

Brushi



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by J. Elaine Spear

SO MANY BRUSHES, SO LITTLE TIME. HERE'S SOME STRAIGHT TALK ON WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THESE STYLING ESSENTIALS.

It's a fact: Savvy stylists would no more use a vent brush to smooth out curly hair than they would use a straightening iron to create curls. They know that the right hairbrush is key to every successful hairstyle. There are so many different brush shapes and sizes on the market today, however, that choosing appropriate models can be downright hair-raising for the average customer. The best advice for merchants? Make it as simple as possible for them.

“Ceramic-ionic **brushes** are most effective when they’re used in conjunction with a ceramic-ionic blow-dryer or iron.”



Courtesy of Comare

The Power of Four

“There are only four basic categories of brushes,” explains Alan Sporn, president of Spornette International in Homewood, Illinois. “If your clients like to change hairstyles frequently, chances are good that they’ll need at least one brush from each category.”

Vent. A vent brush has openings that allow air to generously flow through its body. Because the bristles are set wide apart, a vent brush is not meant to completely control the hair; instead, it should be used to calm rather than eliminate waves, or to create a soft, free-flowing hairstyle with added volume. All professional-quality vent brushes have ball-tip bristle ends to protect the hair against damage. Advise customers to check their vent brush every so often to ensure that no ball tips are missing. If even one is gone, it’s time for a new brush.

Round. Depending on its size and the materials used, a round brush can create curl, body and a significant amount of controlled volume. It can also smooth the hair while making the ends curl up or down, depending on which direction hair is wrapped around the barrel. Round brushes with metal barrels are com-

monly referred to as thermal round brushes because, when used with a blow-dryer, they heat up to accelerate the drying process and set the hair in a more pronounced style.

Cushion. All cushion brushes have bristles secured to a rubber or synthetic pad; the thickness of the pad and strength of the bristles determine the brush’s gentleness. People have used the basic oval-shaped cushion brush for generations, but paddle brushes also fall into this category. These large, rectangular brushes are ideal for smoothing and detangling hair that falls below the shoulders. Because of their pneumatic pad, which collapses when it comes in contact with tough tangles, paddle brushes are gentler on the hair than other, less-yielding designs. They’re also extremely popular—at most stores, paddle brushes are the No. 1 selling brush style.

Styling and Finish-ing. This is basically a catchall category. The classic Denman brush, for instance, is a styler/finisher. Brushes in this category are easy to identify because they typically have five, seven or nine rows of nylon or plastic bristles set in a solid block handle. Styling brushes can be used on wet or dry hair and are ideal if your client has a blunt or geometric haircut (a classic bob or undercut, for instance). Finishing brushes come in a range of eclectic shapes and sizes, including flat, wooden brushes with boar bristles that are designed to smooth finished hairstyles and add shine. Regardless of their hairstyle, clients should have a finishing brush on hand to touch up and smooth their hair throughout the day.

Bristles

Today there are just as many bristle materials and cuts as there are brush

shapes. “The bristles are just as important as the overall brush design,” says Sporn. “Although there are many variations, there are basically three types of professional bristles to choose from: boar, nylon (or a similar synthetic), and ionic. Some brushes have wire bristles, but these are only meant for hairpieces and wigs. Do not let your customers use wire brushes on their natural hair!”

Boar. Pure boar bristles are good for thin hair, as they catch and hold the hair during styling and help create shine by distributing the hair’s natural oils. A combination of boar and nylon creates a stronger brush that works well with medium and thicker hair types, or when more control is needed. Porcupine bristle tufts feature boar and longer nylon bristles for ultimate control of very thick or curly hair, or when you have a very precise style in mind.

Nylon. The strength or stiffness of nylon or synthetic bristles varies, making it important for your clients to touch the bristles prior to purchasing a brush to ensure that it has the right degree of flexibility for their hair. As a general rule, stiff nylon bristles are excellent for thick hair types, while more flexible nylon bristles are recommended for medium to medium-thick hair, or for people with a sensitive scalp.

Ionic. These bristles are made from a specially treated synthetic material that emits beneficial negative ions while running through the hair. Ionic bristles are believed to dry hair faster and make it shinier and more supple than untreated bristles. The key is to buy a high-quality brush, since cheaply made ionic bristles have little effect. Also in this category are antistatic bristles. Like ionic bristles, they’re created using a chemical process that specifically imparts antistatic properties to control flyaways.

