

2015 AHFA BUSINESS CATEGORIES

SALON OF THE YEAR

URBAN ESCAPE

Craig Withers



Question 1

What are the main business achievements of your salon, making it worthy of winning this award?

Answer:

URBAN ESCAPE Hair is a high-end, holistically focused hair and wellness retreat that has had an amazing year, firstly being awarded the **2014 Telstra Micro Business Award for Australia**, going down in history as the first hairdressing salon to win a National Business Award in the ceremony's 22-year history.

Establishing URBAN ESCAPE with the clear aim of being a leader in the world of holistically focused high-end hair, this win was an absolute dream come true for Craig and his team.

The prestigious Telstra Australian Business Awards celebrate leading entrepreneurs who are not only innovators in their chosen industries but who stoke the engine room of Australia's economy.



This highly decorated salon not only won the prestigious Telstra Award but has also been a winner of the Aveda Green Salon Award and won the 2014 Australian Customer Service Achiever Award for 2014 for Excellence in Hairdressing Services and Customer Relations.



This luxury, holistically focused hair and wellness retreat, URBAN ESCAPE opened in 2011 and has since impressed with its high level of customer care, modern aesthetic and commitment to the environment. URBAN ESCAPE only uses renewable resources, recycled materials and products free of synthetic ingredients and petrochemicals.

Director Craig Withers wanted to create a business, which allows their customers to escape the mayhem of urban life while caring for the environment and the world. “From the moment you walk into URBAN ESCAPE the sensory journey begins with sustainable building materials, naturally derived and organic ingredients and value add experiences including a complimentary welcome massage and hand relief ritual.”

URBAN ESCAPE is an outstanding business that shows 100 per cent commitment and dedication to its staff, the customer and the environment and has been a Salon Select Gold Salon for the Australian Hairdressing Council since 2011.



Known for its complete customer experience focus, integrated service delivery and reconception of what a great hairdressing business can be.

It has worked with leading brands such as MAC Cosmetics and Ralph Lauren at Melbourne Fashion Week. URBAN ESCAPE’s multiple achievements recognise its business savvy, client-orientated and environmentally driven mindset.

Combining fashion credentials with lauded customer service and a commitment to the environment, URBAN ESCAPE has made history as a Hairdressing Salon that can be an example to all.



Question 2

What social media initiatives have you implemented during the awards period and how has this increased business? e.g. increase in client numbers, increase in turnover, increase in retail sales?

Answer:

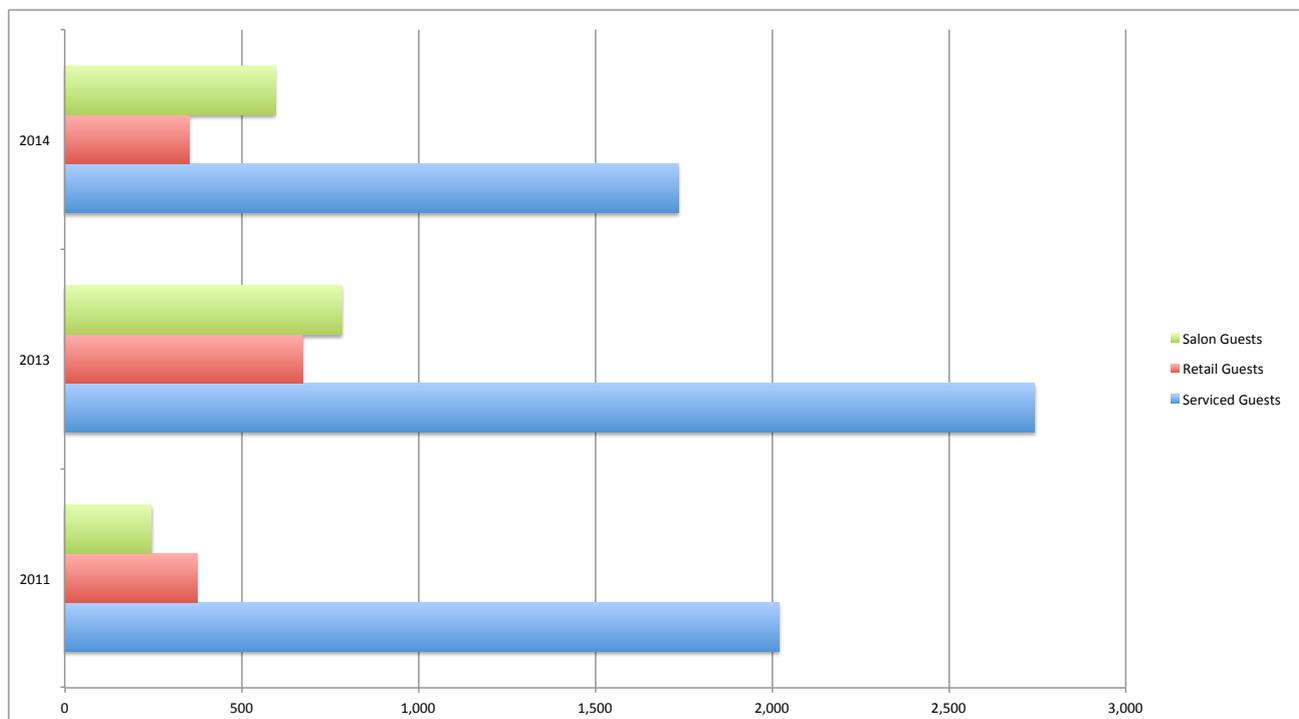
URBAN ESCAPE increased its social media reach significantly over the past 12 months. Growing their Facebook followers from 196 in December 2013, to 504 as of today. They also introduced Instagram in late 2012 slowly to begin with, until once again concentrating on it as a genuine marketing tool and growing it from around 40 followers in late 2013 to 456 as of today.

