



The Takeaway from Add-ons

by Jaime Schrabeck

Within the limitations of our scope of practice, the possibilities and pricing for add-ons vary greatly because few guidelines exist. Much like retail, they have a somewhat negative connotation as an “up-sell,” an extraneous or more expensive service that you must persuade clients to purchase. As a beauty professional and salon owner, I want to provide services clients need and want without any convincing on my part. What’s the secret? Add-ons sell themselves when clients desire and value these optional services enough to pay.

Clients must be financially accountable for the services they choose to receive.

That’s especially important at a time when we should be reducing the length of our services, not extending them. This may seem somewhat contradictory, but given the restrictions placed on us during the coronavirus pandemic and the risks of prolonged interactions, we should minimize the time spent with clients and get paid more for what we already do. We can start by restructuring our services, making them simpler by eliminating unnecessary steps and products.

When developing services, I recommend giving clients options, but not too many, otherwise scheduling and explaining the differences among services become too

complicated. This can be easily avoided by creating two distinct levels of service: a very basic one that meets basic nail care needs and another that packages more luxury into an expanded service. Pedicures provide a ready example:

Basic

Nail shaping
Cuticle work

Expanded

Nail shaping
Cuticle work
Callus work
Exfoliation
Paraffin
Massage

If all the extras provided in the expanded service were available individually, that would be a pricing and scheduling hassle. If some of the extras were available as part of the basic service, that undermines its simplicity and dilutes the desirability and value of the longer and more expensive expanded service. More clients willingly choose the expanded service when those extras come packaged together at a reasonable price.

Note that neither of these services includes polish by default. Why? Because we don’t make

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assumptions about who wants these services, like “Only women want pedicures and they all want polish.” We structure, name and describe services in a gender-neutral way because the quality of the service doesn’t change according to the client’s gender. Any client can choose polish as an optional finish for an additional cost. Pricing should be based on the service provided, not who’s receiving it.

In pricing our services, we should strive for accuracy, viability, profitability, transparency and equity.

While add-ons have the potential to significantly increase revenue, their success depends on desirability, cost- and time-effectiveness and client perceptions of value. To establish “value,” do the math to calculate your service prices. (The Salon Service Pricing Toolkit makes this process easy.) Use that information to adjust your prices and produce a comprehensive menu with enticing service descriptions explaining what’s included, the time allowed and the price. Any services considered to be optional or add-ons must be clearly described as such so clients don’t expect more than what you intend to deliver. Your salon policies (appointments, cancellations, payment options, etc.) also need to be in writing.

Add-ons should not be used to compensate for a basic service that’s priced inaccurately and inadequately.

When asked about pricing, whether in person, email, phone call, text or message, be prepared to ask some questions to determine which services, if any, best meet the client’s needs. For example, our pedicures range from \$25-\$75: the basic service (Foot Express) costs \$25 and takes 15 minutes, and the expanded service (Foot Detail) costs \$60 and takes 45 minutes. Polish application for either the basic

or expanded service costs \$15 and takes 15 more minutes. When clients inquire about pedicures, we ask 2 questions before quoting a specific number: do your calluses need attention (detail vs. express) and do you want polish?

Many salons have expanded their menus to include more unconventional services, but I caution salon owners against straying beyond their primary business - performing regulated beauty services. Just because clients want something doesn’t mean that you’re qualified, licensed or insured to provide it, or that their/your best interests would be served if you did.

When considering the introduction of a new service, ask yourself, “Will this service enhance my reputation as a successful nail professional?” For example, consider “detox” foot soaks. Be sensible. If detoxifying were even possible through feet (it’s not; ask a reputable doctor) and capable of curing ailments/diseases (really?), you’d be practicing medicine and definitely outside your scope of practice. Conversely, if it’s a scam (it is; just ask a chemist if you’re still not convinced), then you’d be practicing quackery which is unethical and unprofessional. Why risk your reputation or licensure? Stay in your lane and do what you do best.

Licensed since 1992, Jaime Schrabek, Ph.D. works as manicurist and owner of Precision Nails, an exclusive employee-based salon in Carmel, California. Beyond the salon, she advocates for the beauty industry, co-hosts the Outgrowth: A Slice of Pro Beauty podcast, consults with salon owners, mentors educators, organizes events, writes savvy articles and advises California’s Board of Barbering and Cosmetology as an expert witness.