

Hire the right employees to staff your salon and spa

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In , the staff at Entrepreneur Press and writer Eileen Figure Sandlin explain how you can launch a successful full-service hair salon and day spa, a business that can be personally rewarding, makes a lot of people happy and can be very lucrative. In this edited excerpt, the authors outline the type of employees you'll need to help make your salon/spa a success.

One of the more challenging aspects of being a salon owner will be hiring and retaining good employees. This can seem like a daunting task, not just because both of these responsibilities can be very time-consuming but also because there's so much riding on employees' skills. Their ability and talent, as well as their attitudes and work ethic, will influence every aspect of the business, from client retention rate to the bottom line, so you'll need to choose your employees very carefully.

The whole issue of hiring is further complicated by one sticky little problem: There's a lot of competition out there for qualified salon personnel. It's not uncommon for rival salon owners to try to lure away talented stylists from each other with promises of more money and better working conditions. Then there's the issue of walk-outs: when salon staff—usually stylists—decide they can do better on their own and leave a salon en masse to start their own businesses. Not only does the original salon lose its qualified staff, but it also then must compete for new staff members with the turncoats who left.

Here's a rundown of the employees you're likely to need for the day-to-day functioning of your new business, along with some typical salary ranges (which may vary depending on which part of the country you're in):

Owner/Operator. You're an employee, too, so you're first on the list. Your day-to-day responsibilities will include overseeing operations, ensuring customer service is a top priority, making financial decisions, checking salon product and retail product inventory, handling personnel matters, hiring new staff, and assessing employee performance. All this is in addition to providing salon services if you're a licensed, practicing cosmetologist. If you're providing salon services as well, you can expect to spend up to 60 hours a week or more in the salon, depending on your bookings.

Salon Manager. Unless your salon is extremely small, the price you'll pay for a manager's salary is worth it. The manager can handle myriad tasks like paperwork, recordkeeping, employee scheduling, and purchasing. They'll also oversee salon maintenance and handle facility management issues. This person should have the authority to act on your behalf in your absence.

PayScale. com says that the median salary in a city like Indianapolis for a hair salon and spa manager with less than a year of experience is \$34, 000, while a manager with five or more years of experience earns a median salary of \$38, 000.

Hairstylist/Cosmetologist. Your stylists are the heart of your salon staff. Every state requires stylists to be licensed cosmetologists, so you'll want to check their credentials when they apply for a job. A cosmetology license typically allows the holder to cut and color hair, and give manicures and facials.

Ordinarily, additional licensing is necessary for services such as massage therapy, but it's possible your cosmetologist will be permitted to give hand

and foot massages without extra licenses. Check with your state's board of cosmetology to see what the requirements are.

Hairstylists usually are paid in one of two ways: on straight commission or on a salary basis. Commission-based stylists usually earn 35 to 50 percent for each service they provide. Salary-based compensation is becoming more common and is actually easier to calculate since wages are typically paid on an hourly basis. The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) says the median salary for hairdressers, hair stylists and cosmetologists, all of whom are lumped into a single statistical category, is \$22, 770, or \$10. 95 per hour.

A third compensation method, salary plus commission, is now fairly common. This arrangement can help increase business since the hairstylists are guaranteed a salary but earn a premium (commission) for every customer they serve.

Shampoo/Salon Assistant. This is the person who shampoos clients' hair while the stylist is finishing up another client. He or she may also fold towels, sweep up hair clippings, and provide other general assistance around the shop. Often these assistants are newly minted cosmetology graduates who are looking for experience in the industry, or licensed assistants who haven't yet completed enough hours to become a fully licensed stylist. Salon assistants earn minimum wage or a little more. Recruiter. com says the median annual income for a shampooer is \$17, 900.

Receptionist. In addition to greeting customers, the receptionist answers the phone, books appointments, gives directions, cashes out customers, and

performs various other customer service duties like making coffee or even hanging up coats for clients. You should put this person in charge of the salon sound system, and make sure they're extremely knowledgeable about the salon products you sell. A receptionist is usually paid a median wage of \$12.49 per hour, according to the BLS.

Manicurist. This professional provides services like manicures, pedicures, and acrylic nail application and tipping, and must be a licensed cosmetologist. According to the BLS, a manicurist earns a median salary of \$19,220.

If you're going to be running a spa in addition to a hair salon, you'll need the following staff:

Aesthetician. Aestheticians hold a special license from the state so they can provide services like facials, waxing, massage and other specialty body-care services. Often this person also does makeup consultations and application, especially if there's no room in the budget to hire a dedicated makeup artist. The BLS reports that skin-care specialists like aestheticians have median annual earnings of \$28,640.

Massage Therapist. Although an aesthetician can provide massage services, a massage therapist has a higher level of training and additional expertise. Most states require these professionals to hold a massage therapist license. According to the BLS, the average wage for a massage therapist is \$35,970.

Electrologist. This person provides hair removal services and needs an electrologist license in many states. According to Salary.com, an electrologist is paid a median salary of \$21,709.

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