

## **Killer B2B App: Hair Stylists Spend Average of 29 Minutes with Redken App**



**AN INTERVIEW WITH:**

**Sarah Liang Kress**  
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As Redken and Pureology's director of integrated marketing communications, Sarah Liang Kress leads both brands' digital efforts and strategies in the US for consumer and business-to-business audiences. She talked with eMarketer's Kris Oser about Redken's Style Station app, a B2B product that targets salon professionals.

eMarketer: How long has the Redken Style Station app been out?

Sarah Liang Kress: Redken Style Station originally launched in January 2011, and then we transformed it and renovated it and relaunched it in March 2012. When we renovated it, we expanded it to the iPad platform.

eMarketer: Could you please describe the app and what it does?

Liang Kress: It's a tool for salon professionals to use behind-chair to help enhance the salon experience for their consumers, the clients who sit in the chair, as well as to help them navigate through Redken's products and offerings.

eMarketer: So the products would be hair coloring, style creams, shampoo and conditioners, that sort of thing?

Liang Kress: Exactly. We also have [formulas]. You can think of them as sort of recipes for how to mix our hair color shades together to create a specific look. We also have a look book feature, which shows models and includes the sort of the products you need to use and the steps to take to recreate that look. The look book also has a

customizable functionality where stylists can create their own portfolio with their own gallery of looks to show the client and keep a professional portfolio.

The third feature is a community called The Break Room, where stylists can connect with other hairstylists and ask them questions if they have a client coming in and they are unsure or looking for other ideas about how to approach the client's hair from a color standpoint, or even to look for business ideas.

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We have a digitized egg timer, too. When a stylist colors your hair, they set an egg timer so they know when that client is done processing. The app has a tool so they can set multiple timers for multiple clients.

eMarketer: What was your objective with the app?

Liang Kress: The Style app is a really important way for us to increase loyalty and push our products in a way that reaches stylists where they're spending time. Hair stylists stand behind a chair for eight to 10 hours a day. They don't sit at a computer.

So we see Style Station as a communications tool through which we can reach our hairstylists and provide them with the tools to assist in that client experience—whether it's showing them looks or creating their own portfolio, or connecting them with each other to get advice, or hearing from our experts or navigating our more complex hair products.

eMarketer: What metrics do you look at?

Liang Kress: We look at downloads. We look at engagement rates and usage. We want the app to be something that stylists would use every day in their salon.

eMarketer: After the first rollout, why did you decide to change it?

Liang Kress: When we first rolled it out, it was for both iPhone and Android phones, and it had the timer, the Break Room and a very limited number of color formulas.

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eMarketer: That doesn't sound all that useful—more like a branding tool.

Liang Kress: Yes, in the new version, we wanted to be able to push fresh content on a regular basis. We also wanted to include more color formulas, including the new hair color line, Chromatics, which launched in March 2012. We wanted to sweeten up some of the

usability opportunities that we saw in the first version, as well as create the formula finder for over 1,000 hair colors in the Chromatics line. So we were able to give them more and more reasons to come back, and we definitely have seen people staying engaged for longer.

eMarketer: What were the metrics?

Liang Kress: In the past, people were spending about 5.5 minutes with the app. Since the re-launch people are spending 29 minutes. So we've increased engagement sixfold.

eMarketer: What about downloads?

Liang Kress: In 2011, we had 30,000 downloads, and since the relaunch we have gotten 20,000 more downloads. Our goal for this year is 60,000, so we're definitely outpacing that goal at this point. People visit the app on average 14 times a month.

Some of the stylists who are downloading it actually don't currently use Redken, but they are now considering our hair color line because the Style Station app provides that education to help them convert from the existing color line that they're using to Redken.

eMarketer: There's no way you could do that with a desktop app is there?

Liang Kress: Because many salons don't have a computer in the salon, or if they do, it's at the front desk, and not all the stylists have access to it. But in this scenario, the app travels with them. In 2011, we did a study that showed that 63% of hairstylists say they own a smartphone.

eMarketer: You've just developed a tablet app. Is it exactly like the smartphone app, or does it have additional features?

Liang Kress: In terms of functionality, it's exactly the same as the smart phone. In terms of the usability, we obviously changed some of the design to meet the bigger screen versus the smaller screen, so it's basically the same app, just optimized for the tablet display.

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eMarketer: Do people use the smartphone app differently from the tablet app?

Liang Kress: Stylists tend to use the smartphone app more for the timer, Break Room community or figuring out what hair color formula to use, whereas with the iPad app, they're actually sharing it with their clients, showing look books and using it in a more consultative way.

eMarketer: How you are driving people to the app? How did you get 50,000 people to be aware it was there to download?

Liang Kress: We reached out to our trade PR partners. We market it to our existing databases and our salon professional communities.

We've integrated into store locations, which are retail locations exclusive to licensed cosmetologists. We've actually put an iPad in a number of stores and featured the app, so it's basically on display in the store at the end of the shelf, and we have the store managers and the employees talk about the app while trying to sell the product.

We also have what we call Redken artists who educate individual salons and visit our brand ambassadors. When they talk about hair color and Chromatics, they also talk about the app, and they feature it. It's also featured at some of our trade shows, and it's at all of our marketing events. Plus, we've done email blasts to our communities and talked about it through our Facebook page. But peer-to-peer recommendations are one of the most successful download drivers for us.

Interview conducted by Kris Oser on May 15, 2012.