

A Bevy of Brushes

Smart store owners know that all brushes are not created equal—and will offer their clients a wide selection of these steady sellers.



OFFERING CUSTOMERS A COMPLETE assortment of hair brushes is a key ingredient to running a successful beauty supply store. Between salon professionals and consumers, the ongoing demand for brushes ensures good turnover and steady sales. A wide selection of high-quality hairbrushes also sets beauty supply stores apart from the mass retail competition. Unfortunately, though, too many store

owners don't take full advantage of the category. By stocking a limited selection, duplicating styles, or not devoting adequate space to merchandising hairbrushes properly, some store owners are missing out on one of the industry's most dependable revenue streams.

Over the past several years, technology advancements have led to both rising price points and improved brush sales. While boar bristles have long been an important consideration for discerning hairbrush shoppers, the ceramic and ionic elements initially introduced in blow-dryers and styling irons are now equally coveted. "Ceramic and ionic technology are the hottest buzzwords in hairbrushes," claims Marc Spilo, president of Spilo Worldwide in Los Angeles. Phil Greco, vice president of sales and marketing at J&D Beauty Products in Hauppauge, New York, points out that there are real, tangible benefits to using ceramic and ionic brushes. "It's refreshing to actually see a technology that's more than just hype," he says. "These products really work, adding shine and luster to the hair. And, because consumers are more informed than ever, they'll pay for these higher-end, quality hairbrushes."

Tony Parkinson, president of Camelot Hair Care Products in Miami, maker of the Marilyn Brush line, adds, "We've noticed a move away from the less expensive models to higher-quality and higher-priced items. Quality and a higher price point sell, while inexpensive, more

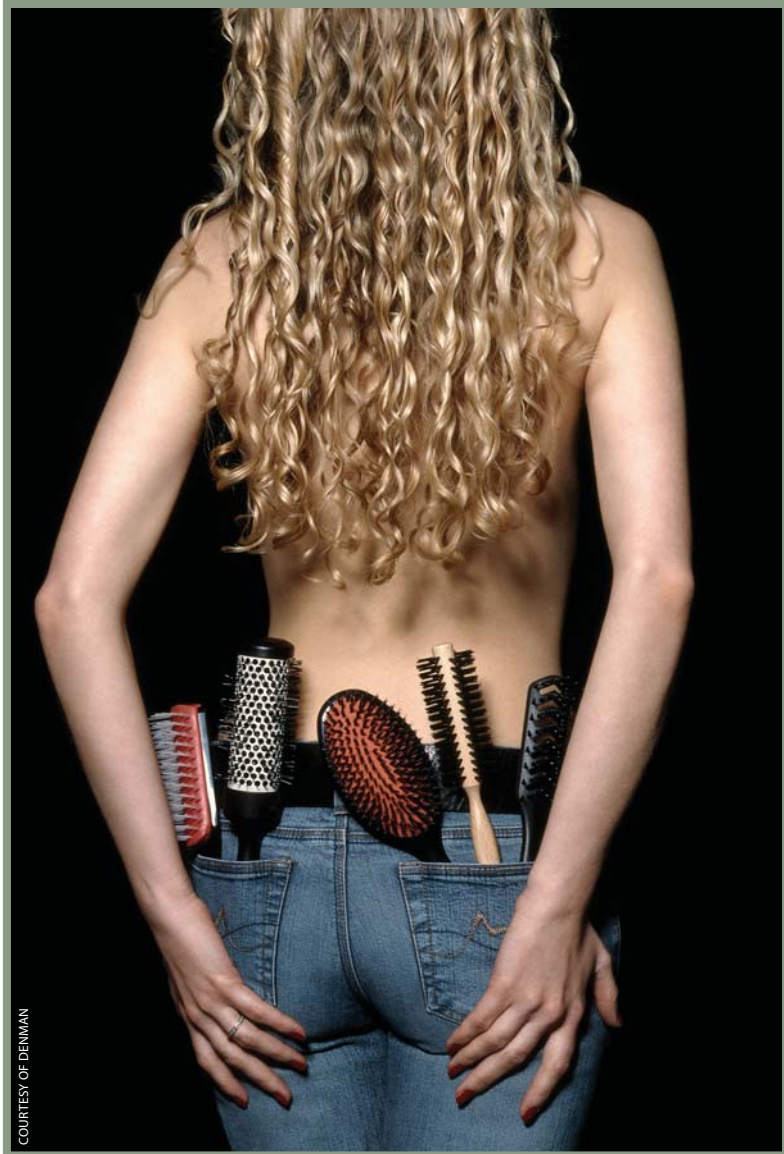
utilitarian products are languishing."

