



Junk in Your Trunk

WHY BRANDS NEED PUSH, PULL AND PROOF TO MAKE IT BIG

Every journey is better when you travel in style. And just like the best jean and boot brands, luggage is promoted for its style, impact and status, or its functionality. Simplistically, salon products are no different. In the fifth of this series of branding articles, **Neil Osborne** explains how the art of push-and-pull promotion techniques is now joined by social proof for your brand to gain trust, respect and attention in the salon marketplace.

You're probably already thinking that luggage (and I include handbags here) has absolutely nothing to do with salon products. Really? Luggage, leather goods and your must-have bag are all attention-seeking devices.

They're used as symbols to signify your status, mobility, wealth, style and exclusivity and are as unique and telling as the person carrying them. Through purposeful marketing and promotion, you've subconsciously learned which brands are the best, most expensive and celebrity supported. Let me explain...

Prior to WWI, luggage was functional. There were large, heavy trunks that were far from luxurious. Purses were the opposite. They were small, lavish and an obvious symbol of wealth, rather than a useful accessory.

As travel became more widespread, luggage and handbags somehow fused — both taking on not just practical forms, but also culturally significant ones. They became status symbols and along the way, great brands were built.

Luxurious luggage and a must-have handbag lend you their glamour, to make a grand entrance and promote your worth. That attention (and the social proof that flows from it) is exactly what you need to succeed in the branding business.

PART Five: Promotion & Proof

In today's fast-paced marketplace you need to grab attention — from salon owners, clients or consumers — and secure trust and belief in your brand. That takes work — and that's called promotion.

As the fifth of the 7Ps of salon brand-building, promotion and proof influence two key areas of a brand:

1. Its awareness
2. Its acceptance

The art is fusing the two so they're one, but still appear to be separate — just as luggage and purses have done.

Traveling the old way

Back in the age of traditional marketing (before social media), promotion was somewhat simpler. There were push and pull techniques. You 'pushed' from one side to get the brand into a stockist and 'pulled' from the other side to get it out, or sold. (see diagram)

A successful brand constantly played see-saw, using different tactics to drive sales into and out of distribution channels.

With the advent of social media, this once simple concept was joined by proof — social proof — that's responsive, accountable and interactive in all directions. (see diagram)

The addition of proof has added greater complexity and length to the equation. And it's the area that can spread quickly and uncontrollably — driven by fast fingers and photos that rapidly circulate amongst device-friendly consumers.

What puts spunk in your trunk?

Let's break down some promotional concepts and see how they can make the difference between your brand taking off on a grand journey, or being home-bound.

A. Porter driven techniques — push [in]

Traditionally 'push' techniques are created by manufacturers to drive demand (from stockists) for their product. However in the salon industry, this step is broken into two phases — the push-in and the push-out — if it's done well.

i. Loading — the push-in

Push-in techniques are designed to entice the initial purchase of your brand by a stockist who wants to take it on as their preferred product of choice.

Examples of push-in promotions are: trade shows, business seminars, introductory parcels (including attractive mark-up), select sampling and merchandising. Others include: latest application methods, advanced training concepts or methods and unique education deliveries. Rebates and other financial incentives can also help a brand 'push' their way in to your salon.

ii. Unloading — the push-out

The singularly unique aspect of our industry is our people (read more on this in next issue's article on the sixth P — People & Passion). The staff in each salon actively promotes and recommends the products and brands it carries and it's here the 'push-out' tactics fit.

Push-out tactics are specifically designed by manufacturers to encourage (yes, even motivate) your therapists to recommend a brand over another available choice.

Push-out concepts can be broken into two options: one rewards the therapist and the other benefits the consumer. Examples of therapist-skewed tactics are competitions, incentives, commissions and peer recognition. Consumer push-out tactics include gift with purchase, packs, cash-back offers, consumer competitions and other incentives or rewards to the consumer for purchasing your brand.

B. Carry-your-own techniques — pull [out]

A 'pull' technique creates awareness and demand for your brand from the consumer. It gets the consumer to come to you — effectively 'pulling' product through. By using pull technology, people are brought toward your brand.

Traditional (old media) pull tactics included advertising and publicity. Ideally the brand featured across mass media (TV, radio, magazine, billboard) or other highly visible public forms. At their best, (although sadly not often enough) they created consumer demand, or at the very least made

it easier for a therapist to recommend a brand, because the consumer had seen it on TV.

The advent of social (new) media has delivered new 'pull' through opportunities — via specific pull technologies. These include your website, blog, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest, to name but a few.

The true beauty and advantage of these technologies is their ability to facilitate interaction and participation (by consumers) in your brand and its story. Best of all, social media drives a word-of-mouth referral program to new heights.

Louis Vuitton, Hermes or Chanel?

Which bag will it be? Today we ask our online friends for the answer ... and more importantly, we'll believe them over any brand advertising. Social media has also rippled across the salon industry. Product popularity is no longer suspected; it's searched for online. And performance comments are no longer a solitary affair in front of the mirror; they've become a community critique.

Results are now a key decision factor in product purchase. Customers want proof that product claims can be trusted. They'll no longer just accept what a brand says is true; before-and-after images are the go-to online proof that results are achievable.

Proof is no longer an optional extra — it's a mandatory component in your ultimate new media promotional mix. Make sure you factor it in, harvest it and use it to strengthen belief in your brand and respect for its claims.

If you've ever shopped for travel luggage, then you know there are decisions ahead, but it's all part of the experience of traveling. Similarly, when you know what you want, brand promotions are challenging and thrilling. Just remember, a successful promotion is not comprised of a single component. By carefully balancing push and pull techniques with a healthy dose of social cred, you'll create brand success. ■

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 helps businesses launch, grow and change their sales results. Contact him at The SALES CATALYST,



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