On the Job

21

Chapter Outline

- Why Study What It Is Like on the Job?
- Moving from School to Work
- Out in the Real World
- Managing Your Money
- Discover the Selling You
- Keeping Current Clients and Expanding Your Client Base
- On Your Way

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Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- ☑ **LO1** Describe the characteristics necessary to thrive in a service profession.
- ☑ **LO2** Discuss the importance and meaning of a job description.
- ☑ **LO3** Explain the most common ways that nail technicians are compensated.
- ☑ **LO4** Manage a personal budget.
- ☑ **LO5** Explain the principles of selling products and services in the salon.
- ☑ **LO6** Discuss the importance of maintaining and growing your client base.

Key Terms

Page number indicates where in the chapter the term is used.

client base / 468

commission / 462

job description / 459

retailing / 469

ticket upgrading (upselling services) / 469

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Congratulations! You have worked hard and conducted yourself professionally while in nail technology school, passed your state's licensing exam, and may have been offered your first position in the field. Now, more than ever, you need to prioritize your goals and commit to personal rules of conduct and behavior. These goals and rules should guide you throughout your career. If you let them, you can always expect to have work and enjoy all the freedom that your chosen profession can offer **(Figure 21–1)**.

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▲ **Figure 21–1** Nail technician successfully transitioning from school to work.

WHY STUDY WHAT IT IS LIKE ON THE JOB?

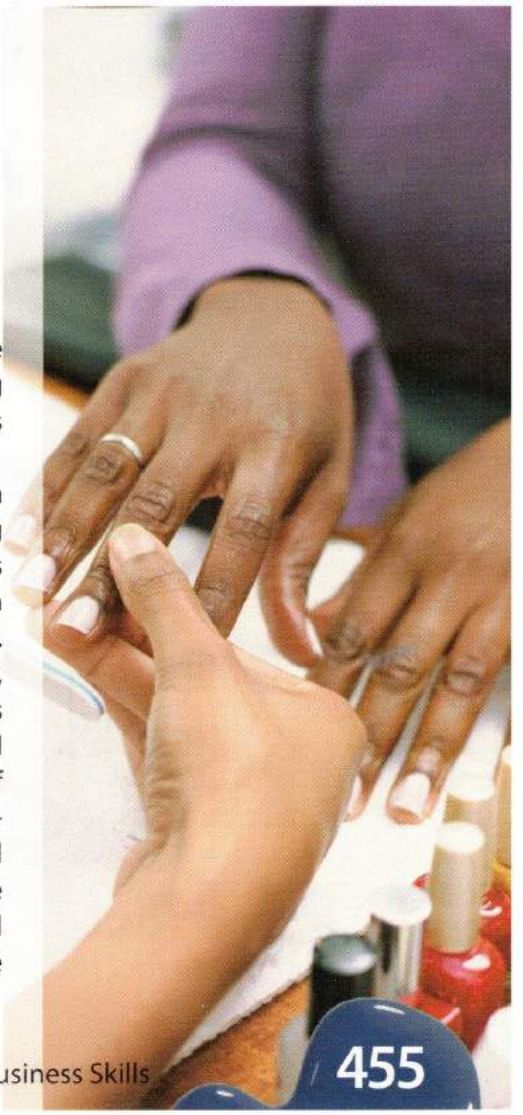
Nail technicians should have a thorough understanding of what it is like on the job because:

- Each salon or spa staff member must work as part of a team. Learning to do so is an important aspect of being successful in this environment.
- There are a variety of ways that a salon or spa may compensate employees. Being familiar with each method and knowing how it works will help you to determine if the compensation system at a particular salon or spa can work for you and what to expect from it.
- Once you are working as a salon or spa professional, you will have financial obligations and responsibilities. Learning the basics of financial management while you are building your clientele and business is invaluable.
- As you build your clientele and settle into your professional life, there will be opportunities for you to increase your income, such as retailing and upselling services. Knowing about and using these techniques will help you to promote yourself, build a loyal client base, and create a sound financial future.