This is evident by early business projections, which look like they will come in at a very healthy profit margin of between 25-30c out of every dollar through social media exposure.

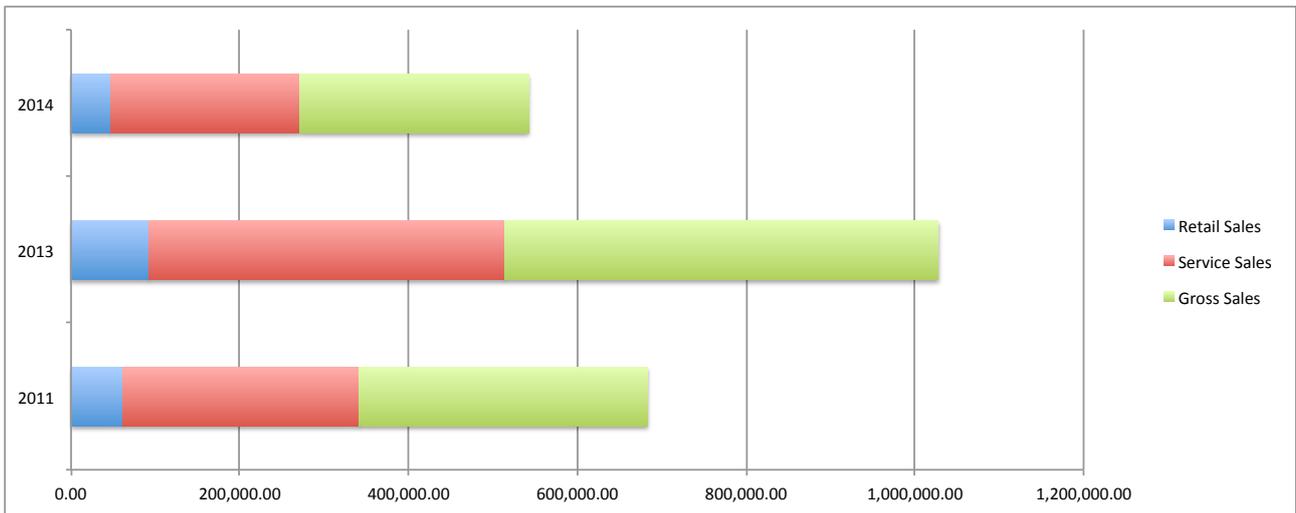
The influence from social media shows that without a doubt, today's consumer is tech and research savvy. URBAN ESCAPE regularly has new guests who have found them via a search engine, but they always check out social media (Facebook / Instagram) before calling. The influence of social media is endless, however, to tap into the randomness of things going viral is virtually impossible. That said a strong and consistent flow is a much more attainable and controllable marketing approach, which will assist in building a business of today and ready for tomorrow.

