

4



# COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

## LO1

Take practical steps for effectively communicating in the workplace.

## LO2

Conduct a successful client consultation.

## LO3

Adequately manage tardy clients, schedule mix-ups, and unhappy clients.

## LO4

Build open lines of communication with coworkers.

## OUTLINE

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In order to have a thriving clientele, commit to mastering the art of communication (figure 4-1). Effective human relations and communication skills build lasting client relationships, accelerate professional growth, and promote a positive work environment.

**figure 4-1**  
Communication is key in building lasting cosmetologist–client relationships.



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why study

## COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS?

**Cosmetologists should study and have a thorough understanding of communicating for success because:**

- Communicating effectively is the basis of all long-lasting relationships with clients and coworkers.
- The communication process will help stylists perfect the consultation process with clients.
- Effective communication fosters a positive team environment.
- Good communication skills reduce potential workplace conflict.
- Learning how to communicate effectively can help stylists improve retail and service sales.
- Practicing professional communication ensures that clients will enjoy their experience, and encourages their continued patronage.
- Effectively expressing ideas is a necessary skill for career advancement.

After reading the next few sections, you will be able to:

**LO1** Take practical steps for effectively communicating in the workplace.

# Practice Communication Skills

The ability to understand people is the key to operating effectively in many industries. It is especially important in cosmetology, where customer service is the cornerstone of success. Most of a stylist's achievements will depend on his or her ability to communicate successfully with a wide range of people: supervisors, coworkers, clients, and various vendors who come into the salon.

Here are practical steps for effectively communicating in the workplace:

- **Respond instead of reacting.** A man was asked why he did not get angry when a driver cut him off. "Why should I let someone else dictate my emotions?" he replied. A wise fellow, don't you think? He may have even saved his own life by not reacting with "an eye for an eye" mentality.
- **Believe in yourself.** When you do, you trust your judgment, uphold your values, and stick to what you believe is right. It is easy to believe in yourself when you have a strong sense of self-worth. Believing in yourself makes you feel strong enough to handle almost any situation in a calm, helpful manner.
- **Talk less, listen more.** There is an old saying that we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason. Listen more than you talk. When you are a good listener, you are fully attentive to what other people are saying.
- **Be attentive.** Each client is different. Some clients are clear about what they want, some are demanding, and still others may be hesitant. If you have an aggressive client, ask your manager for advice. You will likely be advised that what usually calms difficult clients down is agreeing with them. Follow up by asking what you can do to make the service more satisfactory (figure 4-2).

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Optional info on **Communication Skills** can be found at [miladypro.com](http://miladypro.com)  
Keyword: *FutureCosPro*



**figure 4-2**  
Be attentive to your client's needs.

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- **Take your temperature.** If you are tired or upset, your interactions with clients may be affected. An important part of succeeding in a service profession is taking care of your personal conflicts first so that you can take the best possible care of your clients.

## The Golden Rules of Communication

Keep the following golden rules of communication to build a successful beauty industry career:

- Project a professional demeanor at all times.
- A smile can be your best asset. Wear one every day.
- Be aware of your body language. For example, when listening to clients or team members, don't cross your arms. Instead, nod your head to acknowledge and/or accept their points of view.
- Always remember that listening is the best relationship builder.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough for people to hear. Don't mumble.
- Use correct English.

## The Importance of Effective Communication

**Effective communication** is the act of successfully sharing information between two people (or groups of people) so that the information is understood. You can communicate through words, voice inflections, facial expressions, body language, or visual tools (e.g., a portfolio of your work). When you and your client are both communicating clearly about an upcoming service, your chances of pleasing that client soar.

### ***Meeting and Greeting New Clients***

One of the most important encounters you will have is the first time you meet a client. Be polite, genuinely friendly, and inviting. Remember that your clients are coming to you for services and paying for your expertise (figure 4-3). Communicate professionally by using the proper terminology and thoroughly explaining the features and benefits of the products and services.

To earn a client's trust and loyalty, you should:

- Be consistent by always having a positive attitude. Always introduce yourself and use the client's name throughout the service. Set aside a few minutes to take new clients on a quick tour of the salon.
- Introduce clients to people they may have interactions with while in the salon, including potential providers for other services, such as skin care or nail services.