MOVING FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Making the transition from school to work can be difficult. While you may be thrilled to have a position, working for a paycheck or independently operating your own nail business brings with it a number of duties and responsibilities that you may not have considered.

Nail school is a forgiving environment. You are given the chance to do a certain procedure over and over again until you get it right. Making and fixing mistakes is an accepted part of the process, and your instructors and mentors are there to help you. Schedules can be adjusted, if necessary, and you are given some leeway in juggling your personal life with the demands of your schooling. When you become the employee of a salon, spa, or an independent operation, however, you will be expected to put the needs of the business and its clients ahead of your own. This means that you must be on time for your scheduled shift and be prepared to perform whatever services or functions are required of you, regardless of what is happening in your personal life. For example, if someone comes to you with tickets for a concert on a day when you are scheduled to work, you cannot just take the day off. This would definitely inconvenience your clients, who might even decide not to return to the salon or spa. It could also burden your coworkers, who might feel resentful if they are asked to take on your appointments.



Budgeting for Your Student Loans

Your school expenses may include rent, utilities, and other related expenses. As you progress in your career, your expenses will change and your income will grow. Through it all, you will continue to budget your income and expenses. Remember, a budget simply helps you identify where your money is going. A very important expense that will be added to your budget when you leave school is the repayment of your student loan. Many of you may have paid for your education through student loans. Understand that this is not free money, it is a loan that must be repaid with interest.

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Good credit is also necessary if you want to borrow more money to open a business or buy a house. Good credit is built by paying your bills on time—paying off balances in full. You lose your good credit standing when you are late with payments or default on a loan, including your student loan. Here are some tips to help you when it comes to borrowing and repaying student loans:

- Borrow only what you need for school and school-related expenses.
- Know what you are borrowing: read all the information and fine print.
- Pay attention to your entrance and exit loan counseling.
- Pay your loan on time.
- Keep in touch with your loan servicer: he or she is there to help!
- Keep your paperwork organized.
- Know you must repay your loan whether you drop out of school or graduate, or find a job or not.
- Understand the consequences of defaulting:
  - The entire loan will become due and payable immediately.
  - Your federal income tax refunds will be garnished.
  - Your wages will be garnished.
  - You will be ineligible to receive any additional federal student aid (including grants).

WEB RESOURCE The National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) is the U.S. Department of Education's central database for student aid. It provides a centralized, integrated view of Title IV loans and grants that are tracked through the entire cycle beginning with aid approval through to closure. The Web site is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can use the Web site to make inquiries about your Title IV loans and/or grants. The site displays information on loan and/or grant amounts, outstanding balances, and the status of loans. Visit http://www.nslds.ed.gov.

OUT IN THE REAL WORLD

Many students believe they should be rewarded with a high-paying position and perform only the kinds of services they wish to do as soon as they graduate from school. It does not work out that way for most people. When working, you may be asked to perform tasks or services that are not your first choice. The good news is that when you are really working in the trenches, you are learning every moment. There is no substitute for that kind of experience.

What is important is to determine which type of position is right for you by being honest with yourself as you evaluate your skills. If you need help and direction in sorting out the issues about the workplaces you are considering, ask your instructor and mentors for advice. If you choose a salon or spa carefully, based on its culture and type of salon or spa and the benefits that you prefer (as discussed in Chapter 20, Seeking Employment), you'll be off to a great start.

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Network with mentors, nail professionals, educators, and classmates. Ask questions, take advice, listen, and consider all your options! You will open yourself up to knowledge, resources, and terrific nail industry information.

Thriving in a Service Profession

The first thing to remember when you are in a service business is that your career revolves around serving your clients. There will always be some people who do not treat others with respect; however, the majority of the people you encounter will truly appreciate the work you do for them. They will look forward to seeing you and will show their appreciation for your hard work with their loyalty.

Here are some points that will help guide you as you serve your clients.

