Tips for a Successful Open House by Gina Beck

The success of your event will depend solely on the PREP work that is done by you BEFORE the event. Do not just set a date and expect the people to flock in.

1. Set a strategic date (or dates)

If the open house is held before Thanksgiving, you may get to the Christmas shoppers before they hit the malls. If your open house is after Thanksgiving, you may have good luck with those who wait until closer to Christmas. My open house this year was Friday Nov 13th from 3-8pm and Saturday Nov 14th from 10-3. The strategy behind the Friday late afternoon is to target the teachers before they go home, and the evening is for the working women before they go home. I am accommodating a lot of customers, so my Saturday hours are lengthy. If you don't have many customers, choose a shorter time frame. You want the atmosphere to be "busy" when people arrive; on the flip side, if you have one person every hour, it will feel like your day is lasting forever and it will not be as enjoyable.

2. Invite everyone

Yes, I mean *everyone*. Great customers, customers who have only ordered once, women who went to a class and never purchased, friends, people you meet while out and about (carry invitations with you), neighbors, etc. A proven process of inviting includes the following:

- a "save the date" email
- a simple postcard invitation in the mail
- a phone call
- last minute reminders (email or phone) the day before or the day of the event

3. Follow-up all invitations with a booking phone call

Consider every invitation that was sent as a *commitment* that they will receive a phone call from you. You'll probably catch more answering machines than people, so be prepared for both scenarios. Because my customer base is very large, I delegated my reminder phone calls this year. I went over the scripts with one of the consultants in my unit a couple of times until I felt comfortable with her tone, speed, inflection, and phone personality. (It is vital to *smile* while talking!) Here are some example scripts:

Live person:

"Hi _____! This is Lauren and I'm calling to remind you about Gina Beck's Mary Kay Open House. Did you get your invitation in the mail?

Yes: Great! ***{Continue to next part of script)***

No: Oh no! Do you have a pen to write down the dates? It's going to be this Friday the 13th from 3-8 and Saturday the 14th from 10-3.

There are big discounts on all of the products and gift sets, especially the skin care. Which day is better for you, Friday or Saturday? … And do you have an idea of a time frame that would work well? ... Great! I'll let Gina know to expect you on (Saturday around 10:30) but of course if something comes up, you can come earlier or later. This just helps Gina have an idea of how her day will flow.

One last thing…you'll also receive a gift for bringing a friend or two with you. Can you think of someone to bring along?

Yes: Great!

No: That's OK! You know...Gina can't wait to see you. ☺

Don't forget to bring your invitation so that you can use your Mary Kay bucks. Do you have any questions for me? Have a great day!"

Answering machine:

"Hi _____! This is Lauren and I'm calling to remind you about Gina Beck's Mary Kay Open House. It will be this Friday the 13th from 3-8 and Saturday the 14th from 10-3. There are big discounts on everything, especially the skin care. When you bring a friend you'll receive a gift from Gina, and don't forget to also bring your invitation with your Mary Kay bucks. If you can take a second to give Gina a call and let her know what day you'll be coming, her number is 434-258-3759. That's 258-3759. Thanks and have a great day!"

I also gave Lauren a quick-glance "menu" of answers to questions that might arise. The menu included the days and times, my address and phone #, and directions to my home.

4. Keep the set-up simple

Food and drinks should be simple (apple cider or coffee, something sweet and something salty.) Presentation should be simple. Instead of using red and green, choose silver or gold (or pink!) instead. That way you don't have to take apart any leftover sets and can re-use them in the new year for Valentine's, etc. Make it look like a boutique!

Order products ahead of time – especially the ones that you LOVE – so that your guests can shop on the spot. I have found that most women end up buying for themselves anyway, so have ALL of the products out. For multiple products available in baskets, keep the baskets looking half-to-three-quarters full. No one wants to buy from a basket that is full!

Placing tent cards with prices in front of the products helps customers make quick buying decisions. Keep a master price list of every product and its open house discount price with you at your check out table. This makes writing sales tickets a simple and quick task!

5. Help your sales soar!

Have your customer profiles nearby. If there is any dead time, get on the phone to make reminder calls instead of looking out the window and waiting. Also, having the customer profiles allows you to service the customers better while they are there.

Give customers a shopping bag when they walk in. The mentality is for them to fill it rather than balancing everything in their hands. They will buy less if they have to hold their products while shopping. The empty Miracle Set (organza) bags are great!

The last part of your set up should be a checkout table. On this table you can have a basket of products that you really want to move, like previous limited edition items or discontinued items. This can be your $5 Grab Basket. Another idea is that if customers complete a Wish List, they can take an item from the basket for Free! You could also have mini size products or samples wrapped in cute cello bags as a thank you gift for coming or bringing a friend.

Promote free gifts with purchase. Great price points for free gifts would be $40 (or bump it up to $50 if you choose), $100, and $200. Your gift can be ANYTHING! This year I had a lot of Targeted Action Line Reducers and Night Solutions on hand because they were bonus products with wholesale orders in the past. They made a great gift at the $100 level! (They were free for me from the company, and my customers had a $30-$40 product in their hands just for spending $100!)

If you have a large customer base, consider having someone you trust to help you with check-out. That way you – the top seller – can be with the customers and the products answering questions, offering suggestions, etc. The helper at the check-out table only has to follow the master price list in order to write up a ticket.

6. Keep a positive attitude!

No matter your results, keep a positive attitude. After *every* open house I see new ways to improve for the next year. Remember it is about reaching out to your customers, serving their needs, and building relationships. HAVE FUN!!