



How to host the ultimate

VIP Event

BY SHARYN RAITI

Christmas is just around the corner and we know what to expect – lots of parties, time with family and friends and extravagance on all levels – especially customers looking for holiday treatments and special gifts for loved ones! It's our peak trading period that needs to be well structured and planned in advance to capitalise on the frantic spending that this time of year promotes. While you can throw a special event at anytime during the year, November is the perfect time to host a special event in your salon to capture pre-Christmas spending with your product packs, gifts, treatment packages and gift vouchers.

Now is the time to get your VIP guest list ready for a fantastic evening of celebration and the joy of the cash register ringing! In the past we had in-salon events, invited clients, and they turned up and spent their money; these days it's not quite so easy.

Time is at a premium so we need to provide our customers with a good reason to spend their time and their hard-earned money with us. Groundwork is crucial; planning and preparation is the key to success on the night. This article is equipped with your very own special event planner to ensure your event is an absolute cracker!

Firstly - why are you having a VIP event and what are you hoping to achieve? Here are some reasons for holding the event:

- To increase business awareness of what you offer
- To boost sales and services
- To introduce existing and new clients to your salon's treatments
- To demonstrate these treatments
- To offer the client an opportunity to see what happens in the cubicles
- To show the client what they can expect when they visit your salon
- To book clients in for treatments following the event

- To include all team members in the event and strengthen staff bonds
- To increase long-term purchases for treatments and retail.

PLANNING THE SUCCESS

- Hold a meeting to discuss the event with your team
- Have them be part of the creation to increase commitment
- What ideas do they have to make this event a success?
- What will be your point of difference to encourage attendance?
- Set a financial goal and a gift voucher goal.
- Share the duties – delegate and ask for participation
- Choose your ideal clients – ask each therapist to contribute a client list
- Decide on the treatments to be demonstrated – high profit and treatments being promoted in your Christmas packages are ideal.
- Will you pre-sell to clients prior to the event? This is ideal
- Who will do which treatment?
- What role will each team member play at the event?
- What training is required to ensure the demonstrations are 'flawless'?
- How will you promote the treatments?
- Who will organise the invitations?
- Who will do the mail-out?
- Who will follow up the RSVPs?
- What will the food/drink menu include?
- How will you set the ambience that is required?
- What music is appropriate?
- What will your theme be for the event?

TIP – This special client experience must be communicated from the initial invitation; value of time and money along with a 'heart' sell rather than a 'hard' sell approach. A heart sell is recognised by the client as exceptional customer care. It is where your integrity generates sales at the VIP event because you have displayed an honest approach over the year. Your customers will spend freely when they feel remembered and a sense of belonging to your business.

SO WHO DESERVES AN INVITATION?

The success of your promotion will be dependent upon your planning and by inviting the correct people to your event. Think quality not quantity.

CHOOSE BETWEEN:

- Loyal existing clients and ask them to bring a friend – people love to travel in pairs
- Existing clients that have other services but not the ones you are promoting

- Clients who have treatments but have not purchased retail
- Local business owners i.e. concierge, banks, hotel staff, media, gyms, etc

THE PLAN

It is essential that everything you do to prepare for the event reflects the impression you want to portray to your clients. Remember that time, money and care are the top three requirements.

- **THE INVITATION** – Choose an invitation that gives an indication of what the event signifies, i.e. scroll invite with nice paper decorated with a ribbon. Think colour, texture and quality and tie this in with what you do on the night.
- **THE PRE-SELL** – Instruct all therapists to call their clients to alert them to the fact that their favourite products are in special Christmas packs. Suggest they buy

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in advance by paying with their credit card over the phone as stock is limited and may sell out before the event. They can easily collect their pre-purchases on the night and you can offer to gift wrap for free.

- **TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE** – Offer convenience; free delivery if they can't attend the event, email packages in advance to help with choosing corporate gifts, post gift vouchers for busy people as a time saving service. Gorgeous wrapping is essential – everyone loves a gift that looks professionally wrapped!
- **SET THE ATMOSPHERE** – Set the mood with a guitarist, harpist or lovely CDs that reflect your salons ambience. Use candles and soft lighting to induce mood, burn aromatherapy oils, position beautiful displays of your Christmas stock, simple yet delicious food that is able to be self-served. Emphasis is not on the food but the overall experience - attention to detail is what people love. They may not be aware exactly what the attention to detail is but they do know that 'something' feels good and they will talk about it after the event to their friends. As we all know, word of mouth is the best form of advertising.

- **THE DEMONSTRATIONS** – organise continuous treatment demonstrations in every room and ask a team member to be the expert in relation to their designated task. They need to learn procedures, ingredients, treatment/retail special offers and answer any

questions asked by the clients. Perform a complimentary skin analysis for every attendee; this is a good way to promote your treatments and products and remember to fill out the consultation sheet and suggest skincare needs.

- **YOUR SPECIAL OFFERS** – prearrange special deals or packages by offering added value to promote your treatments and retail e.g. provide a menu of services checklist that can be given to each client and also displayed in the rooms as well as linking to the treatments being performed. Offer buy-four-get-one-half-price or package ideas; place a credit card booking form on the bottom along with client details – name, address, phone, appointment time, etc. This reminds the client what they liked as they view the treatments and take the journey through your salon.
- **THE SALON JOURNEY** – make the experience personal by escorting small groups of clients through the salon/spa to show them the rooms and treatments. Explain what is happening in each room; let your clients touch and feel products and have your therapists do the presenting. After the journey let the clients wander to watch further treatments and then let them know when they are ready to return to reception where therapists are available for any further queries, purchases and appointments.
- **PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL** – organise special bags of information that include Christmas treatment packages, gift voucher ideas, product offers, treatment menu pricelist, product information and samples. A voucher is a tempting way for clients to return in January for a facial or treatment package and ensures they remember you after the busy festive rush.
- **A REASON TO BUY** – give your clients a reason to buy. Run a competition if they book a treatment or buy a product or gift voucher on the night. Create excitement! Best of all, do your best to pre-sell before the event – train your clients to pre-purchase and you will be amazed how they follow the lead.

Make this Christmas season an absolute cracker by creating a memorable VIP event in your salon with a pre-planned outcome because when all is said and done, we are a business. We need to ask our clients to support us and spend their Christmas cash with us; after all we do make a huge difference to their well being. **PB** Call Sharyn at Mentor Management to enquire about the 'Christmas Salon Prep Pack' to take the stress out of Christmas planning. www.mentormanagement.com.au, ph: 0410 691 910.