

Wrapping up the client experience is one of the last steps to ensuring that you have been successful in your front desk role. You are typically the last person the client will interact with at the day spa. You also have the ability to help retain the customer and get them booked again.

Retention and pre-booking are two words that should be the foundation for everything your front desk tries to do. Without them, you cannot be an entirely successful day spa. You as a front desk person have significant parts to play in the success of these metrics.

But first, let's go over what these metrics are.

What is Retention?

Retention is the number we look at to see if and when a new or existing client comes back for services. Let's say that on average our spa saw about 140 new clients a month. Out of those clients, we retained 38% of them. For our personal day spa, this means that the client has been in 6 times before we consider them retained. The first step for understanding retention is to know how many times a client comes in before they become a lifetime client.

You probably do an excellent job of finding new clients, but success is keeping existing ones. Regardless of the business, experts agree that it's much easier to keep an existing customer than to find a new one.

You play a critical role in whether the client returns or not. Here are some reasons clients choose not to come back according to the American Bodyworker Association:

1. 35% said the price
2. 25% stated that they did not need the service
3. 25% felt they were too busy to fit regular appointments into their schedule
4. 8% felt they were not getting enough benefit from the service
5. 6% did not give a reason.

Now after reading that you may not think as a front desk employee that you have any say in the client's reaction to price or how busy her schedule is but this is NOT TRUE! As the first and last person, the client interacts with you have a critical role in retention. You asking the right questions and providing the right words gets clients from maybe returning to become prebooked clients

What does Prebook mean?

Prebook is a term that we use to describe a client who makes her next appointment before she leaves the building after her last appointment. Having a high prebook percentage is a great indicator that all aspects of the spa experience are working. It means that those five excuses are handled because between the practitioners and the front desk we have to provide solutions to all those reasons clients give not to rebook an appointment.

How can you increase client retention through prebooking?

If both the practitioners and the front desk work together both of these metrics will be high. Here are ways that both need to work together

Educating vs. Selling the Client- What the Practitioners Need to Do

This section belongs to the practitioners, but you as front desk still need to understand how it should work so you can follow up on closing the booking. People do not like being "sold" to, it feels artificial and well yucky. By changing perspective, it becomes educating rather than "selling."

1. The practitioners should know her stuff- she should give excellent service
2. The practitioners should have a discussion with her client after the service for home care suggestions- this is where adding products is helpful
3. The practitioners should be focused on the client from the moment the therapist greets the client until the practitioners hand off the client to you.
4. The practitioners should be ready on time and honor the client's schedule
5. The practitioners should admit when she does not know the answer to a client concern but seeks out the answer.
6. The practitioners should explain prepaid packages and features and the benefits of using them.
 - Coming in regularly really helps
7. The practitioner should show clients' personal attention that makes her feel special.
8. The practitioner should let the client know when she wants to see her again, and then write it on the work ticket letting you know.

These are great to know, now let's talk about what you do for rebooking

Educating vs. selling the Client- What the Front Desk Needs to Do

1. You know your stuff- you are ready to provide appointment times that work for the practitioner and the client- you give specific options- for example
“Okay Mary, Henry would like to see you back in two weeks for another 60-minute massage. He has Thursday, June 1st at 11:00 am available- shall I put you in that spot?”

Notice that the front desk gave a very specific time and date that mirrors the appointment the client just had. That is the best place to start. You should not only ask “would you like to book another appointment.” It is too broad, and people will respond with “I need to check my schedule.” Giving the client a specific day and time makes all the difference.

2. Discussion about what the practitioners recommend for home/after care.

We realize you are not likely able to give the same advice- it is not your job. However, you can remind the client what the practitioner gave as information about products or home care. By doing this you are paying attention to the client’s needs.

3. Being focused on the client from the moment she walks into the moment she leaves with the practitioners- and then from the moment she re-enters the lobby to the moment she leaves.

That client in front of you is the most important person- make her feel like it- it will go a long way to seeing that we see Mary as a person and not just another number.

4. Being ready on time- honor the client’s schedule

Do not delay a client to finish a non-critical task or take a personal phone call. This point should be common sense. The client always comes first.

5. Admitting you don’t know the answer but you will find out.

This can be a tricky situation because we do not want to look foolish in front of clients, but it is better to admit you don’t know than lie and cause harm. If you think a practitioner can take an appointment outside her regular availability and that is what the client wishes then you can offer to find out- make sure you follow up as soon as possible. This shows you care.

6. Explaining packages and the features and benefits of them.

Using our day spa as an example, we want a client to come six times before we consider them retained. Getting a client to purchase a package is one way to ensure of this. They are an excellent way to ensure a client comes back. Also, if a client comes on the same day at the same time make her a re-occurring appointment to ensure her spot is reserved.

7. Showing the client personal attention

This is again should be a no brainer- but giving clues that you know Mary is unique among all your clients is an excellent way to make sure Mary becomes a retained client.

Here are some suggestions

Mention happy birthday or anniversary if appropriate

Ask about family/friend

Ask how her day has been

Offer to take her coat/ umbrella

Personally show her where the bathroom is

Write the appointment on a business card

Use the client's name whenever possible

Wow, your list is the same as the practitioners' this means that both front desk and practitioners must give excellent service throughout the visit to ensure that the client will want to come back.