- *Put others first.* You will have to quickly get used to putting your own feelings or desires aside and the needs of the salon or spa and the client first. This means doing what is expected of you (unless you are physically unable to do so).
- *Be true to your word.* Choose your words carefully and honestly. Be someone who can be counted on to tell the truth and to do what you say you will do.
- *Be punctual.* Scheduling is central to the nail business. Getting to work on time shows respect not only for your clients, but also for your coworkers—who will have to handle your clients if you are late.
- *Be a problem solver.* No position or situation comes without its share of problems. Be someone who recognizes problems promptly and finds ways to resolve them constructively.
- *Be courteous.* The space you work in is shared with others. Always make sure that voice levels do not disturb others in the surrounding area. In addition, avoid discussing subject matter that may be considered offensive at all times in the event that it is overheard.
- *Practice good manners.* Successful people always practice good conduct and manners inside and outside of the work environment. Always say "please" and "thank you," and show respect for others. You never know who is observing you.

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- *Be a lifelong learner.* Valued employees continue to learn throughout their careers. Thinking that you have finished learning once you are out of school is immature and limiting. Your career might go in all kinds of interesting directions, depending on what new things you learn. This applies to everything in your life. Besides learning new technical skills, you should continue to gain more insight into your own behavior and how to better deal with people, problems, and issues.
- *Look and act professional.* Not only must your technical skills be well developed and your work area clean, your appearance and behavior are all part of the client experience. Take care in your clothing and personal hygiene by greeting clients with a look that leaves them with a great first impression about you and your work. Maintain a positive attitude: Demonstrate that you are ready to provide excellent service for them and have their best interest in mind.

Furthering Your Education

In a professional environment, it is important to always perform quality work, meet the expectations of your clients, and be well versed in the latest nail trends. It is also wise to expand your skill set in order to offer a wide range of services in case one service area slows down due to a change in season or the economy. To do so, it is important to remain knowledgeable about changes in your industry. You can accomplish this through a combination of the approaches below:

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- Read industry magazines. A powerful source of information comes from periodicals such as *Nails Magazine*. Visit www.nailsmag.com for more information.
- Attend trade shows and networking events. Both national and international beauty shows offer the opportunity to take classes and gain exposure to the latest in nail technology. Many vendors hold classes, offer demonstrations, and are available to answer technical questions. Networking and exchanging knowledge with other professionals can be very helpful in overcoming technical challenges and learning best practices.
- Attend classes. Improving your current skills and learning new techniques will be critical to your success. Visit the professional section of your product vendor Web site for further information and course offerings.
- Read trade journals, such as *Nailpro* and *Nails* magazine to learn current trends and the latest technical information. The nailpro.com Web site also has discussion forums so you can network virtually with other nail technicians. ☑ **LO1**

Salon Teamwork

Working requires that you practice and perfect your people skills. A salon or spa is very much a business environment. To become a good team player, you should do your best to practice the following workplace principles:

- *Strive to help.* Be concerned not only with your own success, but also with the success of others. Be willing to help a teammate by staying a little later or coming in a little earlier.

- *Pitch in.* Be willing to help with whatever needs to be done in the salon or spa—from folding towels to making appointments—when you are not busy servicing clients **(Figure 21–2)**.
- *Share your knowledge.* Be willing to share what you know. This will make you a respected member of any team. At the same time, be willing to learn from your coworkers by listening to their perspectives and techniques.
- *Remain positive.* Resist the temptation to give in to maliciousness and gossip.
- *Become a relationship builder.* Just as there are different kinds of people in the world, there are different types of relationships within the salon or spa world. You do not have to be someone's best friend in order to build a good working relationship with that person.
- *Be willing to resolve conflicts.* The most difficult part of being in a relationship is when conflict arises. A real teammate is someone who knows that conflict and tension are bad for the people who are in it, those who are around it, and the salon or spa as a whole. Nevertheless, conflict is also a natural part of life. If you can work constructively toward resolving conflict, you will always be a valued member of the team. If you do have a conflict, discuss it with the individual, not with others in the salon or spa.
- *Be willing to be subordinate.* No one starts at the top. Keep in mind that beginners almost always start out lower in the pecking order.
- *Be sincerely loyal.* Loyalty is vital to the workings of a salon or spa. Nail technicians should be loyal to the salon and its management. Management needs to be loyal to the staff and clients. Ideally, clients will be loyal to the nail technician and the salon and spa. Staff meetings are a good way to help build team loyalty. As you work on all the team-building characteristics, you will start to feel a strong sense of loyalty to your salon or spa. **(Figure 21–3)**.

