



# PRIME

## NAILS & SPA

BUSINESS SERVICE  
OPERATIONS RESEARCH

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SYOSSET DECA

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



### Business Overview

After years working as a technician in the nail salon industry, Laura Zhang was finally able to achieve her dream of opening up her own salon after her purchase of Prime Nails & Spa in 2019. With a new emphasis on providing the “prime” customer experience, Prime Nails & Spa re-opened in September 2019. The salon offers clients an abundance of services, from massages to facials, but focuses on manicures.

The salon experienced success until the COVID-19 pandemic forced the salon to close. After months of closures, the pandemic continued to affect business once the salon re-opened as fears of infection & economic turmoil stifled demand.

In order to help Prime Nails & Spa rebound, we have developed a strategic plan designed to rebuild customer loyalty & increase sales. The plan targets upper-middle income women from Gen Z to Gen X, and through improvements in services & customer relations and new promotions, we expect to not only attract new customers, but also increase customer retention and referral rates.



Research & Conclusions  
Several methods of primary and secondary research were utilized to develop our plan, including interviews, surveys, online articles & reports, competitive analyses, and more. Our research led us to the following findings and conclusions:

Consumers overwhelmingly trust other consumers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 80% of Gen Zers, Millennials, and Gen Xers trust referrals.</li><li>Surveyed local consumers considered reviews important and factored them into purchasing decisions.</li><li>Most of the salon's customers had been captured through word of mouth.</li></ul>
The local community is unaware of Prime Nails & Spa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>94% of surveyed local consumers had never heard of the salon, and of those who went to salons, most purchased services from competitors.</li><li>The salon had reopened &amp; rebranded less than two years ago.</li><li>The salon has a very small online following.</li></ul>
Prime Nails & Spa needs to create and design a website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The salon currently has no website and solely uses Yelp &amp; Google Business options.</li><li>80% of surveyed local consumers check a business' website before purchasing services.</li><li>A website would streamline processes for both clients and staff.</li></ul>
Social media provides a big opportunity for Prime Nails & Spa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Local consumers found that no salons in the area stood out on social media, and said that Prime Nails &amp; Spa's social medias had a lot of room for improvement.</li><li>Social media is one of the first platforms used by consumers to evaluate a business, and this is especially true of younger generations.</li></ul>
The salon lacks cohesive aesthetics, both in-person and online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The salon has no recognizable logo or signature color scheme, and there is no unity across different platforms.</li><li>Signage on the storefront and the interior design colors clash.</li><li>Lack of cohesive aesthetics indicates lack of professionalism and organization.</li></ul>
The salons should focus on increasing referrals & customer retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The lifetime values of referred customers are 25% higher than non-referred customers.</li><li>Acquiring new customers costs 5x-25x more than retaining existing ones.</li><li>Returning customers spend 67% more than new customers.</li></ul>
The salon can leverage the quality of its services & employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Online reviews and customer interviews show that clients are very satisfied with the salons service.</li><li>Many customers are loyal to their technicians, praising them through reviews and interviews by name.</li></ul>



## Proposed Plan

Based on our findings, we formulated our objectives, Operation LIONESS, in which each letter represents a goal our plan aims to achieve. These goals were used to guide the development of our campaign's activities.



### R edesign Salon Branding



### E ngage with customers



### B olster consumer trust



### U pdate social media content



### I ncrease sales



### L aunch new promotions



### D igitize business processes

Operation REBUILD will consist of 8 different activities

#### 1. Branding Redesign

- a. Design new logo and develop brand color palette
- b. Replace signage

#### 2. Increasing COVID Safety

- a. Purchase autoclave and additional sterilization supplies

#### 3. Website Construction

- a. Offer online booking and payment
- b. Create digital contact database
- c. Highlight customer testimonials and promotions
- d. Provide transparency on COVID safety practices

#### 4. Social Media Content Enhancement

- a. Improve quality & diversity of social media content

#### 5. Social Media Contests and Challenges

- a. Start a monthly hashtag contest
- b. Host seasonal social media challenges

#### 6. Review and Referral Encouragement

- a. Encourage customers to review and refer through banners, text reminders, and discount deals

#### 7. New Promotions

- a. Offer discounts based on customer loyalty and times of less traffic



## Proposed Key Metrics

We measure return on investment (ROI) in order to assess the effectiveness of the plan as a whole, however, in order to evaluate the success of each individual activity within Operation REBUILD, we will use several key metrics, including increases in social media interaction, uses of promotions, and more.



## Proposed Budget & Predicted Return on Investment

Operation REBUILD utilizes a multifaceted approach to increase business, simultaneously working to acquire new customers, increase referrals, and improve customer retention. Our proposed plan will cost a total of \$3,782.74 and generate an estimated total revenue of \$32,240. With \$28,457.26 in predicted profits and a predicted ROI of 752.29%, Operation REBUILD will help Prime Nails & Spa successfully rebound from the devastation of the pandemic.



## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Description of the Business or Organization

From 2017-2019, the nail salon industry grew at an average annual rate of nearly 4%. However, due to business interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the nail salon industry shrank by a drastic 12% (Statista Research Department, 2020). For the 54,000+ nail salons across the U.S., the pandemic dealt a devastating blow to business. In New York, a state heavily hit by the pandemic, nail salons are facing particularly grim conditions. Repeated lockdowns and resurgences of the virus have led to stunted sales rebounds. A survey done by the Nail Industry Federation of New York found that, on average, nail salon visits in the state have fallen by more than 50%, and sales have dropped by 40%. Prime Nails & Spa is just one of the many nail salons devastated by the virus. Located in Syosset, NY, Prime Nails & Spa recently underwent a change of management in 2019. With this shift in ownership came a complete rebranding; the store was renovated, its logo was changed, and a grand re-opening was hosted. The salon is located within a series of strip malls right next to Jericho Turnpike, a major east-west road that runs from Manhattan to the end of Long Island (**Figure 1**). This location makes Prime

Nails & Spa extremely accessible to potential customers, especially those from other nearby towns. The salon's proximity to other businesses also provides opportunities to attract new customers from people passing by from nearby restaurants or stores.

Prime Nails & Spa offers a wide range of services, from different types of manicures to facials and massages to various waxes (**Figure 2**). However, their most popular offerings are their nail treatments with their extensive list of nail services, including gel, acrylic, & French tip sets and refills.

