

The Truth About...

Marketing Myths that Hold You Back

By John P. Ribner

Expert Panel

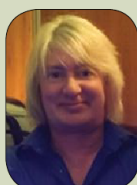
This group of salon professionals was willing to share their secrets on how to make the most of the various services and promotions that other salon owners are avoiding. With a combined 101 years of experience and individual records of success, you might want to read what they have to say!



Brad Blair, Owner
Pacific Tanning – Suffolk, NY
14 years



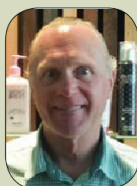
Kevin Rohm, Owner
Suntan Shack – Pittsburgh, PA
13 years



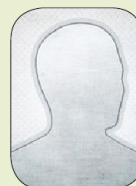
Alex Friedrichsen, Co-owner
TropiTANa – Mt. Juliet, TN
7 years



Gary Strong, Co-owner
Sizzle Tans – Morris Plains, NJ
13 years



Craig Joyner, President
Great Tan – San Francisco, CA
22 years



Jim Todd, Owner
Sun Rayz Tanning Centers – Somerset, KY
15 years



Daniel Mann, Co-owner
Tropical Tan – Seattle, WA
11 years



Bruce Wood, Owner
No Tan Lines – Streamwood, IL
14 years



Lara Nance, Co-owner
Sun Seekers Tan & Spa
Des Moines, IA
6 years

Have you ever heard the adage, “A bad carpenter blames his tools?” When it comes to your salon business, it applies to marketing and promotions, too!

Some salon operators will complain about anything, even the very things that can help them. “My clients don’t want EFT,” “Groupon attracts bottom-feeders,” and “radio advertising is a

waste” are all things that some tanning professionals continue to say. Sadly, these are the same people who will blame the economy and/or the Tan Tax for their declining business. They can’t see that it’s their own negativity toward proven marketing and promotional strategies that holds them back.

There are no bad marketing and promotional methods, only bad marketers.

In other words, EFT memberships, Groupon and anything else used to promote a salon are only as good as the businesspersons employing these methods. There are plenty of tanning operators who are using these methods and mediums and enjoying great success with them. Follow their lead, and you can too!

EFT Membership Programs

People join in January then quit in June, or sooner! This is one of the biggest complaints some salon owners have about EFT memberships. Those who sound like this might be good at getting people to sign up for EFT but have no idea what to do to keep them enrolled.

"If you think you can trap your customers into an EFT membership, you're only deceiving yourself," said Daniel Mann, Tropical Tan co-owner. "If they want out, they'll find a way out. We've found it's better to offer our VIP members different incentives to encourage them to continue their memberships, and we promote these in October, which is our slowest month. For example, friends of VIP members can tan for free that month, which helps us gather information on many potential new clients. We also give VIP members free lotion packettes each time they come in, which makes them happy and introduces them to many great products that they might not normally try. All of this this has been a big help in keeping clients enrolled."

"Ours used to be one of those salons that didn't offer EFT memberships because I thought my clients didn't want it," said Kevin Rohm, Suntan Shack owner. "After so many of them said they were tired of coming in to renew their memberships, I decided to offer it. The key to our success was adjusting the pricing structure in such a way that made it a deal for our clients while still being profitable for us; we did this by increasing the enrollment fee to \$50 and doubled the minimum enrollment time, and set our prices between \$33-\$70 a month, depending on the tanning level. Our clients love it and EFT memberships are at least 20 percent of our database."

"We've offered our EFT program since 2008 and we make it our top priority," said Gary Strong, Sizzle Tans co-owner. "Rather than offering many different packages that are all great deals, we offer single sessions and EFT memberships but make our EFT the best value. For example, a single session

in our level-one units costs \$10 while a membership for that same unit costs \$20 a month. While this does attract a few clients who will tan every day, the majority of our EFT customers are people who tan three to four times a month and stay in the program an average of six to 12 months."

Free Tan Weekend

If your free tan weekend attracts hundreds of people whom you never see again, then you're doing it wrong. Many successful tanning pros swear by free tan weekends as an easy means of creating excitement, attracting people and even making sales!

"Your entire staff has to be in full sales mode for a free tan weekend to work," said Crag Joyner, Great Tan President. "The best way to do that is to get them motivated by getting them involved. In the weeks leading up to our events, I visit with each of my staff to ask them what we can do to help them earn the most commissions they can during the free tan weekend. I always get great input when I do this, and we incorporate their suggestions because it helps raise their individual sales numbers. It also makes these events more of a team effort where everyone feels they've contributed to its success."