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▲ **Figure 21–2** Pitch in and be a team player by helping a colleague.

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▲ **Figure 21–3** Staff meetings are a good way to build team loyalty.

The Job Description

When you take a position, you will be expected to behave appropriately, perform the services asked of you, and conduct your business professionally. In order to do this to the best of your abilities, you should be given a **job description**, a document that outlines all the duties and responsibilities of a particular position in a salon or spa. Many nail salons and spas have preprinted job descriptions available. If you find yourself at a salon or spa that does not use them, you may want to write one for yourself. You can then present this to your

Here's a Tip:

Because we are all individuals and come with our own experiences and ideas, we may look at situations differently. Because of our differences, conflict can arise with coworkers. When this happens, follow these tips:

1. Ask to meet privately with the individual.
2. Focus on the behavior or situation and not the person. Speak in terms of how you feel.
3. Avoid blaming the other person for the disagreement.
4. Ask questions to try to understand the other person's point of view; you will learn more and clear up any miscommunication.
5. Become accountable for your part in the situation. Make it a goal to learn how you can adjust your behavior.
6. After you understand what is behind the behavior, and know more, come to an agreement on what can be done differently in the future.

For example, Tina, a coworker, is short with you because you asked to borrow her nail glue. You might ask to meet privately and say:

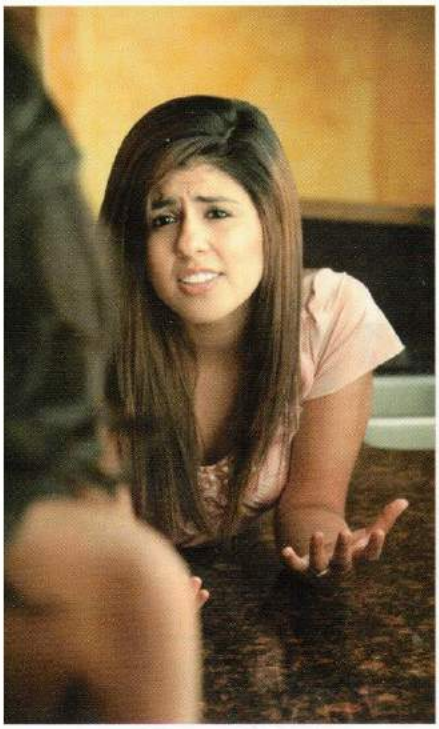
You: *"Tina, I felt embarrassed when you rolled your eyes after I asked to borrow your glue to fix Mrs. Smith's nail. What about that upset you? I want to understand."*

Tina: *"I was in the middle of working with a client and had no time to search for the glue. Besides, it was the third time you asked me for supplies this week."*

You: *" I see why that would bother you. I didn't have time to get to the supply house over the weekend, so I'll go during lunch. While I'm there, can I pick up anything for you?"*

Tina: *"No, I'm all set."*

You: *"I'll make sure to keep my supplies stocked from now on."*



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FOCUS ON...

Being a Good Teammate

While each individual may be concerned with getting ahead and being successful, a good teammate knows that no one can be successful alone. You will be truly successful if your entire salon or spa is successful!

salon manager for review to ensure that both of you have a good understanding of what is expected of you.

Once you have your job description, be sure you understand it. While reading it over, make notes and jot down any questions you want to ask your manager. When you assume your new position, you are agreeing to do everything that is listed in the job description. If you are unclear about something, or need more information, it is your responsibility to ask. How well you fulfill these duties will influence your future at the salon or spa, as well as your financial rewards.

