from SQUARE to STILETTO
How Do Your Nails SHAPE Up?

Getting on “BEST OF” Lists Takes a Little Smooth Operating

OUCH! NAILS Handy Nail Disorder Guide

Getting Away from the “Office” When Your SALON IS YOUR HOME
Reap the Rewards of Local Cosmetology School Involvement

BY LYNELLE LYNCH

Most nail spa managers and owners face similar hiring challenges. The most common battles tend to be high turnover, expensive training costs, and identifying licensed professionals with the necessary skills and business acumen. There is, however, a no-cost solution — collaborate with your local cosmetology school. Although you can expect to devote time and energy into developing a successful partnership, the rewards far outweigh this small, non-monetary investment on your part. Here are three of the key benefits you can expect:

Pick of the Litter. Many schools offer placement programs for graduates, but these services can prove especially valuable to your business when coupled with an extern program. We chose to launch an extern program because students who apply their education to real world experiences and interact with clients in a spa or salon setting will inevitably graduate with a higher degree of professionalism. If you tap into a similar program in your area, you'll have the opportunity to see first-hand if that student has what it takes to be successful in your environment. You will also have a pool of externs to choose from to help make sure you are only bringing on board the strongest candidates. By immersing prospective new hires in your culture, you can determine whether they have the technical skills, drive, follow-through, and personality you're looking for. Keep in mind students are there to gain confidence. So if you recognize potential, you can help develop it through mentoring and coaching to ensure the student is at the level you need her to be when it comes time to hire. Another bonus is the additional support your team will receive from an extern program such as assistance with services, stocking product, rebooking, front desk operations, and even towel laundry. You'll find they are eager to learn and excited to help with even the most mundane of chores.

Influence on Curriculum. Current courses place little or no emphasis on the spa treatments that are in such high demand. By connecting with your local cosmetology school and offering constructive criticism and suggestions for improvements or enhancements, schools can anticipate your needs and provide students with all of the desired skills. In fact, our Spa Nail Technician Program was born from input from our Advisory Committee, which consists of 35 local spa owners and managers and industry experts such as CND's Doug Schoon. We learned that the spas and salons are hard-pressed to find trained spa manicurists due to the limited availability of basic and advanced spa treatment classes. As a result, valuable time is spent training new hires or the departments are simply closed. Based on this information, we immediately created a comprehensive course that covers all of the bases. However, we wouldn't have addressed these needs as quickly if the local owners had not shared this information with us, so let your voice be heard.

Minimizing Training Expenses. As mentioned before, a resounding issue for managers and owners is the costs associated with training, especially when there are struggles with turnover. Between helping shape what is taught in cosmetology school and implementing an extern program, you can begin to eliminate these costs. Also, there is an added benefit to an extern program. Schools can cover the technical side of manicurist training, but what they can't teach are the treatments that are unique to your spa or salon. Use the opportunity to educate your externs on all things that you would likely have to cover with new-hires once they are on the company payroll. Besides treatments, spend time training students on the products your salon uses and retails — ingredients, techniques, etc. — so they can make proper recommendations to clients. Once again, it's time invested, but wisely.

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