"Free tanning weekends are more successful when you market them to your existing database," said Bruce Wood, No Tan Lines owner. "New clients will come in for the tan, but one session is typically not enough to build the trust they need to sign up for a membership on the spot. We heavily promote our free tan weekend to our existing clients with the goal of upselling them to a high-pressure session. To reward their loyalty, we allow them to try these units for free during the event, and we also offer outrageous deals on high-pressure sessions. In most cases, we're able to convert them into a higher membership level after they've seen the difference in their results, and our weekend sales are always in five-digits. During those days, we easily clear at least half of what we do in any given month!"

"We've been hosting free tan weekends since I got started in this business 11 years ago and they continue to be our largest sales days. Free tan weekends only work if you and our staff are committed to promote the event and make sales. Everyone likes getting something for free, so we market the event heavily in order to get people excited about coming to Tropical Tan. When they get here, our staff is trained to sell them everything from lotions and eye protection to moisturizers and memberships," said Daniel Mann, Tropical Tan Co-owner.

Groupon

If you think promoting a Groupon offer will do nothing more than attract a bunch of bargain-hunting bottom feeders, you've got this concept all wrong. It's actually considered a "new client generator" by many salon owners who know how to use this effective Internet marketing program.

"Groupon has done more to get new people into our store than any other advertising," said Alex Friedrichsen, owner of TropiTANa. "We sold 1,500 Groupon deals and half of those who purchased them were people who've never tanned with us before. Our goal is to convert every Groupon client to an EFT member and our staff is trained to do this; our manager calls everyone whose Groupon offer expires to offer them different specials and get them back."

“Groupon is one of our most effective marketing tools because it reaches more people who’ve never tanned with us than any other medium. Since Seattle is a very tech-savvy area, the majority of our target demographic is online, using the Internet to find the best deals. Groupon offers drive them into our stores and our staff is trained to convert them into purchasing memberships so these people will stay with us for a much longer time than the initial deal we offered,” said Daniel Mann.

“The biggest mistake salon owners make with Groupon is focusing upon what they spend,” said Gary Strong, Sizzle Tan Co-owner. “Almost every form of advertising costs money, but since you only pay Groupon half the price of your offer, the cost you’re paying to attract new clients is actually fairly low. The best part about it is you have the opportunity to up-sell every Groupon client who walks through your door.

For example, we just offered a \$25 Groupon special and we allowed everyone who purchased it to receive that amount off our EFT program; we sold 1,700 specials and 1,500 people came in to redeem it, and we converted at least 20 percent of them into memberships.”

Radio Advertising

This term might as well be a four-letter word for some salon owners. They’ll say it doesn’t work or that it’s too expensive but these are just code terms for people who have no idea what they’re doing when using this medium. It’s better to listen to those who know what they’re doing when they advertise their salons “on the air.”

“Radio advertising works if you have a game plan,” said Brad Blair, Pacific Tanning owner. “You have to know what you want to do, what your customers will be receiving and what return you expect; you also have to offer an attractive special that gets customers through the door. We held a contest that gave away a one-year membership, and everyone who entered got a free week of tanning. Our clients heard this commercial every Monday, Wednesday and Friday between noon and 3pm, and again between 6-9pm, and more than 960 people went to the radio station’s website and entered their information. By the time we awarded the winner, we had many new clients enrolled in our EFT program.”



**Protect expensive nail treatments
in tanning beds and spraytan booths.**

See our Website & Blog
for other UV protection products.

Like us on Facebook
for a chance to win a **\$50 Visa Gift Card.**

www.nailsavers.com

“Radio advertising has worked wonders for us,” said Lara Nance, co-owner of Sun Seekers Tan & Spa. “The most important thing to remember is that you can’t do a radio ad for a month and expect a flood of business; repetition is what brings people in, so you have to commit for at least six months if you want it to work. We chose a station that’s 99 percent commercial free, which appeals to the 18-30 demographic, and our ads run between songs and song sets. After one year of advertising, we’ve attracted 2,324 clients at just one of our stores, and people are still coming in and saying, ‘We heard your commercial on the radio.’”

“Radio is a great way to get your name out in the community,” said Jim Todd, Sun Rayz Tanning Centers owner. “We use it for branding our salons and announcing contests and it not only keeps our name alive, it also helps generate excitement about our salons and tanning in general. This recognition helps us sell our specials, which we promote using mass mailings, emails and social media.”

Real Talk ...

Instead of wrapping this story up in a cute little package, it’s time to be honest. The marketing methods featured in this story work, and the salon owners we interviewed continue to prove it each month at their businesses. If more salon owners would quit bad-mouthing these promotional tools they have at their disposal and just use them, there would be more successful salon owners in this industry. It really is *that* simple. ■

We at IST Magazine wish to thank all of the tanning salon owners who contributed to this article.

ATTENTION SALON OWNERS!

Free

SALES TOOLS!



SCAN OR VISIT US @
TWILIGHTTEETH.COM

CLICK ON



OR CALL TOLL FREE 866-908-3384



WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!