

THE MAKEOVER MAVEN

A collection of thoughts on how a hair salon owner could transform their business to respond to pricing objections from clients.

By Jonathan Stark

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HAZMAT HAIRCUT

Sent by Jonathan Stark on May 22nd, 2020

In a recent message, I suggested that one of the most effective things you can do to combat price objections is to create new offerings that are more profitable to you and the prospects you're currently attracting.

Fellow list member Robert Akstar replied with a follow up question (*shared with permission, lightly edited for clarity*):

Hey Jonathan,

How do you transform something into a new product or service?

For example, I have a friend who owns a salon. How would she transform her haircut service?

Love the content, by the way. 😊

Robert Akstar

Great question!

Given the specific nature of a hair salon and how they have been impacted by COVID-19, I'm going to split my thoughts into "pandemic" and "non-pandemic" sections. This is going to be a long answer, so I'll do the pandemic ideas today and the non-pandemic ones tomorrow...

Some ways a hair salon owner might be able to innovate their products and services during lockdown:

Contact every single one of your current and past client to simply ask how they are. No ulterior motive; just genuine concern. Start conversations with them. Listen closely

to what they say. Be present. Ask if there's anything you can do to help. Encourage them to join your mailing list to make it easy to keep in touch. And then keep in touch with them via email AT LEAST once per week.

I'd be willing to bet that this exercise alone would present you with enough novel opportunities to keep the business running, albeit in completely new ways. Here are several ideas - some crazier than others - that I imagine could be inspired by discussing your clients needs:

1. Home delivery of fancy hair and beauty products that clients can use to spruce themselves up at home. Shampoos and conditioners and gels and pastes and hair color kits and home perms and hair dryers and flatirons and more.
2. You could also go the manicure/pedicure route with nail polish (and remover) and emery boards and cuticle trimmers and pumice stones and hand lotions and essential oils and so on.
3. While you're at it, why not offer an assortment of men's grooming items? Razors and brushes and shave cream and aftershave and beard trimmers and mustache wax and all that fun stuff.
4. Your clients' friends and family members still have birthdays and anniversaries and graduations and other special occasions, even during lockdown. You could create themed gift baskets to make it easy for your clients to gift your fancy hair and beauty products to their friends and family. You could even include chocolates, champagne, and jewelry to enhance the "at-home spa experience" for the recipients.
5. Some of your clients might feel uncomfortably unkempt on all those video Zoom calls they're having for work. You could offer 1-on-1 remote video styling consultations for folks like this, during which you'd assess your client's grooming situation, and then give them some tips and tricks to tame the mane. Maybe a little bang trim, or a spot root touch up, or some tips on how to rock an up-do would be good enough to get them through til their next in-salon visit. Maybe there would even be demand for makeup / skin / accessory tips, which you could provide yourself or bring in a colleague if these are outside of your wheelhouse.

6. The more daring (or desperate) of your clients might be interested in DIY hair cutting instruction and supplies for themselves or their kids. You could consult with a client over Zoom about what they might be able to do on their own (or with the assistance of a family member) and then package up and deliver the tools and supplies they'd need to do a DIY haircut. You could then provide live remote assistance again via Zoom. I could certainly imagine someone with 6-12yo kids valuing some expert guidance while administering a bowl cut or wiffle. I know they're just kids, but you don't want them to end up looking like Tiger King junior.
7. I don't know if it would actually be feasible, but what if you could get some kind of hazmat suit and go around safely doing "haircut housecalls"? Show up in your van, suit up outside, set up in the driveway, and do your thing. If your clientele included people like local TV newspeople or successful You-Tubers or other folks who make a living on camera, they would probably pay hundreds of dollars for a hazmat haircut in the comfort of their own yard.

Some of these ideas are are probably dumb, but that's okay. They're not meant to be implemented directly... they're just examples of the *kind* of things that I imagine could theoretically be inspired by reaching out to all of your past and current clients to find out how they're doing and how you can help.

Here's the thing...

