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Elevating the
Guest Experience

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ELEVATING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

90%

of your new leads are brought in by existing clients

. . . .

86%

of customers are willing to pay more money for a better experience

. . . .

You expect more these days. So do your guests.

It's no secret that our expectations of the brands and companies we interact with is sky high. With switching costs as simple as swiping one way or the other on your phone these days, it's the norm rather than the exception, to not go back to brands and companies that don't meet our expectations.

So if we have that mentality as consumers, how can we ensure that as business owners and managers, we're providing a great experience for our guests that extends beyond just their treatment? Why do we think that just by having a great haircut or relaxing massage or finding the perfect color nail polish automatically means we've found a customer for life? After all, the brand experience is no longer just about the service—it starts with the first mention of your brand, and doesn't end until they're back in their car once they've left your facility.

When we get our coffee, order a taxi, or buy a plane ticket today, we expect the process to be frictionless and fluid—easy and uniform. But how do we ensure that we provide that same experience for our customers?

Let's find out.

89%

of people stopped going to a salon because they had a bad customer experience

The Online Experience

Back in the day, it was a matter of calling up your salon or spa, your stylist or therapist, and making the appointment directly with them. The front desk would check availability, and inevitably you'd have to work around when they had openings and when you did. Hopefully, it all worked out. But that's hardly the experience that your guests expect today.

Quite the opposite. They want to book when it's convenient for them to do so, not simply during the hours you're open. And they want to book from wherever they are— on the couch, behind their desk, waiting in line at the coffee shop. They won't settle until they find not only the provider but also the time that suits them. They expect you to remind them about the appointment and ensure it's on their calendar. Sounds easy, right?

In all honesty, it is! With today's online booking tools, ensuring that the customer is in control of the booking process is an expectation that you can easily meet. From setting up your own online branded webstore to easily customizing your own mobile application, making it easy for customers to find you and do business with you is paramount. And by eliminating the friction in the process, you've already elevated your brand against the competition!

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Consumers have an unlimited choice in their beauty and wellness providers today. The brands that are growing and have the most loyal customers are those that not only provide a great treatment or styling, but think of the entire experience of their guests--from booking to reviews and back again.

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Sudheer Koneru
CEO, Zenoti

50%

of consumers give a brand only one week to respond to a question before they stop doing business with them

Staying Connected

Your job, once you see your appointment book filling up, is to make sure that your customers actually show up! In today's texting world, it's easier than ever to send either a personalized text message from the provider to their client, or from your business to your guest reminding them of an appointment, confirming their treatment and provider, and even providing any other information—like traffic detours or special hours of operation—that could hinder their experience with you. Suggesting new services and products, highlighting promotions, and offering discounts are also a great way to personalize and establish the relationship you have with your customer, increasing the chances that they become a customer for life.

Say goodbye to the check-in line!

If you're looking to kill the mood, walking into a business and seeing a long line is a surefire way to do it. From wondering which receptionist is moving faster, to looking at your watch to see if you're going to start your appointment on time, losing the positive anticipation of the treatment you're about to receive can severely impact your overall experience. But increasingly, salons and spas are ditching the very idea of checking in at all, thereby making the first experience the guest has with their business a positive one. They're doing it in a few interesting ways.

First, they're using geofencing technology to automatically get an alert when the customer approaches and enters their salon or center. The alert automatically goes to the receptionist as well as the treatment provider, who no longer has to wonder if their next client has arrived. Further, the guest is also welcomed by a text alert confirming they've arrived and that their treatment will begin shortly.

Some salons and centers have removed the receptionist desk altogether, and allow their front office staff to personally greet the guest when they enter. Armed with tablets and phones, they're able to instantly confirm the guest has arrived, notify the provider, confirm the treatment and procedures the guest is there for, and provide a personal and warm greeting that makes the guest feel welcomed.

Other salons and spas have removed the receptionist altogether! By using tablets to have the guest sign-in themselves, they provide a sleek, modern experience right upon entering, and allow the stylist or provider to initiate the personal contact with the guest. This not only cuts down on front-office costs, but allows the provider to be more central in the appointment.

Whatever your business chooses to do—one of these, or a combination of all three, the results are clear—the customer receives a great experience, they feel acknowledged and cared for, and they are in a great frame of mind to begin their appointment with you!

