

conversation starter

by Jennifer Wehunt

How many hours a day do you spend talking? Two? Five? Maybe eight solid hours if you work behind the chair.

As an owner and the official face of your business, you probably have some practice at keeping up your end of a conversation. You already schedule chats with your accountant, your bank and your publicist ... but what about the local Chamber of Commerce, your congressperson or a security service?

In the spirit of **The Salon Association's** eighth annual Symposium, "Conversations," we offer this checklist of discussions you, as an owner, should schedule within the next year. Read on for talking points that will maximize communication in these 20 key conversations.

1. ACCOUNTANT

Larry Kopsa's accounting firm, **Kopsa Otte + Associates**, represents hundreds of salons. So, we asked him to share the top five questions salons should ask their own accountants.

- What is the best business form for me, now: LLC, sole proprietorship, or an S or C corporation? While one form may have met your needs as a new salon, your growing business may dictate a different structure.
- What are the five biggest mistakes salons and spas make in financial planning, and how can I avoid them?
- How do my financial statements compare to industry averages for salons and spas around my size? *Continued*

To bring in more clients? To motivate the team? To get more national or local recognition?"

• "How much time am I personally willing to spend on the program?"

• "Am I willing to commit long-term, six months to a year?"

• "Am I ready for great press? If I publicize a new service and 100 people call, can I get them into the salon within a reasonable amount of time? Do I have the front desk team in place to answer calls? If a reporter stops in without calling ahead, can someone handle the situation if I'm not there?"

Ask your publicist the following questions:

• "What steps will you take to accomplish my goals? Who will you target? How does the process work; can you walk me through a typical month? Who will work on my behalf from your company? What will my role be in your plan, and how much

time should I plan on spending with you and the media?"

• "What results can I expect and when? How will you help my team manage the results? How much will this cost, including related expenses?"

4. SALON COACH

Left untended, an employee with a little problem can fester and grow into a monumental nail biter. Salon coach **Bryan Durocher** of **Durocher Enterprises** in Coral Gables, Florida, says there's one hard-and-fast rule for avoiding miscommunication and addressing issues head-on when it comes time to reprimand an employee: "Praise in public, reprimand in private," he says, and document everything. He recommends these five steps for delivering a reprimand.

• First, offer genuine and sincere praise for something the employee has done well.

• Then, in a neutral tone, tell the employee the specific behavior you've observed that has to change; for example, "I've observed that you've arrived late three times in the last week."

• Tell the employee exactly what must change, identifying the benefits of making the change. "You must be here 15 minutes prior to your shift; this will also give you time to prepare for each day's clients."

• Discuss the consequences if the employee does not comply—a second warning, probation, termination.

• In order for change to occur, the employee needs to acknowledge that she understands what's expected, commit to change her behavior and agree to a timeframe for the change to take place.

5. COMMUNITY LEADERS/CITY COUNCIL

Cindy Monten, owner of two **Salon Monten** locations in **Continued**

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