The big picture here is that salon owners aren't in the business of cutting hair; they're in the business of making their clients feel better about themselves. There are lots of ways to accomplish this without a pair of scissors in your hand.

Stay tuned for some general "non-pandemic" salon business tips tomorrow!

Yours,

—J

SHEAR MADNESS

Sent by Jonathan Stark on May 24th, 2020

In response to a reader question, I've been thinking about how a hair salon owner could transform their business to respond to pricing objections from clients.

Given the specific nature of hair salons and how they have been impacted by COVID-19, I split my thoughts into "pandemic" and "non-pandemic" sections. I shared seven "pandemic" ideas in the last message.

Today, I'll share three "non-pandemic" positioning ideas.

Some ways a hair salon owner might be able to innovate their products and services under normal (non-pandemic) circumstances:

The very first thing I would recommend would be for the salon owner to hyper specialize. Instead of trying to appeal to everyone (e.g., "Unisex haircuts for children and adults!"), pick a very specific target audience who would see you as the go-to person for a particular thing. Once you are seen as the obvious choice, it will be much easier to justify premium rates for your high end services.

Here are three hyper-specializations I dreamed up for a hairstylist:

The Steampunk Barber

Historically accurate mens grooming for film actors.

Tagline: "When wigs and glue just won't cut it."

The Hurricane Hairstylist

Haircuts and styling for TV reporters who need to be on-camera in inclement weather conditions.

Tagline: "Look incredibly good when the weather is incredibly bad"

The Makeover Maven

Transformational makeovers for women who have recently gone through a major life change.

Tagline: "When you know it's time for a big change, but don't know what to do."

These might sound almost comically specific, but *that's exactly the point*. It makes them more memorable, which is the point of positioning. Any one of these would be way more effective than boring pablum like "Shear Perfection" or "Curl Up & Dye".

NOTE: A side-benefit of laser focused positioning is that you could absolutely OWN the Google search results for any one of these identities within six months. And I checked... the domain names are all available. If you adopted one of these - say, "The Makeover Maven" - and then someone heard about you from a friend, they might not remember your personal name but they'll definitely remember "The Makeover Maven". And what would they do next? They'd search for "The Makeover Maven" on Google and you'd be the entire first page of results. Hits like: your website, your "makeover tips" podcast, your "before and after" YouTube channel, you being interviewed by Tim Gunn or Stacy London or Nick Arrojo, etc.

Are these markets big enough?

You might be wondering if a hairstylist could find enough clients if they were just serving "male actors" or "TV reporters" or "women going through a major life change"?

Heck yeah, they could.

From Google:

In 2017, there were around 135,600 actors in the U.S. of which roughly 55% were male.

*Number of Reporters, Correspondents, and Broadcast News Analysts, 2018:
49,700*

There is 1 divorce approximately every 36 seconds. That's about 876,000 divorces a year.

The smallest of these segments is roughly 50,000 people. If you only captured 1% of the smallest market, you'd have 500 clients. That's a lot of hair to cut. Even if they only came to see you every other month on average, that'd be 20 appointments per week. If appointments were \$500 per visit, that'd be \$10,000 per week. And oh yeah, they'd be buying your premium products, too. A fifty week year could round out to \$500,000 in revenue, plus whatever you do in product sales.

(Does \$500 sound like more than anyone would ever pay for a haircut? [It's not.](#))

Is positioning really that important?

Let's say you meet someone at a cocktail party or a wedding reception or a backyard BBQ. You strike up a conversation and ask, "So, what do you do?" Which of the following replies would be more memorable, interesting, or intriguing to you...

These?

- "I cut hair."
- "I'm a barber."
- "I'm a hairstylist."

Or these?

- "I do historically accurate mens grooming for film actors. "
- "I do hair for TV reporters who need to be on-camera in inclement weather conditions."
- "I do transformational makeovers for women who have recently gone through a major life change"

Or maybe even these?

- "I'm the steampunk barber."
- "I'm the hurricane hairstylist."
- "I'm the makeover maven."