In winning the Telstra Award part of the feedback was that they have proven that technology and digital innovation can make a difference, irrespective of their industry. They demonstrated how tools such as social media, smart data, digital printing and search engine optimisation have moved them from the realm of IT and into businesses.

Client numbers and retail sales have increased significantly as you can see by the graphs.



Figures shown for 2014 are based on July – Nov 2014. **only for 5months



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Craig has utilised this window of opportunity by promoting the awards that they won. Promoting their successes on hairdressing online trade journals and newsletters, through to in house social media like Facebook and Instagram.

Here are some of the online marketing examples done through social media.





A large advertisement for URBANescape. The top left features the 'URBANescape' logo in white on a dark grey background. Below the logo, the text reads: 'Spring is here and Urban Escape would like to Thank you!' followed by 'Recommend a friend and we will present you and your friend with a 2 week pass to the exclusive KAYA Health Club'. On the right side, a woman in a black sports bra and shorts is performing a handstand on a Pilates reformer machine. The background is dark. In the bottom left corner, the 'KAYA HEALTH CLUBS' logo is displayed in white on a grey background.

Question 3

What other promotional and marketing activity has been implemented in the last year?

Answer:

URBAN ESCAPE take pride in and follow the new '4 P's' of the Marketing Mix concept: people, planet, pleasure and profit. (The old ones: product, price, place, and promotion)

The 4P model is not just a communications strategy, but also a value-driven proposal, where the reward is engagement, community, sustainability and loyalty. Everything in society is interconnected and, to deliver 'real' value, we must explore today's trends in society. By linking trends to people's lifestyle preferences, we gain great insight into the opportunities that will drive tomorrow's communications.

TELSTRA AWARD WINNERS
21,777 businesses with revenue of \$3.9bn
[Source: IBISWorld Industry Report Hairdressing and Beauty Services in Australia | 95911 | July 2014]

TELSTRA MICRO-BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER

URBAN ESCAPE

"I've always believed in the power of positive thinking!"
CRAIG WITHERS

JUDGES' COMMENTS
Judges praised the owner's passion for his staff, his guests' (customers) and the salon environment saying that it's impressive he focuses on the complete customer experience, integrated service delivery and re-conception of what a great hairdressing business can be. This salon has built a base of satisfied clients to ensure repeat visits and to attract new customers through positive word of mouth. Because of this, Urban Escape bucks the perception by some that hairdressing is a cottage industry - when it is actually a scalable business.

WINNING WAYS
Marketing: "We have had incredible success with social media, last year running a six week campaign at Christmas that engaged salon guests to enter give away competitions by liking the page. It was promoted in an email blast and through a dedicated Facebook email push. We saw a dramatic increase in fans for our page and people engaging in the pages activities. This was coupled with a huge spike in salon bookings and new client referrals."
Management: "I have learnt not to be reactive. I had a staff member who was arriving late. My approach is to sit down with her and discuss the importance of being on time. She did not have a key to the salon, so at this stage I 'rewarded' her by giving her a key, but on the proviso that she arrive on time each day to open up for the team. The staff member totally transformed their behaviour and began arriving early each and every day."

BRIEFING: URBAN ESCAPE
It took founder, idealist and hairdresser, Craig Withers four years to realise his dream of opening a high-end holistically focused hair and wellness retreat.
Using only Aveda products, that are free of petrochemicals and synthetic ingredients has put this enterprise in a field of its own.
With a staff of five, their motto is: Where perfection, professionalism and passion come to play!
-> urbanscapehair.com

My friends always tell me that I work too much and while that may be true physically, every day I wake up here for my birthday! Love it!
Craig Withers

Victoria Lynette Dingle
Photography: Emma Gallagher

WWW.SMARTERBUSINESSIDEAS.COM.AU 42

WITH SHONAGH WALKER

Fix the beauty sins of your past, with this expert advice

BEAUTY ADVICE YOU'D GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF

Cameron Diaz once said her skin would be in better condition now if

"DON'T START COLOURING YOUR HAIR TOO YOUNG."
- SHONAGH WALKER, 42.

