

In Your Expert Opinion

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You're an expert. There's something that you do really, really well. Something that you know a lot about. Your opinion matters, and makes a difference. People take your advice seriously.

In the world of beauty, salons and spas, it's incredibly important that each client considers you and your team to be experts, the top experts in their world, in fact, when it comes to beauty and personal care. If they don't, there's a problem, and you'll want to make changes in order to fix it.

Positioning yourself and your business as a resource for all things related to beauty is essential to your businesses success. Your team should give off an air of confidence about the industry as a whole in addition to the services you offer and the products you retail. Your team's knowledge and excitement about beauty should be on par with the experience that your clients are going to have when they come to your business. Being an expert is not your job alone, not the salon manager's job alone, not your stylists job alone. Expertise is a group effort.

When we travel, we ask the hotel concierge where we can find a good Italian restaurant, where we can buy sun-block lotion or how to use the Tube. We expect the concierge to be an expert. But what if we asked the bellman or the housekeeping staff and they could just as easily direct us. Wouldn't we think a bit more highly of the hotel and its team? We would be pleased that the hotel's staff exceeded our expectation. Does your team exceed your client's expectations? Are you all experts?

If we want our clients to trust that we know beauty, we need to ensure that our team *does* in fact know beauty. Beauty is an area that all of us focus on in our business. If we run a business that focuses on hair services, shouldn't we be able to suggest a great place for a facial? If we operate a spa that doesn't offer makeup application services, doesn't it bode well on us to be able to give a strong referral for someone who does? If a client asks our opinion about a product that we don't retail, or a service we don't offer, and we don't know anything about that product, could it appear that you don't know all that much about the industry in general? Living in your glass-bubble, that can't be good for business.

By creating an atmosphere of expertise, your clients know that you know the business, that you know what's new and fresh, that you know it all when it comes to beauty. When you know it all, your clients trust you implicitly. When they trust you implicitly they are more likely to try that new product you just introduced, or the new hair color you suggested. Most importantly, they refer more clients. There's the really good part, more clients, which of course means more business.

What if your team weren't experts that your clients trusted. Let's say an existing client refer a new client to your business, toting you as top in your field, the best in the business, real know-it-alls. What if the new client didn't perceive your team as experts? What if you let the client down and didn't live up to the expectation of the experience? Not only are they not likely to return, but they'll let their friend (your original client) know, and that client will be much less likely to refer more people to your business knowing that the experience is inconsistent. There stops the word-of-mouth free publicity machine.

So how do you do it? How do you ensure that everyone in your business is an expert? It doesn't mean that you can't hire new people with little experience. It doesn't mean that you need to test your team's knowledge regularly with pop-quizzes. It means that you need to hire staff with a passion for what they do, and you have to keep them passionate.

Passionate people want to learn all they can about what they do, leading to their becoming experts. Passion isn't something you can learn. People who are passionate have it deep inside of them, they live for what they do, they love it. They go out of their way to learn, to experience new

things relating to their work, they network and meet new people involved with their industry. They also love to talk about their passion. They need no convincing to be an expert, they just need to be allowed to be one. These are not always easy people to find, but sometimes they exist right beneath your nose and their door just needs to be opened for them to let it all out.

Finding ways to excite your team to learn, to open up their passion and encourage their expertise, is not usually the number one thing on your list of things to do. It's often overlooked, or completely ignored in favor of bill paying, schedule making, order writing or perhaps even that well deserved day-off. However, If you want to get your team, your entire team, to become experts, the kind of experts that your existing and new clients both trust and want to tell the world about, make the effort and give them the tools to become just that.

Training, education, motivation, enticement, and positive feedback are all integral to creating and nurturing a team of creative talent who *want* to be experts. We all get a lull in our energy and enthusiasm. To make your team stronger you need to invest in these experiences, encourage your teams growth and be excited about their passions, and finally sometimes you just need to be cheerleader with a heartfelt and authentic "Go Team!"