Front-Desk Management: The heart of the business and the soul of customer service.

Topic: The front desk of a salon or spa is its operation center and requires tact, patience, and skill to run smoothly.

Synopsis of Segment

Pam, the receptionist is a seasoned pro, but the next few minutes behind the desk test her skills and patience. Working the front desk can be challenging, especially when everything happens at once. If you are working the front desk, it is important to stay calm, be systematic, and make the customer in front of you your top priority. Even when you are not working the front desk, you must be empathetic and patient with the person working this key area of the salon. In this segment, Pam gives students true insight into what it means to remain cool under fire.

Lesson Plans

Instructor Objectives

Upon completion of the lesson, students should:

1. Understand that the front desk is the operation center of the salon.
2. Realize that the front desk can be challenging at times, making it important to remain cool and prioritize who needs help first.
3. Practice good customer skills by being polite, respectful, and courteous, even when they feel overwhelmed by the tasks at hand.
**Implements, Equipment, Supplies Required**

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**Teaching Aids (audio/visual equipment, handouts, etc., used by instructor)**

1. Chalkboard or overhead projector
2. DVD player and DVD

**Facility**

Theory classroom

**Time Allotment**

90–120 minutes, depending on time available and student participation.

**Prior Student Assignment**

View Milady Soft Skills DVD “Front Desk Management”

**Educator References**

None

**Notes to Educator**

1. Review Milady Soft Skills DVD “Front-Desk Management” and entire lesson plan prior to lesson.
2. Review Questions/Activities for this lesson and predetermine which ones you will incorporate, based on your time allotment.
3. Check DVD player to ensure it is working properly.
4. Take attendance or have students sign in for class based on your school’s procedure.

Discussion Topics Interspersed in Milady Soft Skills “Front Desk Management”

• None

Review Questions

1. Why is the front desk considered the center of operations for a salon?
2. In addition to greeting clients, what other things take place at the front desk?
3. What should you do when things become really hectic? Keep cool? Call for help? Let phone calls go through to voice mail? Take a break?
4. Why is it important to give your first priority to the client standing in front of you?
5. How can you take care of clients systematically when so many things seem to be happening at once?

Activities/Questions

Group Discussion

Topic: “What you should do when . . .”
Discuss different problems that can affect the front desk and what you should do to resolve them. Examples: A credit card is declined; three lines ring at once; you have an angry client in front of you; you have a confused client who cannot make up her mind; somebody wants to book an appointment, but cannot remember the name of the stylist; someone wants to book several future appointments at the busiest time of day, etc.

Topic: “Employment opportunity”
Working part-time at a hair salon or day spa while attending beauty school has three distinct advantages: (1) It allows you to work in the environment you are
committing to as a career. (2) It allows you to see the innerworkings of a salon/day spa before graduating from school. (3) It gives you the opportunity to see your perceived specialties at work. As a beauty school student, you are also considered desirable as a front-desk employee to many salon employers because you have a good sense of the beauty business, and may even come to work for them as a service provider after passing your state board exams. If you saw this ad in the newspaper, how would you respond? How would you present yourself as the right person for this job?

**Job Opportunity!**

Beautiful, upscale salon and day spa seeking an experienced, friendly individual to run our very busy front desk. High energy, extreme professionalism, and beauty industry experience are musts.

The right individual will manage bookings, interact with clients, and assist managers and a dynamic team of professionals to provide the best in guest services. Excellent benefits!

Send email with resume or letter of interest with salary requirements. No phone calls please.

**Teacher’s Guide: Insights/Answers to Group Discussion**

As you know, running a front desk can be a high-energy, high-stress position. Whether students want to work in a salon/spa part-time while attending school, or be asked to help run the front desk as part of their training once they are licensed, this demanding aspect of the business takes great customer service skills and, above all, patience. The more practice you allow your students to have on your front desk, the savvier they will be about what it really takes to run the heart of all salons.
Scheduling: Creating high efficiency and high customer satisfaction in the workplace through proper bookings.

Topic: The importance of proper bookings; how to handle booking mistakes.

