

Experiential Marketing - Make a physical impression on your Guests!

By Deb Hunt

When you hear the word Nestle, what do you think of? Words like smooth, creamy, or milk chocolate may come to mind. You might even get a picture in your head of the last time you put a piece of chocolate in your mouth. Are you sitting with a smile on your face right now? Maybe you are thinking that you all of the sudden "need" a piece of chocolate!

Now imagine if this powerful word association was implanted in the minds of all of YOUR Guests. If when they heard your salon or spa name, they associated it with an experience that was so great, it brought a smile to their face and had them "needing" to schedule an appointment with you! You can achieve this effect with your Guests by partaking in Experiential Marketing.

Experiential Marketing utilizes the senses of a Guest so that there is not only an emotional, but also a physical association with your business. It can be so impactful that it has been used to increase a business's retail percentage over 240% in one week, and increase their Guest base by 20%. Here are three great ways to hold special Experiential Marketing events in your business!

Taste of Services Party

This event will not only cause an immediate boost in you retail sales, but will allow Guests, new and existing, to experience services they have never tried before (and maybe never even knew you had). This event works by determining a menu of "mini" services that you can have your technicians perform in 15 minutes or less. Examples are mini facials, mini massages, mini manicures, mini pedicures, "hair makeover" consultations, moisturizing treatments, or scalp massage, etc. Once you have 3-4 services determined, decide on a price point that will cover the time and cost of the services performed. Keep the price reasonable, remember, this can be thought of as "discounted" services because you are giving the Guests the chance to try NEW services and can absorb some of the cost with your marketing budget. Price points between \$15 and \$30 are recommended. Businesses that have held "Taste of Services Parties" have included hors d'oeuvres and wine at the different stations so the Guests get a full "sample" experience. Invite Guests and have them bring friends. On the event night the Guests rotate around so they get the "full salon/spa experience". Pre-bookings and retail sales are a great opportunity at this event!

Salon or Spa "Hostess Party"

Based on the same idea as a Tupperware Party, a Salon/ Spa "Hostess Party" can bring in great revenue and allow your salon or spa to be experienced by new Guests every week! The party works by having a "hostess" (a Guest) that is responsible for the majority of the organizing and coordination of the event. The Hostess creates and invites the guest list and can provide the "snacks". (Again think Tupperware Party). The hostess has incentives for inviting a certain number of people, say every person that attends she gets 10% off her next service. The guests all pay a set price for a "special service". They come to the salon/spa (often done after hours to accommodate busy work schedules) and experience the service. Special products are grouped together and offered at a discount to the Guests. Again, the hostess is rewarded by receiving discounts and free product for all retail purchased and "re-bookings" made the night of the party. The guests also have the opportunity to sign up to host a night themselves (the hostess also gets "points" or discounts for this!)

One salon that I coached has taken the "Hostess Party's" to a great level! They hold the parties every month and are so popular that they are booked 3-4 months out! Rather than giving the hostess direct discounts, they have created Salon/Spa Bucks that can be used same-as-cash in the salon/spa. For the number of people that attend, the amount of retail sold at the event, the number of re-bookings by the guests and the number of "Hostess" sign-ups; the "Hostess" gets certain amounts of salon/spa Bucks. The program has been an overwhelming success and has generated a steady stream of new Guests based on experience of products and services in a "trial" way.

Girls Night Out

This event brings us out the fun in women of all ages! Similar to the "Hostess" event, one Guest is responsible for inviting and coordinating a guest list. Usually done on a Thursday or Friday night, the group of women comes to the salon around 6pm. For a flat fee, the attendees treat themselves to a "shampoo/style" and make-up overhaul (mani & Pedi) (Mini facial and 30 min massage) etc...be creative with the services that you can offer here). There are usually hors d'oeuvres and wine or champagne to start the "party." The women come and get ready with their friends and are done by 9pm, just in time for a night out on the town. Again, this is a great opportunity for some concentrated retailing and pre-booking as the service providers should be doing a mini consultation while making everyone beautiful for the night. This event can also be done in variations such as "A Night Away from the Kids" or a "Bridal Party Thanks" event. Get creative!

Experiential marketing provides a unique opportunity for new Guests to "try on" services before they become actual Guests. They can then book regular appointments based on an experience rather than a traditional advertisement. If you are a salon or spa that you know offers an "unforgettable" experience if you could only get them in the door, this marketing technique could be for you. Meet with your technicians to identify the benefits for them and for the business and try out an experiential marketing event. Your new Guests will think of you in a whole new way!

Deb Hunt
Salon Spa Business Solutions
www.ssbs.co
