

Salon Software – 'The power to enable' - things to look for and think about.

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If you can't measure it, how can you manage it?

Great salon software can be an invaluable tool to assist modern salon owners to manage their business and leverage off their valuable data that they have collected. The key is that computers can quickly perform necessary tasks that are a pain to do manually, it's about the ability to help you make the right decisions in your business.

Make it as easy as possible

Love them or hate them, computers and technology are merely tools to collect, analyse and display data.... it's how they do it that sets one software program and provider apart from another with accuracy and ease of use being the fundamental requirement that allows you to automate as much as possible to enhance the salon experience for you and your clients.

Are you scared of computers?

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of salons computerised in recent years however there is still a quite a few that have not seen the benefit in doing so for one reason or another. Often fear of the technology can be overcome by working with people that can explain things in real and salon relevant terms along with a focus on helping you to identify and meet your requirements.

Are you on top of it, or being left behind?

Another common reason for not computerising is that the time is not right and other things have a higher priority. This delay in salon systemisation and collecting data can mean that even a new or established salon does not have good information and therefore limited measurements on the key performance indicators that enable savvy salon owners to review, decide and take action on in order to effectively manage their business.

Developing your management skills

It's the 'human' part of the whole equation that is paramount. Developing the skills and discipline to review and analyse the collected information can provide those operators willing to do so, with a significant return on their time and dedication. It allows a better understanding of the business and staff performance from a 'results' perspective, better decision making and better results.

Get the help when you need it

Training and support are also vital elements in being able to quickly and efficiently incorporate the technology into the salon process and to maximise the experience for staff & minimise the disruption for your clients.. after all, it's about customer service and the ability of the technology to assist and support you in giving your clients a better salon experience.

Are you looking forward and being pro-active?

Some software programs will also assist in evaluating forward bookings so you can take action on potential quiet times both from a salon and a staff perspective. Being pro-active and doing target

marketing to fill up your appointment book cost effectively through the software are fantastic features to increasing sales and profitability.

Target marketing, the key to cost effective results

A key part of the data collection is client information and being able to tailor services and products to meet their needs. For example, identifying all those clients who have purchased one service but not purchased another can give you the ability to cost effectively target market a special offer which is designed to provide your client with an even greater experience and then build your business even more.

Test & Measure

Your business coach or mentor is bound to have you test & measure for good reason. Information such as how customers found out about your salon can have a profound impact on your future decision making. Being able to 'test and measure' and see that if you are spending several thousand dollars on say Yellow® and identifying that you are getting a lot of customers from this medium may prove it is worth while... if not... then an alternative placement of your advertising dollar could provide you with a better return. The key is the software being able to quickly provide you with the ability to record, test & measure and make informed decisions rather than 'seat of the pants' decisions based on little or no facts and a bad result.

Are you making the most of the opportunity?

The ability to contact and market effectively is dependent on the accuracy of your client database. Being able to quickly & cost effectively text or email your clients is dependent on having accurate information, look for software that will measure 'client card accuracy' so you can easily build your business without it costing you a fortune to do marketing.

Fix those no-shows and help your customers arrive on time

Most software will now enable you to automatically text or email confirm client appointments and it will automatically show the appointment has been confirmed. This is vital in both assisting clients and also in preventing lost charge out time. Some options will cost under 1c per text and some 22c so shop around. It may not seem a lot of difference but it can add up to hundreds of dollars a month or as little as \$10.

Control your stock, it should not control you!

Stock management should be an integral component of your software solution and it should enable you to quickly place orders and accurately determine (and help control) the amount of stock you have on hand at any time. There are a few tricks to make your life easier in this area and your provider should be able to help with this as part of their support & training.

Easy recording and reporting

Administration of things like Gift Vouchers and Customer Reward programs are incorporated in most software packages and you need to be aware of how they handle GST. Wages, targets and commissions may also feature and you will probably find your services setup will handle packages and courses of treatments to count down their use in order to make their recording and control easier for you.

Are we doing OK, can we do better?

Sales reports will give you an audit trail to track and trace transactions and you will find reports to show services, retail and rebooking rates for the salon and each staff member. You will probably find, in the beginning, that even a few crucial reports will give you enough info to help you have a real understanding of what is happening in your business. This 'enabling' information is invaluable in assessing where your business is currently coming from and perhaps where you need to direct your attention to improve service and sales.

Protect your future

Data backups may be done off site or onsite and this may be determined by how you feel about your client information being stored outside your control but either way, backups need to be done daily at least. Its because you data is so valuable that this is important and even a paper system is of concern. What would happen if the paper dairy was lost or destroyed? Or client cards lost? The client cards are often the subject of filing errors and frustration for therapist and stylists alike. Often a backup can be restored in hours on a new machine with minimal loss of info and without major disruption to your business.

Plan your IT replacements as panic situations will cost you more

A hardware replacement plan is also important in minimising your business risk of a failure that will cause disruption to the business, inconveniencing both clients and staff. As a general rule, computers should be replaced every 3-4 years depending on warranties. You IT gear is no different from a good pair of scissors or laser machine... they are better with maintenance and they will need replacing.

Your overall cost of ownership is important

If you are already computerised then looking for great features such as online booking and easy performance analysis may be you focus combined with ensuring you are getting the best value for money by looking at your total cost of ownership (software / support plus marketing costs such as email & SMS).

Are you making the most of your talents, bogged down or burying your head?

If you have yet to be convinced about the value of computerising, why not list the reasons why you are holding back, have several providers and other successful salon owners address your concerns. The value of collecting and using data to help you make informed decisions should not be underestimated, to do so may be severely hindering your salons performance, wasting your time on repetitive tasks and limiting client service.

Hopefully we have given you a couple of ideas to think about, inspired you a little to find 'the power to enable'. You are in an awesome industry providing a fantastic service and you need to be rewarded for your efforts. So please test & measure, get results, do more of the stuff you like and less of the repetitive stuff... get your software to help and reward yourselves!

Ian & Sue Sage

Salon Support Limited

'partners in business success'