**Intake Form** Every new client should fill out a **client intake form**—also called a client questionnaire, consultation card, or health history form. This form can prove to be an extremely useful communication





**figure 4-3**  
Welcome your client to the salon.

and business tool (figure 4-4). The client intake form is used in beauty and wellness services as a questionnaire that discloses the client's contact information, products they use, hair/nail/skin care needs, preferences, and lifestyle. The form also includes all medications, both topical (applied to the skin) and oral (taken by mouth), along with any known medical issues, skin or scalp disorders, or allergies that might affect services.

Allergies or sensitivities must also be noted, highlighted, and documented on the **service record card**—the client's permanent progress record of services received, results, formulations, and products used during the service or purchased. The service record card is not intended for the client's use, and is completed by the technician or stylist performing the service. It is the technicians' responsibility to update or note changes on this document with each client visit. Some salons use a customer database to record this pertinent information. Examples of a service record card appear in Chapters 21 and 22 related to haircoloring and skin care services.

The amount of information requested on the intake form or questionnaire varies from salon to salon. In cosmetology school, the intake form may be accompanied by a release statement and service notes in which the client acknowledges that the service is being provided by a student who is under instruction. This helps protect the school and the student from legal action.

**How to Use the Client Intake Form** The client intake form can be used from the moment a new client calls the salon to make an appointment. When scheduling the appointment, let the client know that you and the salon will require some information before you can begin the service, and that it is important to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the appointment time. Also, allow time in your schedule to do a 5 to 15 minute client consultation.

## Client Intake Form

Dear Client,

Our sincerest hope is to provide you with the best hair care services you've ever received! We not only want you to be happy with today's visit, we also want to build a long-lasting relationship with you. In order for us to do so, we would like to learn more about you, your hair care needs, and your preferences. Please take a moment now to answer the questions below as completely and as accurately as possible.

Thank you, and we look forward to building a relationship!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about our salon? \_\_\_\_\_

If you were referred, who referred you? \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions in the space provided. Thanks!

1. Approximately when was your last salon visit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In the past year have you had any of the following services either in or out of a salon?  

_____ Haircut	_____ Manicure
_____ Haircolor	_____ Artificial Nail Services (please describe)
_____ Permanent Wave or Texturizing Treatment	_____ Pedicure
_____ Chemical Relaxing or Straightening Treatment	_____ Facial/Skin Treatment
_____ Highlighting or Lowlighting	_____ Other (please list any other services you've enjoyed at a salon that may not be listed here).
_____ Full Head Lightening	
3. What are your expectations for your hair service(s) today? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you now, or have you ever been, allergic to any of the products, treatments, or chemicals you've received during any salon service—hair, nails, or skin? (please explain)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you currently taking any medications? (please list)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Please list all of the products that you use on your hair on a regular basis.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What tools do you use at home to style your hair? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the one thing that you want your stylist to know about you/your hair? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you interested in receiving a skin care, nail care or makeup consultation? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Would you like to be contacted via e-mail about upcoming promotions and special events?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

figure 4-4

The Client Intake Form gives you an opportunity to build an excellent relationship with your clients.

**NOTE: If this card were used in a cosmetology school setting, it would include a release form at the bottom such as the one below.**

*Statement of Release:* I hereby understand that supervised cosmetology students render these services for the sole purpose of practice and learning, and that by signing this form, I recognize and agree not to hold the school, its employees, or the student liable for my satisfaction or the service outcome.

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Service Notes

Today's Date:

Today's Services:

Notes:

Today's Date:

Today's Services:

Notes:

Today's Date:

Today's Services:

Notes:

Today's Date:

Today's Services:

Notes:

Today's Date:

Today's Services:

Notes:

**figure 4-4**  
(Continued)



#### FOCUS ON

##### Understanding The Total Look Concept

While the enhancement of your client's image should always be your primary concern, it is important to remember that nails, skin, and hair are reflective of an entire lifestyle. How can you help a client make choices that reflect a personal sense of style? Start by doing a little research. Look for books or articles that describe different fashion styles and become familiar with them. This exercise is useful for developing a profile of the broad fashion categories that you can refer to when consulting with clients.

For example, a person may be categorized as having a classic style if simple and sophisticated clothing, monochromatic color, and no bright patterns are preferred. A person who prefers classic styling in her clothing would likely want a simple, elegant, and sophisticated look with respect to her nails, makeup, and hair (**figure 4-5a**).

Someone who prefers a more dramatic look may choose nail designs, hairstyles, clothing, and accessories that require greater attention. These clients are likely to be more willing to try a variety of new products and spend more time having additional services (**figure 4-5b**).