One of the great things about selling hairbrushes is that, as hairstyles change, so does the need for stylists and consumers to use different types of brushes to achieve specific looks. "The look today is very finished, and straight looks require brushes that can control the hair," says Mark Wright, president of Via San Francisco in Pittsburg, California. Spilo points out, however, that the most popular styling trend is the return of big hair with loose curls, a look that is re-energizing sales of round brushes. Alan Sporn, president of Homewood, Illinois-based Spornette International, agrees. "Longer hair with more body, volume and larger curls is making large-diameter rounders more popular," he states. Jeffrey Schwartz, vice president of sales at The Cricket Co. in Benicia, California, also sees opportunity in today's trend toward tumbling curls: "With the return of curls, we can expect to see more of the smaller-diameter round brushes."

MERCHANDISING TIPS

As new hairbrush styles hit the market, managing your inventory and the space devoted to merchandising brushes can become a bit tricky. Store owners need to provide the styles and assortment that both professional and retail customers have come to expect, yet are often constrained by the amount of space they can give the category. A limited selection, however, can actually do more harm than good, as customers will go elsewhere to find more options or the ideal brush for their particular needs.

Merchandising brushes, though, is extremely flexible: Displaying them can be equally effective in bins or hanging on Peg-Board. In addition, most brush manufacturers offer effective floor stands or counter displays for their lines. Sally Beauty Supply has mastered the challenge of effectively merchandising a large assortment of hairbrushes in stores with limited space through a combination of bins and counter displays that fill up an entire gondola. Each bin label features a picture of the brush and type of hair it's designed for, plus a SKU re-order number.



As I See It

Bins aren't for every store, however. Mark Centomini, national sales manager at Burmax, the Holtsville, New York-based master distributor, recommends pegging brushes on a wall. "That way, shoppers can scan an entire 9- to 12-foot section in seconds to find the style and brush type they're looking for," he says. "Baskets are too involved and require searching; plus, they do nothing to enhance the visibility of the product."

"Floor stand displays are also effective merchandising aids," adds Sean Miles, president of EstheticPlus in Lawndale, California, maker of Elegant Professional Styling Tools. "These units are easy to move around the store, take up minimal space and stimulate impulse buying." One of the more effective freestanding brush displays is J&D's Professional Hairbrush Center, which holds 21 different styles. "Many dealers set it up away from their regular hairbrush department and it continues to perform phenomenally," acknowledges Greco.

No matter how you merchandise them, brush displays should be

Schwartz points out that The Cricket Co. frequently partners with manufacturers of salon hair-care brands to create a hairbrush and styling aid combo. The Marilyn Brush and Elchim USA, manufacturer of Italian styling appliances, are currently enjoying a similar relationship: In an ongoing promotion, buyers of an Elchim blow-dryer receive a free Marilyn brush.

"Shrink-wrapping brushes with irons, shears and especially hair dryers provides ideal cross-merchandising opportunities," adds Bart Simon, president of Phillips Brush in Cleveland.

To stimulate up-selling, merchants can promote a discount on multiple brush buys. "Offer a 50% discount on the purchase of a third brush when you buy two, or any four brushes for \$20," Simon suggests. "You want to give the customer a savings of between 10% and



Burmax

tation for offering a large selection of specialized brushes at competitive prices, and shipping orders with fast turnaround. The company's BioMax styling brushes feature natural boar bristles cut in two lengths and wood handles that are fitted with oversized foam grips, making them easy to manipulate. Another excellent seller is the BioCeramic range of thermal round brushes, which are available in four sizes and feature ceramic barrels.