SERVICES OFFERED		
NAILS	WAXING	OTHER
ACRYLIC FILL-IN ACRYLIC NAIL REMOVAL CALLUS REMOVAL CLASSIC PEDICURE FRENCH TIP FILL-IN GEL FILL-IN GEL NAIL REMOVAL NAIL ART REMOVAL NAIL REPAIR PINK & WHITE FILL-IN ACRYLIC FULL SET	BACK WAXING BRAZILIAN WAXING CHIN WAXING FULL BODY WAXING LEG WAXING WOMEN'S WAXING	BODY MASSAGES EYELASH SERVICE EYEBROW SERVICES

Figure 2: Popular Services Offered

Prime Nails & Spa's mission is to provide the highest quality services and build meaningful relationships with each customer. They are dedicated to attending each customer's personal needs and strive to create the most luxuriously relaxing environment possible. Prime Nails & Spa wants their guests to have the "prime" experience.

### B. Description of the Target Market (Demographics and Psychographics)

#### *Syosset Demographics*

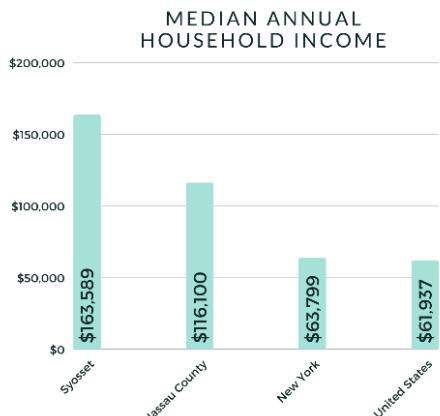
Syosset, a town of nearly 20,000 people, is in Nassau County, Long Island, New York (**Figure 3**). Long Island produces a gross economic output of approximately \$170 bil a year (O'Connell, 2018).



Figure 1: Strip Mall Where Prime is Located



Figure 3: Nassau County on Map



**Figure 4:** Median Annual Household Income

This provides LI businesses with access to the most extensive local economy of New York besides NYC. The U.S. Census Bureau finds that the median household income of Nassau County is \$116,100, and within Syosset specifically, it is \$163,589. Compared to the median household income of \$68,703 for the entire country, these areas' income levels are substantially higher (**Figure 4**). In fact, Nassau County's median income is the highest of all New York counties (Winslow, 2016). Syosset is also located Long Island's suburbs, surrounded by towns that match Syosset's potential for customers due to similar economic and demographic makeup.

### Target Demographics

Based on these demographics, our campaign for Prime Nails and Spa will target several key population groups. The primary target demographic is women, who make up 49.79% of Syosset residents and a majority of salon and spa customers. The average American woman spends \$313 on her physical appearance per month (Groupon 2017) and \$44 of that solely on grooming and beauty services (Prichard 2020). Our plan will focus specifically on upper-middle-class women who can spend more on non-necessities like salon services and were less likely to have been significantly financially impacted by the pandemic. Less than one in five adults in the upper-income brackets have struggled to pay their bills during the pandemic, compared to 46% among lower-income adults (Parker et al., 2020). While we will focus on women in Syosset, we will also target residents from nearby towns like Plainview and Jericho.

We can further segment our primary target demographic of upper-middle-class women into age groups--Gen Xers, people between ages 40-55, and Millennials, people between ages 24-39--as they spend the most on beauty and grooming out of all generations. 29% of Gen Xers and 30% of Millennials spend \$51 or more on beauty & grooming services monthly (2020 Mind Body Wellness Index). However, our campaign also focuses on targeting older Gen Zers, people between ages 14-24, as teenage girls and women in their early 20s represent a growing share of the nail salon market. According to trend forecasting company WGSN, female Gen Zers represent the *largest* cohort of beauty spenders. In addition, as the severity of COVID symptoms is generally correlated with age, Gen Zers have become an important customer segment, as they have become the generation that is most willing to shop in-store and purchase in-person services (Petro, 2020).

### Psychographics

Within our target demographic, we aim to reach consumers that have the following attitudes, behaviors, or traits:



**Figure 5:** List of Attitudes, Behaviors, or Traits

We hope that the campaign's consumers will embody at least several of these criteria, with the first two criteria being the most critical. Ideal customers will also frequently go to salons, making them more likely to be recurring and loyal visitors to Prime Nails, and be active on social media and reviewing platforms. Customers active on these platforms will be more likely to post/review the results of treatments, providing more opportunities for organic marketing.

### C. Overview of the Business or Organization's Current State of Business as a Result of Interruption

Like many other states, New York went into lockdown in mid-March, but due to the severity of the statewide outbreak, it did not begin phases of re-opening until May. Long Island, specifically, did not enter Phase 1 of re-opening until May 27<sup>th</sup> (Figure 6) (Failla, 2020), and nail salons were not allowed to open for business until June 24th (ABC7NY, 2020).

Although nail salons in New York experienced a brief surge in business in July after the lockdown was lifted (Kim, 2020), it was quickly followed by dwindling sales and customers with around 50% fewer visitors compared to pre-pandemic times (Kim, 2020), and Prime Nails & Spa has come out just as scathed.

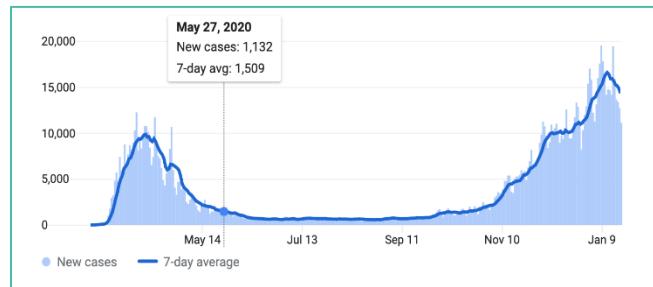


Figure 6: Graph of NYS COVID-19 Cases 2020

**Responsible Parties must post signs inside and outside of the personal care facility, consistent with DOH COVID-19 signage. Responsible Parties can develop their own customized signage specific to their workplace or setting, provided that such signage is consistent with the Department's signage. Signage should be used to remind employees and customers to:**

- Cover their nose and mouth with a face covering.
- Properly store and, when necessary, discard PPE.
- Adhere to physical distancing instructions.
- Report symptoms of or exposure to COVID-19, and how they should do so.
- Follow hand hygiene and cleaning and disinfection guidelines.
- Follow appropriate respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

Figure 7: NYS Interim Guidance for Personal Care Services During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

waiting rooms must be closed (Figure 7). Unfortunately, compared to other industries, the personal service sector has few opportunities to restructure its services. Unlike retail stores, which allow for pre-orders & in-store pickup, or restaurants, which can pivot to outdoor seating or delivery, nail salon services require prolonged person-to-person contact indoors. As of now, there exist no real economically or logically feasible alternatives.

