Let’s be clear on one thing from the start. Having a great idea for a product range doesn’t ensure its success. In fact, in some select cases it’s not even necessary. But by building your new product range into a brand, it can potentially determine the survival of your business.

The successful mainstream brands in our industry are built into a total ‘experience.’ They’re not individual products or short ranges that just take up shelf space. Having been made from many elements working together, every time a customer is touched it brings to life the heart, soul and story of those brands.

Another clarion call is that a brand is not one single action, image or product. It’s an amalgam. Brands are built in layers, over time, with each successive overlay strengthening the total structure. The seven brand building blocks (see inset) — none of which individually ensure success — must be melded together to effectively build a thriving brand.

What makes a brand? Simplistically, a brand is a promise … to your customers. As the creator, you need to know what makes up the promise, how you’re going to deliver it and why you’ll continue doing it, again and again.

The ‘again and again’ of brand building is an ongoing process, as is every single, individual product launch; they’re not just a single ‘event’ that happens. As the most valuable brand in history, Apple ‘owns’ the product launch process — staging it over many weeks and months. Its fans are almost evangelical in their brand advocacy. The Apple brand has so successfully enraptured them that many queue for days to buy items they never before imagined they needed.

The Seven P’s of brand building

New products and ranges are launched every month — from overseas as well as local creations — but few fulfil their potential. As a result our industry has seen more than its fair share of hiccups, misses and those that were dead even before they set foot on the shelf.

In future articles I will cover each of the seven Ps of brand building needed to turn your product range into a thriving salon brand.

**Part One: Product and Proposition**

No matter if you’re creating a product range from a custom/private formula, buying a generic formula under your own private label or importing a range from overseas, the product and its proposition is the soul of any brand-building journey. It meshes together several foundational pieces of your future brand:

**i. The ideal user:** Know your ideal users and build your product concept to suit them.

You need to be clear on who your customers are, because a successful launch (and brand) won’t happen if the market wants one thing and you’re delivering another.

Once you’ve clearly defined your buyers, the concept, USP and formula should all align and satisfy their basic need. Are they baby boomers who need anti-ageing product regimens, or teenagers after preventative skin care? To explain: if you’re creating an anti-ageing product, the viscosity, texture and performance of the product is important. In contrast, the viscosity of a teenage range would be lighter and cleansers more important.

**ii. The concept and USP:** Know how your USP and product concept makes you stand out.

A Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is a term used to define what differentiates your brand and your uniqueness. The litmus test for a USP is to answer the question “Why you?” Why should someone buy your brand, use your product, or prefer your offering over another?

One USP approach is to base your product concept around a unique ingredient and/or performance factors. When formulating, consider how your product is going to deliver benefits differently, faster, easier, or more effectively. Which is it? What are your key or supporting ingredients
THE SEVEN PS OF BRAND BUILDING

The traditional marketing model consists of just four Ps - product, place, price and promotion. However, in the beauty industry a successful new product launch requires the model is tailored to specifically suit the idiosyncrasies of this market.

Simplistically, the Seven Ps for the salon industry consist of:

1. Product & Proposition:
   Your product formula is the soul of your brand. What's its personality? What are its unique traits that deliver on your users' needs and wants?

2. Packaging & Performance:
   If your formula is the soul, your packaging is the spirit that connects to your users. How can your packaging design and functionality deliver repeatedly?

3. Price & Positioning:
   Price can dictate how your brand is perceived in the marketplace. Is your price complementary or underemphasising your brand's positioning?

4. Placement & Partners:
   There are many channels available to place your brand. Which reflect your quality and value can be added to brand through social proof, performance and results. They are today’s consumers’ language.

5. Promotion & Proof:
   Quality and value can be added to brand through social proof, performance and results. They are today’s consumers’ language.

6. People & Passion
   Your brand values should flow through your people. How can you instil your passion so the right people are attracted?

7. Promises & Professionalism
   The ultimate success is keeping your word and delivering on your promises that form the foundations of your brand.

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Neil Osborne has devoted more than 30 years of his working life to making a difference to businesses in the salon industry. As a sales performance consultant, trainer and business mentor he works with and partners some of the most dynamic and demanding sales-driven organisations, helping them grow and change their sales results. Contact him at The SALES GURU, 1300 352 859 or visit www.thesalesguru.com.au

Join us for chocolate & bubbles at Salon Melbourne and find out how Kitomba can help make you more successful.