From a pricing standpoint, it's dramatically more effective to be positioned as "the one and only" instead of "just one of many". When people from your target market come to you, they'll *expect* to pay top dollar. As far as they'll be concerned, you're the only real option.

Once you've nailed down a position like one of these, the ideas for branding, marketing, sales, products, and services become almost obvious.

But just in case they're not obvious...

In my next message, I'll dive deep into my favorite of these three positions to elaborate on how I'd attract my ideal buyers and build out a range of offerings to serve them.

Stay tuned!

Yours,

—J

BOOTSTRAPPING “THE MAKEOVER MAVEN”

Sent by Jonathan Stark on May 25th, 2020

In response to a reader question, I’ve been spending the past few days thinking about how a hair salon owner could transform their business to respond to pricing objections from clients.

Here’s the crux of the question... if you were a garden variety hairstylist who sold low-value “unisex haircuts for children and adults”, how could you transform yourself into an in-demand hairstylist who commands premium fees?

My advice in the last message was to get very VERY specialized and I outlined three potential positioning examples for you. Today, I’m going pick one of them and describe step-by-step what I would do to bootstrap that business in one week for under \$100.

Let’s use this one:

Identity—The Makeover Maven

One-liner—Transformational makeovers for women who have recently gone through a major life change.

Tagline—“When you know it’s time for a big change, but don’t know what to do.”

Here are the steps I would recommend:

1. Change your LinkedIn headline to “THE MAKEOVER MAVEN”. Your current clients are probably not checking your LinkedIn profile, so it’s a safe place to experiment.
2. Change your LinkedIn “About” section to “Did you recently retire? Let’s find the new you! If you’re ready to reinvent your look, I’m here to help.”

Message me here on LinkedIn for more info." A portion of your target market will definitely be on LinkedIn - specifically, recently retired women.

3. Send connection requests to 20 or more retired women on LinkedIn every day. I just typed "retired" in the People search and found 11,000 profiles for retirees in my local area alone.
4. Buy themakeovermaven.com and set up an email address. You can use [Hover](#) for this and it'll cost less than \$20 and take you about 5 minutes.
5. Set up a dead simple placeholder page with your identity, one-liner, tagline, email address, and phone number and point your new domain name at it. You could use a free carrd.co account for this and be done in a half hour.
6. Create a very short (3 pages or less) PDF called "10 Hair Mistakes That Will Age You" written by "The Makeover Maven" that has 10 simple and effective hair tips for women in your target market. End the document with a call to action like, "Did you recently go through a major life change? Let's find the new you! If you're ready to reinvent your look, I'm here to help. Call me at <phone number> or shoot me an email at <email address> to set up a free consultation." This'll probably take a few hours, but it's totally worth it.
7. Every weekday, share one of the ten hair mistakes on LinkedIn with a link to the full PDF. It will take two weeks to go through all ten. Once you go through them all, start over at the beginning. Wash rinse repeat. The vast majority of people will not see your posts, so you can keep reusing them indefinitely without annoying anybody.
8. If the PDF seems to be generating some interest, draft a 10-part series of short articles (400-600 words each) that expands on each of the 10 points in your PDF. This will probably take a day or two, but it's totally worth it.
9. Turn your series of articles into a 10-day email course. You can use the \$49 tier of [Drip](#) for this and it should take you less than an hour.
10. At the end of the email course, send a message with a CTA of some kind... probably something like "Are you ready to meet the new you?" with a button labeled "Schedule a Free Consultation" that links to a scheduling app. You can use the free tier of [Calendly](#) to set up this scheduling link.

11. Add a section on your website for your email course with a button that links to the Drip sign up form.
12. Announce your free 10-day email course on LinkedIn and other social media.
13. Email literally everyone you know with a message like, "Hey there! Do you know any women who have recently gone through a big life change (e.g., divorce, retirement, empty nest, health scare, widowed, etc)?" If they reply with a "Yes", ask for an email intro or if they would be willing to forward a link to your free email course.