**figure 4-5**

Your client's image matters. Cater services to fit their personality, such as whether this classic style (a) or a more dramatic look (b) is preferred.



Courtesy of Artistic Nail Design. Photography by Ted Emmons.



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Changes can occur between visits, so remember to have your returning clients refer to their notes on the intake form recorded at their last visit. Any significant changes should be recorded on the service record card as well.

*After reading the next few sections, you will be able to:*

**LO 2** Conduct a successful client consultation.

## Conducting the Client Consultation

The **client consultation** is the communication with a client that determines the client's needs and how to achieve the desired results. The consultation is one of the most important parts of any service and should always be done before starting the actual service. A consultation should be performed as part of every single service and salon visit. Effective client consultations keep your clientele looking current and stylish, and it will keep them satisfied with your services. A happy client means repeat business for both the salon and you.

### Preparing for the Client Consultation

Be well prepared to make the most of this dialogue and have certain important items on hand:

- Have a variety of styling books and/or digital images that your clients can look through.
- Show a variety of style options including various lengths, haircuts, and haircolor.

- Have a portfolio of your work on hand (**figure 4-6**).
- A swatch book or swatch ring is a great tool for discussing haircolor options. These are provided by the companies that manufacture haircolor. They are usually packaged in a book, in a ring, or laid out on a paper chart. Swatches are bundles of hair, dyed to match a particular haircolor shade offered by the manufacturer. Usually made from a synthetic material, swatches are very durable and easy to use in consultations. If the swatch is long enough, it can be held up to the client's face or integrated into his or her own hair to see how it looks.

## The Consultation Area

It is the stylist's responsibility to find out the client's needs and to make recommendations accordingly. To do so effectively, you will need a freshly cleaned and uncluttered workspace. Make sure that the product bottles, cans, and jars are also clean. Clients should be able to look at themselves in the mirror without having to compete with sticky product bottles, implements, and tools on the station. While it may take time and effort to make your station esthetically pleasing, the payoff of an effective consultation is worthwhile.

## 10-Step Consultation Method

Every consultation should be structured so that you cover all the key points that lead to a successful conclusion. While this may seem like a lot of information to memorize, it will become second nature as you become more experienced. To ensure that you cover all the bases, keep a list of the following 10 key points at your station. Modify the list as needed for each actual service:

1. **Review the intake form.** Feel free to make comments that break the ice and initiate conversation with the client. Read the intake