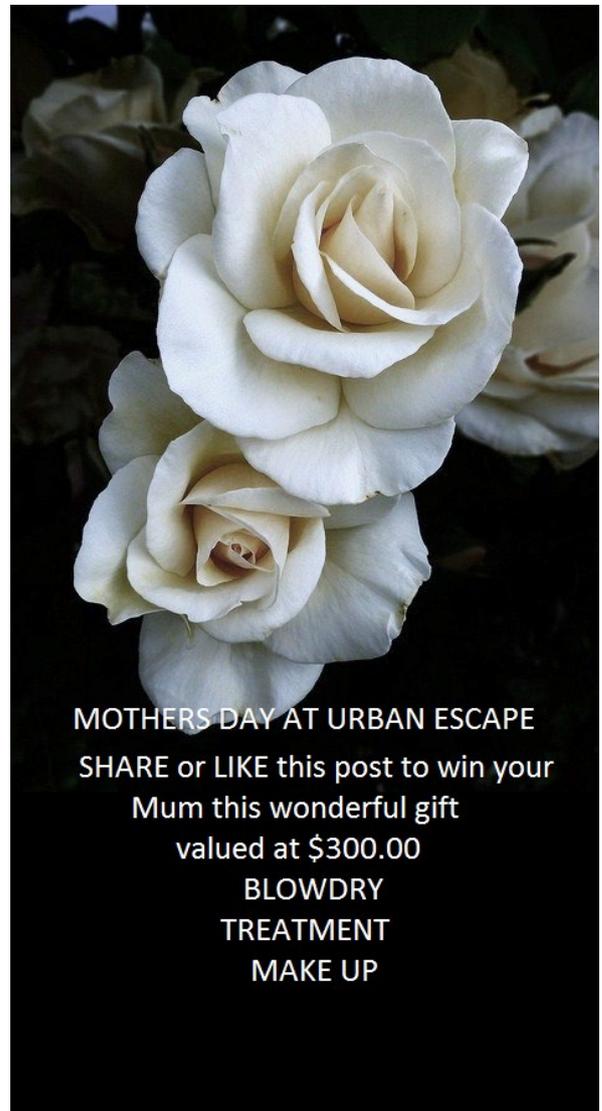
the cuticle and removes or alters the natural colour. This deteriorates its condition over time."
Just as with finances, Withers says hair health is about strategic planning.
"Plan your next 12 colours and cuts with your hairdresser, taking into account your work, time restrictions and styling ability, to ensure the best result."
"Rejuvenate fine hair with volumising tonic and leave-in conditioner. Look at overall wellbeing. A balanced diet with good fats helps hair sparkle."
+ Try Aveda Color Conserve Strengthening Treatment, \$49.95, 1300 300 054.
Pantene Pro-V Clinicare Fullness-Charge Revitalizing Shampoo and Conditioner, \$14.99 each, 1800 028 280.

People

- They understand that the female factor is important to 'soften' a brand when thinking of marketing, and have done this with marketing material for mothers.
- Their brand is a trusted guide, enabling sharing and learning
- They realize that communication must facilitate autonomy across many multimedia platforms (e.g. Facebook posts fuelling in depth and interesting discussions amongst users, an advertisement or advertorial piece in a local magazine being able to start conversation about a topic).

Planet

- Their policy is that communication must deliver 'truth' to foster lasting relationships and advantage over competitors
- They follow the concept that successful social initiatives require commitment to an issue to create social impact. Brands that share their point of view through cause marketing (e.g. non-profit promotion through Aveda initiatives) need to invite participation and interact meaningfully with all their stakeholders – customers (Urban Escape clients), employees (Urban Escape staff – from senior stylists to casual assistant staff) and suppliers (Aveda).



AVEDA
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PURE FLOWER AND PLANT ESSENCES

- Multi-award winning team specialising in AVEDA colour services & advanced cutting/styling techniques.
- Internationally Acclaimed Salon.
- **Salon Director** (Craig Withers)
National Educator & AVEDA Purefessional.

