

## Customer Service: A Cut Above the Rest

Posted By [Janell Hazelwood](#) On June 17, 2009 @ 1:46 pm In [Small Business](#) | [1 Comment](#)



<sup>[1]</sup>Many have heard about it or experienced it time and time again. You enter a hair salon or barbershop hoping to leave a more attractive you, but by the time you emerge, you're aggravated and frustrated after spending hours waiting to get your 'do done.

From stylists eating while grooming to unsupervised screaming kids to lewd gossip, the complaints about unprofessionalism in beauty salons can be endless. And at a time when jobless numbers are at [a 25-year high](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, small businesses are [struggling in a tight credit market](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, and stress levels for Americans are at high levels, a bad experience at the salon or barbershop can mean [losing a loyal customer](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and much-needed profit.

"Customer service is extremely important in a salon or spa because of the amount of time spent there," says Chris Bryant, executive coach and founder of [Rapport Strategies](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, a Los Angeles-based customer service and business etiquette consulting company. "It's also important because it involves a service that is emotional for many people and one they take very seriously -- how they look. Therefore that experience can either create a life-long advocate or a life-long adversary."

**BlackEnterprise.com** caught up with some industry heavyweights for strategies on how to upgrade your salon or barbershop to boost morale and customer retention. (And you don't just have to be in the grooming industry to benefit from knowing the [tried and true do's and don'ts](#) <sup>[6]</sup> of customer service.)

### On valuing your customer:



<sup>[7]</sup>**Kito Jones**

Stylist/Owner, [Lavish Hair Spa](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, Durham, N.C.

**Realize that you are more than a stylist -- you are also a trusted adviser.** Stay current in your knowledge and be able to offer clear, informed advice.

**Value your client as a person, not as a paycheck.** Learn about your client's dreams, desires, and goals-- for their hair and for their life-- and customize a hair care and maintenance program based on their needs.

**Be honest with your client.** Sometimes that means telling them what they need to hear about their hair versus what they want hear.

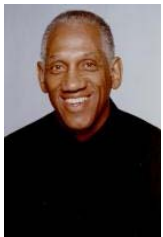
### On upgrading the experience:



<sup>[9]</sup>**Edris Nicholls**

Celebrity Stylist/Owner, [Edris Salon](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, New York

**Don't provide a large menu of services if you only have the time and money to invest in one or two of them.** I would rather have a tightly edited list of service options, offering the most luxurious experiences, than to provide lots of options with low standards.



<sup>[11]</sup>**John Atchison**

Stylist/Owner, [John Atchison Salon and Spa](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, New York

**Have a consultation.** This should take place between the stylist and client prior to service to determine the client's needs.

**Offer extras.** Provide quality products for clients and teach home maintenance care. Offer free refreshments or Wi-Fi, fax, and/or e-mail access.

**On training staff to provide a top-notch environment:**

**Atchison:**

**Start with a vision** of performing extraordinary customer service. Create the environment to grow that vision.

**Make certain all employees buy into and execute the vision.** Train your staff in the importance of good customer service in every area of business, i.e. those handling cleaning services, stylist, receptionist, etc.

**Have a policy manual.** Make sure that all job descriptions are clearly defined.

**On handling customer conflict or dissatisfaction:**

**Nicholls:**

**Listen to the client's concerns.** When they are finished, repeat back to them what they just said so everyone can be in accord.

**Pay attention to nonverbal cues.** Sighing, looking down, and lack of a smile are signs that something is not right. Ask follow-up questions. It is important to receive honest, explicit feedback, and once you know their true feelings, begin to resolve the challenge.

**Be proactive.** Ask the client how the service was when they check out. Once the challenge has been addressed, apologize, guarantee it will not happen again, and follow up with another note of apology.

**On time management:**

**Jones:**

**Never overbook.** If you can't fit a client into your schedule then book them at a time when you can. The client may love their hair, but will remember if you made them wait.

**Nicholls:**

**If a client is left waiting, offer complimentary services.** They may experience a new service and book it again in the future.

**Atchison:**

**Don't take "fit-ins" if it will impact scheduled clients.** All fit-ins should be scheduled at the end of the day after all clients with appointments have been serviced. **Customer Service Do's And Don'ts for Any Business**

Chris Bryant, [Rapport Strategies](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, Los Angeles

**Do** think in terms of delivering a superior customer experience -- that is great people, great product, great process and a great place!

**Do** ensure customers are engaged by staff in a personalized way. People prefer to do business with those who know them and seem to care about them as a person.



<sup>[13]</sup> **Do** strive to build customer loyalty. Implement creative ways to reward long-standing customers for their business and referrals.

**Don't** allow any customer to visit without receiving a warm greeting or leave without being thanked for coming.

**Don't** just meet the expressed needs, but always look for even the smallest ways to exceed customer expectations.

**Don't** ever stop listening to your customers and striving for ways to improve the overall experience.

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[4] losing a loyal customer: [http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/manage/marketandprice/SERV\\_CUSTSERVICE.html](http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/manage/marketandprice/SERV_CUSTSERVICE.html)

[5] Rapport Strategies: <http://www.mrchrisbryant.com/>

[6] tried and true do's and don'ts: <http://blackenterprise.com/entrepreneurs/2009/06/17/customer-service-a-cut-above-the-rest/3>

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[8] Lavish Hair Spa: <http://www.lavishhairspa.com/index1.html>

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