Another threat to the nail salon industry aroused by the pandemic is at-home beauty care (Gerstell et al., 2020). Do-it-yourself and self-care beauty products & treatments have exploded in popularity during the pandemic as consumers faced salon closures, forewent services due to contact concerns, and adjusted their expenditures to the pandemic. The New York Times recently published an article titled, "Is This the End of the Manicure?", citing experiences of consumers who have either turned to DIY nail treatments or stopped painting their nails entirely due to the pandemic.

To weather the remainder of the pandemic and regain and expand business, Prime Nails & Spa must adapt to the post-COVID reality of the nail industry. Our plan outlines a comprehensive campaign to rebuild customer loyalty & spending through modernizing initiatives and proposals for new, innovative revenue streams.

In addition to decreased demand, Prime Nails & Spa faces the challenges of increased regulations. Along with mask mandates for both employees and customers, New York State Law restricts nail salons to no more than 50% occupancy and requires customers and employees (except the one performing the service) to always remain six feet apart. Seating and facilities must allow customers to stay a safe distance away from others, and



## II. RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THE STUDY

### A. Description and Rationale of Research Methodologies Selected to Conduct the Research Study

Prior to creating the plan, we conducted extensive market research through both digital and in-person methods. We conducted secondary research by creating competitor comparisons, gathering data from online articles and reports, studying Prime Nails & Spa's digital presence, and analyzing reviewing platforms. Sources of primary research included interviews, surveys, and in-person visits to the salon.

#### Secondary Research Methods

##### *Prime Nails & Spa's Digital Presence*

Rationale: In this age of digitalization, a business's online presence is critical to reaching consumers and attracting potential customers. We needed to evaluate the state of the salon's digital footprint to assess for areas of weakness that needed improvement.

##### *Reviewing Platforms*

Rationale: One of the key ways to assess a business' reputation is through online reviews and ratings. Studying ratings and reviews provided quantitative and qualitative metrics of customers' perception of the salon and revealed what customers liked & what they thought needed improvement.

##### *Competitive Analyses*

Rationale: Competitor comparisons were crucial to detect any areas where Prime Nails & Spa lagged behind other nearby nail salons. Analyzing competitors also allowed us to gain inspiration from their practices and determine potential opportunities for innovation.

##### *Online Articles*

Rationale: Various articles on industry trends, promotional strategies, and ways to appeal to consumers provided us with supplementary information needed to craft our surveys & interview questions and to create the best possible marketing plan.

#### Primary Research Methods

##### *In-Person Assessment of Facilities*

Rationale: Visiting the salon in person allowed us to assess the salon's physical aspects from a customer's perspective without any biases that would be introduced by simply asking the owner to describe the facilities.

##### *Prime Nails & Spa Manager Interview*

Rationale: An interview with the manager of Prime Nails & Spa, Laura Z, was crucial to gathering key information on several topics that would be otherwise inaccessible, like the salon's current marketing strategies.

##### *Prime Nails & Spa Customer Interviews*

Rationale: Customer interviews were instrumental in getting insight into possible areas of improvement, gaps in service, and overall satisfaction with the salon.

##### *Local Consumer Interviews*

Rationale: Interviews with local consumers allowed for the effective gathering of information about their opinions & preferences and allowed us to ask questions that would be easier to answer verbally rather than through surveys.



## Surveys

Rationale: Surveys are easy to distribute and are an efficient way to gather large amounts of data. A survey given to the local population allowed us to gather critical insight into several different topics, including local consumers' values, behaviors, habits, and Prime Nail & Spa's brand recognition.

## B. Process Used to Conduct the Selected Research Methods

### Secondary Research

#### *Prime Nails & Spa's Digital Presence*

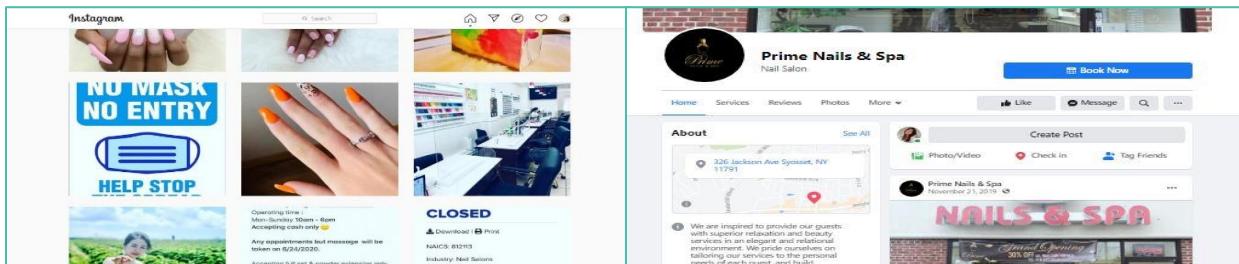


Figure 8: Prime Nail and Spa's Instagram (Left) and Facebook (Right) Pages

We carefully studied the social media pages (Instagram and Facebook) of Prime Nails & Spa after discovering that they did not have a website. We studied the like-to-follower ratio, number of followers, and the quality of the posted content. We also analyzed the pages' layout and aesthetics to determine how attractive the salon seemed from a consumer's point of view (Figure 8).

### *Reviewing Platforms*

We studied the salon across several major reviewing platforms: Yelp, Google, and Facebook (Figure 9). The ratios of positive to negative ratings and reviews of each were analyzed, and we paid particular attention to the more negative ratings and reviews, as they revealed more about areas of improvement than the reviews of those who were completely satisfied. We noted the depth, quantity, quality of the reviews as they factored into their overall reliability.

### *Competitive Analyses*

We compiled a list of Prime Nail & Spa's main competitors based on the criterion of location/distance, price point, range of services, and size. We then analyzed the websites, social media, and reviews & ratings of the competing salons, comparing them to those of Prime Nails (Figure 10).

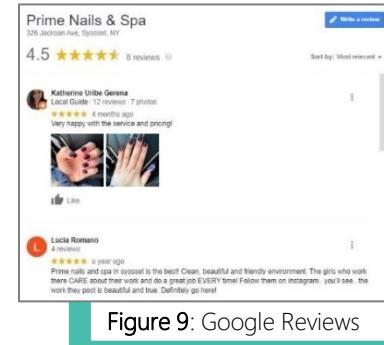


Figure 9: Google Reviews



Figure 10: Prime's Main Competitors

### *Online Articles*

General information, statistics, and trends within the nail salon industry was obtained using online articles. We paid special attention to articles centered around post-COVID impacts and restoring customer spending and loyalty.