We welcome you to come and experience a sensory journey of relaxation and expertise away from the outside world.



Pleasure

- It has been important to build Urban Escape's brand platform and make it a wellbeing facilitator in order to match the real needs of people – e.g. healthy, strong, shiny, well looked after hair, and all of the right advice to avoid external factors, which may impede these qualities.
- They have a meaningful communication strategy also recognises the value of interactive transmedia experiences – aural, visual, touch, smell – that weave into people's personal narrative.

Profit

- Their social media communication is agile and adaptable to keep up with our real-time demands, e.g. - Operating in many digital modes and delivering targeted content via cross-channel platforms (linking Facebook to Twitter) is the only way to connect with people and nurture the Urban Escape Hair community.



FEATURE ARTICLE, NEWS JULY 21, 2014

PRAHRAN SALON 2014 TELSTRA BUSINESS AWARDS WINNER



High-end Prahran salon, Urban Escape Hair, today announce it has been awarded the national winner of the Micro Business Award category at the 2014 Telstra Business Awards. The award caps off a busy couple of months for the salon, also the winner of the 2014 Australian Achiever Award for excellence in hairdressing customer service, presented in June.

The prestigious Telstra Australian Business Awards celebrate leading entrepreneurs who are not only innovators in their chosen industries but who stoke the engine room of Australia's economy.

Commenting on the win Member for Prahran, Mr Clem Newton-Brown said "Urban Escape's prestigious Telstra Business Award proves that there's so much more to hairdressing than just cutting and styling hair. With over 80 plus hair salons within a five kilometre radius in Prahran, it can be difficult to stand out.

I congratulate Mr Withers for his unique approach and high commitment to the industry and the community."

Additionally, the Australian Achiever Award for Australia's Hairdressing Services recognises and rewards the success of customer service delivery. Now in their 16th year, the awards are an independent, unbiased award system based on assessment ratings from the salons own clients and are therefore a strong indication of a well-run, healthy business worthy of patronage.



Urban Escape surpassed all expectations by achieving an outstanding 98.62% for Customer Service and Relations.

For a small to medium sized business such as Urban Escape to be recognised and awarded for their hard work and commitment cements owner Craig Withers' dream of building a high-end, holistically focused urban hair and wellness retreat.

"Our mission at Urban Escape says Craig Withers, is to establish a new standard for dedication and commitment in the beauty industry as we welcome our clients to experience a sensory journey of relaxation away from the outside world."



With such profound recognition Urban Escape relishes the challenge and commitment to the constant pursuit of perfection in their craft and in continued staff education to guarantee their clients' continued support. Achieving such high accolades sets a new benchmark not only for Urban Escape to maintain but for the industry to surpass.

Finishes Craig, "Each day our team comes to work, we do so not for recognition or industry awards, but for the love of our craft and the impact we can have on our clients daily lives. A core value at our salon is 'The Superstar is the person in the chair, not behind it!'. So to be recognised for our commitment to providing a superior service and client experience is an honour that we are humbled and grateful to receive, however we are equally as grateful for the daily rewards we receive from our valued and happy clients."

Strategies for growth

- Market penetration?
- Service development?
- Market development?
- Diversification? ...
- One or all of the above?

Market penetration

- Aggressive marketing of the Aveda product range – why should consumers come to you instead of another Aveda retailer down the road?
- Building repute of Urban Escape's 'core services' – cutting, colouring and styling – the simple services done really well
- Target stakeholders of 'natural/raw/organic' – be innovative with communication channels, e.g. partnering with a health food/nutrition store (business to business, 'B2B' approach).

Market development

- 'Brides to be' – taking care of hair in the lead up to the 'big day'
- 'School social/formal girls' – styles to consider or group lessons with friends
- Inform a younger market on why 'natural' and 'raw' is the way of the future. Urban Escape's current market has an understanding of this but planting the seed in a younger age group will provide long-term relationships.

Service development

- Development of the 'Craig Withers home styling' lesson
- add about styling
- Online 'how to' tips and tricks – make 'everyday' hair more interesting.

Diversification

- Not in the interests of Urban Escape Hair at this stage to attempt diversification – it is best to focus on market penetration.

