



# Keep your eye on the prize

## Making the most of salon loyalty programs

*Nothing is more valuable to your salon than the loyalty of your existing clients. A single steadfast, rusted-on client is worth at least a dozen one-time walk-ups. If you think new clients are easy picking, read on and learn about the deeper benefits of rewarding loyalty. By Lisa Conway.*

**S**ure, you need new clients for business growth. A steady in-flow of newbies into your business is fundamental but it doesn't warrant being your biggest focus.

Keeping your existing clients faithful is the bigger game and well worth your effort.

How do I do it, you ask? Loyalty programs are one rather large can of worms. How and when you implement a program in your salon depends on many, many variables.

Without knowing your salon's figures, I'd be mad to recommend a specific strategy for you. What I can do, however, is give you some guiding principles, some do's and don'ts to help you decide what will work best in your business.

For starters, have you ever considered how your existing clients feel sitting by watching your campaigns aimed at attracting new people to your salon?

All those offers and freebies and introductory prices might leave your devoted clients feeling a little neglected and taken for granted. They need to feel the love. Otherwise, you might find them wooed by a loved-up introductory offer from one of your competitors.

Some clients might mention this feeling to you but most won't. It might just sit with them until one day, when you're not your best self, they get to thinking about the possibility of greener grass elsewhere and that's the last you see of them. Clients don't normally leave a salon for an isolated reason, it's more likely a combination of things and "being taken for granted" can rank mighty high in that mix.

To reward loyalty, you need to understand what loyalty is and means in terms of your salon. To me, loyalty is embodied in the person who plans to return to your salon so rebooks their next appointment before they leave. Letting

them leave with the notion they can phone in or go online to book their next appointment is not the plan. Not EVER! This virtual cutting of the ties leaves your client unengaged, swinging fancy free. It's just a matter of time before they see another shiny object – a worth-exploring offer from a competing salon. And just like that, you've lost them forever.

The rationale behind a loyalty program is that it keeps your clients engaged, gives them something to work towards – a prize. The nature of that prize depends on the nature of your business model.

Many loyalty programs offer a discount off the core business or reason the client shows up – for example, the haircut or the facial. I've always found it works better to reward regulars with a service they've never had before. For example, in a hairdressing salon, your client might work towards a complimentary basin service.

The offer could work in a similar way to a coffee card: five visits and you get X, in this case, the complimentary treatment. To me, that's a real gift, rather than 20 per cent off their next visit, and it has two parts to its thinking. Although the value might be \$38 to the customer, it costs you a fraction of that to deliver. The added bonus is that your client gets to experience a new service, which they might just enjoy enough to pay for the next time they visit. Win. Win.

The same program model could work for a blow wave or ghd styling. I recommend offering this on a separate visit, so they come in, have their hair washed, then a treatment (with all the trimmings including a hot towel) and beautifully styled. To them, the cost appears as more than \$100 so they feel spoiled and valued by your salon. In reality, it's costing you much less, especially if you have a trained-up junior deliver the experience (remember: terms and conditions; it's a gift). It has

so much more value to your client and you don't have to cheapen your brand by discounting. You're also giving your junior a chance to shine and engage with a real live client.

Your objective with any loyalty program is that your client feels valued and remains loyal to your salon, even in the face of competitor offers, other word-of-mouth referrals or cheaper price points.

Salon owners often tell me they feel challenged by the need to keep score of loyalty programs. Clicking a coffee card sounds like a good idea, but many people just can't be bothered or feel awkward presenting the card each time. There are other options. With all the mod cons that come with the great salon software on offer today, it makes sense to let the technology take care of the bean counting and streamline the process to eliminate any uneasiness.

There's nothing more annoying to a client than to click their way across a loyalty card then lose it just when they're in sight of the prize. Having a system where you can login and see where you're up to at any time is valuable to both your clients and to you, the salon owner.

Loyalty is a rare and precious commodity in this fast-paced age. Nurturing it with a well-considered and sleekly executed loyalty program will pay off big-time for your business. Reward your devoted clients, keep them feeling spoiled and they'll not only stay rusted-on to your salon, they'll return with their family and friends to further boost your clientele. **IN** For more salon wisdom, email me at [lisa@zingcoach.com.au](mailto:lisa@zingcoach.com.au), visit my website, find my video tips on YouTube or read my book *The Naked Salon, an essential guide to time, team and money*. And my brand new book: *Your Salon Team – the salon owner's guide to finding, motivating and keeping great staff*. [www.zingcoach.com.au](http://www.zingcoach.com.au)