### Primary Research

#### *In-Person Assessment of Facilities*

Taking on a customer's perspective, we carefully studied the salon facilities for noticeable implementation of health guidelines and enforcements. We also analyzed the general aesthetic of the salon including cleanliness, color schemes, and modernity.



### Prime Nails & Spa Manager Interview

We formulated interview questions designed to gain information not available through secondary research (analyzing websites, online articles, and social media), i.e., the frequency of returning customers. We then conducted an interview with the manager of the salon, Laura Z.

### Prime Nails & Spa Customer Interviews

We created questions keeping in mind three main objectives: determine how customers find out about the salon, learn more about customer perceptions of the salon, and gain insight into why they chose Prime Nails over other salons. Questions included "Is there anything you would change about the salon?" and "How often do you come to Prime Nails & Spa?". We then interviewed eight customers.

### Local Consumer Interviews

Fifty female local consumers were interviewed, as they represent our target market. First, we allowed them to browse through Prime Nails' social media and reviews. The same process was then repeated with one of the salon's competitors' social media, website, and reviews. Each competing spa was assessed by ten random interview participants, who were asked three different types of questions. The first set of questions asked them to evaluate the salon's digital presence independently. The second set of questions mirrored the first set, except they were focused on the competitor's online presence. The third set of questions asked them to compare the platforms of the two salons.

### Surveys

We first formulated questions regarding consumer preferences and behavior. Some were more general, like "Which social media platform are you most active on?", while others were more specific, for example: "Have you ever heard of Prime Nails & Spa?". We then posted the survey questions in a Google Form, which allowed for easy online distribution. All the questions had corresponding responses in multiple choice or checkbox format, making them easy to answer. We then distributed the form via various social media and messaging platforms. Instructions indicated that the survey was intended for female consumers to ensure our results were relevant to our target demographic.



Figure 12: Instagram Announcement

## III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

### A. Findings of the Research Study

#### SECONDARY RESEARCH

METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
Prime Nails & Spa's Digital Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⌚ Prime Nails has no website but does have an Instagram and Facebook.</li><li>⌚ On Instagram, the salon has 281 followers and posts an average of 17 posts per month, with around 20 likes per post. The salon is almost entirely inactive on Facebook, having posted only once for its grand re-opening.</li><li>⌚ The salon seems to have no logo or signature colors (Figure 11).</li><li>⌚ The photos posted on the accounts appear to be amateur shot, low quality and oddly filtered.</li><li>⌚ Flyers and posts advertising promotions on their social media are very poorly designed (Figure 12).</li></ul>



Figure 11: Different Logos Used by Prime



Reviewing Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Prime Nails &amp; Spa has a 4.5-star rating on Google, a 4.5-star rating on Yelp, a 5-star rating on Facebook.</li> <li>↳ Prime Nails &amp; Spa has eight reviews on Google, 34 reviews on Yelp, two reviews on Facebook.</li> <li>↳ Positive reviews highlighted the quality of nail designs and other services, reasonable pricing, as well as the friendliness of the manager, Laura. Numerous reviews mentioned Laura by name, as well as some of the other technicians.</li> <li>↳ Negative reviews concerned the difficulty of booking appointments and conflicting appointment times, which led to rushed manicures. Other customers also complained about the lack of clarity regarding the use of coupons and packages.</li> </ul>
Competitive Analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Based on the reviews of other salons, Prime Nails &amp; Spa provides either the same quality or better service. Salons with greater numbers of negative reviews generally received complaints about bad technique or quality of service.</li> <li>↳ Prime Nails &amp; Spa is one of the newest nail salons to open in the Syosset area.</li> <li>↳ While some salons required appointments to be booked over the phone, like Prime Nails, others had options to book through third-party platforms or had their own booking option on their websites.</li> <li>↳ Only one salon, Millennium Nails &amp; Spa, had posted information online about their adherence to COVID guidelines.</li> <li>↳ Each salon had a similar number of followers and likes, ranging from 43 to 355 followers.</li> </ul>
Online Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Supplementary market research was gathered, and specific articles and reports used to craft the campaign are mentioned in the relevant sections of the strategic plan.</li> </ul>

## PRIMARY RESEARCH

METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
In-Person Assessment of Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ COVID guideline enforcements including temperature checks at the door, hand sanitizing upon arrival, shields &amp; masks, and distanced seating. However, there was no signage regarding COVID protocols or promotions.</li> <li>↳ Outdoor signage clashes with the interior and the salon's logo.</li> </ul>
Manager Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Business is down about 30-40%.</li> <li>↳ Because Prime's change in ownership and renovations happened just a few months before the lockdown, the salon did not have time to establish a substantial, loyal customer base.</li> <li>↳ Post-COVID, the ages of clients tend to skew more middle aged or on the younger side.</li> <li>↳ Most records are kept on paper, and appointments are made over the phone or through text.</li> <li>↳ The salon is busiest on the weekdays from 12 pm - 2 pm &amp; 4-7 pm. Most customers come on the weekend, and appointments are concentrated in the morning and early afternoon.</li> <li>↳ The salon cleans its facilities each open and close and conducts a deep clean each week. Nail stations &amp; chairs are also disinfected between each customer, and all employees wear masks, face shields, and gloves.</li> </ul>
Customer Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ 80% of customers interviewed found the salon through word of mouth, whether through conversation or a friend's social media. The other 20% interviewed found the salon through Google and Yelp.</li> <li>↳ Customers interviewed were overall very satisfied with the service and would be willing to recommend the salon to a friend or write a good review.</li> <li>↳ Customers wished it were easier to book appointments and get information regarding promotions and hours.</li> <li>↳ The customers interviewed did not follow the salon on social media; most did not know that the salon had any.</li> <li>↳ Most customers reported that they choose to go to Prime Nails over other salons due to the quality of service and the employees.</li> </ul>