2014's Blow-dry and Hair up class dates

Give the gift of education this Christmas and enrol you and your friends now for the must have 'BLOWDRY CLASS' at the multi award winning Urban Escape in the heart of Melbourne's ultra 'chic' East Prahran Village.

Value \$85.00pp

Class sizes are 3 to 4 guests (great girl's night in the salon)

****Urban Escape guests can redeem their loyalty points as payment, deposit required at time of booking****

This evening is essential to all and only available to a select few.

A 1.5hr educational where you become the stylist. Under the expert tuition of Craig Withers you and your guests will be guided through a series of 'step-by-step' styling tips custom designed for your individual hair needs. Aside from gaining truly priceless skills for your day to day routine Craig will showcase some very handy day to night tips and tricks including the 'Academy Awards' favourite...How to do an 'Up-do' with only six pins!! A definite 'must have' going in to this year's party season.

CALL 9529 78 45 TO BOOK YOUR SPOT NOW!!!!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Class</u>
Tues 4 th Feb 2014	Blowdry	Tues 3 rd June	Blowdry
Tues 11 th Feb 2014	Hair Up	Tues 1 st July	Blowdry
Tues 11 th March 2014	Blowdry	Tues 12 th Aug	Hair Up
Tues 8 th April 2014	Blowdry	Tues 9 th Sept	Blow dry
Tues 6 th May 2014	Hair Up	Tues 7 th Oct	Blowdry

Question 4

How do you ensure the constant growth and development of your team?

Answer:

We used to train Junior's every Tuesday with a very solid education program / structure and seniors required to attend every second Tuesday. In 2015 we will be running education on Monday afternoon so that the team maximises their learning potential without being tired after a big day, and keeps the late nights to a minimum. While initially, and unsurprisingly met with a subtle level of enthusiasm, the team now realises the benefits of the day just being for them and we are now all on board for an exciting year of growth in 2015.

Our team of highly skilled individuals are motivated and dedicated to follow our mission statement.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at Urban Escape is to establish a new standard for dedication and commitment in the beauty industry. Our dedication to the constant pursuit of perfection to our craft and our passion for continued education will guarantee our guests a truly beautiful experience. At Urban Escape we make a commitment to care for you, our Guest, to listen to your concerns and respond professionally. We believe in caring for the environment and the world we share by using renewable resources, recycled materials & products free of synthetic ingredients or petrochemicals. Our ever professional & highly skilled team is capable & confident in all aspects of the craft and in providing an environment of hairdressing excellence where the client is our guest. We welcome you to come & experience a sensory journey of relaxation away from the outside world.

Urban Escape... where perfection, professionalism & passion come to play!



By having everyone on board with this, helps to ensure that there is constant growth and development of the team.

Our mission at Urban Escape is to establish a new standard for dedication and commitment in the beauty industry. Our dedication to the constant pursuit of perfection to our craft and our passion for continued education will guarantee our guests a truly beautiful creation. At Urban Escape we make a commitment to care for you, our Guest, to listen to your concerns and respond professionally.

We believe in caring for the environment and the world we share by using renewable resources, recycled materials & products free of synthetic ingredients or petrochemicals. Our ever professional & highly skilled team is capable & confident in all aspects of the craft and in providing an environment of hairdressing excellence where the client is our guest. We welcome you to come & experience a sensory journey of relaxation away from the outside world.

Question 5

What policies do you have in place to ensure customer satisfaction?

Answer:

Customer Service Policies and Procedures were put to the test when URBAN ESCAPE was nominated for the two awards of **Australian Achiever for Customer Service** and the **AHC Salon Select Gold Status**. Both were successful taking out top honors.

Being the winner of :

June 2014



Australian Achiever
AWARDS
Encourage Recognise Promote
Excellence in Customer Service

Media Release

URBAN ESCAPE WINS CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD.

Urban Escape, Prahran, has won the 2014 Australian Achiever Award for Australia's Hairdressing Services category.

Now in their 16th year, the Australian Achiever Awards are an independent, unbiased award system based on assessment ratings from companies' own clients – and are therefore an indication of a well run, healthy business, worthy of patronage. The award focuses on seven criteria, namely: Time Related Service, Addressing Client Needs, Care and Attention, Value, Attitude, Communication and Overall Perception.

