

WAKE UP + SMELL THE COFFEE

by Joshua Farmer, National Store Director, American Crew



“Hot”, “Bold”, “Strong”, “Tall”, “Extra Shot”... At your local coffee house, there is no shortage of getting exactly what you want. The coffee itself may not take long to drink, but the experience—treating yourself, listening to hip music, people watching from a comfortable chair—leaves a lasting impression. Why is sipping the beverage in such a setting worth the premium price? It’s the enhanced experience that keeps us coming back for more.

It's time to wake up and smell the coffee. The professional beauty industry is rapidly changing from the service economy of the 1990's to the experience economy of the 21st century. In this new economy, customers are demanding exactly, and only, what they want. Revenue growth lies not only in driving sales of existing goods and services, but in creating customer-centric experiences that command a premium price.

Recently I interviewed industry recognized experience economy

expert Renée Malone, founder of the frontline 'makeover' company, KICK THE MOON. Renée explains the evolution of the Experience Economy, its significance to salon sales and its relevance to the men's grooming business.

Define experiences and how are they different from a service in a salon environment?

RM Experiences are memorable events that engage individuals in a distinctly personal way. Whereas 'services'—such as a haircut or

hair color—are intangible activities performed on the individual's behalf. Imagine the work environment as a theatre and your business is a stage. Workers become actors, intentionally utilizing goods (products) as props and services as the stage to create specific effects for their customers.

At what point does an experience become its own offering?

RM When the services become memorable—through personalization. An example would be a salon that charges an admission or a subscription for the time the customer spends immersed in the total salon experience—comprised of many different goods and services.

What are the key elements of a salon/store experience?

RM One of my strategies that salons have been successful with consists of five design principles that drive the creation of memorable experiences. Start by identifying a theme. Next, layer the theme with takeaways or positive cues that will guide customers to feel a certain way about their experience. Third, eliminate all the negative impressions that detract attention from the theme. Fourth, offer memorabilia as tangible artifacts of the experience. Finally, design the experience to engage all of the senses—sounds, sights, and so on. The more sensory the experience, the more memorable it will be.

Is sending a customer home with products considered the memorabilia aspect of the experience?

RM When a customer purchases memorabilia—such as a hair care product, they are purchasing an extension of their salon experience.

To entice the customer to purchase, engage the senses and remember that dialogue is every bit as important as the product used.

JF I personally like to use a four step approach which I call the What, Why, How, Personal Tip approach.

- Explain what is being used on the hair.
- Explain why that product has been chosen.
- Show the client how to emulsify, apply and style the product in his hair.
- Establish Ownership . . . place product in the client's hand to see, study, smell and explain why you like the product.

Utilizing this approach can help ensure that your men take home a piece of the in-salon experience.

What sets apart a successful salon from those that aren't quite as successful?

RM Successful businesses are customer-centric; they pay attention to the voice of the customer and respond by doing something to elevate their services into experiences. Salons that stage experiences will thrive and those who continue to deliver services with a dated customer service mindset are at a competitive disadvantage.

How can we design an experience that is sure to appeal to men?

RM Sight is by far the most powerful sense of all. American Crew visual imagery, along with product packaging, earns full marks for visual appeal to the male customer. Men tend to be loyal, decisive and eager to spend on products and services that help them

maintain a competitive edge personally and professionally.

What recommendations can you provide to help salons provide the ultimate men's experience using American Crew as a partner for success?

RM Salons can deliver a quality experience by utilizing the tools which American Crew provides, combined with an experience education program. Training stylists in this method will help create a specific service that men want to return to time and time again.

The experience program will enhance the American Crew message of quality and value by designing an authentic salon experience with a combination of elements across four realms—Entertainment, Educational, Escapist and Esthetic.

JF It's important also to point out that American Crew recommends some specific male services to enhance the experience of male clients in a salon. Some of those include:

- Tea Tree Hot Face Press at the shampoo bowl.
- Warm Tea Tree Towel Massage on and across the neck & shoulders when finishing a service using Tea Tree Body Lotion.
- Clean up the neck line using a feather razor and an American Crew Shave Cream versus using a hair trimmer.

Authenticity—that's an interesting word. Can you elaborate on authentic elements as they apply to this men's experience?

RM An authentic experience for a man is one in which they are made to feel SPECIAL. Value added

services, personalized with an American Crew message, offering special men only treatments help create an authentically male experience for clients.

JF That's a great point. At American Crew these are some of the things we recommend to create that authentically male experience:

- Create an experience that is entertaining through display of male imagery including posters and male friendly salon menus.
- Include an educational element through the use of style selectors that encourage exploration of new looks.
- Design a male-centered retail environment with an esthetic that gives men their own space.

JF I would like to thank Renee for her thoughtful insight to creating a salon experience. At American Crew, we look for ways to continuously enhance the tools and education, which we offer to salons and stores to help create unique, memorable experiences for male customers.

Renee is a frequent speaker at Salon and Spa Industry trade association conferences, creator of The Salon Experience™ seminar, and an executive advisor for individual companies. For more information visit renee@kickthemoon.com.

If you have information that you'd like to share about great things you're doing with American Crew in your salon or store, please contact Joshua Farmer at joshua.farmer@americancrew.com