Key skills in hairdressing

★ Putting the client at ease
★ In the client’s shoes
★ Different questioning techniques
★ Active listening

Client consultation

VOLUME 2 IN A SERIES OF 9

KNOW WHAT YOUR CLIENT REALLY WANTS
It is crucial to give a new client consultation extra attention to avoid misunderstandings. Not only will it save you time and money because you won’t have to redo the service, but it will also set the tone for future business. A client who leaves the salon fully satisfied with their experience is the best possible advertisement for you and the salon – the client will tell family and friends about their experience, and new business is certain.

You need to build the client’s trust and understanding to ensure that the consultation is successful. This way, you will both have the same ideas and vision for the final result.

It can be useful to ask the client why they no longer visit their previous salon or beauty spa. This will tell you a great deal about the client and their expectations. But never be unprofessional: don’t ask them the name of the last salon and, more importantly, never bad-mouth the salon if the client has freely told you which it was.

What clients look for

Did you know that, in your clients’ eyes, the actual hairstyle you create or makeover you do accounts for only 20% of how they value their visit to your salon or beauty spa? This means that other qualities account for 80% of what makes the consultation good for them.

One of the most important ingredients of a client consultation is sincerity. (Look this word up in a dictionary and get a clearer understanding of its meaning.) It is also the Number 1 ingredient that a client looks for in a stylist or beauty therapist – they want someone who really cares. Master this and you will be on your way to building a loyal clientele.

Activity

Take a few minutes to think about the other qualities that clients may feel are important. Write them in the table below. How important do you think these will be for clients?

Then discuss your findings with a colleague or small group of colleagues to see if your ideas are the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Client % value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client hairstyle, massage or makeover</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A client who leaves the salon fully satisfied with their experience is the best possible advertisement for you and the salon.
Putting the client at ease

When a client visits the salon, it is very important that they are:

★ comfortable with their surroundings
★ at ease with their stylist or beauty therapist

and that you:

★ treat them with consideration, respect and courtesy
★ listen attentively and actively to what they have to say.

These factors are key to building a regular clientele. The client must receive a high level of customer service from the moment they enter the door until the moment they leave. Here are some essential points to remember for every service.

★ Make appropriate eye contact, but do not stare at them so intently that they begin to feel uncomfortable.

★ Use body language that is open and welcoming – e.g. smiling, leaning forward to show your interest – but do not overdo it as it may feel threatening. Read the client’s body language, e.g. facial expressions and gestures.

★ Sit if they are sitting – it can feel very intimidating to have someone standing over you and talking to you, it can feel as though they are talking at you.

★ Sit where you can be seen without the client having to turn to see you – arrange chairs so that you are at a slight angle, where each of you can comfortably see the other one.

★ Include advice and recommendations based on your client’s own view of their hair or skin type and condition.

★ Use stylebooks or pictures as visual aids.

★ Always confirm the client’s requirements – e.g. ‘I will give you more texture on the crown, which will help create more body and lift’ or ‘I will darken your eyebrows, which will help to frame your eyes.’

★ Always show confidentiality during discussion by not breaking that of others.

★ Treat the client appropriately during interruptions (e.g. from colleagues or other clients).

★ Take appropriate action if adverse conditions are found – the client must be advised in a tactful and discrete manner.

★ Advise the client on appropriate products, equipment and future services.

★ Ensure that the end result is to the client’s satisfaction – e.g. if the client feels that their fringe is not short enough, cut a little more until they are happy with the result; if the client feels that the lipstick is too dark, either blot it and apply a lighter one on top or remove it and reapply a different shade.
In the client’s shoes

REMEMBER: A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS. How short is short? How red is red?

When you look at a visual, try and put yourself in your client’s shoes.

Look at the picture on the right. What is the client “seeing”? 

- Mood?
- Attitude?
- Sex appeal?
- Fun clubbing hairstyle and make-up?
- Colour contrasts?
- What are you “seeing”?
- A short textured hair cut, with asymmetrical look?
- Possibly unrealistic hair length at one side?
- Make-up too heavy?
- False colour produced by lighting?
- Limited convertibility for work or day wear?

Your client will ‘buy’ the ambience. It’s your job to look at it with a trained eye and work with your client to personalise the look for them.

Activity

Detail below the concerns you might have about the style in the picture and then suggest a possible solution to each one that you could offer your client.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Possible solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mood?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex appeal?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fun clubbing hairstyle and make-up?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your client will ‘buy’ the ambience. It’s your job to look at it with a trained eye and work with your client to personalise the look for them.
Different questioning techniques

After the client has explained their vision of how they would like to look, be sure to ask open and probing questions.

Open questions

Open questions ask the client to give information. They usually begin with the words:
★ What
★ Who
★ Which
★ When
★ Where
★ Why
★ How

This will help you obtain all the relevant information on the history of the client’s hair before you make a final decision with the client on what to do.

Probing questions

You can use probing questions to find out more information about a cut, colour, etc. For example, if you are considering colour, you might ask, ‘When you say you don’t like bright colour, can you explain that a bit more?’ This would also be an appropriate time to have images, pictures or colour charts to hand to show the client.