Local Consumer Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➥ Overall, consumers found that both Prime Nails &amp; Spa and its competitors across the board had relatively weak online presences, with no significant difference in ratings for each salon.</li> <li>➥ Consumers described the social media pages as "boring," "disorganized," and "unprofessional," and noted the low quality and unattractive backgrounds of certain photos.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Figure 13:</b> Instagram Feeds of Competing Spas (Blooming Nails Has No Instagram Page)</p>
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➥ However, consumers agreed that they could better understand the services and hours offered by salons that had both social media and a website.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➥ Local consumers are highly active on social media, concentrated on the platforms of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.</li> <li>➥ 89% of respondents considered COVID safety measures to be an essential factor in their in-person service purchases.</li> <li>➥ On a scale of 1-10, 64.3% of local consumers rated the importance of reviews as an eight or higher.</li> <li>➥ Over 94% of local consumers have not heard of Prime Nails &amp; Spa</li> <li>➥ 87% of respondents said they trusted business recommendations from friends/family.</li> <li>➥ Of the people who said they get their nails done at salons, 32% said they get them done once a month, and 19% said they get them done twice a month. 82% said that they researched salons online or through social media or reviewing platforms before going to them.</li> <li>➥ A majority of respondents also reported that they like to have all their beauty services done in one place and that they enjoy rewards programs, coupons, and deals.</li> </ul>

## B. Conclusions Based on the Findings

*Consumers overwhelmingly trust other consumers.*

Research continuously indicated that the experiences of previous customers were extremely influential upon the decisions of potential clients. Online articles provided a wealth of evidence regarding the impact of reviews & referrals, reporting that just a single review can increase conversions by up to 10 % (Summy, 2019). Referrals are particularly influential upon younger generations, as they tend to distrust traditional advertising methods (Friedman, 2017).



Figure 14: "Who Trusts Referral Advertising?" (Duskin, 2017)

Our primary research corroborated these findings; surveys indicated that most local consumers considered a business' reviews important, factored reviews into their purchasing decisions, and trusted friends/family recommendations. The substantial influence of consumer reviews is also supported by the fact that a majority of interviewed customers had heard of Prime Nails & Spa through word of mouth.



### *The local community is unaware of Prime Nails & Spa.*

Surveys indicated that almost no one knew about Prime Nails & Spa, even though many respondents stated that they frequented nail salons. This is most likely because the salon underwent a recent change in management and has not run any marketing efforts since. The salon also has a minimal online presence, with few followers and even less engagement. The abundance of competing nail salons presents another hindrance to recognition among local consumers (**Figure 15**). With a small online presence, numerous prominent competitors, and few efforts to market to the community, Prime Nails & Spa attracts very little attention.



**Figure 15:** Red Dots Indicate the Location of Other Nail Salons in Syosset

### *Prime Nails & Spa needs to create a website.*

In this digitized age, it is almost essential for businesses to have websites; in fact, PowerReviews finds that 97% of consumers check a business' website before purchasing, and our surveys showed that more than 80% of consumers examine businesses online platforms prior to purchasing services (Krakowiah, 2018). However, in addition to advertising value, a website would allow Prime Nails & Spa to streamline several business processes, including online appointment booking, online payment, a listing of services & COVID updates, and more.

### *Social media provides a big opportunity for Prime Nails & Spa.*

Interviews with local consumers indicated that potential customers saw no significant difference between the nail salons' social media we presented to them. None were highly rated, and consumers found that they could use improvement. According to our surveys, social media is vital as an easy, free form of organic marketing and as some of the first places people turn to when looking for or evaluating a business. Online research indicates that this is especially true of younger Millennial and Gen Z customers (Salesfloor, n.d.).



**Figure 16:** The Interior of Prime Nails & Spa

### *The salon lacks cohesive aesthetics in both its physical facilities and online.*

Prime Nails & Spa has no recognizable logo or signature color scheme. While its profile pictures on social media platforms show a black and gold logo, signage outside the door is displayed in red, and the interior of the salon is primarily designed with white (**Figure 16**). The lack of cohesiveness indicates a lack of professionalism and organization. The salons should focus on retention and referral rather than solely acquisition.

### *The salons should focus on increasing customer retention and promoting referrals rather than just customer acquisition.*

Online research indicates that returning and referred customers spend more than new customers & those who were not referred. Studies from Wharton find that referred customers' lifetime values are about 25% higher than those of non-referred customers, and referred customers are also 18% less likely to churn than non-referred customers. The fact that referred customers are more likely to be return visitors than non-referred customers is critical as increasing customer retention rates by just 5% can increase profits by 25%-95% (Gallo, 2014).



Familiar with your brand and more willing to try new services, returning customers also spend up to 67% more than new customers (Clark, 2013). Rather than focusing too much effort on acquiring new customers, which can be anywhere from 5 to 25 times more expensive than retaining existing ones (Harvard), Prime Nails & Spa should concentrate its efforts on customer loyalty & referrals.

### *Prime Nails & Spa can leverage the quality of its services and employees as competitive advantages.*

From both online reviews and in-person customer interviews, it is clear that clients are very satisfied with Prime Nails & Spa's service. They rave about the quality of their manicures on reviewing platforms and proudly posted photos of their nails on Yelp. In particular, it seems like the salon's employees really add to customers' experiences, as many reviewers praise their technicians by name. (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Yelp Review Highlighting a Specific Technician

## IV. PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN

### A. Objectives and Rationale of the Proposed Strategic Plan

Our proposed plan focuses on enhancing services, improving online presence, and building customer relations. While we do incorporate direct advertising activities, a majority of our plan relies on word of mouth/organic marketing. Our objectives are represented by Operation REBUILD, which stands for:



### B. Proposed Activities and Timelines

Our plan will run throughout the course of a year starting in March 2021 and consists of 8 activities: Branding Redesign, Increasing COVID Safety, Website Construction, Social Media Content Enhancement, Social Media Contests and Challenges, Review & Referral Encouragement, SMS Customer Engagement, and New Promotions.

#### *Branding Redesign:*

With no distinct color scheme or logo, the salon had no familiar trademarks that customers could recognize.



To create a more cohesive sense of brand identity across all platforms, as well as refresh the current look of their designs, we developed a new palette of colors (Figure 18) and a refreshed logo to be used across all platforms.

Bluish-greens, colors proved to have calming and relaxing effects (Sweet, 2020), were selected along with neutral beiges, drawing on colors of the salon's furniture. We also redesigned the logo itself with more modern, cleaner cut, sans-serif fonts (Figure 19). These fonts and colors will be used across all platforms: the new website, any flyer designs (Figure 20), etc.

In addition, the sign hanging outside the storefront will be replaced with a more modern sign from Signarama.

