

Client Complaints

Complaints from clients are inevitable at some point in the life of a business. How these complaints are dealt with is an important issue and it is vital that all members of staff are trained in dealing with complaints or that complaints are dealt with by a designated person.

Having a designated person means that all complaints will be dealt with in the same way and that person has the experience to ensure the best outcome for the business. The only drawback is that they may not always be available. If training all staff is the option chosen then there must be a specific procedure put in place for handling complaints so that everyone is treated in the same way using the specific guidelines.

Some complaints may not be fair and there are some clients who are serial complainers hoping to gain financially or with free treatments by making a complaint. This client must be treated in the same way as any other, professionally and respectfully.

Clients who are dissatisfied with a treatment they have received or poor service will react in different ways.

1. They may not complain but quietly take their business to another salon
2. They may tell only their closest friends about their experience and never return and their friends may repeat the complaint to others
3. Tell everyone they come into contact with how awful the treatment was
4. Inform many people publicly by writing and complaining to their local paper
5. Tell the salon they were unhappy and explain why

Many clients don't like complaining directly and will use one of the first four options, however for the business, option 5 will be the best outcome, as it provides the salon with the opportunity to put things right. Some complaints may not be justified, but in the eyes of the client they usually are and the salon should deal with all complaints effectively to maintain client loyalty, the salon's reputation and profit! If you deal with a complaint successfully it is highly likely that the client will become a loyal customer in the future.

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When a client makes a complaint respond quickly, in a courteous manner, provide sympathy but follow closely your salon's procedure for dealing with complaints. Large organisations will have a customer complaints department with staff who are trained in dealing with grievances and complaints. It is important that all members of staff in your business know the procedure for dealing with complaints, but it may be a good idea to have your own designated member of staff who maybe more experienced and efficient when dealing with complaints.

The following steps should be taken:

- Take the client somewhere private
- Listen carefully to what the client has to say, without interruption
- Apologise but without admitting fault and blaming an individual
- Record details of your discussion
- Try and resolve the problem to both yours and the client's satisfaction
- If necessary use an appropriate follow up action, which could be a quick phone call, or a letter of apology