



"I believe only those who you've trained to answer the phone should have the privilege. It takes a lot of energy to generate an enquiry only to have it ruined by poor phone skills."

Consider a veto on greeting callers with "good morning" or "good afternoon". It's way too easy to muck up. If you haven't had your lunch yet, your stomach tells you it's morning and you find yourself apologising for your error instead of focusing on the enquiry.

Sometimes, I hear people cross-examining the caller. Is it short? Is it long? Do you want to have this? Do you need that? Blah. Blah. Blah. Really, just get them in!

Your appointment book is a guide, it's like the race guide for Melbourne Cup. It's a starting point and any of those horses could win, lose or get scratched. To be in the running, they have to be in that book.

I worked with a girl who, when she started her shift, couldn't put her handbag away before scrutinising the appointment book. She'd run through her starting list and comment: "she doesn't need a full head" or "that's not enough time to do that colour". My answer was simple: if you want to control your column, book them in yourself before they leave.

Why not offer an initial consultation service? One that you charge money for, redeemable off the first visit.

Make it 15 minutes of your undivided attention. Promise you'll answer all their questions and make a plan to deliver what they need. Identify their problem, recommend a solution. Wow them with the consultation and you win them over. You could take their credit card details over the phone to ensure they show up.

Taking every customer enquiry seriously will differentiate you from your competitors. What if the salon-owner greets every new customer, does the consultation and matches the client to the best-fit team member? You can't do that if you're too busy doing the floor work in your salon. So, what if you stepped into a role similar to that of a restaurant maître-d? You oversee

the whole operation, sort out any problems and ensure premium service. Imagine the sense of organisation and confidence conveyed to your customers.

Have you ever measured the number of calls coming in each day? How many could you avoid? Let me explain. Most salons are interrupted unnecessarily and take a subsequent hit on productivity.

How many of your clients are ringing to make an appointment? Educate your existing clients to rebook on the day - fewer phone calls and interruptions, right?

How many are calling to check their appointment? If you had an SMS reminder service, they'd have no need to call. Fewer interruptions. Tick.

Now ... what about personal calls? Are your family members phoning to ask random questions that could wait? You're welcome to use my "fire and blood" rule. My children used to call the salon often. Until, that is, I started asking whether anyone was on fire or if there was any blood. If not, they were told to wait until I got home. Take control of incoming calls or you'll be interrupted relentlessly.

Once you've culled the avoidable calls, you can focus on your greeting style. Think of the phone as your front gate. People knocking at your gate are hoping for a warm greeting, a smile that they can feel even if they can't see you. They want you to answer quickly, so they know they're at the right place, and to welcome them in through the gate with the promise of great service.

Your phone smile is paramount to that welcome. A smiling voice shows that you're engaged, interested and ready to help. Next time your salon phone rings, take a deep breath, crack a big grin and translate that enquiry into an enthusiastic new customer.