



MARKETING SOLUTIONS

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Celebrate The Season With Gifts Of Beauty!

Promote Salon & Spa Gift Certificates

By: Larry H. Oskin, President, Marketing Solutions, Inc.

Salon, spa and medical center gift certificates need to become a priority part of your Annual Marketing Calendars – with the strongest emphasis before the year-end holidays! The Holiday Season is always a terrific time to launch your Annual Gift Certificate Marketing Programs. Salon 'Gifting Programs' must become a year-round activity, beginning with Birthdays, Anniversaries, Corporate Gifts and the big seasonal gifting holidays. Gift Certificates will always become your best annual 'New Client Salon Referral Program' for introducing many new first-time clients, while also achieving incredibly successful new sales increases.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE DESIGNS: Create and custom print professionally designed salon gift certificates, with your logo. Make these certificates appear valuable by using a gold or metallic foil imprint, embossing or thermography in the printing process. Special gift certificate boxes with foil logo labels and bows add an extra touch of elegance.

Make them distinctively unique in look, color, design, shape and size while matching the total graphic design and image of your salon. You may want to consider two to four color printing, specialty papers, die-cuts and unique paper cuts. You might consider a nice cream, gray or other elegant color that matches your salon décor package, so it is not just plain white ... but will still look terrific with graphics or photographs printed on it. Visit your printer to review various textured, marbled and watermark papers.

Some of the more progressive salons and spas now offer plastic Gift Certificate Cards, which have pre-designated values and packages.

Consider unique sizes and shapes for your gift certificates. Make certain that these will fit within a standard envelope or a gift box available through local office supply stores and box companies. There are 'stock design certificates' available through the professional beauty industry, yet you really should consider something upscale that is totally unique to your business. Remember that image is everything – and your clients will want to be proud of the elegance of their gift.

GIFT CERTIFICATE PROMOTIONS: We must remember to promote gift certificates all year long, especially before the year-end holidays, Valentines Day, Secretary's Day, Mothers Day and Father's Day! Create ads, posters, fliers and direct mail campaigns to sell gift certificates while offering several differently priced packages in \$25 to \$50 increments from \$25 through \$250. Don't be afraid to sell a 'Year Of Beauty' package with 10 each of your various salon and spa services for \$2000 to \$2500. Create and promote an array of special 'Holiday Beauty Retreat Packages', 'Days Of Beauty' and 'Men's Executive Retreat' packages.

GIFT CERTIFICATE BASKETS: Create a special in-salon display of at least six examples offering 'Customized Gift Baskets'. Make these colorful, while including a salon or spa service gift certificate within each basket. The key is to have the recipients come in to experience your salon services. Gift certificates are often given by your regulars to people that have never been into your salon before – so it also services as a tremendous new client referral program. Don't be afraid of price points like \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100, \$150, \$200, \$250, \$300, \$500 or \$1000+.

PRIZE GIFT BASKETS: Get your clients in the gifting mood each season by offering a huge gift-wrapped basket of professional salon products and service certificates with a seasonal drawing – up to four times per year. Create professionally printed 'Register To Win' slips, to save this database for future mailings. Another alternative is to charge \$2 to \$5 for a Charity Fundraiser Ticket, with a chance to win your \$100 to \$250 value gift basket. Display an assortment of several salon gift baskets in your reception area with signs that note 'Give A Gift Of Holiday Beauty ... customized gift baskets may be created for any products and services and in any price range'.

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR CLIENTS: Plan to give one small salon gift certificate to each client during the month of December, so they will come in during January through February for some new service area that you are trying to promote. This may be for a free manicure or \$10 off their next facial or massage service. It may be specifically geared to a brand new service that you are offering. This will provide your clients with a terrific holiday bonus, while teaching them about your terrific gift certificate programs. Your staff will love the idea!

POINT-OF-PURCHASE MERCHANDISING: Create large window and in-salon banners to promote your gift certificates on sturdy papers, cloth or plastics that can last all year long. Local sign companies can illustrate your gift certificate with your salon logo on attractive banners. Use smaller matching 8½" by 11" point-of-purchase signs in beautiful frames throughout the salon and spa areas. Frames are available at the local office supply stores and department stores. Promote your gift certificates with P.O.P. devices from your front door and reception area to the changing, treatment and bathrooms.

DIRECT MAIL MARKETING: Create a computerized database of past gift certificate purchasers and how much they spend each year. Promote gift certificate sales with letters, postcards, brochures and in your newsletters. Thank them for past holiday gift certificate purchases, and remind them they can simply phone in an order and that you'll be happy to mail their gift certificates directly to their friends, relatives and business associates. Use direct mail for soliciting new gift certificate buyers. Here is where cooperative direct mail works well for approximately 3.5 to 4 cents per home. Look for upscale direct mail coupon companies like Clipper Magazine, Val Pak or Money Mailer in your local Yellow Pages telephone directory. Research solo direct mail, bulk mail and business-to-business mailing programs.

