

# STILL A LITTLE TOUGH OUT THERE? SO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT IT?

By Kym Krey

SO THINGS ARE STILL TOUGH OUT THERE, HUH? I'VE SPOKEN TO LOTS OF SALON OWNERS WHO ARE CHIPPING AWAY EVERY DAY BUT REPORTING THAT THEY'RE HAVING TO WORK HARD FOR EVERY DOLLAR THEY MAKE WHEN 2 YEARS AGO IT SEEMED SO MUCH EASIER. SOME OF YOU ARE HOLDING YOUR GROUND, SOME ARE EVEN EXPERIENCING GROWTH (CONGRATULATIONS) BUT A LOT ARE JUST SCRAPING BY.

Now, the interesting thing is that when I ask the questions "So what are you doing about it? How are you generating new business? What are you doing to recover lost clients & keep regulars coming back?" I'm still getting blank faces or silences on the phone. You may have been able to grow quite nicely through referrals and walk in business alone until now, but the market has changed around you and there's a BIG chance that's not going to cut it any more. You need to change strategy. You need to do something DIFFERENT. If you've never done a marketing calendar before; if you've never left the 4 walls of your business to go and meet other local business owners; if you've never gone to a business networking breakfast to promote your business, it's about time to started.

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Dominating your local market in small business is not about spending thousands on glossy advertising and waiting for the phone to ring. It's actually about getting outside your business to get known. It's not about who you know, it's about who knows YOU! And how will they get to know you? By getting involved. By taking an hour every week to drop into a number of local businesses to drop in a service menu and an invitation (read gift certificate) towards their first visit. You shouldn't be able to walk down the street without being almost out of breath saying 'Hi George', 'Hey Kathy', 'How are you Tracey?'. EVERYONE needs to know who you are so when the topic of hair comes up in conversation, they automatically think of you-

and mention your business name. Sponsor everything you possibly can so your business name is mentioned. If the local school has a fashion parade- be there, do the hair and donate a fabulous prize which brings a new client to your business.

Think about the other business around you who you think do a great job. Where do your clients shop/eat/hang out when they're not with you? Make a list and go and meet these business owners and talk about how you can work together to grow your businesses. Swap 20 x \$20 gift vouchers with a similar offer from them and give them to your best clients that month, or those who spend over \$200 or those who refer a new client. It costs you nothing and you look like a hero- plus, if you have 2,3 or 12 other businesses doing the same thing, you have a stream of new clients coming through your doors who have been personally recommended by that business owner. Now, what difference could that make to your business?

Why not get a few businesses together and hold a VIP client event? Your local boutique owner could talk about what colours, shapes and accessories are in fashion for the coming season, you will talk about what's happening with hair and some fabulous new products and then a local style/image consultant could talk about dressing for your body shape or a naturopath could talk about finding the balance & staying physically & mentally healthy, or even a personal trainer can show them how to stay



fit and fabulous in just 20 minutes a day. Get creative. Invite the owners who seem to have a bit of 'spark' about them to coffee and brainstorm how you can work together & what you could contribute to such an event. Each business invites a number of their clients and you all have the chance to show what you can do- and win a swag of new clients! Make sure you give each person who attends an offer (gift voucher) to come to your salon with an expiry date of say 4-6 weeks so you maximize the opportunity.

Next, you need to get up close and personal with what's happening inside your business as well. How many of you don't use most of the reports that expensive computer system can create for you? You're crazy! That computer can show you exactly what's working & not working for you- and it costs about the same as a small car- and we're using it like a cash register! If you don't understand them, make the time to call your computer company or a business coach and get them to show you the information you need, the story it's telling you and what to do with that information. Here's a big statement coming at you right between the eyes: If you don't know exactly who hasn't  
*con't over page...*



we still pop into their inbox every 4 weeks and stay under their nose.

4. E-news blast. Short, sharp, witty, warm and punchy, this snippet of 3-4 articles tells them what's happening at your salon, what's new, what products you love and what they need to know about their hair right now. It needs to look great with quality images and also reflect your warmth and personality so have fun with it. Getting an email newsletter happening really isn't as hard as it may sound; you just need your template designed with your logo and colours and then, if you can type on a computer, you can type in your news stories and if you need a hand, I can show you how to do the first few to get you started. Super-easy; super cheap and super effective. DO IT!

Last of all, when was the last time you actually sat down with some of your clients and asked their opinion of your business? Why not write a list of some questions you'd

really like to know such as 'what made you choose us and what makes us different to other salons you've tried?', 'when do we disappoint you and what don't we get right?' and 'how can we make this better for you?' and invite a group of clients in, pour them a glass of wine and listen to what they say! You'll be surprised how willing they are to help you because you've made the effort to ask and how frank and open they'll be as they chat with each other, about your business and right in front of you! That information is GOLD! If you knew exactly what your clients wanted from you, all you'd have to do is make sure you gave it to them! No more guess work; no more wasted money trying new ideas; just ask and listen carefully- then DO WHAT THEY SAY!

I'm not going to accept the 'I don't have time' excuse any more because these things take very little time. What it DOES take is commitment from you to make it happen. If you really want this business to be successful; if you're sick of scraping by week after week and not having any money, then you need to get serious- and take action. Decisions shape results.



Happy to help, just drop me a line [kym@kymkrey.com.au](mailto:kym@kymkrey.com.au) or 0403 042 312.

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been back for 2-3 months and you haven't been in contact, you don't deserve those clients. Don't be surprised if you see them walking out of your competitor's salon down the road, because you obviously didn't appreciate them. They weren't feeling the love, so they left to find someone else.

## When was the last time you actually sat down with some of your clients and asked their opinion of your business

Here's what you absolutely MUST be doing week after week, month after month just to get in the game:

1. A welcome letter/gift/pack to every new client within 72 hours of them leaving your salon. Show them you appreciate them, impress them with your professionalism and just woo them with a warm and fuzzy gesture. They love you for it.
2. Thank you for referral. Let's get serious: that new client could be worth thousands of dollars to you over the next few years so the least you can do is say a very genuine 'Thank You'. Get some classy-looking Thank you cards and hand write (don't you dare email this!) a personal note to say 'thank you for your wonderful support and we'll take very good care of your

friend'. Tuck in a nice \$10 voucher towards their next service or give them a lovely complimentary treat. Just do something to show your gratitude so they'll be inclined to do it again! Encouraging referrals like this is crucial for your business survival and growth so make it a system and make sure it happens.

3. 'We miss you' letter/note/postcard. On the first of the month, you must print out your list of clients who have not been back in the last 8-12 weeks (or whatever is unusual for your client base) and look into their history. How many times have they been to the salon? What services do they usually have? Who looked after them last time and was anything different that they may not have been happy with? Then, send them a letter which gently and good-naturedly shows them you've noticed their absence and would love to see them again soon. The offer them something that relates to them. Maybe their usual cut and colour at an extra special price or just a \$25 gift certificate toward their next service but MAKE SURE IT HAS A FAIRLY SHORT EXPIRY DATE(4 weeks) to prompt action. I always keep this list in a marketing folder so that next month when I print my non-return client report, I can see who didn't respond to that letter- and I'll send them another (different) letter with an even better deal (I have clients who do this at 1/2 price and one who insists it must be free because 'we've obviously lost their confidence and need to regain it'. If they haven't responded by the 3rd month, I get the message that I've lost them and make them inactive so I don't keep harassing them. Maybe I'll keep them on my email newsletter list so