Following these steps will increase awareness of your value proposition with folks in your target market. As more and more people become aware of you, your calendar will start filling up with free consultations with women who are your ideal clients.

NOTE: These conversations will be full of solid gold information, so take notes like crazy with every person you chat with. Capture the hopes, dreams, worries, and fears of these ladies because it will help you connect more easily with people like them in the future.

At the end of each call - if you believe your prospect would be a good fit - you can ask for the sale. You could say something like, "Well, I'm convinced that you'd be a great fit and I'd love to work with you. I have one opening next week for a Maven Makeover at \$500. Would you like to book it?"

If she says, "Yes!" then take payment right then and there, and book the appointment.

If she says, "No" then find out why by asking something like, "Okay, that's totally fine. What are you thinking?"

Big picture...

The goal of this bootstrapping exercise is to create a small but steady pipeline of targeted leads for very specific premium priced service that you can provide without a lot of ramp up time. Namely, a hair styling appointment for a woman who's looking to make a major change in her appearance.

Here's the coolest part of this particular specialization... it markets itself. Since you'd be making big obvious improvements to your client's appearance, *everyone she knows is going to ask her about it!* In other words, it's viral by default.

It'd go something like this:

"OMG! Sally you look amazing!!!!"

"Thanks! Don't you love it?"

"Yes! Who'd you go to?"

"The Makeover Maven. She's a little pricey, but... SOOOO worth it!"

"I'll say! I have to tell Martha... we could go together!"

Every friend of your clients (big life change or not) who's looking for a hair/style/makeover reboot is going to call you *fully expecting to pay top dollar*. The more of them you help, the more people will become aware of your services.

Now... if we stopped here, it'd be pretty good. You'd have gone from selling \$50 appointments to anybody who walked through the door to selling \$500 appointments to a very specific clientele. Once your pipeline was full, you could potentially 10x your revenue.

But you'd still be doing a lot of high-touch sales and delivery, which is fine... until it's not.

How could you 10x things *again*?

I'll talk about that next time.

Yours,

—J

SCALING “THE MAKEOVER MAVEN”

Sent by Jonathan Stark on May 27th, 2020

In response to a reader question, I've been spending the past week or so thinking about how a hair salon owner could transform their business to respond to pricing objections from clients.

Here's the premise... if you were a garden variety hairstylist who sold low-value “uni-sex haircuts for children and adults”, how could you transform yourself into an in-demand hairstylist who commands premium fees?

Last time around, I gave you 13 steps to follow to increase awareness of a specific value proposition - e.g., transformational makeovers - with folks in a chosen target market - e.g., women who had recently gone through a big life change - so that you could charge 10x your current price for an appointment.

If you stopped here, you'd have gone from selling \$50 appointments to anybody who walked through the door to selling \$500 appointments to a very specific, upmarket clientele. But... you'd still be doing a lot of high-touch sales and delivery, which can get old pretty quickly.

Today, I'm going to talk about leveraging your brand to create new products and services that scale up *without* requiring more of your time selling to and working with clients 1-on-1.

Scaling up The Makeover Maven business

To recap: at this point in the story, you have transformed yourself into “The Makeover Maven” and are getting \$500 per appointment.

The first challenge you're going to come up against is repeat business. Can you charge \$500 for visits AFTER the initial makeover? Probably not, because it'd be more of a maintenance visit than a transformational makeover.

So what are some things you could do that would add value for your clients and be profitable to you?