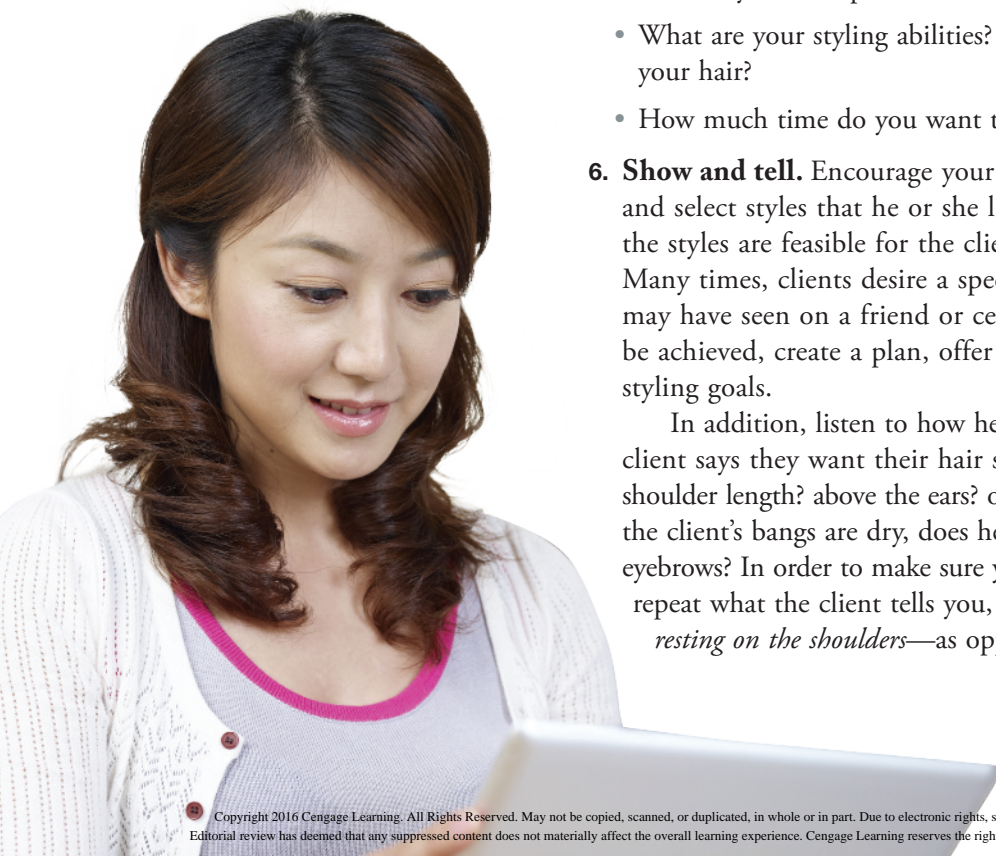


**figure 4-6**  
Use a photo collection to help confirm your client's choice.

form carefully, referring to it often during the consultation process. Also make notes on the service record card (some salons will have a joint intake form and service record card). After the service, record any formulations or products that were used, and include any specific techniques or goals. This information will be needed for future visits.

2. **Perform a needs assessment.** Discover what the client wants and what they need. Start off by assessing the client's current style. Is it soft and unstructured? carefully styled? classic? avant-garde? Is it in sync with her style of clothing and personal image?
3. **Determine and rate the client's preferences.** Using this method will be helpful in determining what services will best help the client. Here is a sample question: How would you rate the manageability of your hair on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent? These numerical values will also serve as a measuring tool for total customer satisfaction. Probing questions like the following will help stylists determine the client's preferences. When was the last time you loved your hair (skin, nails)? What challenges are you having with your hair?
4. **Analyze the client's hair.** Assess your client's hair, including its thickness, texture, manageability, and condition. Is the hair particularly thin on top or at the temples? Check for strong hair growth patterns, including unruly cowlicks. Ask your client what at-home products he or she is using and if the products are effective.
5. **Review the client's lifestyle.** Ask the following questions about career and lifestyle:
  - Do you spend a great deal of time outdoors? Do you swim frequently?
  - What is your occupation? Describe your personal style?
  - What are your styling abilities? How often do you shampoo your hair?
  - How much time do you want to spend styling your hair each day?
6. **Show and tell.** Encourage your client to flip through style books and select styles that he or she likes. Monitor the choices to ensure the styles are feasible for the client's hair type and personal style. Many times, clients desire a specific cut or color that he or she may have seen on a friend or celebrity. If the desired look cannot be achieved, create a plan, offer alternative looks, and set future styling goals.

In addition, listen to how he or she describes hair length. If the client says they want their hair short, for instance, does that mean shoulder length? above the ears? one-inch long all over the head? When the client's bangs are dry, does he or she want them to still touch their eyebrows? In order to make sure you understand what they are saying, repeat what the client tells you, using specific terms like *chin-length* or *resting on the shoulders*—as opposed to vague terms like *short* or



*long*—and reinforce your words both with pictures and by pointing to where the hair would fall. Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you is known as **reflective listening**. It is important to focus on the client and not interrupt while he or she is speaking. After the client is finished, restate and confirm what was said. Following this, ask for confirmation to make certain you understand what the client wants or needs.

**7. Make recommendations as part of the needs assessment.** Once you have enough information, ask the client if you may make some recommendations. Before giving any suggestions, wait for him or her to give you permission to do so. Once they have, base your recommendations on the client's needs and desires. Narrow your selections based on the following criteria:

- **Lifestyle.** The styles you choose must fit the client's styling parameters (time and ability), meet your client's needs for business and casual looks, and provide options within those looks.
- **Hair type.** Base your recommendations on whether your client has thick, medium, or thin hair density; fine, medium, or coarse hair texture; straight, wavy, curly, or extremely curly wave patterns.
- **Face shape.** Point out hairstyles that would look good with his or her face shape. Is the face narrow across the temple area? If so, you should suggest styles that add a little fullness in this area.

When you make suggestions, qualify them by referencing the above parameters. For example: "I think this hairstyle would work well with the texture of your hair." Tactfully discuss any unreasonable expectations (based on the client's hair and personal needs) that the client expresses. If his or her hair is damaged, address intensive hair treatments, better home-care products, lifestyle changes, and the need to trim damaged ends.

Never hesitate to suggest additional services (be sure to offer two or more services) that will complete the look or improve it in some way. In addition to color, this could be a texture service for added movement or body, a straightening service to tame his or her curls, a makeup lesson to complement your client's new style, and so on.