"Longer hair WITH MORE BODY, VOLUME AND LARGER CURLS IS MAKING LARGE-DIAMETER ROUNDERS MORE POPULAR."

changed frequently, according to Alan Sporn. "Newness creates excitement and equates to more consumer awareness and higher sales," he remarks. "Have a new monthly brush selection so your customers see something different, such as a 'Brush of the Month' or several brushes prominently marked as being on sale."

John Kim, president of New York-based Beutee Sense, recommends setting up a video display that demonstrates the use of a particular brush style to increase profits. He points out that a number of hairbrush suppliers offer these educational videos to beauty supply stores free of charge.

Cross-merchandising hairbrushes with haircare and styling products is another strategy for increasing sales. "Brushes go hand in hand with almost all salon supplies, so cross-merchandising possibilities are bountiful," says Marc Spilo. "Styling products and blow-dryers are natural combinations, along with capes, combs and other sundry products." David Fitzpatrick, vice president at Denman in Medford, Massachusetts, asserts that it makes sense to cross-promote brushes with items that are related to specific brush features; for example, offering sectioning clips with the Denman D79 straightening brush.

20% for it to be meaningful."

Finally, there's no better way to generate greater brush sales than by employing knowledgeable staff members who can recommend appropriate brushes for customers' individual needs. For example, if a customer is buying a medium-diameter, ceramic round brush, the sales associate can suggest adding a smaller-diameter brush for her shorter hair sections. The combination is a natural but may be something the customer had not considered.

WHO'S WHO IN BRUSHES

The following companies are among the industry's top suppliers of professional hairbrushes. I recently spoke with each of them to find out about their latest products and the trends they feel are having a positive impact on their sales.

Beutee Sense

800/BEAUTEE
www.beuteesense.com

Over the years, sundries distributor Beutee Sense has developed a repu-



Burmax

800/645-5118
www.burmax.com

Serving the professional beauty industry since 1948, Burmax is a master distributor that offers a wide selection of brushes from a variety of manufacturers. Its own Scalpmaster brand offers excellent quality at reasonable prices—some of the styles have been in the line for 40 years and still do well. Scalpmaster's new thermal styling brushes feature attractive black metal casings and sleek, black, soft-grip handles. They're available in a seven-piece, acrylic bridge display that beautifully showcases the line.

Camelot Hair Care Products

800/561-7024
www.themarilynbrush.com

A relative newcomer to the professional beauty marketplace, Camelot's Marilyn Brush has developed an avid following among celebrities, salon professionals and top platform artists. Beauty stores that stock the line are reporting strong retail sales as well. Marilyn's round stylers feature a patented hourglass-

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shaped barrel and bristling pattern that adapts to the shape of the head, resulting in better penetration through the hair. The company's new Thermal Red Ceramica line also has a solid ceramic barrel that heats up to 180°F and holds the temperature for up to 10 minutes. The ionic nylon and natural boar-bristle pattern allows the brush to work gently through the hair.



Denman

The Cricket Co.

800/654-7032
www.cricketco.com

The Cricket Co.'s brushes are created with the professional stylist in mind. "Wayne Clark, the founder of the company, is a hairdresser, and everything we create is for the professional first," says Jeffrey Schwartz. "We don't skimp on materials, and each brush is well-constructed with different features and benefits for meeting stylists' various needs. This attention to detail differentiates us from the competition." Cricket's new Technique thermal round brushes with 100% boar bristles feature even heat distribution for fast styling and a staggered bristle pattern that smooths the hair cuticle, preventing split ends and frizz. They're available in three sizes.



The Cricket Co.

Denman

800/848-6866
www.denman-us.com

The first classic Denman styling brush was created in 1938 by Jack Denman Dean and has been a mainstay in the professional salon industry ever since. The company now offers a complete range of



The Hair Doc Co.

brushes that are sold through master distributors and direct to accounts that can meet the company's minimum shipping quantities. Among its newest items are the Diamante stylers, available in black or red and studded with rhinestones. There are two sizes to choose from: a pocket brush with five rows of bristles, and a medium brush with seven rows.

