JULY/AUGUST 2020

salon today

2020
TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

MINIMIZING
CONTACT
MAXIMIZING THE EXPERIENCE

Yene Damtew, owner of Aesthetics Salon in Arlington, Virginia

Productivity Power

Technology companies, like Rosy Salon Software, rush new features to market as salons make health and safety a priority upon reopening.

Bobit Business Media

SALONTODAY.COM A MODERN SALON PUBLICATION

E-Commerce and Touchless Retail

With stay-at-home orders in place, salons rushed to launch e-commerce sites to help bring in revenue during the shutdown while helping their guests maintain a beauty regimen even when they couldn't get services.

SalonInteractive, an ecommerce platform that preserves the integrity of professional beauty, saw a record number of salons leverage their platform to develop online stores. Through this system, product orders are fulfilled by distributors, while the salon continues to collect a commission on the sale.

"Clients have found it easy to work with and our team members were happy to be able to recommend products to clients over this time (the shutdown). It made them feel like they had a little bit of connection with their clients," says **Louise MacClain**, owner of **Beautiful People Salon & Day Spa** in Hartford, CT.

SalonCloudPlus' **Dilan Desilva** says their team has developed a few thousand e-commerce stores for salon websites and they are were gratified to watch a big product purchase uptick during the pandemic. "We also built in a search function so clients can see their past purchase history and our sites ask the shopper for the name of the recommending stylists so they receive a commission as well," he says. SalonCloudsPlus integrates with most of the major salon software players, like **STX Cloud**, **Meevo**, **Mindbody/Booker**, **Phorest**, **Salon Iris**, **Rosy**, **SalonBiz** and **Zenoti**.

"Our new 'online store' and other e-commerce platforms syncs directly with a salon's inventory, client history and marketing suite, allowing the owner or their staff target clients with specific recommendations," says **Patrick Monaghan**, product director at **Phorest Salon Software**. "Every client of the salon gets their very own personal store with any previous products bought in the salon available to repurchase."

As salons reopened, many chose to not allow clients free access to retail shelves, either out of concern or because of a state mandate. Ecommerce offers salons a touch-free way for clients to shop retail either in or out of the salon.

TeleBeauty

As Americans embraced Zoom to connect with work, friends and family during the pandemic, salons started using **TeleBeauty** (a Zoom-like service customized for the beauty industry) to do virtual consultations with clients to recommend products and team meetings with staff to keep them updated or to do virtual education.

As salons began to reopen, one of the biggest challenges they faced was how to get months' worth of appointments in as quickly as possible, often while operating at less than full capacity because of social distancing guidelines. By using video consultations, stylists could assess a client's hair needs, including how long it had grown or if they attempted to cut or color their own hair, and develop a game plan and pricing strategy before the client entered the salon.

"Stylists often spend 10-15 minutes consulting with a client, browsing through photos to determine the exact shade of blonde or precise length of cut she wants," says **Jeff Mason**, president of **STX**. "With video consultations, this can be done before a client's appointment. Not only does this diminish time in the salon for the client, it allows owners to be more efficient in scheduling. With consultations completed in the morning hours before the salon opens or the evening before an appointment, a salon's open hours can be focused on services and sanitation."

Curbside Check-In

As salons opened, most closed off their reception areas, so another issue they faced was where would clients wait until their stylists were ready for them. Having them wait in the safety of their own cars was a natural, but then how to alert them when it was time to come in?

At the **Danny Jelaca Salon** in Miami Beach, Owner **Danny Jelaca** loves that when clients are fully onboarded with the salon's app developed by **Aura Salonware**, the salon can give them an alert when they are in the vicinity, clients can check in through the app and stylists can text them when they are ready. "They can even store their credit card information in the app so they can buy products, pay for their service and tip their service provider—it practically eliminates the need for a front desk," he says.

Through many of these programs, owners can set a geographic perimeter around the salon, so clients can't check in before they physically are within the perimeter—basically, the salon's parking lot. Once they check in, their name is added to a dashboard which tell the front desk or the stylist how long each guest has been waiting.

"We only have one person working the front desk right now when normally we would have three," says **Carl Glorioso**, owner of **The Glam Room** in Kansas City, MO, who uses both Millennium and SalonCloudsPlus. "All of these features like curbside check-in make the day-to-day operations easier and streamlines the front desk, not only freeing up more time, but also helping when you have capacity limitations."