Closed questions

Closed questions give you ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. You can use these questions when closing or confirming the client consultation – for example, ‘So, if I take half an inch off the sides, would that be about right?’

**Activity**

Try writing a couple of examples of open and closed questions that you might use during a consultation.

Open questions

★

Closed questions

★
Active listening

While it’s important to ask the right questions, it is just as important to listen to the replies – if not more so! Most of us will know people who seem to do a lot of talking and very little listening – and they are not normally seen as good communicators.

Active listening is a skill which we can improve and develop throughout our lives. When we are listening actively, we are giving the speaker our full attention, but without making them feel as though they are 'under the microscope'? We pay attention to our position in relation to theirs. We observe their body posture, facial expressions and gestures as well as being aware of our own posture and gestures.

Activity

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who kept glancing at their watch, fidgeted and looked as if they were ready to leave? How did it make you feel? Describe your feelings and reactions.

Active listening is an activity where you really focus on the speaker and try to take in what is being transmitted, using all your senses. It means:

★ giving the speaker your undivided attention, listening not only to the words that are said but how they are spoken – the tone of voice, the pace and emphasis and the ‘feelings behind the words’. We ‘listen well’ by using all of our senses, not just the sense of hearing
★ showing by your facial expression, gestures, eye contact and ‘verbal encouragers’, such as ‘Mmm’ or ‘What happened then?’?, that you are actively listening and interested
★ encouraging the speaker to continue, e.g. by nodding your head or smiling
★ being aware of the speaker’s posture and body language and also your own posture and body language – what messages are they conveying?
★ using appropriate questions to draw out what the speaker wishes to say.
Do you have 100% client consultation skills?

You will find this checklist useful in identifying your own strengths and weaknesses while carrying out a client consultation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you use eye contact when you are talking to your client?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you smile and nod your head when you are listening to your client talk?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do you use different tones of voice and are you enthusiastic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you encourage the client to talk?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you let the client finish what they are trying to say?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. If the client hesitates, do you encourage them to go on?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you listen equally well whether the client talking is male, female, young or old?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do you confirm what the client has said and ask if you got it right?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you use colour charts, images or magazines where necessary to help clarify the client’s requests?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you question the client in order to get ideas explained more fully?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Do you advise clients on the products/retail that would be best suited to them?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you allow them to see, feel, smell or touch retail products?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Do you advise clients on possible future services?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Do you seek advice from a colleague if necessary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Do you use the client’s name when carrying out the consultation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Do you make the client feel relaxed and comfortable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Do you carry out hair and/or skin tests when necessary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Do you inform new clients of the duration and/or cost of the agreed service or products?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Do you complete or update the client record card?</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Are you confident that your client will return to you for future services?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A** Totals (Add up the ticks in each column)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Multiply A by B and record your answer in row C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now add each column in row C and record your score here %

Key skills in hairdressing | CLIENT CONSULTATION | 7
Score

95% and over
Excellent, you have covered the areas needed to ensure that a thorough and enjoyable consultation is carried out. You have a good understanding and are aware of the importance of putting the client at ease, thus building trust and excellent client rapport. You gain the respect of clients as they see you as knowledgeable and confident. You are aware that clients do not always give information freely, but you are able to obtain the information necessary to ensure that you both have the same vision of the end result. By giving the client advice and guidance on the service, duration and products, you are allowing them to see the bigger picture and they will appreciate your attention to detail. They will leave very happy with the service and this will build your reputation and a loyal clientele.

80%–94%
Well done, you are almost there! You have a good understanding of what is needed to ensure that you obtain the relevant information. You are building a good rapport with clients and starting to gain their trust. However, there are some areas that you need to practise and develop further – you might find it helpful to do a consultation on a colleague a few times to help you gain confidence. Once you have done this, you will be ready to re-do the self-evaluation form.

60%–79%
Good! You have mastered some of the areas that are needed to carry out an effective consultation – you now need to practise and develop your skills in specific areas. You might find it helpful to watch and learn from a colleague who has achieved 95%, or you could carry out a consultation on a colleague a few times to build your confidence and use the evaluation form as a checklist until you master all the areas. Keep practising!

59% and below
You are lacking confidence and knowledge in client consultation and you now need to practise, practise, practise! In order to build your confidence you have to understand why it is important to cover all the areas listed in the evaluation form. Team up with a partner and discuss these areas. You might need support from your supervisor who can give you training in the specific areas you need to develop. You are capable of this – you just need to practise. Good luck!

Activity
Next time you have a discussion with a client, review your listening. How actively did you listen to what the client said? Jot down any ideas about how you could listen more actively next time.

Links to qualifications
This workbook will help with the following parts of your qualifications:

NVQ in Hairdressing
Unit G9: Provide hairdressing consultation services

Key skills
Communication: G2.1a
Application of number: N2.1

Skills for Life
Adult literacy level 2:
• Speaking and listening
Adult numeracy level 2:
• Understanding and using mathematical information

Technical certificate in Hairdressing
Consult with and advise clients

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