58%

of consumers noted that their expectations were not met because a company was unavailable by phone and email

Forget the Forms

Maybe second to the long check-in line, the next thing that can really complicate an appointment or treatment are all of the repetitive forms you often have to fill out before a treatment. While not as applicable for haircuts and nail polish, even given some of the chemicals used for treatments today, release forms and insurance forms are often the norm rather than the exception. But what if all of those could be digitized and even sent ahead to be completed by the guest before they arrived? Businesses that digitize their processes are seeing a significant reduction in human errors on data entry, significant time savings from their front desk staff, and more personalized interactions between the provider and guest. For some businesses, forms are a part of doing business. But that doesn't mean they should get in the way of providing a great guest experience. Going digital is a great way to let your guests complete the information you need on their time, not yours, and puts the power in their hands to ensure a great experience with your business.

Adding products on the fly

In a business where many services are attached to products that your business sells, it's a natural for your employees to want your guests to continue their treatments at home with the same products from their appointment. But it can be cumbersome for the provider to wait to ring the guest up after their appointment is complete (that dreaded line at the receptionist desk rears its ugly head again!). Just when your guest is feeling relaxed or looking great, the last thing you want to happen is for the experience to be broken by trying to ring up products, finding prices, matching your appointment and bill. It's far from frictionless and can find your customer back in their car as stressed out as they were when they arrived at the appointment!

Luckily the technology exists today to avoid those issues and keep the flow and rhythm of the appointment. By adding products directly to the customer appointment as the sale is made, a seamless transaction is able to occur, so that when it's time to check-out, there's no searching for price tags or finding stock on the shelf. The product is already accounted for and added to the bill, and the customer—and the provider, both walk away satisfied.

But why bother with check-out at all?

After all, if the business knows the customer has arrived, can't the business just take care of the payment? If it's good enough for Uber™, why isn't is good enough for your business? The good news is that it is. Adding an auto-payment capability to your mobile app again puts the customer in charge and lets them set up their own payment account, eliminating the check-out line altogether. The provider merely marks the treatment or appointment as "completed," and the payment is made. Oh, and those products that were added-on during the treatment? They're part of autopay as well, so the guest can just walk out of the salon or center after their appointment is completed.

Oh wait, I have a membership!

There have been a few things we've highlighted here that can really be a bummer—from waiting in lines to filling out forms, there's a lot that could throw a great treatment experience off track. So while we're at it, let's add another—forgetting to apply a membership or loyalty card to the client's appointment and not giving the credit they deserve.

In a world where we rack up loyalty points in everything from coffee to airline miles, getting credit for our repeated business is often a huge factor in developing and maintaining brand loyalty. So we want to ensure that we're able to apply the right set of filters on a guests visit. Maybe they're coming with a friend or party and want to redeem a bunch of visits. Maybe they only want their visit to count on the program but not the guest; or maybe they forgot their number and didn't get their points at all. Either way, it doesn't result in a great guest experience, and it's one that we have the power to correct.

By using software tools that recognize the guest's membership and loyalty status at any location of yours that they visit, you're able to ensure that they get credit for their business, and give them a reason to keep coming back to visit you.

Making it easy for them to recommend you

Today's retail environment is nothing short of cutthroat—and finding a new customer is something that every salon and spa values. So why not make it as easy as possible for your most satisfied customers to recommend you to others? By integrating your review capability directly with your mobile application and texting, you're able to contact customers and guests you know had a great experience and have them post a favorable review on places like Yelp™ and Google™ when they're still feeling great about the treatment and appointment they just received.

And should things go sideways—and you know better than anyone that they sometimes can—you'll be able to contact the customer directly and take any corrective action to ensure they stay a customer and you can improve on the services you provide to others, and hopefully them, in the future.

Don't just wait—elevate!

It should be pretty easy to see by now that finding the greatness inside of your business and elevating the guest experience is far more than just providing a nice appointment and treatment. It's the entire experience, from start to finish, that distinguishes you from other providers and keeps customers coming back again and again.

Amazing customer experiences are not limited to big brands like Starbucks™ and Nordstrom™. They're just as available for your business as well. And with the right technology in your hands—and in the hands of your customers, the experiences you demand as a consumer are just as available to your customers as well.

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