



SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT: Bruce Schultz provides men a luxurious haircutting experience in a 1920s-style setting at the company he founded, The Boardroom Salon for Men.

SALON: Men's spa niche on rise

FROM PAGE 17

only spas with tremendous growth is because we are plugged in 24/7, so (men) have to go somewhere to unplug and destress," McNees said. "It's a non-threatening way to learn how to take care of yourself and not in a girly way."

Unlike men's salons that draw clients because of their large-screen televisions and scantily clad women, you'll find neither at The Boardroom Salon for Men. Instead, the focus is on destressing.

"We don't have TVs in our styling area. We want the guys to relax while they're getting their style done," Schultz said.

Gratuities are a big part of the business model at The Boardroom. Instead of hiring independent stylists who rent a space at the salon, all stylists are employees who receive a base pay and health benefits.

Because of the high status of the clientele — typically men from 25 to 55 years of age who make at least \$75,000 per year — gratuities are often higher than at a traditional salon.

"The Boardroom is like the fine steak restaurant for waiters and waitresses," he said. "It's more prestigious and provides a much better work environment, and (our stylists) get more gratuity."

With modestly dressed stylists focused on great customer service and high quality, Schultz has found one of his biggest marketing allies to be the wives and girlfriends of his clients.

"We earned that pedicure demand was very high. We learned that even if men don't want it, their spouses and girlfriends do," Schultz said.

With no background in the salon industry — Schultz was previously the director of airline distribution for Sabre Holdings Corp., a job he held for two years after launching the salon — it took some time before he got the right staff to meet the demand.

"We opened up with a motley crew who wasn't giving the best haircuts and best service," he said.

So he pared the team down to just one stylist and built up from there. They boosted their qualifications and became more strategic with their hiring.

Schultz hopes to sell three franchises this year and will then focus on slow, steady growth throughout the country, eventually taking the concept internationally.

"I think we have the recipe. Now it's a matter of execution. I don't think we need to trick it up; it's a matter of rolling it out," Schultz said. "It's going to take some help from the economy — some confidence in opening — and some marketing. The mission, the menu has been consistent: We give the ultimate relaxing grooming experience for men."

IDEAS IN ACTION

A cut above

AT BRUCE SCHULTZ'S **THE BOARDROOM SALON FOR MEN**, PATRONS PAY FOR UPSCALE SPA SERVICES AS PART OF NEW BOYS' CLUB EXPERIENCE

BY SHASHANA PEARSON-HORMILLOSA | STAFF WRITER

BIGGEST PROBLEM

When Bruce Schultz first opened The Boardroom Salon for Men, he hired a mix of employees who weren't able to deliver the level of quality he wanted at his salons. So, he stripped his team down to just one employee and rebuilt it, hiring only experienced, qualified technicians who could meet the demand of the biggest segment in the grooming industry.

The Boardroom Salon for Men carries all the mystique of any all-men's club, but offers more practicality than a stereotypical venue for smoking cigars and playing poker.

When CEO Bruce Schultz and his wife Heather founded the company in 2004, they wanted to create a relaxing men's grooming experience reminiscent of a 1920s country club. They filled their first store in Southlake Town Square with rich, dark wood paneling, plush barber chairs and pool tables to create a top-of-the-line salon experience for men.

Just five years later, the pair owns three stores — in Allen, Dallas' Inwood Village and Southlake — and have franchised two others — in Highland Village and Winston-Salem, N.C. Revenue reached \$1.7 million in 2008, and Schultz is in talks with three other potential franchisees hoping to open before

year-end.

"We're not selling a haircut, we're selling an experience," said Schultz.

The salons offer haircutting services — The Express, which includes a wash, cut and style for \$35, and The Benchmark for \$50, which includes a wash, cut and style as well as a paraffin hand dip, scalp massage and moisturizing facial. Other spa-like services include hand and foot grooming (\$30 to \$55), massages (\$20 to \$115) and traditional straight-edge razor shaves (\$15 to \$55).

The Boardroom also offers annual memberships, which range from \$550 for an unlimited number of The Express services, to \$1,395 for an unlimited number of The Benchmark services plus six other services. Customers can save up to 30% off the cost of individual services with a membership. The idea behind the memberships was to create a sense that the salon belongs to members.

"Members pay a certain amount

and then use (the membership) whenever throughout the year. So, when he needs a haircut, he pops in, gets his hair cut and leaves without paying. So he feels like it's his place."

They quickly learned there was demand for a classy, spa-like type of service catering to men.

According to Lynne McNees, president of the International Spa Association, men comprise about 30% of spa customers.

"The traditional spa experience wasn't very man-friendly. It's just making some of those subtle changes to the environment to make men feel more comfortable," said McNees. "They are no different from women. They want to look good. They want to feel better."

Stress, she said, is one of the biggest factors driving people to participate in the spa experience.

"To be more competitive, (men) have to take care of themselves. The reason you're seeing these men-