**8. Make color recommendations.** Unless a client absolutely does not want to talk about color, these recommendations should be part of every consultation service. Almost everyone can use a glossing treatment, have their haircolor enriched, or add some highlights or low lights to make his or her hair (and your work) even more attractive.

Ask if he or she has colored her hair in the past. If the client already has haircolor, find out how long it has been since it was last applied. Have they had color challenges in the past? Does the client color his or her hair at home? Would they like to make a subtle or dramatic hair color change?

When talking about color, be very careful to make sure you and the client are speaking the same language. Hairstylists are accustomed





## ACTIVITY

When was the last time you went to a salon for a service yourself? Putting yourself in the client's shoes will help you improve your communication skills in every way. First, recall your most recent salon visit. Now, write down the following information:

- Your first impression of your stylist.
- His or her best verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Any questions you asked your stylist and his or her reply.
- Questions you wanted to ask but did not, and why.
- What you would change, knowing what you know now about how to communicate with clients? Would you have asked more questions to make certain you got what you wanted? Would you have avoided a certain subject?
- Do you think you communicated exactly what you wanted? What questions did you ask that your clients may not know to ask, since they are not stylists?

to the technical side of color and tend to use terms like *multidimensional highlighting*, or *no-ammonia, semi permanent tint*. This can be very confusing and misleading to clients. Use pictures as much as possible. The term *blond* to a stylist might be platinum blond, while *blond* to a client may mean a few fine streaks of medium-blond around the hair line. Let photos be your guide.

- 9. Discuss upkeep and maintenance.** Counsel every client on the salon maintenance, lifestyle limitations (blond hair and chlorine, for instance, are not a good match), and at-home maintenance that he or she will need to commit to in order to look their best. Let the client know that throughout the service you will be educating them on various products that you would recommend for home use and that at the end of the service they will have an opportunity to choose those home care products that they need.
- 10. Review the consultation.** Reiterate everything that you have agreed upon by using a phrase like, "What I heard you say is ..." Make sure to speak in measured, precise terms. Also use visual tools to demonstrate the intended end result. This is the most critical step of the consultation process because it determines the ultimate service(s). Always take your time and be thorough. Pause for your client's confirmation and ask the client for feedback on the consultation process. After a successful consultation it is time to conduct the service.

## Concluding the Service

Once the service is finished and the client is satisfied, take a few minutes to record the results on a service record card. Note anything you did that you want to do again, and things you would do differently next time. Also, make note of the final results and any retail products that the client purchased. Be sure to date your notes and file them in the proper place. Depending on your place of work, in some salons the information on each client is entered into a client record database.



## FOCUS ON

### Retailing

The best way to make retailing recommendations is to use this three-step plan to discuss the *What*, *Why*, and *How* of the recommendation:

1. Once you have chosen a product for the client, explain "This is **WHAT** I recommend..."
2. Next, explain **WHY** you recommend the product. This is the perfect time to refer back to the concerns the client expressed during the consultation.
3. Finally, describe **HOW** the client should use the product at home.

Educating clients using these three steps helps them to better understand your recommendations and makes selling the home care products much easier.

After reading the next few sections, you will be able to:

- LO3** Adequately manage tardy clients, schedule mix-ups, and unhappy clients.

# Handling Communication Barriers

Although you may do everything in your power to communicate effectively, you will sometimes encounter situations that are beyond your control. Your reactions to situations and your ability to communicate effectively in the face of challenges are critical to being successful in a people profession.

## Managing Tardiness

Tardy clients can greatly affect the salon flow. Because beauty professionals depend on appointments and scheduling to maximize working hours, a client who is overly late for an appointment, or one who is habitually late, causes problems. One tardy client can set back an appointment calendar and make stylists late for other services. The pressure involved in making up for lost time can be stressful. Beyond being rushed and feeling harried, you risk inconveniencing the rest of your clients who are prompt for their appointments. Here are a few guidelines on managing late appointments:

- Know and abide by the salon's appointment policy. Many salons set a limit on the amount of time they allow a client to be late before requiring them to reschedule. Generally, if clients are more than 15 minutes late, they should be asked to reschedule. Most clients will accept responsibility and be understanding about the rule, but you may come across a few clients who insist on being serviced immediately. Explain to them that you have other appointments and are responsible to those clients as well. Also explain that rushing through the service would be unacceptable to both of you.
- If a client arrives late and you have the time to take the appointment without jeopardizing other appointments, politely advise the client of the late policy. You can deliver this information diplomatically and still remain pleasant and upbeat.
- As you get to know your clients, you will learn who is habitually late. You may want to schedule such clients for the last appointment of the day or ask them to arrive earlier than their actual appointment time.
- If you are running very late, have the receptionist call your clients and let the client know. The receptionist can give them the opportunity to reschedule or to come a little later than their scheduled time.



