

# Maximize your Marketing

By Nanette Miner

Being in business for oneself is a challenging endeavor. Too many of us go it alone when we really don't have to. You can maximize your marketing time – and dollars – by working cooperatively with other businesses in your area.

There are three steps to this process:

1. Identify who your clientele are
2. Identify who else in your area serves a similar clientele
3. Identify complimentary businesses and services

## Step 1

Think about who your customers are and why they come to your salon. Is your clientele part of a distinct demographic group: elderly, teens, working moms, stay-at-home moms? Are they part of a distinct economic group: do they have a lot of disposable income or a little disposable income? Do they feel that a trip to the salon is a luxury or a necessity? Lastly, consider whether they are part of a distinct geographic group: is your salon downtown and therefore your clientele is mostly working professionals? Or is your salon in a rural town with a mix of clientele?

## Step 2

Once you undertake this simple analysis of your customers, you're ready to look for other businesses in your area that serve the same group. You may find a masseuse, a natural food store, a tailor or dry cleaner. If your store is in a plaza, you won't have to look far at all. Chances are your fellow store owners are in the plaza for the same reason that you are – to attract the same clientele you want to attract.

Why do you want to identify other businesses with the same type of customer? Because *their* customers are *your* customers. How many distinct customers do you estimate you have? Five hundred? Twelve hundred? How many do you think the dry cleaner has? The natural food store? If 10% of their customers started to frequent your salon, that would be quite an increase in business wouldn't it?

## Step 3

Once you've identified complementary businesses approach them with the idea of marketing *together*. Why? It's cheaper and it gives you exposure to customers who might not have normally considered your services.

There are a few ways that you can market together. You might put a flyer or coupon on each other's counter offering some type of discount or special offer. When the dry cleaner's customers ask about the coupon and your salon, the dry

cleaner will enthusiastically tell them where you are located and why he is proud to be associated with you. A personal endorsement or recommendation is by far the best way to attract new clients. Even though you prompted the conversation with your coupon, the positive word-of-mouth the dry cleaner shares with his customer is an endorsement of your services.

Another way to market together would be to do a joint mailing. You can put up to four sheets of paper in an envelope before the postage price goes up. If you gather four similar business people together and share your customer lists, you can inexpensively do four mailings a year to not only your customers, but to your cooperating business partner's customers as well. If you each bore the cost of assembling the mailing and paying the postage one time per year, it wouldn't be an overwhelming or expensive task. Similarly, you might do a joint newsletter and share the cost of printing. This would save you quite a bit of money and would increase the chance of your newsletter being read because there would be a wealth of information and advice.

Lastly, you may offer a free product from your cooperating business partner to *your* customers for utilizing your services a certain number of times. For instance, every third haircut "earns" your customer a free dry-cleaning. You would actually pay the cost of the dry cleaning (which, hopefully, your cooperating business partner will give you a price break on). Likewise, the dry cleaner might offer a free haircut for every 5<sup>th</sup> suit that is dry cleaned. At the end of each week or each month, you would tally up the coupons you received from his customers and submit them with a bill for the cost of the haircuts. He, similarly, would submit a bill to you for the cost of the dry cleaning coupons you issued. Neither of you should owe the other very much money because in all likelihood the two bills will "wash," or cancel each other out. The benefits of this last marketing tactic are twofold: 1) you increase the frequency of seeing *your* customers because when people are "earning" something they are more serious and diligent about making and keeping appointments, and 2) you attract and grow a new group of customers from the referrals of your marketing partner(s).

The ideas offered in this article should get your creative juices flowing. Don't limit your marketing ideas to your customers alone – think about who else's customers might one day be yours – and go after them today. Good Marketing!

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