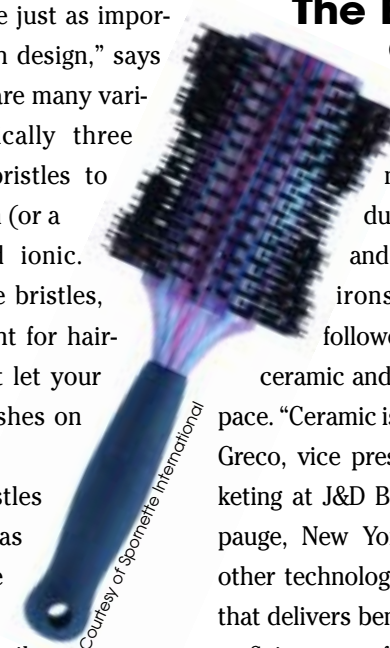
The Benefits of Ceramic

In response to consumer demand, manufacturers are producing a wealth of ceramic and ionic blow-dryers and irons. Brush makers have followed suit, introducing new ceramic and ionic brushes at a rapid pace. “Ceramic is not just hype,” says Phil Greco, vice president of sales and marketing at J&D Beauty Products in Hauppauge, New York. “I haven’t seen any other technology in the beauty industry that delivers benefits on so many levels.”

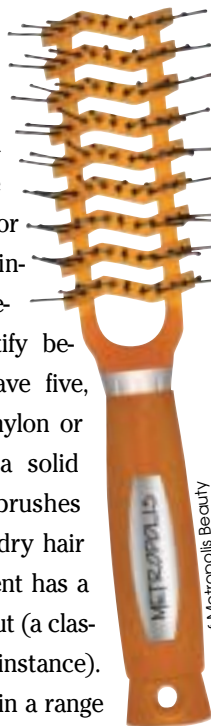
Science confirms that ceramic materials produce negative ions when either sufficient pressure or external heat is applied. Given enough negative ions, ceramic styling appliances offer a number of advantages:

- Static electricity is eliminated.
- Moisture droplets are fractured, speeding up the drying process.
- Moisture is infused deep within the hair shaft, improving elasticity and suppleness.
- The cuticle layer is closed, sealing in moisture and creating a sleek, shiny finish.
- Humidity is locked out, discouraging frizziness.
- Bacterial growth is inhibited.
- Hair is deodorized.

Even with these proven benefits,



Courtesy of Spornette International



Courtesy of Metropolis Beauty



Courtesy of Via San Francisco



Courtesy of Camelot Hair Care Products

some questions remain about whether or not a brush can actually generate enough negative ions to have an effect on the hair.

Some companies claim that their ceramic brushes provide the same benefits as blow-dryers and irons equipped with negative ion generators. Others maintain that the true benefit of ceramic brushes lies in their ability to evenly distribute and hold heat for a long period. “No matter what your opinion may be, ceramic-ionic brushes are most effective when they’re used in conjunction with a ceramic-ionic blow-dryer or iron,” says Michael Wittman, president of Metropolis Beauty in Granada Hills, California. “This intensifies the benefits produced by both tools while creating superior styling results. It’s important to capitalize on



this synergistic approach by always recommending a set of ionic brushes to customers who are in the market for a ceramic-ionic blow-dryer or iron.”

Manufacturers employ a variety of methods to add ionic properties to their hairbrushes. Spornette International and Comare infuse the bristles of their ceramic models with a negative ion compound during the molding process. “Our Tuxedo brush is both ceramic and ionic,” says A.J. Gallo, general manager of Comare, a division of Belson Products in Miami Lakes, Florida. “We have a negative ion powder mixed into the bristling during molding and then coat the exterior of the barrel with ceramic.”

Camelot Hair Care Products makes the barrels for its Jeli Ceramica brushes from a composite of plastic and ceramic. The

result is a brush that can reach 180°F and retain that heat for up to 12 minutes. “For stylists who sometimes prefer not to use an electric utensil, like a curling iron or hot roller, the brush can take its place,” comments Tony Parkinson, Camelot president and CEO. “After it heats up, they can just leave the brush in the hair for a few minutes. It’s a tremendous benefit.”

Ceramic isn’t the only material that produces negative ions. Via San Francisco and HairArt infuse their brushes with semiprecious tourmaline crystals, and Bio Ionic relies on its patented Natural Ion Complex, a blend of 32 natural negative ion-emitting minerals from Japan. No matter what material is used, your customers are bound to see a difference in their hair by switching to a high-quality brush with ionic properties.