Synopsis of Segment

In order for a salon or spa to run smoothly, appointment schedules must be accurately and efficiently maintained. It begins with properly taking a booking that includes a client’s full name, specific stylist, and services desired and allotting the right amount of time to get the job done—no more or no less. This necessitates knowing who does specific services, how long it takes to do them, and even being familiar with the products and costs involved in everything from a haircut to a European facial. Unfortunately, despite the best training, booking mistakes inevitably happen. As Milady shows in this segment, when this unfortunate event does occur, stylists and management need to pull together to resolve the problem.

Lesson Plans

Instructor Objectives

Upon completion of the lesson, students should:

1. Understand that even under the best circumstances, scheduling difficulties will arise. It is how they are handled that is most important in satisfying clients.
2. Know that when a booking mistake occurs, they need to stay calm, empathize with the client, and seek the aid of the people involved (including management) in order to quickly resolve the problem.
3. Realize that even when another party makes a mistake on their books, they still must own the problem and actively work to resolve it.
**Implements, Equipment, Supplies Required**

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**Teaching Aids (audio/visual equipment, handouts, etc., used by instructor)**

1. Chalkboard or overhead projector
2. DVD player and DVD

**Facility**

Theory classroom

**Time Allotment**

90–120 minutes, depending on time available and student participation.

**Prior Student Assignment**

View Milady Soft Skills DVD “Scheduling”

**Educator References**

None
Notes to Educator

1. Review Milady Soft Skills DVD “Scheduling” and entire lesson plan prior to lesson.
2. Review Questions/Activities for this lesson and predetermine which ones you will incorporate, based on your time allotment.
3. Check DVD player to ensure it is working properly.
4. Take attendance or have students sign in for class based on your school’s procedure.

Discussion Topics Interspersed in Milady Soft Skills “Scheduling”

• None

Review Questions

1. What should be done when booking every appointment (e.g., ask for first and last name, repeat the time, date and service provider back to the client) to ensure accurate bookings?
2. Why is it important to be familiar with the services and products available in the salon or spa?
3. What do you do when a client requests a specific stylist who is not available?
4. What are the three most important things you must do when a booking mistake occurs (stay calm, empathize, resolve)?
5. When attempting to resolve the problem, why is it important to either have a quick and simple solution, or to provide the clients with at least two options? (The first immediately resolves the problem; the second gives clients a voice in the solution.)
6. How did teamwork play into the solution at Salon Renew?
7. How did gifting the clients with pedicures make them less upset?
8. Why was it important for Angie to come to John with the problem and a suggested solution?
Activities/Questions

Group Discussion

Topic: “Getting it right”

Ask students to consider all the information that must be recorded when making a salon booking. This information includes: first and last name spelled correctly, daytime number, cell number, and all the services required that day. (Hint: If someone books a haircolor appointment, for instance, you should ask if they also need a haircut as many people automatically assume it is included.) How smart is it to also get an email address? Make sure that students include checking and updating client files at the time of booking as one of their answers. This will save a lot of grief down the line if a stylist calls in sick, or is late, and the client must be reached immediately!

Group Breakout

Topic: “A series of unfortunate mistakes”

Teaching Materials and Aids: “A Series of Unfortunate Mistakes” printouts

Resolving problems and correcting mistakes in the salon workplace often takes creativity and teamwork. The following scenarios are real-life salon dilemmas that your students must resolve. Divide the class into three groups, assigning one situation to each group.

Given the following set of facts, how would you handle each of these situations in such a way that everyone feels good about the resolutions and wants to return to the salon?

1. You have a double booking: one client is booked for a perm and haircut on the right day and time; one client is mistakenly booked for a haircut on the following week. It is 9:00 in the morning, and your next appointment is coming in at 11:00. Both 9:00 clients are on their way to special events and cannot rebook. They are both furious and must be out by noon. What do you do? How do you take care of the problem, and still not run late all day?