HOLIDAY EMAIL MARKETING: Create a database to promote gift certificates before each holiday via email notes and newsletters to your regular clients. Collect email addresses from each new and regular client over the next few months.

CORPORATE GIFTING & RETREAT PROGRAMS: Both large corporations and small businesses are always looking for creative new incentive program rewards, unique sales contest prizes and special holiday gifts. Create a holiday promotional flier and letter that can be mailed to the president's of all local businesses. You can also send out 'Broadcast Fax' memos in mass to businesses in select zip code areas by utilizing local direct mail resources.

If you have a corporate meeting space, offer 'Corporate Retreats' at your spa facility. The new 22,000 square foot Robert Andrew DaySpa Salon in Crofton, MD will offer 'Business Retreats' complete with a conference room, refreshments and spa services. Others like the Avon Trump Tower Salon & Spa have done this successfully for the past few years.

DEAR SANTA: Create a fun promotion for women to register for whatever products and services they would like to receive from their boyfriends and husbands. Design a clever Dear Santa postcard that can be mailed to their significant others, with a note about what salon or spa service they desire – via a gift certificate. If it is properly pre-printed, women will just have to fill in their desired services, while addressing the card to their mate. You simply help your salon clients to mail this reminder card - from Santa. Create matching point of purchase posters, counter cards and station note cards.

BARTER CERTIFICATES: Don't be afraid to barter your gift certificates with local restaurants and other service-oriented businesses. You can use these extra gift certificates for staff rewards and client contest prizes. This type of program also works as a referral while each participating business sends some of their best clients to each other.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS: Whenever any local organization, club or charitable group comes in asking for a donation, use your spa service gift certificates rather than to offer free retail products. You need these new people to try your salon services first, so you have the opportunity of winning them over as a regular client. Retail gift certificates are fine, yet they will usually not win over any new clients.

GIFT CERTIFICATE 'SALES': Don't be afraid to offer a 'Pre-Holiday SALE' with 10% to 15% off of any \$100 to \$500 or more gift certificate purchase, from November 1st through Thanksgiving weekend. Some salons offer corporations and large gift certificate purchasers extra savings with a 'Buy 5 - Get 1 FREE' Holiday Promotion – Minimum \$25 per gift certificate.

PRESS & MEDIA RELATIONS: Promote your unique and wonderfully different 'Gifts Of Beauty' with a press release to the local newspaper editors and the TV show producers. Be sure to include photographs of your gift baskets and a special salon service. Send a free 'Day of Beauty' or a free facial certificate to the local beauty editors, TV news anchors and Radio personalities, with a professionally written and typed cover letter noting how you can help them create some exciting local stories, contests and promotions.

GIFT CERTIFICATE EXPIRATION DATES: We suggest using "This certificate expires one year from date of issue", not just three or six months. Create goodwill by always giving the client the benefit of the doubt – on certificates redeemed after the expiration date.

EXTRA SPECIAL SURPRISES: Work with your manufacturer and beauty supply distributor's sales consultants for any extra holiday promotional materials and thin packet product samples that can be offered as a surprise within your gift certificates packages.

YEAR-ROUND GIFTING: The best time of year to promote Gift Certificates will always be between Thanksgiving and New Years, with most certificates sold the last ten days prior to Christmas. Mothers Day and Valentines Day are the next best times. Gift Certificate marketing programs should be promoted for Secretary's Day, Easter, Father's Day, Weddings, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, New Moms and Bridal Showers. Gifting must be promoted in every salon all year long to be most effective.

FINANCIAL REWARDS: Gift certificates must become an essential element in your salons Annual Marketing Calendar. Some salons sell minimal gift certificates each year. Other very progressive salons and day spas sell from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 or more per year in gift certificates, while others have yet to begin developing a promotional plan. Now is the time to help your salon team launch a powerful new plan with seasonal advertising, marketing and public relations programs that will offer a special celebration with new `Gifts Of Beauty'!

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EDITORIAL NOTE: Larry H. Oskin is president of Marketing Solutions, a marketing, advertising, media relations and consulting services agency specializing in the professional beauty business. Clients include salons, day spas, medical clinics, manufacturers and associations from across North America. For more information contact Marketing Solutions at 10875 Main Street, Fairfax, VA, 22030 USA -- 703-359-6000 or via email at MktgSols@MktgSols.com.

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