Macro Ergonomics

Older brushes generally have flat plastic or straight wood handles that



Courtesy of The Cricket Co.

are difficult to grip and can cause muscle spasms and aches for stylists after a lengthy blow-dry session. Thankfully, manufacturers are bringing hairbrushes into the age of high-tech specialization. Far from a one-size-fits-all situation, the newest brush grips target every hand size and styling technique. “A good grip is very important to your customers, especially for the independent hairstylists who shop at your store,” says John Wright, president of Via San Francisco in Pittsburg, California. “A soft, rubber-coated grip can actually massage the hand, increasing blood flow and

Hairbrush Resources

Ready to update your inventory of hairbrushes? This list is a good place to start.

Bass Brushes, 818/989-HAIR
www.thehairdoccompany.com

Beautee Sense, 800/BEAUTEE
www.beauteesense.com

Belson Products/Comare,
800/327-8384
www.belsonproducts.com

Betty Dain Creations,
800/327-5256
www.bettydain.com

Bio Ionic, 888/755-6834
www.bioionic.com

Blason International Trading Corp., 888/6-BLASON
www.blasononline.com

The Bobby Co., 858/277-9735
www.thebobbyco.com

Burmax, 800/645-5118
www.burmax.com

Camelot Hair Care Products,
800/561-7024
www.themarilynbrush.com

Conair Pro, 800/726-6247
www.conairpro.com

The Cricket Co., 800/654-7032
www.cricketco.com.

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

Fromm International, 800/323-4252
www.frommonline.com

Golden Duck Co., 800/851-4590
www.hairbrushes.com

HairArt, 888/424-7278
www.hairartproducts.com

Herdoos, 866/437-3667
www.herdoos.com

I & J.C. Corp, 305/594-4903
www.iandjccorp.com

Industrie, 800/270-7901
www.industrie.net

Interfashion USA, 888/292-HAIR
www.interfashion.com

J&D Beauty Products,
800/523-2889
www.jdbeauty.com

Lado Co. of America,
800/368-1130
Ladopro@hotmail.com

Marianna Industries,
800/228-9060
www.marianna-inc.com

Metropolis Beauty, 800/871-6824
www.metropolisbeauty.com

Olivia Garden, 800/922-2301
www.oliviagarden.com

Phase One, 800/544-5246
PhaseOne2001@aol.com

Phillips Brush Co., 800/875-3623
www.phillipsbrush.com

Pivot Point, 800/886-4247
www.pivot-point.com

Royal Brush, 800/992-5611
www.royalbrushesinc.com

Sassi America, 800/881-0441
Sassiamerica@sbcglobal.com

Spilo Worldwide, 800/347-7456
www.spilo.com

Spornette International,
800/323-6449
www.spornette.com

Turbo Power, 888/715-6100
www.turbopowerinc.com

ULTRA, 800/328-3066
www.dencoultra.com

Via San Francisco, 888/280-4842
www.viasf.com



Courtesy of Phillips Brush Co.

brush from The Cricket Co. has separate grip designs for the thumb and palm; the grip allows the stylist to produce more tension with less effort when straightening or adding volume to the hair.

Show 'em Off

While there are four primary categories of brushes, there are many different styles within each category. Displaying so many brushes can be a challenge for merchants, especially if space is limited. What's the best way to retail a brush? On a rack? In a bin? Hanging on pegs? Most manufacturers try to make it as easy—and successful—as possible for stores. J&D Beauty Products, for instance, introduced a freestanding floor display in September 2003 for its Luxor Professional line that holds 21 different styles. Greco says it has everything a merchant needs to sell brushes and is doing “phenomenally well.”

“Brushes are no different than

liquids,” maintains Jeff Schwartz, vice president of sales at The Cricket Co. in Benicia, California.

“You introduce a new product and everyone gets all excited about it. When it isn't new any more, it becomes just another item on the shelf. Store owners can benefit by establishing a featured item section in a key area of their store that's visually exciting. They should then switch out the featured products every 30 days so that customers always see something new.”

“Sally Beauty does something similar to this by using two shelves that are filled with displays of featured brushes, including complete collections,” says Gallo. “Below these shelves are baskets filled with staple, everyday brushes. This display method provides a constant source of new or exciting brushes for customers to see, as well as mass



Courtesy of Spillo Worldwide

arrays of brushes that customers historically buy all the time.”

“I think it's important to continue coming up with brushes that are better in some way or that address a specific need,” concludes Schwartz. “To build a brush just for the sake of having something new doesn't make sense for the consumer or the distributor. With that said, I find that brushes are like television shows: Certain styles are a big hit in one area but not another. The key for store owners is to carry a large enough variety of brush designs to satisfy all of your customers' needs.” **BSB**

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