EstheticPlus

800/438-3076
www.estheticplus.com

EstheticPlus markets the Elegant Professional Styling Tools line, a complete range of hairbrushes featuring high-quality woods and 100% boar, porcupine- and pin-style bristling. The Elegant ceramic-ionic thermal brushes are available in round and paddle shapes, with each collection merchandised on 12-piece counter displays. All brushes also have handle holes for easy Peg-Board merchandising or display on a comprehensive floor stand.



EstheticPlus

The Hair Doc Co.

818/882-4247
www.thehairdoccompany.com

Ron Weinstein's Hair Doc Co. is the exclusive importer of Bass hairbrushes, which feature high-quality bristles, exotic wood handles and fine craftsmanship. The Chatsworth, California-based firm offers a complete selection of brushes of all types, including styles used for nails and body. The Bass Professional Thermal Hot Curl Brushes are available in six different styles, all featuring light wood handles and wild boar and white nylon combination bristles.



J&D Beauty Products

J&D Beauty Products

800/523-2889
www.jdbeauty.com

J&D is one of the leading suppliers of sundries, including styling tools of all types. The firm offers a wide selection of hairbrushes in a number of different collections. "We scour factories all over the world to find what we call niche brushes, adding only those styles to our catalog that are unique in some way or serve a specific purpose," explains Phil Greco.

Phillips Brush

216/621-0992
www.phillipsbrush.com

Phillips has been designing, manufacturing and distributing styling brushes for the professional beauty industry for more than 60 years. Its high-quality products are presented in attractive counter displays, making for easy retailing. The Phillips Monster Vent series pushes the envelope on what is saleable. These super-sized brushes, available in three diameters, feature reinforced boar bristles set in a red hardwood handle with rubber grips. The barrel is hollow and fully vented to maximize airflow.



Phillips Brush

Spilo Worldwide

800/347-7456
www.spilo.com

With a 60-year history, Spilo is one of the salon industry's premier master distributors, and the company's Toolworx

As I See It

brand of ionic technology hairbrushes delivers high quality at affordable prices. Available in a variety of styles and three colors—black, frosted-clear and ice-blue—these static-free brushes

want them and in the way they want them,” says Alan Sporn. He adds that the ceramic, aerated barrel, ion-bristle Prego collection is setting company sales records.

“Brushes go HAND IN HAND WITH ALMOST ALL SALON SUPPLIES, SO CROSS MERCHANDISING POSSIBILITIES ARE BOUNTIFUL.”



Spilo Worldwide

reduce frizz, add shine and increase smoothness. Their ergonomic handles provide control and comfort.

Spornette International

800/323-6449
www.spornette.com

Spornette has been supplying the professional beauty industry with a complete selection of brushes for more than 50 years. Started by Walter Sporn, the three-generation family business offers a wide variety of styles and continually brings out new SKUs, employing small counter displays to merchandise its latest offerings. “We’re a service-oriented company offering the items our customers want, when they



Spornette International

Via San Francisco

888/280-4842
www.viasf.com

Via San Francisco is known for its high-quality and effectively packaged hairbrushes. The company is tuned in to the latest trends and routinely introduces the right products at the right time. Its Crystal Ion brush collection features ion-generating bristles, an integrated sectioning pick and an ergonomic, no-snap rubber grip. The line is merchandised on a new retail floor display that takes up just one square foot of floor space and can generate sales of up to \$10,000 annually.



Via San Francisco

Beautystore owners can count on hairbrushes to deliver steady profits. As consumers trade in their old brushes for the latest models featuring ionic and ceramic technology, the opportunity for greater sales continues to expand. It behooves store owners and managers to not take their hairbrush department for granted, however; the items won’t sell themselves. But, with proper inventory control, effective merchandising and appropriate customer education, hairbrush sales can be taken to the next level. ■

Mike Nave is president of Professional Beauty Distributors and publisher of “The Beauty Industry Report” newsletter.