In crafting a job description, the best salons and spas cover all the bases. They make sure to outline not only the employees' duties and responsibilities, but also the attitudes that they expect their employees to have and the opportunities that are available to them. **Figure 21–4** shows some highlights from a well-written nail specialist apprentice job description. This is just one example. Like the salons and spas that generate them, job descriptions come in all sizes and shapes and feature a variety of requirements, benefits, and incentives. ✓ **LO2**

Job Description: Nail Specialist Apprentice

Every apprentice must have a nail technology license as well as the determination to continue learning and expand their skill set. As an assistant you must be willing to cooperate with coworkers in a team environment, which is most conductive to learning and to good morale among all employees. You must display a friendly yet professional attitude toward coworkers and clients alike.

Excellent time management is essential to the operation of a successful salon. An apprentice should be aware of clients who are early and late or nail technicians who are running ahead or behind in their schedule. You should be prepared to assist in those situations and to change your routine if necessary. Keep the receptionist and nail technicians informed about clients who have entered the salon. Be prepared to stay up to an hour late when necessary. Keep in mind always that everyone needs to work together to get the job done.

The responsibilities of an apprentice include:

1. Greeting clients by offering them a beverage, hanging up coats, and informing the receptionist and nail technicians that they have arrived.
2. Consultations for nail services and nail retail.
3. Assisting nail technicians in services that require extra help.
4. Cleaning and disinfecting stations and work areas.
5. Keeping the nail stations and inventory well stocked with appropriate products.
6. Notifying the nail salon manager about items and supplies that need to be reordered.
7. Making sure the pedicure stations are drained, cleaned, disinfected and free of debris.
8. Keeping the nail display is neat and clean.
9. Keeping the retail area neat and well stocked.
10. Keeping the bathroom and dressing room neat, clean, and stocked.
11. Performing housekeeping duties such as: emptying trash receptacles, cleaning up dust on floors, keeping the lunch room and dispensary neat and clean, helping with laundry, and dusting shelves.
12. Making fresh coffee when necessary.
13. Training new assistants.

Continuing Education

Your position as apprentice is the first step toward becoming a successful nail technician. In the beginning, your training will focus on the duties of an apprentice. Once you have mastered those, your training will focus on the skills you will need as a nail technician.

As part of your continuing education in this nail salon you will be required to:

- attend all salon classes
- attend our special Sunday Seminars

Advancement

You will need to acquire all professional tools necessary for training at twelve weeks (implements, nail brushes, hand files/electric file, nail art, etc.). Upon successful completion of all required classes and seminars and your demonstration of the necessary skills and attitudes, you will have the opportunity to advance to the position of nail technician. This advancement will always depend upon your performance as an apprentice as well as the approval of management.

Remember: how quickly you achieve your goals in this nail salon is up to you!

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▲ **Figure 21–4** Example of a nail specialist apprentice job description.

Compensation Plans

When you assess an offer of employment, your first concern will probably be the compensation, or what you will be paid for your work.

Compensation varies from one salon to another. There are, however, three common methods of compensation that you are likely to encounter: salary, commission, and salary plus commission.

Salary

Since new nail professionals rarely have an established clientele, being paid an hourly rate is one way to start out. This hourly rate is usually based on the minimum wage. Some salons offer an hourly rate that is slightly higher than the minimum wage to encourage new nail technicians to take the position and stick with it. In this situation, if you earn $10 per hour and you work 40 hours, you are paid $400 that week. If you work more hours, you get more pay. If you work fewer hours, you get less pay. Regular taxes are taken out of your earnings.

Remember, if you are offered a set salary each week, in lieu of an hourly rate, that salary must be equal to the minimum wage for the number of hours you work. You are entitled to overtime pay if you work more than 40 hours per week. The only exception would be if you were in an official management position.