### DID YOU KNOW?

When referring to patrons, some salons use the word *client*, while others use *guest*. Spas are more likely to use *guest* because of the amount of time the client spends on the premises and the fact that spa patrons often have lunch during their visits. Some salons have adapted this practice; others feel it personalizes the relationship too much. Medical spas have returned to using *client* because many of these spas are bound by medical privacy laws when it comes to record-keeping. Additionally, *guest* is never used in the professional medical field. Go with the culture of the business in which you're working, and you won't go wrong.



## Managing Scheduling Mix-Ups

We are all human, and we all make mistakes. Chances are you have gone to an appointment only to discover that you are in the wrong place at the wrong time. The way you are treated at that moment determines whether you patronize that business again. When you, as a professional, are involved with a scheduling mix-up, always remember to be polite. Never argue about who is correct.

Once you have the chance to consult your appointment book, you can say, “Oh, Mrs. Montez, I have you in my appointment book for 10 o’clock, and unfortunately I already have clients scheduled for 11 and 12 o’clock. I’m so sorry about the mix-up. Can I reschedule you for tomorrow at 10 o’clock?” Even though the client may be fuming, you need to stay detached. Move the conversation away from who is at fault, and squarely into resolving the confusion. Make another appointment for the client and be sure the salon has her telephone number so that the appointment can be confirmed (figure 4-7).

## Resolving Unhappy Client Problems

Once in a while you will encounter a client who is dissatisfied. Remember the ultimate goal: Make the client happy. Happy clients build trust with the stylists and will return for future services.

Here are some guidelines:

- Try to find out why the client is unhappy. Ask for specifics.
- If it is possible to change what the client dislikes, do so immediately. If that is not possible, look at your schedule book to see how soon you can fit them in to make the adjustment. You may need to enlist the help of the receptionist if you have to reschedule other appointments.
- If the problem cannot be fixed; honestly and tactfully explain why. The client may not be happy but will usually appreciate your honesty. Sometimes you can offer other options that minimize the client’s disappointment.
- Never argue with the client or try to force your opinion.

**figure 4-7**  
Accommodate an unhappy client promptly and calmly.





## ACTIVITY

At some point in your career you will have a client who is unhappy about something, either related to service or scheduling. The best way to prepare for this scenario is to practice. Role-play with a classmate, taking turns being the client and the stylist.

As you play the role of client:

- Act out different personalities: first shy, then aggressive.
- Act out a problem that was your (the client's) fault. Then evaluate your classmate's (the stylist's) reaction.
- Continue the conversation until you are satisfied.

As you play the role of stylist:

- Pay attention to the tone and level of your voice.
- Make certain you understand the problem.
- Avoid being defensive.
- Offer more than one solution.
- Determine when you should involve a manager.
- Do not hesitate to ask for help from a more experienced stylist or your salon manager. If, after you have tried everything, you are unable to satisfy the client, defer to your manager's advice on how to proceed.
- Confer with your salon manager after the experience. A good manager will not hold the event against you, but will view it instead as an inevitable fact of life from which you can learn. Follow your manager's advice and move on to your next client.

## Managing Differences

As a stylist, you'll find the clients you are most likely to attract are similar to yourself in age, style, and taste. On the other hand, you will also service clients who are very different from you; this is a positive element in your career as a stylist. Without both older and younger clients, and ones from different social groups, you won't be able to build a solid client base for future business.

When working with clients who come from a different generation, the basic rules of professionalism should guide you. Older clients, in particular, do not like gum chewing, slang, or the use of *yeah* instead of *yes*. They like to hear *please* and *thank you*. They prefer to keep the topics of conversation professional. Some like to be addressed by the honorific, such as "Mrs. Smith," rather than by their first names. When you meet an older client for the first time, ask how he or she would like to be addressed. Some clients are sensitive to verbiage about aging. When delivering skin care services, do not refer to aging skin; instead, talk about dryness and solutions to remedy the condition.

