Friends or Soul-mates?
FINDING YOUR PERFECT BRAND PARTNER

Ever rushed into a relationship? Fallen head first into what you thought was a lasting, long term partnership? Miss hits are normal and often expected in dating, but in the branding game, it can spell disaster. In the fourth of this series of branding articles, Neil Osborne explains how your intent toward and treatment of partners can be the beginning or end of a lasting brand.

What about my heart?
Your placement choice should proudly wear your brand heart on its sleeve. But when building a brand, poor placement and partner selection can cast a long, dark shadow. This is especially the case when you’re under significant pressure to generate early or significant sales lifts. That pressure often negatively influences your decisions and it’s increasingly difficult to stay true to your brand positioning.

While the beauty and spa marketplace offers many channel choices — from high quality spas and clinics through suburban beauty salons to the more contentious platform, the internet — the real question is which one complements and reflects your brand, its image and values for not just now, but the long term.

The dating game revealed
Your ultimate goal in dating is to find synergy and see a path ahead. Your brand is no different. In today’s fast moving, consumer driven marketplace, look for a place where you can woo your users, win their hearts and become a must-have.

So what is your placement and partner options within the salon industry? Choose a channel aligned with your brand positioning, pricing and business strategy and then select a partner within that channel, but beware … some are monogamous while others like their partners in numbers.

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J ust as it is with life-partners, your selection of a brand partner can have a significant impact on your brand’s destiny, so it’s important to choose wisely. You need to consider if you’re curious and just looking, chasing a short-term fling for excitement, wanting an upgrade or in need of a lasting long-term relationship.

The answers to those questions define the channel type you’re looking to put your product through, as well as how, where and when you want your brand to be seen and sold.

Getting your brand stocked, distributed or discovered is like meeting that someone special. It’s a huge challenge and everyone’s after the same thing. To make the best choice, you need to know what you’re after, start with the right intent and finally, treat your partner well.

Part Four: Placement & Partners
As the fourth of the 7Ps of salon industry brand building — refer to my first article in the March 2014 issue for all 7 Ps — placement (distribution channels) defines where your product will be stocked and bought, while your partner (selling approach) determines who and how your brand will be distributed and sold to those outlets.

Fundamentally a great product, at the right price, that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place that consumers recognise as answering their needs and desires, is worthless without the right place.

That said, placement should not be discounted as either a functional or logistical process. It is a branding decision. It’s a key element that contributes to your ‘opportunities for exchange’ — which are all the touch points that occur between a producer and the end consumer. You want your product in ‘the’ place (not just ‘any’ place) where your ideal consumer is likely to be, so they will then find it, love it and buy it.

How many hands do you shake?
Historically, the supply chain for the exchange of goods and services was very short. There were no intermediary people (or steps) between the producer and the customer, who most often was also the consumer or user. It was primarily a one-to-one process and transaction.

However this model required that the physical distance the producer travelled to find and sell to his users, was short. That is no longer practical in today’s marketplace.

Part of the challenge today is that placement of products is much more complex, flexible and is constantly in flux. People can buy from shopping centres, main street shops, the internet, catalogues, any combination of these. Because this is continually evolving, as a producer your notion of what constitutes ‘placement’ needs to shift and respond to these changes.