Here's a Tip:

Accepting a commission-paying position in a salon can have its pluses and minuses for new nail technicians. If you think you have enough clients to work on commission and can earn enough to pay your expenses, then go ahead and give it a try. It could be a great way to work into better commission scales or even booth renting. (Only Pennsylvania forbids booth renting by law, but other states may regulate licensing differently. Always check.)

If you don't think you can make enough money solely on a commission basis, then take a position in a salon or spa that is willing to pay you an hourly wage until you build your client base. After you have honed your technical skills and built a solid client base, you can consider working on commission.

Commission

A **commission** is a percentage of the revenue that the salon or spa takes in from services performed by a particular nail technician. Commission is usually offered once a nail technician has built up a loyal clientele. A commission payment structure is very different from an hourly wage because the money you are paid is a direct result of the total amount of service dollars you generate for the salon or spa. Commissions are paid based on percentages of your total service dollars and can range anywhere from 25 to 60 percent, depending on your length of time at the salon, your performance level, and the benefits that are part of your employment package.

Suppose for example, that at the end of the week, when you add up all the services that you have performed, your total is $1,000. If you were at the 50 percent commission level, then you would be paid $500 (before taxes). With a commission payment structure, the salon or spa usually provides all of the products you need to perform the nail services. You may be responsible for providing your personal tools, such as nail brushes, files, electric drills, and sometimes nail art supplies. Keep in mind that until you have at least 2 years of servicing clients under your belt, you may not be able to make a living on straight commission payments unless they average out to be at least minimum wage.

Salary Plus Commission

A salary-plus-commission structure is another way to be compensated in the salon or spa business. It basically means that you receive both a salary and a commission. This kind of structure is often used to motivate nail technicians to perform more services, thereby increasing their productivity. For example, imagine that you earn an hourly wage of $300 per week and perform about $600 worth of services every week. Your salon manager may offer you an additional 25 percent commission on any services you perform over

your usual $600 per week. Or perhaps you will receive a straight hourly wage but can receive as much as a 15 percent commission on all the retail products you sell. Sometimes, salons or spas call this structure "salary plus bonus." Here, your salary is based on an average of what you would have made if you were paid commission, but you also get a bonus on anything over and above. You can see how this kind of structure quickly leads to significantly increased compensation **(Figure 21–5)**.

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▲ **Figure 21–5** Retail sales boost your income.

Tips

When you receive satisfactory service at a hotel or restaurant, you are likely to leave your server a tip. It has become customary for salon clients to acknowledge beauty professionals in this way, too. Some salons and spas have a tipping policy; others have a no-tipping policy. This is determined by what the salon or spa feel is appropriate for its clientele.

The usual amount to tip is 15 percent of the total service ticket. For example, if a customer spends $50, then the tip might be 15 percent of that, or $7.50. Tips are income in addition to regular compensation and must be tracked and reported on an income tax return. Reporting tips will be beneficial to you if you wish to take out a mortgage or another type of loan and want your income to appear as strong as it really is.

Deciding on Appropriate Compensation

As you can see, there are a number of ways to structure compensation for a nail professional. You will probably have the opportunity to try each of these methods at different points in your career. When deciding whether a certain compensation method is right for you, it is important to be aware of what your monthly expenses are and to have a personal financial budget in place. Budget issues are addressed later in this chapter. **LO3**

Employee Evaluation

The best way to keep tabs on your progress is to ask for feedback from your clients, salon or spa manager, and key coworkers. Most likely, your salon or spa will have a structure in place for evaluations. Commonly, evaluations are scheduled 90 days after hiring and then once per year after that. But you should feel free to ask for help and feedback any time you need it. This feedback can help you improve your technical abilities as well as your customer service skills.

Ask a senior nail technician to sit in on one of your client consultations and to make note of areas where you can improve. Ask your manager to observe your technical skills and to point out ways you can perform your work more quickly and more efficiently. Have a trusted coworker watch and evaluate your skills when it comes to selling retail products. All of these evaluations will benefit your learning process enormously.

Did You Know?