If these clients are your peers, relate to their image needs but don't act too much like a peer; it is always better to maintain a professional demeanor. When it comes to slang, the same word can have a different meaning across cultures, which is why it is always best to avoid using slang terms. If the word is fashion-related and your client uses it, you can too, indicating that you understand and are aware of current trends. Never use cultural slang words or regionalisms you do not fully understand. When in doubt say, "I have never heard that expression before. What, exactly, do you mean?"



## FOCUS ON

### Talking Points

Let's imagine a long-time client reveals to you that she and her husband are going through a messy divorce. You care for her and want to be understanding as she reveals increasingly personal details. Other practitioners and their clients are soon listening to every word of this conversation. You want to be helpful and supportive, but this is not the right time or place. What can you do? Decide which of these solutions you might use:

- Tell her you understand that the situation is very difficult, but that while she is in the salon, you want to do everything in your power to give her a break from it. Let her know gently that while she is in your care, you should both concentrate on her enjoyment of the services and not on the things that are stressing her.
- Change the subject. What topic could you shift to that seems the most natural?
- Find a reason to excuse yourself. When you return, change the subject.
- Acknowledge her by saying, "I'm sorry to hear that." Suggest a mini relaxation service the salon is promoting.



## Getting Too Personal

Sometimes when a client forms a bond of trust with a stylist, the client can have a hard time differentiating between a professional relationship and a personal one. Manage client relationships tactfully and sensitively, with professionalism and respect. Do not engage in an attempt to fulfill the role of counselor, career guide, parental sounding board, or motivational coach for any of your clients.

If your client gets too far off topic, use neutral subjects to bring the conversation back to beauty needs. If the client tells you about a personal problem, simply listen and tell the client you are sorry. Then ask, “What can we do to make your visit better today?”

If your client is gossiping, change the subject as soon as you can. Try something like, “I just noticed your ends are drier than I thought. We’ll do a deep-conditioning treatment after your color.” Then describe the treatment and home care.

Books, movies, and celebrities can all be used to move into conversations about a particular look or style. As a rule, avoid discussing religion and politics. When you cannot find a way to move the conversation back to something beauty-related, simply listen; then change the subject.

*After reading the next few sections, you will be able to:*

**LO4** Build open lines of communication with coworkers.

# Guidelines for In-Salon Communication

Behaving in a professional manner is the first step in making meaningful in-salon communication a reality. The salon is a close-knit community in which people spend long hours working side by side. For this reason, it is important to maintain boundaries. Remember, the salon is your place of business and, as such, must be treated respectfully and carefully.

## Communicating with Coworkers

In a work environment, you will not have the opportunity to handpick your colleagues. There will always be people you like or relate to better than others. Keep these points in mind as you interact and communicate with coworkers:

- **Treat everyone with respect.** Regardless of whether you like someone, your colleagues are professionals who deserve respect.
- **Remain objective.** Different types of personalities working together over long and intense hours can breed some degree of dissension and disagreement. Make every effort to remain objective. Resist being pulled into spats and cliques.



- **Be honest and sensitive.** Many people use the excuse of being honest as a license to say anything to anyone. While honesty is always the best policy, using unkind words or actions at work is never a good idea. Be sensitive, and think before you speak.
- **Remain neutral.** There may be times where you are persuaded to choose sides. Avoid taking sides in a dispute.
- **Avoid gossip.** Gossiping never resolves a problem; it only makes it worse. Participating in gossip can be just as damaging to you as it is to the object of the gossip.
- **Seek help from someone you respect.** If you find yourself at odds with a coworker, seek out someone who is not involved and can be objective, such as the manager. Ask for advice about how to proceed, and then really listen.
- **Do not take things personally.** How many times have you had a bad day, or been thinking about something totally unrelated to work, when a colleague asks you what is wrong, or if you are mad at her? Just because someone is behaving in a certain manner, and you happen to be there, does not mean their behavior involves you. If you are confused or concerned by someone's actions, find a private place and an appropriate time to get clarification.
- **Keep your private life private.** The work environment is never the place to discuss your personal life and relationships.

## Communicating During an Employee Evaluation

Salons that are well run make it a priority to conduct frequent and thorough employee evaluations. Sometime during the course of your first few days of work, your salon manager will tell you when to expect your first employee evaluation. If the manager does not mention it, you might



### FOCUS ON

#### Communicating with Managers

Another important relationship is the one a person will build with their manager. The salon manager is usually the person with the most responsibility regarding the salon's overall operation. The manager's job is a demanding one. Often, in addition to running a hectic salon, he or she also has a personal clientele.