Color Management and Color Conversion

Although they work slightly differently, color management systems like **Vish**, **LaRu**, **SalonScale** and **CLICS**, help colorists mix a precise amount of an exact formula with virtually no waste. With a couple of months' accumulation of roots, most clients need more color following the shutdown than they did in a normally-spaced appoint-

CONTINUED

ment. These systems help colorists easily adjust, mixing just the right amount of color and capturing the accurate price of the color product used.

This summer, **LaRu Color Managemen**t by **SureTint** unveiled its color conversation technology, which was seven years in the making. This new platform helps salons that are taking on a new color line effectively and quickly translate a client's formula in their existing line to an accurate formula in the new line. Before this technology, to pull off a conversion, color manufacturers needed to send an educator into the salon for a week or more and colorists tended to congregate in the dispensary giving each other advice about the new formulations. Through this technology, colorists can convert the formula on the LaRu app through their phone in a matter of seconds, aiding in the social distancing requirements for the team.

Tip Management

As salon owners consider the way the virus can spread in the salon, they also looked at systems that help them go cashless. **Tippy** is a digital tipping solution built specifically for the beauty industry. It saves business owners money and hassle since they no longer have to play 'banker,' and tips are directly deposited into the service professionals' bank accounts the next business day.

When the pandemic struck, Tippy also launched **TipIt Fwd**, a feature that allowed clients to send their favorite beauty pros tips and positive messages during the shutdown. They also launched a tip card option allowing the tips to be loaded onto a debit card which granted the stylist use of the funds even more quickly.

Lori Adler, senior vice president of salon operations for the **Alline Salon Group** with 391 franchisees, started looking at Tippy in January, but got very serious about bringing it on once the pandemic hit.

"We were looking at the health and safety of our employees and needed a partner to help us go cashless," she says. "Our franchisees love never having to do a deposit or rush to the bank to get change to pay out tips, and it's allowed them to be more productive in the salon. And, we've heard multiple stories of clients being very generous in their tips when they come back for the first service, leaving $100 or $200 tips. One salon even had a client who tipped every stylist in the salon $50 to show her appreciation."

Touchless Checkouts

With 10 locations in Seattle, **Gene Juarez Salons and Spa** used their shutdown to convert to **Zenoti**, a software that specializes in multi-location salons. While the salons always maintained high standards of cleanliness for their customers, the management team knew it would need to implement changes that increased safety measures once they reopened and they wanted to be able to use technology tools that clients accessed through their personal mobile devices to make transactions as contactless as possible.

In addition to online booking and curbside check-ins, Gene Juarez used the two-way texting capabilities to educate clients on new check-in options.

The salon group's new digital experiences also expanded safety during the service. Using their mobile devices, service providers can revise client invoices to include add-on services and products, saving clients time and helping them avoid any unnecessary additional interaction with front-desk at check out.

"We're really discouraging clients from handling products on our retail shelves," says **Katie Trent**, chief operating office for Gene Juarez. "Now when a stylist recommends a product and the client says yes, the stylist can scan the barcode through their app and add it to the ticket. The stylist can hand the client her products and the client knows that scores of others clients haven't touched the bottles."

Clients can pay and tip providers from their mobile devices rather than wait in lines at the front desk. The convenience of this Uber-like digital experience allows customers to breeze through check-out without contacting frequently touched POS equipment.

"About 30 percent of clients are paying now through autopay, and we are working on increasing that frequency," Trent says.

Forms and Waivers

Most software companies like **Vagaro** are helping their salon customers with a feature that allows them to create digital registration and intake forms from scratch. These can be used to ask clients to respond to a quick health assessment or sign a hold-harmless waiver. Salons also can use the feature to design client surveys that can give them important insight into how clients feel about the new client experience or their opinion on a new service or product line.

Owners can choose to share a link to a liability waiver or consent form through an email to the client, as well as digitally store the form for the salon's protection.

"We have the COVID waiver on our app as well, so clients can fill it out digitally," **Paola Hinton**, owner of **Five Senses Spa, Salon and Barbershop** in Peoria, Illinois, says. "For owners, that's really important because then I don't have to keep all that paperwork for seven years. When the client submits it, it's stored directly on our database."

It is a brand new experience for the client, but technology is helping salons deliver an upgraded service while meeting the new safety guidelines. st