2. You got up early this morning to get to work because you knew you were booked solid all day with haircuts, with the exception of 11:00–11:45. You even left the house 15 minutes earlier than usual. Unfortunately, due to a terrible accident, you are now trapped in gridlock that extends for miles. Luckily, you have your cell phone with you. What can you do to get your schedule back on track by lunchtime? Oh, there is one more hitch: someone failed to get a daytime number for two of your clients. Good luck!
3. Things are not going so well this morning. You overslept and walked in with your appointment, instead of a few minutes early. As you drink a cup of coffee to clear your head, you go to the dispensary to mix her color. Oh no! The color you need is on backorder and it is too early to get to the beauty supply. You have 90 minutes to complete a tint touch-up and haircut. What do you do? (Hint: enlisting the aid of a senior stylist to mix an alternate formula for the same color would be smart).

Teacher’s Guide: Insights/Answers to Group Discussion “Getting it Right” and Group Breakout “A Series of Unfortunate Mistakes”

Correct bookings make life in the salon a breeze, while mistakes can instantly transform a calm atmosphere into chaos. Not making a mistake in the first place is the most ideal situation, but no one does things perfectly every time. When mistakes happen, creative solutions are often needed to rectify the situation. It is also a time when teamwork—including management—can turn a bad situation into a special experience for clients. If time permits, talk with your students about the role that quality managers take in these situations (e.g. gifting, talking to clients directly, offering special considerations on their next visit, etc.).
“Communications With Unhappy Clients”

Unhappy Client: A dissatisfied person who normally buys goods and services from your company.

Topic: Satisfying clients who are unhappy with their services.

Synopsis of Segment

It is estimated that up to 50 percent of all unhappy salon situations are the direct result of poor communication between service providers and their clients. Though listening to a client complaint can be unpleasant, it should always be treated as an opportunity to improve the way you handle clients, your approach to doing services, and even your entire workplace. In this segment, Sara, a bride-to-be with pre-wedding jitters, does not like her hair. Susan, a seasoned stylist at Salon Renew, listens, empathizes, and assures Sara she can easily fix her hair in one hour’s time. She accomplishes this, and though Sara still has the jitters over her wedding, she leaves as a very happy salon client. In the process, Susan teaches students about a five-step plan that can turn unhappy clients into salon devotees: (1) listen, (2) empathize, (3) repeat, (4) resolve, and (5) remedy.

Lesson Plans

Instructor Objectives

Upon completion of the lesson, students should:

1. Be able to follow the five-step plan outlined in this DVD: (1) listen, (2) empathize, (3) repeat, (4) resolve and (5) remedy.
2. Understand the importance of being assertive (proactive), rather than aggressive (reactive) when dealing with unhappy clients.
3. Remain calm, caring, and clear-headed in order to take care of the problem to the absolute best of their abilities.
Implements, Equipment, Supplies Required

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Teaching Aids (audio/visual equipment, handouts, etc., used by instructor)

1. Chalkboard or overhead projector
2. DVD player and DVD

Facility

Theory classroom

Time Allotment

90–120 minutes, depending on time available and student participation.

Prior Student Assignment

View Milady Soft Skills DVD “Communications With Unhappy Clients”

Educator References

None
Notes to Educator

1. Review Milady Soft Skills DVD “Communications with Unhappy Clients” and entire lesson plan prior to lesson.
2. Review Questions/Activities for this lesson and predetermine which ones you will incorporate, based on your time allotment.
3. Check DVD player to ensure it is working properly.
4. Take attendance or have students sign in for class based on your school’s procedure.

Discussion Topics Interspersed in Milady Soft Skills “Communications With Unhappy Clients”

• None

Review Questions

1. Have you ever had an unhappy beauty school patron? What was wrong? How was the problem remedied? What role did you play in the resolution?
2. Explain the five-step plan: listen, empathize, repeat, resolve and remedy. What does each step entail?
3. Did Susan admit that she failed to properly tell Sara how to protect her hair color and condition? Please explain.
4. How did Susan immediately let Sara know that she was on her side? Did she agree with what she was saying?
5. What would have happened if Susan had acted in an aggressive (reactive), rather than an assertive manner? Would it have turned out the same way? How would Sara have felt about being at fault for the condition and color of her hair?
6. What prompted Sara to tell everyone that she loved her hair on the way out of the salon?
Activities/Questions