The criteria are rated individually in percentage terms and the final score is an amalgam of these. Anything above 80% overall is regarded as exceptional and reflects outstanding customer service.

Urban Escape achieved a **98.62%** overall score for Customer Service and Relations, topping all other Australia Hairdressing Services businesses. The 2014 Australian Achiever Award proves Urban Escape delivers on the promise of customer satisfaction.

Urban Escape hair & beauty founder Craig Withers has had a passion for the hairdressing industry at the very highest levels for the past 20years. Throughout this time, Craig has accrued numerous awards, travelled internationally and was Top Stylist/Assistant Manager at the AVEDA flagship store in London's Covent Garden. After 6 years in the United Kingdom and a couple more freelancing throughout Europe he returned to Australia and established Urban Escape in Prahran.

Some comments received from Urban Escape customers were:

I find them extremely professional but warm and caring and they have made the salon into a beautiful space which is well presented creating a nice relaxing ambience and an inviting place to be. Appointment duration is longer than other salons so they don't rush you. The staff are very well presented and they are approachable and all have a role to play in your visit.

The staff allow plenty of time for your appointment, they are very professional but friendly and they are very creative and nothing is too hard. They have excellent communication and customer service skills and all the staff are well presented. The salon is kept beautiful and very tidy and it has a very relaxed ambience and they provide wifi for those who want it. They offer fair prices for the services that they provide.

Everyone is extremely professional. They always listen to my needs and they go above and beyond to make me feel comfortable. They are very hospitable while their skill and quality of their work is excellent. It is a pleasure to walk in because they keep the salon neat and tidy at all times.

ENDS: For more information, go to www.achiever.com.au or contact Craig Withers at Urban Escape on 03 9529 7845.

Results were:

The following analysis of your **98.62%** score across all customer and trade references provides an indication of how your business rates over seven judging categories:

Time related service – phone calls/appointments/delivery	99.00%
Client Needs – is the customer getting what they want	100.00%
Care and attention – all dealings handled with expected care	100.00%
Value – does customer satisfaction outweigh the cost	96.67%
Attitude – politeness/friendliness	96.67%
Communication – clarity/informed	97.73%
Referral – word of mouth recommendation	98.96%
Overall perception – evaluates presentation of staff/premises/business	99.54%

(*Please note that your overall score of **98.62%** is not an average of the above seven value scores. Please call our office if you need further clarification.)

URBAN ESCAPE also were involved in the **Mystery Shopper experience** for the **AHC**. Where they showed these findings against their customer service policies. These excellent results awarded them Gold for Salon Select status now.



*for a strong salon business
to attract more staff
and drive more clients
into your salon*



Mentor's Comments, Recommendations & Recommended Timeline:

Congratulations on a wonderful result with the Mystery Client report. It is very clear the standard of the salon, the salon functions, the team spirit and the level of customer service are very high. Well done as I do realise there is a lot of time and energy spent in running at this level.

The overall approach is very holistic and it is a real stand out. The level of service and attention to detail is very much noted and is rewarded with an excellent report.

Well done to the entire team at Urban Escape! The result is fantastic and one I believed should be celebrated and enjoyed by the entire team!!!!

My recommendations are to keep on with what you are doing and continue training in your systems and customer services approaches as they are working so well! The technical side of the business is also strong so keep on with what you are all doing!

The salon has achieved great results, from the Mystery Client Report. With the combination of the on – line assessment and these results.

I will action the salon decal to be sent and I would love a photo of the salon and the team, proudly displaying the achievements which I would post on the AHC Facebook page.

If you have any further questions please let me know and again from me well done!

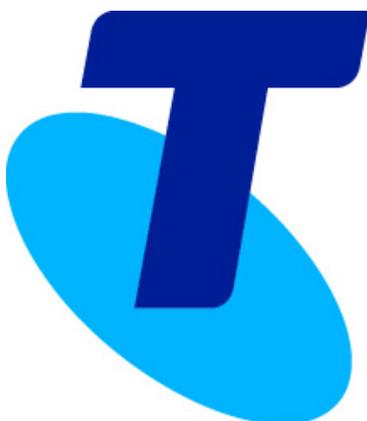
Excellent stuff!
Leesa
AHC Mentor

Question 6

How do you assess and reward staff performance?

