



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

It's a Team Effort

By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Sandee Sims of Inspirations Salon is well aware of the economic downturn. As an Urban Hope Entrepreneur Center graduate, she tries to stay a step ahead of any bad economic news that could hurt her business.

“We are constantly looking ahead,” Sims noted. “Staying on top of what is happening can only help. I believe in the 5 P’s – Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.”

She prepares by keeping her salon current, and relies on her team for innovative ideas. As a chair rental salon, Sims is a business partner more than an employer. The stylists pay a monthly rental fee for space, and set their own fee schedule for services. To operate a profitable business, Sims must build her own client list and keep chairs in the salon rented. She was a chair renter before deciding to open her own salon in May 2005 at 1315 West Mason St.

“I had done chair rental for 10 years and wanted to expand and work with a team,” Sims explained. To prepare for business ownership, she signed up for the Urban Hope Entrepreneur program and learned the ins and outs of running a business. She created a business plan that she continues to use and update. Any change in income or expenses means taking a look at projections and making necessary adjustments.

A themed salon, Inspirations Salon, is done in African décor with the tag line, “Where a leopard can change its spots.” Sims says that the salon reflects her personality. “It is upbeat, innovative, fun, and very friendly. We want to make a difference in peoples’ lives.”

To build a solid customer base, Sims wants to make clients feel welcome and enjoy their experience. To accomplish this, she works toward having a team of stylists that is unified and enthusiastic. Meetings are held on a regular basis to brainstorm for new ideas, address any issues, and provide encouragement. Stylists can make suggestions for merchandising and marketing and discuss the newest trends. Plans are made for attending classes in order to stay current.

“The salon is made up of all of the personalities that work here,” Sims says. She looks for team members with fresh ideas and spirit to invigorate the salon.

“You need to constantly find new and exciting ways to keep clients and find new ones. You can never have enough,” Sims stated. “Innovation is the key word of the times.”

Innovation means offering the newest services including processes like thermal straightening. It means networking and staying in touch with other entrepreneurs. It means keeping a fresh attitude in your business. It means staying competitive and being able to adapt to economic changes. Sims applies these strategies to her business along with outstanding customer service, reward programs for loyal clients, and referral programs to target new clients. However, it is her team that she credits with the success of the salon.

“My team of girls truly works as a team. Their constant dedication and commitment are justly commendable. They have been the inspiration of Inspirations. With their belief in hard work and a solid commitment to a common goal, the salon has proven to be a success,” Sims concluded.

If you have business concerns or would like to schedule free business counseling, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE “Counselors to America’s Small Business” at 920-496-8930 or visit www.greenbayscore.org.

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