personalize every sales approach as well as the products that we prescribe, for quick, easy and fast results!"

Hair Port also has a personalized Nailcare Maintenance Kit for each client, which are alphabetically stored in individual sanitary containers in the back room. Much of this kit includes their personalized bag with abrasives, an orange wood stick, files and their favorite colors.

Krista notes, "We have people on our staff that walk around the salon with tester products, offering samples. We do this with lotions, creams and other products. Before party seasons like proms, Valentine's Day or Christmas we have had a special cream offered with glitter. We ask all of the hair designers to wear it on weekends and with the free sampling on our clients, it always sells out immediately as an extra add-on sale. You just have to be assertive, progressive and caring about your clients – and your retail products will impulsively sell like crazy!"

NAILS DIRECT president, Jesse Goldstein offers some thoughtful retail ideas for success with impulse sales. "Always carry the latest nail polishes, while attractively displaying them with your nailcare accessories, nail art, lipsticks, makeup and jewelry items at or near the front desk."

Goldstein's business philosophy is "Don't feed someone spinach, if they want ice cream." He advises, "Always keep in touch with your manufacturer's newest professional products and polish colors while balancing that with your client's real and perceived needs. Read all of the latest professional beauty, salon and nailcare magazines like Nailpro, searching for ads and articles about the hottest new trends. You should also read all of the latest consumer beauty and fashion magazines like Elle, Cosmopolitan, Allure, Vogue and others. Look to stay in touch with trends as well as those products or colors being promoted seasonally."

He suggests that you utilize safe and simple methods to promote the use of clients' personalized nailcare kits with their own implements and their favorite nail enamels stored at your salon. For example the Nails Direct Iso-Pak and the Isolation Station concepts, allow you to sell and save each client's nailcare products and implements to ensure a clean, safe, economical and sanitary regimen for every salon visit. This makes each nailcare client more loyal to the salon and the nailcare professional, while helping to sell them new professional beautycare products as needed. This also allows the salon owner to become the gatekeeper for each nailcare client in a very positive way, no matter what changes go on in your salon.

Goldstein says, "If you do nothing... nothing will happen! The salon owner and staff must take adequate steps together, to focus on your overall retail program as well as your seasonal retail impulse merchandise. Whether you choose to do something to improve your retail sales or not, you have the power to make this choice." He continues to add that when possible, you must add new retail items that you can use in the salon, even if they don't sell well.

One of the best nailcare retail impulse items is customized nail file purchases. You can buy specialty nail file designs and displays. You can also buy them with your salon logo, address and telephone number on them. Every woman carries a nail file in her purse, so it might as well be a special reminder of you and your salon. Plus, this inventory won't spoil – ever. Don't be afraid to sell items like nail glue, to have your clients keep with their emergency nailcare kits at home between salon visits. Besides selling the major name brand nailcare products, consider adding some exciting new private label nailcare polishes and products into your retail mix for gift-with-purchase nailcare service promotions.

RETAIL MARKETING CALENDARS: Create a special retail calendar to promote certain retail products each month or on a bi-monthly basis. Keep track of every holiday, season and peak sales period. Work with the slower sales periods using more dramatic merchandising tools and specials, to help keep sales up during these traditionally slower periods. Create a retail sales plan. Then, work your retail plan throughout the year with a total salon team effort.

KNOW YOUR RETAIL MARKET: Track your retail sales each year and always stock the best sellers! You can't sell anything from an empty shelf. Learn the favorite seasons, colors, brand names and deals, while keeping notes for successive years. Try to offer some unique retail products that no one else in your area carries. Don't be afraid to test new brands and new retail items, while carefully tracking the results!

MASS WITH CLASS: Retail products won't sell regularly or impulsively unless you approach it in a professional manner. Since 'no one likes to be sold', yet everyone likes to shop ... have plenty of attractive retail products in your displays. Buy the complete display with plenty of backup stock, when these are offered. Use mirrors and focused lighting, to make the impulse retail display area more visually appealing.

DISPLAY AREAS: Impulse retail is generally only thought of at the front desk or right on the nail station. However, you should spread the displays throughout the retail and service sales areas. Consider both wall units and walk-around retail displays.