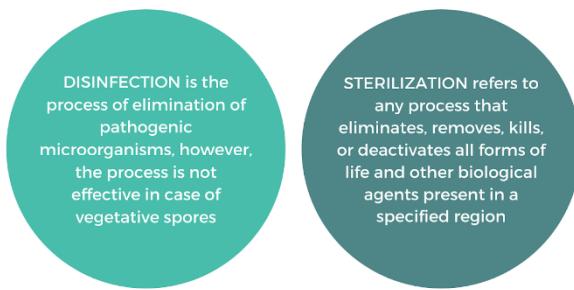


Figure 21: Disinfection vs Sterilization

five additional hand sanitizer dispensers. Most salons use UV light, barricades, or other chemicals to disinfect their tools (The Ashley Law Firm, 2013); however, autoclaves are the only devices that completely sterilize (Figure 21), killing 100% of all infective organisms. The salon's cleaning schedule and practices will also be publicized on their new website and via social media to provide transparency to customers and assure them of clean & sanitized facilities.

#### Website Construction

Based on online reports, local consumer interviews, and surveys, it is clear that Prime Nails & Spa needs a website. We propose creating a website with the domain "www.primenailsandspa.com" through Wix, a website building platform, and using Wix's "Business Basic" plan, which comes with website templates specifically designed for businesses within the salon industry. We propose using the template named "The Nail Lab" (Figure 22).

GSB Web Design, a local website designer partnered with Wix, will be hired to redesign the website with our specifications. The website's construction is predicted to take two weeks.



Figure 18: Color Palette



Figure 19: New Logo



Figure 20: Flyer Design

#### Increasing COVID Safety

Customers are incredibly concerned about COVID19. To provide the safest environment possible for clients and ensure customers are confident in the Prime Nails & Spa's health practices, we plan to invest in additional safety precautions. While the salon already has temperature checks, hand sanitization, deep cleaning, and plexiglass in place, the salon will also purchase an autoclave and

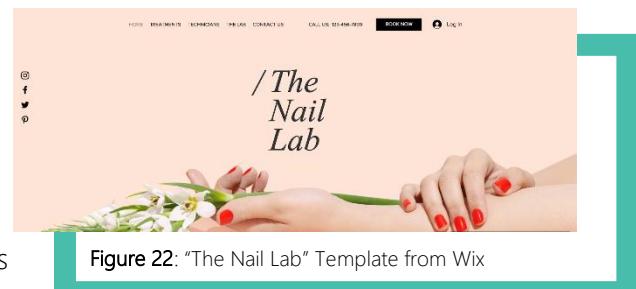


Figure 22: "The Nail Lab" Template from Wix



Online Booking: The new website will also include online booking/scheduling features powered by Wix (Figure 23).

A full compilation of the salon's services will be made available on the website, and each nail technician will have a section detailing their specialties and showing examples of their work. Customers will be able to book their appointments through the new website and book a specific technician, ensuring that they can choose to work with their preferred employee (Figure 24).

Research shows that this will likely build customer loyalty, as a customer survey report done by Salon Iris finds that 76% of nail salon clients say they are more loyal to an individual employee than to the brand. Like how people who attend cycling classes may prefer a specific trainer, people who get their nails done prefer certain technicians.

The new online scheduling service will also help prevent any appointment conflicts ensuring that the number of people on the premises does not exceed COVID-capacity and help allocate time between appointments to sterilize. In addition, online scheduling makes it much easier for staff to update technician availability, as well as salon hours. Salon hours were previously only reported through Google & Yelp, which don't always accurately display hours of opening, especially during holidays. Data collected through online scheduling will also ease any contact tracing if needed.

Online Payment: Through Wix's "Business Basic" plan, Prime Nails & Spa will be able to accept payments through its website, providing an easy method for customers to pay for their appointments. Online payment is not only more COVID-friendly, but also more convenient for both the salon and consumers, a majority of whom prefer online payment methods (Graminga, 2015).

Contact List: Contacts will be collected through several areas of the website, including the "Contact Us" section and the online booking features. All contacts collected through the website will be compiled into a contact list by Wix, through which Prime Nails & Spa will be able to keep track of its leads, contacts, and customers (Figure 25). Contacts gathered over the phone or in real life can also be added to the list, meaning Prime Nails & Spa will now be able to have a complete online database of their customers' contacts. Collected customer contacts can be used to follow-up on appointments, email promotions, and offer specific deals.

Testimonials and Reviews: We will create a section on the website to quote reviews of happy customers in effort to showcase their satisfaction. Several different reviews that highlight various aspects of the salon will be displayed in this section.

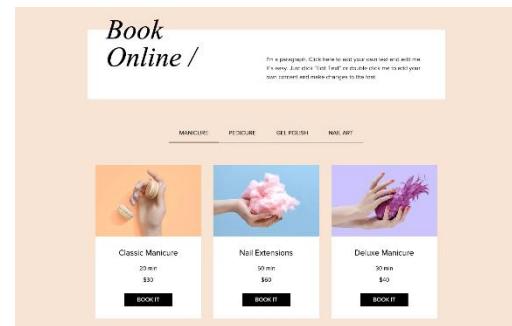


Figure 23: Booking Features from Wix

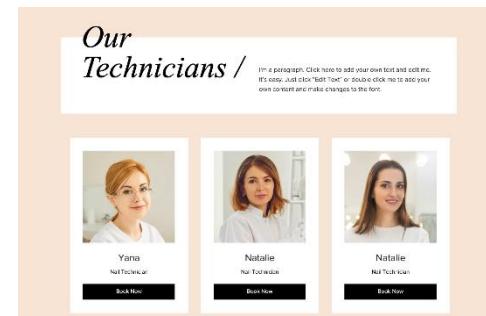


Figure 24: Specific Technician Booking Feature from Wix

Filter by: All Contacts					Search Contacts...
Name	Email	Phone	Address	Last Activity	Actions
Dan Smith (Demo)	dan_demo@wix.com			Dec 15, 2019	
Kat Jones (Demo)	kat_demo@wix.com			Dec 15, 2019	

Figure 25: Online Database of Customers from Wix



Promotions: To prevent any confusion about promotions (Figure 26), there will be a webpage on the website detailing all currently running promotions.

COVID-19: Consumers are extremely concerned with whether the businesses they frequent adhere to COVID health guidelines and will stop going to salons if they find their health measures unsatisfactory (Figure 27).

The salon currently has no information about their COVID adaptations posted anywhere online except within customer reviews. In order to emphasize the safety measures taken by the salon, a page on the website will be dedicated to explaining and highlighting Prime Nails & Spa's COVID regulations, from face shields to temperature checks and more.

Integrations: The website will also be integrated with the salon's Yelp page, Instagram, and Facebook to ensure that visitors can easily move between the platforms.

