

SUCCESSFUL SALON MANAGEMENT

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SUCCESSFUL SALON MANAGEMENT

Psychology in HAIRDRESSING

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PREFACE

You've got to be a bit of a psychologist in this game!

There is a strong need within the hairdressing profession for a much greater understanding of human behaviour. Many but not all hairdressers now realise that a high financial profit and a contented clientele and staff are considerably more the results of an appropriate understanding of human behaviour than of a narrow-minded concentration on the mere mechanical aspects of hairdressing. The profession is in need of a book which not only deals with the understanding of why people behave in the way they do but also provides us with ways of controlling what we do so that we can become more efficient.

Psychology is the conscious study of human behaviour. It has formed many sub-disciplines, for example, cognitive psychology studies the workings of the human brain whereas social psychology is concerned with examining the effects of the social and cultural environment on individual behaviour and experience. Now I stress the word 'conscious' because it is the difference in meaning between conscious and unconscious that divides psychology from hairdressing. Psychologists *consciously* study human behaviour whereas hairdressers 'unconsciously' or 'subconsciously' study it and herein lies the reason for this book.

In hairdressing there are certain ways of performing a skill (for example, perming or tinting) which are common to most hairdressers. In addition to these commonly accepted ways there are lots of other ways of, say, sectioning and winding perms, or applying tints, that would achieve the desired result in the long run. However, they would not be as efficient time-wise or in the consumption of materials. If you left an apprentice on her own for a few weeks to work out how to perm a head of hair, she might well succeed and might even

discover the 'accepted' method. But it would be learning by trial and error, and the one commodity that this method of learning relies heavily on is time: something we can ill afford to waste in the salon! So naturally instruction in the skill of hairdressing has become an accepted part of the trade. But what about social skills? You may have also become naturally skilled and adept at dealing with people (otherwise you would not be a hairdresser), but are there more efficient ways of dealing with others? Can the way you act in a situation affect the human relations side of your business?

This book attempts to present to you some findings of psychologists which have *direct application* to your business and it is hoped that it will help you step back and view your own behaviour *objectively* and then decide on what specific strategies to adopt in order to make you a more efficient and successful hairdresser. Some of the information may appear to be simply common sense, but the study of human behaviour is not the prerogative of psychologists alone, and perhaps it will confirm what you have always felt about people and situations. But to know that others have studied experimentally the same phenomena and have come to the same conclusions as yourself can be very comforting and reassuring. For me one of the main sources of frustration in hairdressing is that although we are continually surrounded by people, we tend to be alone when we have to deal with them.

But remember, we are not trying to turn you into psychiatrists (who mostly study abnormal behaviour) or instant psychologists. Nor is this book a series of recipes for dealing with all of life's situations or the exploiting of others. It is meant simply as a way of presenting some facts and findings which relate to your own behaviour and that of others, and if applied, will make the working of your salon more harmonious and profitable.

As a former salon owner (and now a lecturer) I have for several years been convinced that a greater understanding of human psychology can be most beneficial to the hairdresser. Through my work with the Open University I met some academic psychologists who were able to translate effectively what they knew (and had researched) about human behaviour into a practical form which would be of direct relevance to the hairdressing profession. Together with these psychologists (in particular Ray Bull, B.Sc., M.Sc., A.B.Ps.S., and Denis Gahagan, B.A., A.B.Ps.S., who both wrote major parts of this book) I organised a considerable number of three-day residential courses

on 'Psychology in Hairdressing' at the University of Nottingham. In all, several hundred people attended these courses. These people came from all parts of the profession—there were senior managers and managing directors of the largest companies, stylists from the most up-to-date salons, owners of just a few or one salon, and there were trainees. A frequent request made at the end of every course was for us to produce a book incorporating parts of our courses. This we have now done, and though our courses cover over twenty different topics we have endeavoured here, in the space available to us, to present information on some of the most important topics. Those wishing to ask me questions following their reading of this book, or to enquire about our courses, should feel free to contact me.

I hope that you will enjoy this book.

Roger Cliffe-Thompson