

RED-CARPET ROLLOUT

members, along with their spouses, arrive at a local spot dressed to the nines and ready to be fêted.

"We throw a spotlight on each staffer and hire people to pose as paparazzi, taking pictures," explains Van de Castle. Playing a bouncer to recreate a snobby, New York City bar scene, an actor carries a list of names he consults as staffers check in with him before they're permitted to enter and enjoy the cocktails and dinner. "It's like the Golden Globes," Van de Castle remarks. "We rent a stage and have entertainment and awards."

Some of the awards, like Highest Retail Ratio and Highest Service Sales, are based on hard numbers. Others, such as Best Smile and Miss Congeniality, are tallied from staff votes. The owners also mark milestones by honoring employees who have been with the salon for notable tenures such as one year and five years. The accolades culminate with the presentation of the Pierre Brandli Award, honoring lifetime achievement and named for a local hair styling celebrity who worked at the salon some years back.

The pricetag comes in at between \$8,000 and \$10,000, according to Van de Castle. But, with no holiday party in the budget, she feels that's a reasonable cost of doing business. "It's worth it," she says. "It's a morale booster and a lot of fun."

Event Planning

The key to pulling off any type of themed event is being consistent, says professional meeting planner Edina Lessack, owner of Meetings & Events USA, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois.

"Everything begins with how you notify people about the event," says Lessack. "For example, if you're doing an Academy Awards theme, you should send a formal invitation. Then you maintain the theme during the event with a red carpet, photographers and spotlights, and continue with the theme when you follow up afterward."

Although Bijin limits its awards to staff, some salons are getting clients involved, and

award shows are not the only model. The many reality shows on television provide all sorts of new ideas that clients recognize. Last year Dayton, Ohio, was among the cities selected to hold the preliminaries for FOX-TV's "American Idol." **Hausfeld's Salons & The Spa** in nearby Springboro was able to partner with the local FOX affiliate to do the hair and make-up for the 10 finalists; the salon's director of operations, **Debbi Kinderdine**, even served as emcee.

"We like rewarding our clients for what they do for us. When they refer their friends, they're bringing us the people who fit with who we are."

—**Barbara Gauthier**

"More than 4,000 people came to the open auditions at our area mall," Kinderdine recalls. "We had our massage tech give them stress-relief massages." While the Dayton winner ultimately lost to North Carolina's Fantasia Barrino, the salon won the jackpot.

Says Kinderdine, "The publicity we received through the event was huge—both in print and on radio, plus the TV crew came into the salon and filmed the 10 finalists as we prepared them for their performances. Afterward, we were asked to do more events

like fashion shows in the mall and in-store hair for MAC cosmetics."

Makeover Magic

Long before "Extreme Makeover" and "The Swan" came along, salons were showcasing their makeover miracles. With these new reality shows, though, now clients really get it.

Beautyworx Salon Day Spa in Philadelphia had been holding an annual makeover competition for many years when a local weekly newspaper launched a quarterly pull-out section targeted at women. Called "Just Us," the new section partnered with Beautyworx to run the competition and help promote it. Suddenly an annual makeover grew to four times a year.

"The paper is getting a great response to it," reports Beautyworx owner **Lois Burak**, "and having the newspaper's 'endorsement' gives us a lot of credibility."

The winner of the competition receives the beauty works at Beautyworx—"whatever the person seems to need," says Burak, from a hair cut and color to eyebrow shaping and a facial. Then the winner changes her outfit to prepare for a glamor photo shoot.

"The winners get a real kick out of posing for the photo shoot and seeing the photos," continues Burak, who has enough photography expertise to do the shoot herself. "We put one of the photos in a nice frame, and they see themselves in the newspaper as well. It makes the winner feel like a celebrity."

Winners in three different age categories were chosen at the first venture into makeover contests sponsored by **JKL, A Colourcutting Salon**, in Metairie, Louisiana. Owners **Janie Koger-LaPrairie** and **Ken LaPrairie** had a definite agenda when they sat down with their team to select the winners.

"We wanted to choose people who would have a noticeable change," recalls Ken LaPrairie, "and we wanted to get some press for it."

Toward those goals, in the youngest category the team chose a friendly, outgoing girl who attended an all girls' school. "She went

salon today

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