Answer:

- Incentive games like 'Golden Ticket'. The person with the highest retail sales and the person with the highest sales of a 'feature' product for the week get a 'Golden Ticket'. At the end of the month all tickets are placed in a bowl with one being drawn out, winner gets \$500!!
- Incentive based reward system. When staff reach 3 x Gross Wage they receive 20% of profit above that up until they hit 3.5 x gross wage, then they receive 40% of income generated above that.
- During December: all extra hours staff work are accrued & when they hit 30 hours they receive a 25% bonus. e.g. work 30, paid for 40.



**AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS
AWARDS
2014 NATIONAL WINNER**

Question 7

What career opportunities are offered to staff?

Answer:

At Urban Escape there is a 30year business plan, based on 100 employees, which is extremely scalable. What that means is that we don't have to re-do our business plan or direction as we grow. This ensures that we don't over reach throughout the growing process, and maintain a stable business with strong foundations at all times. We have a flowchart of employee growth options and the possibilities open to team members. This includes, moving through into specialities such as styling team / director, colour team / director, Management, salon co-ordinators, educators and also including helping team members open up their very own salon under the Urban Escape umbrella program.

T AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS
AWARDS

IN THE BUSINESS OF BRILLIANT

Congratulations URBAN ESCAPE
2014 VIC Micro-Business of the Year

For four years Craig Withers has been running the hair salon he always visualised. URBAN ESCAPE reflects his team's commitment to the environment and their belief in supportive workplaces. It's where his guests come to feel great and be guided by his passionate staff to an overall sense of wellness. URBAN ESCAPE is a multi-award winning, eco-salon, specialising in naturally derived products and service that is six star. Craig's made a successful hair salon without cutting any corners.

For more of their award winning story visit
telstrabusinessawards.com

Media Partner
News Corp Australia

Question 8

How do you present your salon and its brand through the shopfront and fitout?

Answer:

From the moment life was given to URBAN ESCAPE it was, as the name suggests, about creating a blissful retreat where clients would come to be pampered.

They began by removing all pollutants & recycling everything possible. The carpet was removed & unveiled a floor of chipboard & concrete wash with approx. 30% salvageable. They sourced reclaimed floorboards. Before laying the floor they spent months doing research on the best way to maximise their energy efficiency & conserve water. Reclaimed railway sleepers were sourced and recycled for the colour table Craig designed and hand built the entire table on site. Other items of importance include the colour dispensary bench, which is located inside the main space so their clients can clearly see them using AVEDA products. This bench, the sink & staff room bench are all made of locally sourced large steel offcuts recycled & personally welded together. All sealants are water based & eco-friendly.

There were several mirrors left on these premises from previous tenant which they have recycled as there condition was average at best.

The entire lighting system is LED or energy efficient globes with motion sensors in the bathroom/staffroom & the shop front lights are on timers. The main space is broken down into 10 small sections, which they switch off when not in use. They have dimmers over the basin area, which insures complete relaxation for their guests. They also utilise dimmers on the pendant light & colour bench to maximise efficiency. All stationary, business cards/refreshment menus, etc. are printed on recycled paper with soy ink. Urban Escape only serves Fair trade coffee & teas from sustainable sources. Utilising the coffee from the Rainforest Alliance. Bamboo has been utilised for decoration & functional storage. No fresh cut flowers used throughout salon. Only living plants, which they grow then plant in their garden.







Their passion for recycling has also inspired a recycling policy with their neighbours, & they encourage them to be environmentally aware & recycle also. Down the side of the shop was a dilapidated area used for storage of everything from old files to old dog kennels & general rubbish. This is now a beautiful garden built entirely from offcuts sourced from their own gardens. They hope to gain as much recognition for environmental awareness as possible whether it, be through awards or not. At the end of the day, it is beneficial to them all, so they all win regardless of awards. Admittedly they help to draw attention. Like the engraving in their staffroom bench says...

" ONE EARTH, ONE LIFE, ONE DREAM!" Lets make it count!