Group Discussions

Topic: “Personal tales of woe”

Teaching Materials and Aids: None

Everyone has been unhappy with dealings at a store, salon, or other services. Oftentimes, it is not so much about being unhappy over something, but how the problem is resolved. Encourage students to share their stories. What problems did they encounter? Were they welcomed or rebuffed by management? What emotions did they experience throughout the process? Were they more confident or less confident about doing business with that person or company after the incident? Ask students to think back to when they were salon clients and something went wrong with their hair. How were those problems handled? How did they feel about the stylist and salon afterwards?

Topic: “Satisfaction survey”

Teaching Materials and Aid: "Satisfaction Survey" printouts

Marketers used to say that when a happy client loved her hair, or the way she was treated by a salon, she would tell three people about her services. But when an unhappy client hated her hair, or the way she was treated by a salon, she would tell 10 people. Wrong! The information is now out of date because that number originated B.I.—Before Internet. Today, a client can now tell thousands of people about how she was treated by a salon—good or bad—with the flick of a few keys!

One of the best ways to know whether or not your clients are happy with their hair and their experiences is to periodically send them surveys. To encourage clients to fill them out, make sure they are sent via email, or include a preaddressed, stamped envelope. You should also promise clients a special reward for doing this: hair glossing, conditioner, or retail products are always welcome gifts. To enrich the learning experience, ask students to first fill out the survey as if they were clients. Then, ask them to suggest additional questions that should be included in the sample survey.

Sample Survey

First, I want to thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire! I know that you are busy, and filling out this survey takes up precious free time. The purpose of the survey is to improve your
experiences and services offered by Salon Renew. Please be honest. You answers are both anonymous and confidential!

Please rate the following areas of our business on a 1 to 3 scale: (1) Poor or Never, (2) Satisfactory or Sometimes, or (3) Outstanding or Always.

1. Courtesy. Do all our staff members act courteous and respectful toward you? ________
2. Timeliness. Do we respect your schedule by running on time? ________
3. Services. How would you rate your overall satisfaction of services? ______
4. Value. Do you receive a value-added experience each time you visit our salon? ______
5. Products. Do you purchase and use the products recommended by your service providers? ______
6. Cleanliness. How do you rate the cleanliness of our business? ______
7. Customer Service. How do you rate the customer service provided by our salon? ______
8. Have you ever had a negative experience with our salon that you would like to share in this survey?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

9. Have you ever had an outstanding experience at our salon that you would like to share in this survey?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

10. If you could change one thing about our salon, what would it be?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

11. Other comments:

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Teacher’s Guide: Insights/Answers to Group Discussions

Ninety percent of all dissatisfied clients never complain; they simply move on to other salons. Unfortunately, most beauty professionals—even those who have been doing hair for years—believe that if clients do not complain, they are satisfied with their services. Encourage your students to reflect on all the times they did not complain about services or products they were very unhappy with. Encourage them to survey their clients at least once a year. What they learn from these surveys will help them retain more clients and create a far more stable career.
Difficult Client: A client who is critical by nature, and is rarely satisfied with services and products.

Topic: Dealing with chronically unhappy clients.

Synopsis of Segment

While the five-step plan of (1) listen, (2) empathize, (3) repeat, (4) resolve, and (5) remedy is effective in handling unhappy clients most of the time, there are a few clients who are never happy. In these rare cases—99 percent of all unhappy situations are isolated incidents—it may be time to throw in the towel. In this segment, Salon Renew is faced with permanently dealing with Mrs. Cross, a client who seems to be perennially unhappy with everything from the brand of coffee they serve and the music they play to their services. In the process of dealing with Mrs. Cross, students are taught that while it is their job to please clients, and even to go the extra mile for difficult ones, it is never their job to be abused or berated by clients.