The manager is the person who hires staff and is responsible for training. Managers have a vested interest in the success of staff members. Salon employees might perceive the managers as powerful figures of authority, but it is important to remember that managers are human beings. Staff members should support management and the salon by following the rules and guidelines that are set.

Here are some guidelines for interacting and communicating with your salon manager:

- **Be a problem solver.** When seeking advice about an issue or problem, think of possible solutions beforehand. This will indicate that you are working in the salon's best interest.
- **Get your facts straight.** Make sure that information is accurate before you speak to salon management. This proactive approach to problem solving will save time.
- **Be open and honest.** Advise the salon manager immediately when uncertainty compromises your decision-making skills.
- **Do not gossip or complain about colleagues.** If you are having a legitimate problem with someone, and have tried everything you can to handle the problem with your own resources, only then is it appropriate to go to your manager.
- **Be open to constructive criticism.** It is never easy to hear that you need improvement in any area, but keep in mind that part of your manager's job is to help you achieve professional goals and ensure the salon's success. It is the manager's job to evaluate your skills and offer suggestions on how to improve and expand those skills. Keep an open mind and do not take the criticism personally.

request a copy of the form or list of the criteria on which you will be evaluated. The following are some points to keep in mind as you begin your tenure in the salon:

- Take some time to look over the employee evaluation document. Be mindful that the behaviors and activities most important to the salon are likely to be the ones on which you will be evaluated. You can begin to review and rate yourself in the weeks and months ahead, so you can assess your progress and performance.
- Remember, the criteria are created for the purpose of helping you become a better stylist and to ensure the salon's success. Make the decision to approach the evaluation positively.
- As the time for the evaluation draws near, try filling out the form yourself. In other words, perform a self-evaluation, even if the salon has not asked you to do so. Be objective, and carefully think out your comments.
- Before your evaluation meeting, write down any thoughts or questions so you can share them with your manager. Do not be shy. If you want to know when you can take on more services, when your pay scale might be increased, or when you might be considered for promotion, this meeting is the appropriate time and place to ask. Many beauty professionals never take advantage of this crucial communication opportunity to discuss their future advancement because they are too nervous, intimidated, or unprepared to discuss these issues. Participate proactively in your career and in your success by communicating your desires and interests.
- When you meet with your manager, show him or her your self-evaluation and express that you are serious about your improvement and growth. Your manager will appreciate your input and your initiative. If you are being honest with yourself, there should be no surprises.
- At the end of the meeting, thank your manager for taking the time to do the evaluation and for the feedback and guidance they gave you (figure 4-8).

**figure 4-8**  
Your employee evaluation is a good time to discuss your progress with your manager.



## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the golden rules of communication?
- 2 What is the definition of effective communication?
- 3 What are the elements of the 10-Step Consultation Method?
- 4 How should you handle an unhappy client? (List at least four points to keep in mind.)
- 5 List at least five things to remember when communicating with your coworkers.

## STUDY TOOLS

- **Reinforce what you just learned:** Complete the activities and exercises in your Theory or Practical Workbook, or your Study Guide.
- **Expand your knowledge:** Search for websites about the topics in this chapter and make a list of additional resources.
- **Study and prepare for your quiz:** Take the chapter test in your Exam Review or your Milady U: Online Licensing Prep.
- **Re-Test your knowledge:** Take the Chapter 4 Quizzes!
- **Learn even more:** Look up in a dictionary or search the internet for the definitions of any additional terms you want to learn about.

## CHAPTER GLOSSARY

<b>client consultation</b>	p. 54	Communication with a client that determines what the client's needs are and how to achieve the desired results.
<b>client intake form</b>	p. 50	Also known as a <i>client questionnaire</i> , <i>consultation card</i> , or <i>health history form</i> ; used in beauty and wellness services as a questionnaire that discloses the client's contact information, products they use, hair/nail/skin care needs, preferences and lifestyle. The form also includes all medications, both topical (applied to the skin) and oral (taken by mouth), along with any known medical issues, skin or scalp disorders or allergies that might affect services.
<b>effective communication</b>	p. 50	The act of sharing information between two people (or groups of people) so that the information is successfully understood.
<b>reflective listening</b>	p. 57	Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you.
<b>service record card</b>	p. 51	The client's permanent progress record of services received, results, formulations, and products purchased or used.