TOUCHY FEELY: If a client can't touch your products, they won't buy them! Impulse items need to be very touchable and specifically priced with point-of-purchase materials. Avoid locking any of your products behind glass shelves and within unapproachable display cases. Yes, you may lose a few products through shrinkage, yet that's just part of the cost of successfully increasing the effectiveness of your retail-merchandising program.

CLEARANCE SALES: It's best to always represent fresh products in an attractive way. Would you rather buy 'Half-Price Clearance' merchandise thinking that it may be old, or would you rather have a 'Spring Sale -- Buy One Get One FREE!' deal. The word clearance has a scary notation to it.

SIDEWALK SALES: Most shopping centers and malls have sidewalk sales. If not, hold your own several times per year. Some of the best times are January, June, July and August. This is a great opportunity to sell your new merchandise at full price as well to clear your old inventory at a reduced price.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE: Have professional signs made on your computer or at a local quick printer. Avoid any hand-made and magic marker signs. Make your headline and statement easy to understand with product name, category, benefits and price.

GIFT-WITH-PURCHASE: Use nailcare retail products as a terrific way to impulsively introduce your clients to new nailcare services, or to move them up from a simple manicure to a complete spa manicure and pedicure service. Just like the department stores, you can also effectively use purchase-with-purchase merchandising techniques to grow from a single product sale to a multiple product sale. Visit your best local department store cosmetic areas to study how they do it!

DIRECT MAIL & EMAIL: Keep track of your better regular retail clients. They love promotions and specials. They will also love being alerted to new products, even at full price. Send them a postcard or an email note to share your bigger seasonal sales promotions.

FREE NAIL ENAMEL FOR LIFE! Set up a new Salon Referral Program. Create a sign that says, "FREE Nail Enamel For Life!" In the smaller print, note that for every new nailcare client they send to you, they will earn a free nail enamel or a \$10. gift certificate towards any nailcare purchase. Set up a special retail display near your front desk that has small gift tags, noting who has earned their free products or certificates, with the name of who they sent in. This will encourage others to send in new clients, while also attracting clients to the nearby impulse nailcare retail displays.

PARTNER WITH MANUFACTURERS & DISTRIBUTORS: Work with your manufacturer and distributor's merchandising tools and counter-top displays. Take the time to visit with your distributors' salon sales consultants. Ask what's hot and what's not. Ask for their merchandising help, especially with any free posters, counter cards and shelf-talkers that they may be able to provide. Don't be afraid to buy through a distributor as well as directly from a manufacturer, by researching all of the ads and articles in your professional beauty trade publications.

EDUCATION: It's time to sell smart! Take a little time at staff meetings to make sure that everyone on staff knows about the retail brands, seasonal items and boutique gifts with the features and benefits. Bring in distributor and manufacturer educators that will teach you how to use and how to sell your products. Consider bringing in a top-notch sales consultant, from outside of our salon industry that is a specialist in training salespeople on the most effective sales techniques.

IMPULSIVE RETAILING STARTS WITH YOU: Sometimes you need to create the need for your clients through seasonal merchandising displays with props. Sometimes you need to consult with your clients, explaining the best deals and new products. Sometimes it's just a matter of having your products in the right place at the right time. Whether your impulse retail products are on the nail station, at the front desk or strategically positioned throughout the entire salon, it is critical that your products be in front of your clients at all times.

Remember that 'RETAIL' is as important a salon service as is any manicure or pedicure. Don't let retail displays and products get stale, boring and dusty. Keep them fresh, well positioned and merchandised. Hold staff sales and incentive contests to keep retail top-of-mind. Successful salon impulse retail sales don't magically happen on their own. You must work at it. Brainstorm new sales ideas with your staff. Save articles on salon retailing in a special folder, while sharing them with your staff. Take turns each month, where two staff members are to work with the owner at creating strong new retail sales programs. If you work hard at retail with a special focus, you will create enhanced retail sales a reality. You, your staff and most importantly your salon clients -- will enjoy the results.

Happy Retailing!

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