

A BLACK & WHITE CASE

Sue Davis explains why plunging necklines persuaded her to have a uniform policy



Sue Davis is director of Hair & Beauty Management in Blaby, Leicestershire.

I have been involved in salon life for more than 30 years, originally as a hair stylist and then as a trainer travelling the UK and abroad for a major colour house before eventually opening my own salon 19 years ago.

Today, the small town of Blaby has eight hair salons, so in this competitive environment the Sue Davis branding and marketing has to differentiate the business from the competitors. One aspect of this is the staff outfits.

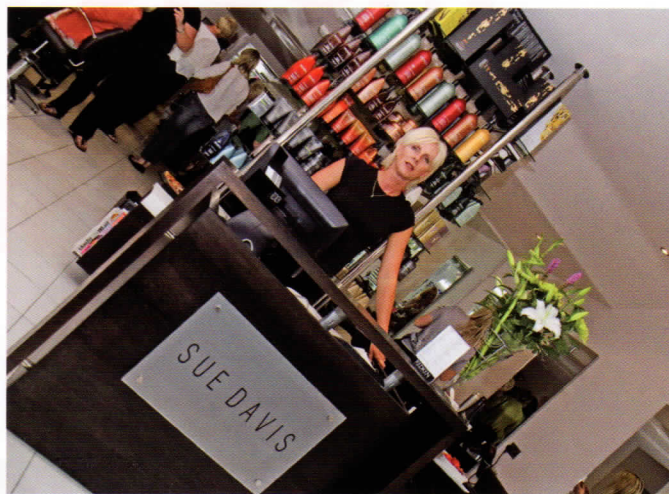
The decision to have a defined salon clothing style came 10 years ago and was client driven. The fashion was for plunging necklines and several clients mentioned that they did not feel comfortable with all that bare flesh on show. It set me thinking that while the interior design of the salon was very considered with a clean cut, contemporary feel designed to make the clients feel relaxed but professionally cared for, a few ill-chosen clothes could ruin the whole ambiance.

My management style had always been team-centric, so I held a staff meeting, which is more of a round-table discussion than a management decree. The staff decided to opt for a simple outfit of black culottes and white, logoed T-shirts, because it was easier to supply garments or have a dress code than to individually assess each outfit each day.

Experience soon taught us that culottes did not suit all shapes and sizes so we relaxed the dress code so the staff could wear their own black skirt or trousers for winter, (black or white for summer) but no jeans or extra casual beachwear.

These are now worn with the salon's own black corporate T-shirts bought from a wholesaler and embroidered locally with the salon name on the back. The garments are good quality and embroidery is a hardwearing method of personalisation.

The whole team, including me, wears this outfit; the only exception is our beauty therapist who wears a traditional white tunic and trousers. The benefits are many and various. For the younger members of the team it means they can look just like the senior members who have bigger pay packets – it gives them so much confidence.



SUE DAVIS BEHIND THE RECEPTION AT HER SALON IN BLABY, LEICESTERSHIRE

Staff do not have to spend too much time thinking about what to wear for work and it saves them money. It also stops the fashionistas in the team from being highly competitive about their looks, rather than focusing on their customer care but they make up for it at the Christmas party which is rather like a fashion show.

From my point of view, it stops inappropriate dress. Although we are part of the fashion industry, we have so many different types and ages of clients we do not want to offend them or make them feel uncomfortable in any way. Finally, it puts the team in work mode: once the T-shirt is on, they put on their professional face, whatever the weather or the sort of journey they have endured into work – it is on with the show.

I always keep a good stock of T-shirts in various sizes so that in the event of lost or damaged clothing the girls can buy a replacement. Although the team are given their initial allocation of T-shirts free of charge, they do have to pay to replace lost or damaged garments, which focuses their mind on caring for their clothing.

Of course, being a hair and beauty salon, hair styling is also part of our corporate look, and too make sure their hair is well styled and in good condition they each have a free cut and colour service every six weeks.