Nail technicians can increase their chances of building a solid and loyal clientele more quickly if they:

- Live in a large city or choose areas within their cities that have lots of potential clients.
- Select a location where the competition for nail clients is less saturated.
- Have advanced training, skills, and certifications.
- Have and use their artistic abilities.
- Employ marketing and publicity strategies.
- Concentrate on an unusual niche within the nail business (teens, for example).

Find a Role Model

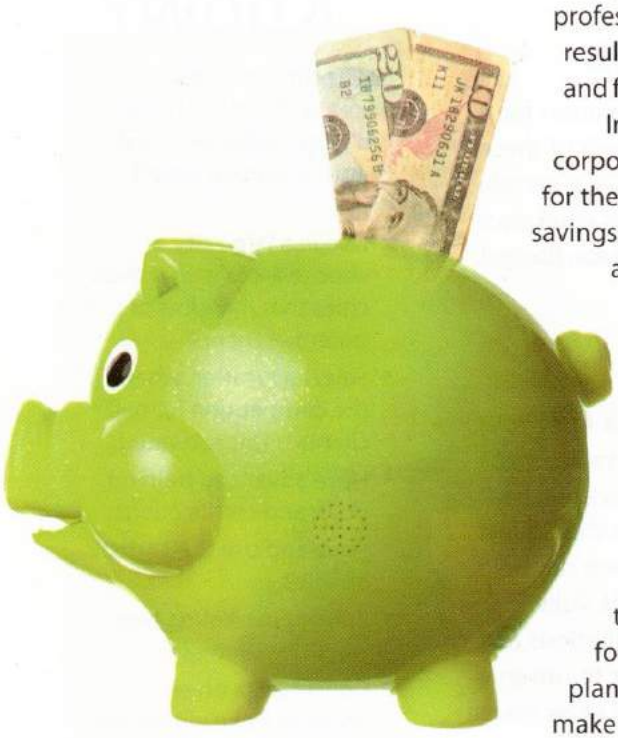
One of the best ways to improve your performance is to model your behavior after someone who is having the kind of success that you wish to have. Watch other nail technicians in your salon. You will easily be able to identify who is really good and who is just coasting along. Focus on the skills of those who are really good. What do they do? How do they treat their clients? How do they treat the salon or spa staff and manager? How do they book their appointments? How do they handle their continuing education? How do they select which products to use? What is their attitude toward their work? How do they handle a crisis or conflicts?

Go to these professionals for advice. Ask for a few minutes of their time; however, bear in mind that it may not be easy to find time to talk during a busy salon or spa workday. If you are having a problem, explain your situation, and ask if they can help you see things differently. Be prepared to listen and not to argue your points. There may be times when others provide feedback that you may not want to hear. Keep in mind that you asked for help. Always thank the person for their help and reflect on the advice you have been given. A little help and direction from a skilled, experienced coworker will go a long way toward helping you achieve your goals.

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Although a career in the beauty industry is very artistic and creative, it is also a career that requires financial understanding and planning. Too many nail professionals live for the moment and do not plan for their future. As a result, they may end up feeling cheated out of benefits that their family and friends in other careers are enjoying in traditional corporate careers.

In a corporate structure, the human resources department of the corporation handles a great deal of the employee's financial planning for them. For example, health and dental insurance, retirement accounts, savings accounts, and many other items may be automatically deducted and paid out of the employee's salary. Most nail technicians, however, must research and plan for all of those expenses on their own. This may seem difficult, but it is a small price to pay for the kind of freedom, financial reward, and satisfaction that a career in nail technology can offer. And the good news is that managing money is something everyone can learn to do.



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Meeting Financial Responsibilities

Budgeting and understanding how much money you will need to meet your monthly financial obligations—such as housing, food, and your car—is a very important part of the employment planning process. For example, if you know that you will need to make $3,000 per month to support your needs, you will want to calculate how this translates into the number of clients and services you perform per month. To do this, you will need your pricing per service, the interval that you expect to service your clients, and the number of days you plan to work per month. This figure will tell you how much you need to earn per day to meet your goals.