Here are a few ideas:

1. Sell one-off Makeover Maintenance Visits for \$250 each. This is half the price of what the initial makeover cost, but is still 5x more than you were making per visit in your "unisex" days. Once you're booked solid, you could raise your prices to decrease demand or hire and train "Mavenettes" to handle the maintenance visits.
2. Sell an annual Maven Maintenance plan for \$5000 that is not available to the general public (i.e., just folks who have purchased the \$500 makeover) and entitles your clients (i.e., "Mavenistas") to unlimited cut and color appointments, priority scheduling, discounts on products on other services (e.g., makeup, skin, nails), etc. If it turns out that your past clients are coming in more frequently than expected, increase the price and/or hand them off to your Mavenettes to handle the overflow.
3. Sell a top-tier, invitation-only Maven Royale plan for \$15,000 per year that includes unlimited visits for hair, nails, makeup, access VIP spa services by appointment. I'd also include a reserved parking space for each client with their actual name right on the sign for everyone else to see as they enter. These signs would confer status like crazy and would be the subject of much discussion and envy.

Okay, but at this point, we're still really just selling haircuts and related salon services. What other line extensions could you sell under The Makeover Maven brand?

1. **Products**—Offer a collection of the best and most effective hair and beauty products for your target market. This could be a curated collection of products from other premium brands, or you use a private label service (like [this](#) or [this](#)) to create a custom-branded line, or you could go nuts and find/create your own exclusive original products.

2. **Courses**—This space lends itself pretty well to online video courses. You could do how to videos with tips and tricks on various hair and beauty topics. Titles would be in the form of “The Makeover Maven Teaches <subject>” where <subject> could be things like hair care, styling, makeup, skin, fashion, accessories, etc.
3. **Community**—Launch a paid private membership community for women in your target market who want to connect with other women like themselves who have recently gone through a major life change and are considering reinventing (or have already reinvented) themselves.
4. **Speeches**—After a year or so of delivering transformational makeovers, I imagine that you’d have plenty of material to put together a talk on the subject and give inspirational speeches to ladies in your target market who would benefit from your perspective. You could give it away for free to charity organizations (like [this](#) or [this](#)), or get paid to deliver it to for-profit groups and government organizations (like [this](#) or [this](#)).
5. **Books**—If your speech seems to be resonating with audiences, write a book on the subject. You could self-publish or try to get a deal with a traditional publisher. Unless it’s a huge hit you won’t get rich off of it, but having a book confers authority and would have a beneficial effect on sales of all your other offerings.
6. **Franchise**—Once you have “The Makeover Maven” business model ironed out, you could franchise so other hairstylists could become “The Makeover Maven” of their town. There would be a million things to consider with a deal like this and I’m not an expert, but I imagine that you could require that all the locations sell your hair and beauty products exclusively. So in addition to the upfront franchise fee (a [Snip-Its kids haircut franchise](#) starts at \$100,000) you would get ongoing income from product sales and probably a million other income streams that I am not aware of.
7. **Certification**—If franchising seems like too hard or risky, you could launch a \$5000 certification program for hairstylists who want to become “Maven Certified”. If you’ve already been training your own Mavenettes to handle your overflow business, you probably already have all the training materials you need and would just need to formalize it into some sort of workshop package. You could set up a referral network (e.g., “find a Maven Cer-

tified™ stylist in your area”), offer a revenue split on any of your products that they sell, and a referral fee if they send any friends in for certification.

8. **Reality Show**—This is pretty farfetched and I have no idea what you’d need to do to get “The Makeover Maven” reality show made, but there are plenty of examples of similar shows (like [this](#) or [this](#)) and I betcha if you had a big community and a track record of business success (e.g., a chain of salons or a best-selling book), then you’d have a non-zero chance of making something happen. This is a real moonshot but if it worked you’d be set for life.

Okay, hopefully that’s enough to get your gears turning because this is going to be my last message on the hair subject. If I think about it any more I’m going to start the business myself! 😂

If you know a hairstylist who would like to become The Makeover Maven, please have them email me at jstark@jonathanstark.com and if they’re really serious about it, I’ll give them the domain (I bought it to fend off squatters).

Yours,

—J

More Information

I hope you have found this short guide to be a useful resource.

For more free resources, please visit:

jonathanstark.com/free

If you have any follow-up questions or comments, please feel free to email me at:

jstark@jonathanstark.com

I look forward to hearing from you!

Yours,

—J

Jonathan Stark

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