Lesson Plans

Instructor Objectives

Upon completion of the lesson, students should:

1. Understand that while following the five-step plan—(1) listen, (2) empathize, (3) repeat, (4) resolve, and (5) remedy—is effective with 99 percent of all clients, a small minority can never be satisfied.
2. Understand that trying to please an impossible client is less important than maintaining the spirit and harmony of the salon.
3. Realize that unhappy clients often make impossible demands. It is their job to keep the client focused on realistic solutions.
4. Know that at some point, a decision must be made to continue or discontinue the relationship. When this happens, management should always be involved.
**Implements, Equipment, Supplies Required**

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**Teaching Aids (audio/visual equipment, handouts, etc., used by instructor)**

1. Chalkboard or overhead projector
2. DVD player and DVD

**Facility**

Theory classroom

**Time Allotment**

90–120 minutes, depending on time available and student participation.

**Prior Student Assignment**

View Milady Soft Skills DVD “Communications with Difficult Clients”

**Educator References**

None
Notes to Educator

1. Review Milady Soft Skills DVD “Communications with Difficult Clients” and entire lesson plan prior to lesson.
2. Review Questions/Activities for this lesson and predetermine which ones you will incorporate, based on your time allotment.
3. Check DVD player to ensure it is working properly.
4. Take attendance or have students sign in for class based on your school’s procedure.

Discussion Topics Interspersed in Milady Soft Skills “Communications With Difficult Clients”

• None

Review Questions

1. What is the difference between an unhappy and difficult client?
2. Why is the five-step plan not effective for most difficult clients?
3. What are some of the signs of a difficult client?
4. Should Mae have turned off the music when Mrs. Cross complained?
5. Should someone have run out and bought her Starbucks when she complained about the coffee?
6. At what point is it not worth catering to such criticisms?
7. Was Angie right in disagreeing with Mrs. Cross about a “decent haircut” solving all her problems?
8. How did she do this and still not seem antagonistic or argumentative?
9. What made Pam realize that John needed to deal with Mrs. Cross?
10. How much tension and unhappiness does a client like Mrs. Cross really cause when she is in the salon? On the telephone? Just knowing she is scheduled to come in?
Activities/Questions

Group Discussion

Topic: “List the similarities and differences between an unhappy and difficult client”

Teaching Aids and Materials: None

Ask your students to discuss and list the similarities and differences between an unhappy client and a difficult client. How does a difficult client make them feel about their abilities as stylists? How does a difficult client repeatedly harm their work environment? At what point does an unhappy client become a difficult client?

Role Play

Topic: “Dealing with difficult clients”

Teaching Aids and Materials: “Eight Step Guide for Dealing With Difficult Clients” printouts

In many ways, dealing with all unhappy clients is difficult and even painful. However, when clients transcend from being unhappy to unreasonable (e.g., I don’t like my haircut, so you need to give me a full set of highlights for free), become chronically unhappy, or are abusive (e.g., loud voice, name calling, etc.), then it is time to speak to management about terminating the relationship.

Have students role-play difficult clients and stylists for the class. Encourage your students to not hold back with their miserable client roles! To deal with them, student stylists must use the following plan:

Eight Step Guide for Dealing With Difficult Clients

1. Listen carefully to a clients’ criticism.
2. If they are abusive, politely ask them to tone down their language.
3. Keep records of your dealings with difficult clients and steps you have taken to deal with their concerns.
4. Try to see things from their point of view.
5. Avoid arguments. Your goal is to come to an understanding, not win a confrontation.
6. Be encouraging. Often people become hostile when they feel frustrated or confused.
7. Stay calm.
8. If the client goes from being unhappy to difficult—becomes abusive or is chronically unhappy—talk with management about terminating the relationship.

Teacher’s Guide: Insights/Answers to Group Discussion and Role Play

Difficult clients: Everybody has had them, and yet most stylists still feel a little guilty about never pleasing them. Difficult clients—those who are perennially complaining, unhappy, and disappointed—are the bane of many beauty salons. Quite often, the problem is not with the salon, but rather with the person who feels unhappy, unfulfilled and insecure in his or her private lives. Help students get a handle on the differences between an unhappy and difficult client, and what steps they should take before quitting the client—guilt free.