### Social Media Content Enhancement

Prime Nails & Spa is currently only active on their Instagram and only posts two types of content, business updates and photos of nails. To diversify the salon's content, we will introduce new kinds of posts, including before & afters, photos of other services like facials, and customer testimonials. These photos will be posted on both Instagram and Facebook, increasing activity & engagement on both platforms.

To introduce uniformity into the photos, a photo setup specifically designed to take photos of manicures and props such as rings will be purchased to provide a nice background for all manicure photos (Figure 28). In addition, instead of irregular uses of random Instagram filters, from now on, all posted photos will be edited with the same natural-looking filter from VSCO, a free editing application.



Figure 28: Example of a Photo Setup

### Social Media Contests and Challenges

Hashtag Contest: We will encourage people to post with the custom hashtag, #primenails, on both our Instagram and Facebook accounts. With this hashtag, we will create a monthly promotion and increase online exposure of the salon. At the end of every month, one random winner who posts with the hashtag and tags Prime Nails & Spa will be chosen to receive a free \$20 Amazon gift card.

Challenges: To further increase our social media presence, we will create seasonal online challenges throughout the year for our clients. Customers must follow the salon's social media accounts and follow the guidelines of each challenge to be eligible to win prizes. The winners of each challenge will receive a free manicure and a \$20 Amazon gift card. The challenges are described below:

**Sabirah K.**  
Woodmere, NY  
0 2  
11/6/2020

Then, when paying & trying to use a coupon through their rewards system, which I was unaware had an expiration, & respectfully told the woman it was okay not to use it & I was sorry for being unaware about the expiration, the person at the counter - Cindy I believe - was very rude, &

Figure 26: Yelp Review of Customer who had Confusion with Promotion

**Sandra C.**  
Melville, NY  
0 3  
11/22/2020

I had been going to a nail salon for years. The salon had not been updated to current conditions concerning COVID-19 regulations. I felt sorry that I could not continue to give them my business, in today's day and age a business owner must really keep up with all the necessary regulations for the safety of their customers.I did my search by googling all the nail salons in close proximity to where I live. I must admit I was quite shocked to see how many negative reviews most of the nail salons had in a couple of mile radius of where I live and work. I finally settled on calling Prime Nails and Spa in

Figure 27: Yelp Review from Customer Unsatisfied with COVID Precautions



HOLIDAY NAIL CHALLENGE	BEST COUPLE NAIL CHALLENGE
<p>Each month, the salon will select someone with what they deem as the best holiday nails</p> <p>Each month is not restricted to a specific holiday. For example, in December, participants can enter both Christmas themed or Hanukkah themed nails.</p> <p>Participants must post a photo of their holiday nails, hashtag #primeholidaynails, and tag Prime Nails &amp; Spa</p>	<p>Every two months, the salon will select a pair of winners who they deem have the best matching nails.</p> <p>Participants must post a photo of them and their partner's matching nails, hashtag #primecouplesnails, and tag Prime Nails &amp; Spa</p>

These contests and challenges will not only take advantage of digital word-of-mouth marketing but also encourage clients to engage in a fun activity with the salon and subsequently strengthen customer relationships.

#### *Review & Referral Encouragement*

Reviews: As shown by our research, reviews clearly have a large impact on consumers' purchases. Research from Texas Tech indicates that 83% of satisfied customers are willing to refer others, yet only 29% actually do, probably because they were never asked to. Thus, we will encourage our customers to review us through the new website, physical banners, and email blasts. On our website, we will direct the web designer to create a thin banner that invites viewers to review us on Facebook, Google, and Yelp (Figure 29). By the front desk, we will also hang a physical banner using the same design. Finally, we will send follow-up texts to customers after their appointments inviting them to leave feedback on these platforms.

Referrals: In order to encourage customers to refer others, we will implement a referral discount. Using data from collected contacts from the website, Prime Nails & Spa will be able to distinguish new customers and old customers from contact information used in past appointment history. Any new customers booking an appointment will be asked through the website if they have been referred by anyone, and if so, to link their email. If the email exists in our customer database, both the referrer and the referred customer will be emailed a 10% discount coupon. This referral program will be advertised in store, on the website, and across the salon's social media accounts.

#### *SMS Customer Engagement:*

Business text messages, which have an open rate of about 98%, a response rate of up to 80%, and an average response speed of 90 seconds (Haymarket, 2018), are an extremely effective way of interacting with customers. We propose running SMS campaigns through Timely using the contact data collected through the website. Text messages will be automatically sent for the following instances:

- Reminders before upcoming appointments
- Post-appointment texts asking for feedback and reviews
- New promotions
- Rebooking reminders (Figure 30)



Figure 29: Thin Banner Encouraging Reviews

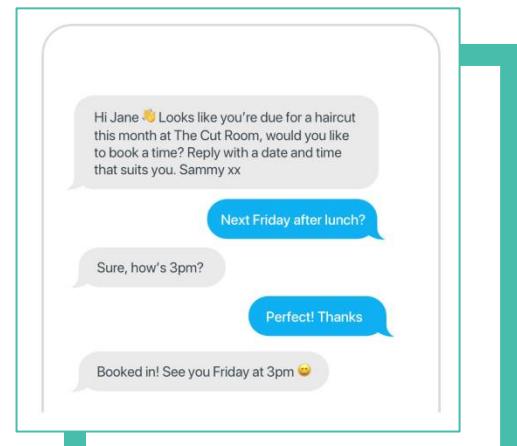


Figure 30: Rebooking Reminder from Timely



Customers can also reply with responses, questions, or concerns. The direct and individualized aspect of business text messages will allow the salon to continue building customer relationships and engaging with clients outside of the appointments.

### New Promotions

Loyalty Programs: In order to boost customer loyalty, we will also be offering a rewards program. Every seven appointments, a customer will receive a free pedicure. Appointment histories will be tracked through the website.

Timing Deals: Certain times of the day and certain days of the week are significantly less busy than others, namely, to bolster business during periods of less traffic, a 15% discount will be offered on any services booked during those times.

