

Martha Matilda Harper's Ten Commandments of Business Success

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Taken from *Martha Matilda Harper and the American Dream*
<http://www.marthamatildaharper.org>

1. Dare to Dream & Persevere

Harper was bound out as a servant girl from the time she was seven. She dreamed about changing her destiny. Twenty-five years later in 1888 with \$360 of her lifetime savings, she launched Rochester, NY's first public hair and skincare beauty shop for women.

2. Seize Opportunity

Harper's last Canadian employer on his deathbed gave her his secret hair tonic formula. With that, she left Canada for Rochester, NY and took a job as a servant there, but with plans for opening her own business.

3. Capitalize on Your Assets

For Harper, it was her hair! This photograph of her was placed on her shop door to attract women to her shop--it was her first ad!

4. Build Everything on Customer Service

As a servant, Harper learned to delight her employers, but Harper observed that soapy water running down her mistresses' faces was not delightful. In response, Harper created America's first shampoo chair. (Thank Martha Matilda Harper the next time you get your hair washed in your salon's reclining chair!)

5. Commit the Customer

When Bertha Palmer approached Harper about locating a Harper shop in Chicago, Illinois for the 1893 World's Fair, with a petition signed by 25 of Palmer's best friends indicating that if a Harper shop came to town, Palmer's friends would patronize the shop. Harper did not require a focus group!



This was Martha Harper!



A Harper salon chair.

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Photo of Santa Barbara, CA salon.

6. Innovate—Think Outside the Box

Opening a public hair parlor in the Victorian era was path-blazing at the time, but Harper had to figure out how to expand to meet Palmer's demand (and signed petition of support). She looked at her Christian Science Mother Church and saw the perfect model of a strong central organization with satellites operations. Harper created America's first modern retail franchise operation and grew it to over 500 franchises in its peak.

7. Develop Win–Win Strategies to Benefit All

Harper's first 100 franchise owners and employees were poor women whose lives were changed by becoming "Harperites." Their loyalty and pride assured quality operations around the world at a time when computers, smart phones, and faxes did not exist. Customers included British royalty, U.S. presidents, the Kennedy clan, George Bernard Shaw, and thousands of other delighted men and women.

8. Lead & Brand

Harper was known for training her Harperites in the wonderful manner she first attracted loyal clientele. Next she niched her products, by promoting that they were organic and the top quality. While others competed on price, Harper competed on distinctive competence.

9. Listen To & Reward Your Staff

Shop owners were urged to hold weekly meetings in which they listened to their staff, since they were on the front line of service. Harperites were recognized for their loyalty and given the opportunity to



50th Anniversary Celebration of the Harperites, Martha's devoted staff.

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become more affluent with shop ownership, through meticulous training. All Harperites were invited to annual Harper anniversary gatherings.

10. Stick to Your Principles And Core Competencies

Know what your founding principles are and adhere to them even when competition intensifies. When the beauty industry introduced hair dyes and products Harper considered dangerous, she refused to produce or sell them in her shops, even though these products were “moneymakers.” Instead, she maintained and grew her business niche and her customer base with Harper’s healthy hair and skin care practices, her organic products, and her dictate:

“Our job is to bring the inner beauty out in every person.”

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