

# Tips for Client Retention in a Spa Setting

By Nicholas Emeigh

1. Cross promote. Clients, although educated by their LMT or LE, may not think they need to return on a regular basis for massages or facials. If the team is consistently promoting areas of frequent return like hair, nails, and waxing, we can guarantee regular visits with possible massage and facial add-ons in the future based solely on the consistent quality of work and exposure to the spa atmosphere.

2. Constantly assess client's level of comfort using verbal and nonverbal cues. We consistently see the majority of client complaints in the form of surveys, comments, and reviews on the web, long after the fact. It seems that clients are sometimes afraid to speak up or to ask for something they need. We need to check in with clients regarding their level of modesty, pressure, and sensitivity during any type of massage whether on the massage table, in the facial room, during manicure and pedicure massages. Sensitivity is particularly important in waxing sessions due to heat and possible skin removal, in hair services because of the use of chemicals in color processes, and in facials when more invasive extracting and chemicals are used. Always ask guests if the temperature of the spa is too warm or too cold. Same goes for the heated tables in the treatment rooms. Spa music plays an important role in the client's level of relaxation, so attention to this is also important. It is hard to make everyone happy, but if the client feels in control and we are attentive to their needs, they will leave happy--and, more importantly, rebook.

3. Keep clients "in the loop." Use client cues about the amount of conversation that takes place during all services. Experience shows that most clients, even those who don't talk as much, like to know exactly what you're going to do next. They want to know the products you're using during facials and why, techniques and areas of the body you're working on during massage, and application tips and tricks during makeup application and in hair styling. Filling the client in, or "keeping them in the loop", allows you to begin a dialogue about products and a home care regimen.

4. Proper consultation before, during, and after service is crucial. Ask the right questions and make sure there is a mutual understanding between service professional and client as to what results each client would like to achieve. Also, in asking the right questions, you should end up knowing how the client was referred to the spa, about friends and family who might be interested in the spa, and if the client has any special events coming up that might require spa services such as: proms, weddings, trips, vacations, etc. Based on what the client tells you, you may also be able to recommend free consultations in the hair, skin, and makeup departments.

5. Soap Notes are a valuable tool. We see hundreds of clients over the course of a month. Utilize Mind Body's formula notes and alerts to store all of the information you gather to help yourself and the rest of the team create a personalized experience for each guest every time they visit. Before the client arrives, you should review the client's entire profile. If, for some reason you don't have time or access to the notes, use the front desk as your support system. Always keep that line of communication open.

6. Following up with clients needs to be a part of your daily routine. It is important that a client-- especially a new client--knows you care about them. It is this level of care that will set us apart. Work with the front desk staff to check in with all new clients. If a regular client requires deeper pressure than normal, or if you used a new technique-- check in. If you gave a client a radically new hairstyle or color-- check in. If a regular client has just had a new facial treatment, evidenced sensitivity during a facial, or purchased new product to use at home--check in. There are also times when we don't feel we've done our best work and we want to make things right--check in. If you've done makeup, hair, nails, or any other service prior to a special event--check in.

7. Utilize marketing tools. Check in with the front desk, and in Mind Body's client history, to determine possible cross promotion within the spa. If a client has had ten massages and has never had another service, work with the front desk to address client needs with cues in mind to offer spa cash, give 20 get 20, product samples, new client coupon books, and even a menu with your schedule written on it. Clients need to feel that special attention has been paid to them. If we offer smart incentives, we will increase the value of each visit for each client.

8. Recommend products and Home Care. Every service we perform requires maintenance and home care. Prolong the great results of a facial by using the right products at home. Always recommend a full skin care regimen for the face and body, and write it down for the client to take home. It's a big win if the client purchases the full regimen, but more likely than not, the client will have reservations about the amount of money they're spending. Advise the client that if they can't--for whatever reason--take home the full line, identify three products as must-haves that they can start with as the core of a good regimen. Having written down the full regimen, you've taken the pressure off the client, making it more likely to come back for the rest of the products as well as another facial. And remember: samples sell product. Hair clients benefit from using the right shampoo, conditioner, and other styling products. When they see lasting color or general hair health, they attribute this to the stylist, making them more likely to return to you. Nail technicians can recommend nail treatments, polish, scrubs, lotions, etc. Massage therapists can recommend scrubs, lotions, oils, and dry brushes for home use. Also, when a client loves the aroma of the products used in a massage or scrub in any department, we can offer a custom blended product. Every time a client uses a product that was recommended by you, they think of the spa and the service professional.

9. Ask for the sale. After every service, the team has to ask if the client would like to rebook, take home product, and perhaps book multiple services. Don't talk too much: let the client make a decision. If the client decides against rebooking, talk about the spa "filling up fast", the quality of services offered at the spa, and the popularity of our service professionals. Always let the client know that it's easier to reschedule than it is to book an appointment--or several appointments--last minute.

10. Be available for new and walk-in clients. Time off is to be approved by management at least two weeks before the requested date, and coverage must be obtained. You may only block out time, start late, or leave early ONE day per week. Our business is growing rapidly via word of mouth. If one client refers another client at lunch, let's say, and that new client wants to book a service when he or she gets home from work, we always need someone available to accommodate them. Assess your own

schedule: it's YOUR business. If you notice that your existing clients have trouble rebooking with you, it might be time to discuss a schedule adjustment with management.

11. Take pride in your workspace. We provide luxurious, holistic spa services to a discerning clientele that notices everything. We as a team must never adopt the attitude of "that's not my job." Everyone in the spa is responsible for his or her workspace and maintenance of it. Put yourself in the client's shoes: walk through the spa and into your workspace just as a client would. If you see anything that would diminish the value of the service you're providing, it's your responsibility to either fix it or report it to management for professional repair.

12. Don't leave your client. Masking and color processing are not excuses to leave your client unless they request time to relax alone. Instead, take these opportunities to build a relationship and an arsenal of knowledge about your client so that you can retain, recommend, and cross promote.

13. Prompt and Reasonable Resolutions. We must always communicate as a team to avoid potential problems and pitfalls. We all run late every now and again. It is so important for the client in the waiting room to know that we take great care with each client and that we're committed to quality. The waiting client must also know that they will receive the same attention, quality, and service they your current client is receiving. Constant, open communication amongst the entire team will diffuse any problematic situation resulting in trust and loyalty from the client.

14. Grass Roots Marketing. If you're not busy, market yourself to the community. Visit local businesses, introduce yourself, and offer your services. If the town is talking about you, you'll receive new clients with a positive preconceived notion and the intention to return in the future. Word of mouth is the most powerful and effective advertising for your business.

15. Accept and understand last minute changes. The way you handle last minute changes, additions, cancellations, etc. speaks volumes to the client. The compassionate and adaptable spa professional gains the most trust and loyalty.

16. No hanging out at the desk. Clients must only see service professionals in the service setting. No client should think that any professional service provider works at the front desk.

17. Your image sells your service. Always maintain a professional, polished appearance. You are a walking billboard for the spa. Be what clients aspire to be: hair done, makeup, nails, clothes, etc. Also know that your personal problems are to be left at home and out of conversations with the clients. Clients like to be heard more than they like to listen. Always maintain consistent levels of service by being a true professional. Your clients will rebook because of it.