## III Timeline of Plan Activities

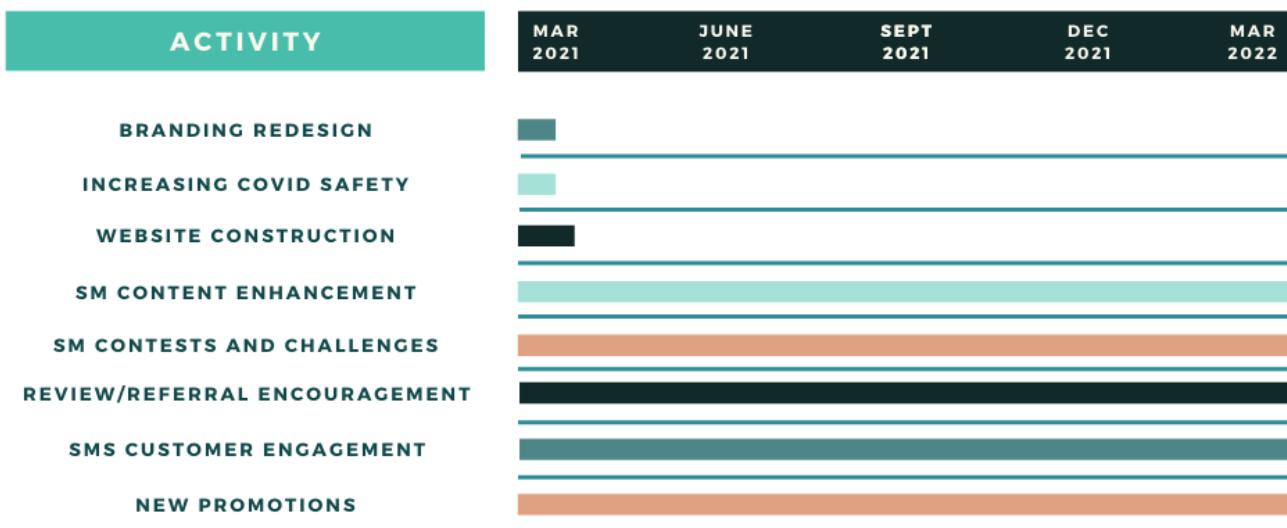


Figure 31: Timeline of Plan Activities

### C. Proposed Metrics or Key Performance Indicators to Measure Plan Effectiveness

To assess the effectiveness of our campaign as a whole, we will measure our return on investment through sales, while more specific key metrics will be used to assess each individual activity.

Activity	Key Metric	Measured By	Method
Branding Redesign	Ratings by Customers	Post-Appointment Survey	Using the business text messaging, a survey will be sent out to customers, and one of the questions will ask them to rate how much they like the branding redesign from 0-10. An average rating of at least 7 will indicate a successful redesign.
	Customer Satisfaction	Post-Appointment Survey	Using the business text messaging, a survey will be sent out to customers, and one of the questions will ask them to rate their satisfaction with our COVID safety practices 0-10. An average rating of at least eight will indicate a sufficient COVID safety measure.



New Promotions	Uses of Promotions	Online Payments and Receipts	At least 200 uses of each promotion by the end of the plan would indicate that they attracted enough customers.
Website Construction	# of Visitors, # of bookings made online	Google Analytics	Having at least 200 visitors per week by the end of the plan would indicate that the website is sufficiently effective. Booking at least 15 appointments per week by the end of the plan would indicate that online booking on the website is serving enough customers.
SMS Customer Engagement	Open and Response Rates	Timely	Open, and response rates of at least 60% would indicate that business text messaging is effectively engaging customers.
Social Media Content Enhancement	Increases in Followers, Likes, and Comments	Built-in Facebook and Instagram Features	Increases of at least 20% in followers, likes, and comments would prove that the improved social media content is attracting follower interaction.
Social Media Contests and Challenges	Number of Hashtag Uses	Built-in Facebook and Instagram Features	The number of hashtag uses will indicate the amount of engagement with the hashtag contest. The more uses, the more exposure Prime Nails & Spa will receive. We want the hashtag to be used at least 400 times by the end date of the plan.
	Number of Tagged Posts	Awario (social media marketing tool provider)	The number of tagged posts/stores will measure the number of entrants into the social media challenges. This metric is similar to the hashtag metric, as the more posts/stories Prime Nails & Spa is tagged in, the more online exposure the gym receives. We would like Prime Nails & Spa to also be tagged in at least 400 posts/stories by the end date of the plan.
Review & Referral Encouragement	Increase in Reviews	Built-in Yelp, Google, and Facebook features	An increase of at least 100% in the number of reviews would indicate that the online and physical banners, along with the text reminders blasts, successfully encouraged customers to review Prime Nails & Spa
	Uses of Referral Discount	Online Payment & Receipts	The use of the referral discount at least 100 times would indicate that the referral discount is attractive enough to incentivize referrals successfully.

In addition to the individual metrics, surveys will be texted to all new customers asking them how they heard about Prime Nails & Spa, and if they encountered any of our promotions. This will provide explicit data about the effectiveness of each of our activities.

## V. PROPOSED BUDGET

### A. Costs Associated with Proposed Strategies

Several of the activities, including the logo redesign and new promotions, will not incur any costs.

Activity	Description	Unit Cost	Number of Units	Total Cost
Branding Redesign	New Sign	\$512.85		\$512.85
Increasing COVID Safety	Autoclave	\$948.00		\$948.00
	Hand Sanitizer Dispensers	\$25.58 per dispenser	5 dispensers	\$127.90
	Hand Sanitizer	\$30 per 64 fl. oz	10 gallons (1024 fl. oz)	\$480.00
Website Construction	Wix Plan	\$23 per month	12 months	\$276.00
	GBS Web Design Services	\$399.00		\$399.00



SMS Customer Engagement	Timely Membership	\$20 per month	12 months	\$240.00
Social Media Content Enhancement	Photo Setup	\$57.00		\$57.00
	Props	\$15.00		\$15.00
Social Media Contests and Challenges	Gift Cards	\$20 per card	36 cards	\$720.00
Review & Referral Encouragement	Banner	\$6.99		\$6.99
TOTAL COST				\$3,782.74

#### *Predicted Return on Investment of Plan:*

Our plan incurs minimal costs due to our focus on increasing referrals and customer retention. Much of our plan is dedicated to improving service and customer relationships, while direct advertising represents a smaller portion of the campaign. However, despite a lighter focus on direct advertising, we still expect to significantly increase sales due to increased customer loyalty, increases in referrals, and improved digital online presence. Clients at Prime Nails & Spa spend an average of \$62 per visit, and around 60 percent of customers visit at least once every three months. The average annual value of each client is about \$376. By improving customer retention & attracting referred customers, we expect to increase the annual value of each client to \$435. The salon currently books 70-140 appointments per week, and we predict that our plan will attract approximately ten additional appointments per week due to visits from new customers and increased return visits from established customers. In the first year of the plan's implementation, we expect a gross return of around \$32,240, a net return of around \$28,457.26, and a total return on investment of approximately 752.29%.

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