Below is an example of a nail technician living in a metropolitan city requiring $3,000.00 per month for her financial obligations. See how that translates into her basic client services:

- Manicure: $20.00
- Pedicure: $35.00
- Manicure and pedicure: $50.00
- Average working days per month: 20

$3,000 ÷ 20 = $150.00 per day

Option 1: $150.00 ÷ $20.00 = 7.5 manicures per day

Option 2: $150.00 ÷ $35.00 = 4.30 pedicures per day

Option 3: $150.00 ÷ $50.00 = 3 manicure/pedicures per day

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In addition to making money, responsible adults are also concerned with paying back their debts. Throughout your life and your career, you will undoubtedly incur debt in the form of car loans, home mortgages, or student loans. While it is easy for some people to merely ignore their responsibility in repaying these loans, it is extremely irresponsible and immature to accept the loan and shrug off the debt. Not paying back your loans is known as "defaulting," and it can have serious consequences regarding your personal and professional credit. The best way to meet all of your financial responsibilities is to know precisely what you owe and what you earn, so that you can make informed decisions about where your money goes.

FOCUS ON...

Salon Technology

Various surveys show that the salon and spa industry is slow to adapt to computerization and new technologies. Nearly one in three (33 percent) of salons are computerized and have Internet access. However, larger and more upscale salons are far more likely to be computerized and have Internet and e-mail access. About 22 percent of owners and managers have ordered products online.

The increasing number of computerized salons could be advantageous for technology-savvy students. You may be able to master salon software programs more easily than other stylists. These programs now handle cash flow management, inventory tracking, payroll automation, online booking, performance evaluation tracking, and more. Just remember, these client records are usually considered the salon's property.

If you are accustomed to working with technology, you may be able to help a salon or spa set up e-mail access, a Web site, and social networking pages. With many clients enjoying the freedom of online booking and text-message appointment reminders, and with salons and spas benefiting from e-mail or even electronic marketing programs, the more you understand technology, the better. Today, nail care manufacturers even have special educational programs you can access on your mobile phone and social networking pages, where you can share information and ask for instant help.

Setting Your Career (and the Industry) Up to Win!

Are you proud of the industry you are entering? Do you like to tell everyone you meet about your decision to become a professional in the beauty and wellness industry? When you tell someone that you are attending school to become a nail technician, what responses have you received? Chances are that at least a few people have questioned why you would want to work in such an industry. You see, there is a common misconception in our world today that a career in the beauty and wellness industry is not a viable career—that it is not profitable work. The general public doesn't know what you have gone through to get your education. They are not aware of the hours spent studying the sciences that are involved or the infection control standards that you must learn and apply. They don't realize the physical demands you must endure as well as the people skills you must possess. There is a misperception in our world that says beauty and wellness professionals are undereducated and make far less money than people in other industries. In fact, if you were to look at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the reported median salary for a beauty and wellness professional is between $25,000 and $30,000. That seems low, doesn't it? Your school may have told you that you would have the opportunity to make much more than this. So why is this official figure so low?

The reality is that many professionals in our industry may not accurately report their income. It's not that they are intentionally trying to beat the system; it's that they never learned what was required or how important it is. Many professionals don't know that accurately reporting *all* income, including tips, is required by federal law. These professionals do not understand the impact that their lack of reporting has on the beauty and wellness industry.

It is critical that you realize that in addition to your own success, you have a responsibility to raise the image and standards of this great industry. As you begin your career and work with other professionals in the industry, some may tell you that you do not have to report your tips as income. Realize that this is bad advice and is *100 percent absolutely false*. Every salon/spa professional, including both technicians and owners, is required by federal law to report all income, including tips as taxable wages. Tips are taxable wages: you are not only required to report them as income but must also pay the required FICA taxes on those tips. This is a *required* law, and compliance is not optional. Underreporting income devalues you as a professional and the industry as a whole. Failure to accurately report all income has consequences.

1. It is a federal law. If you do not accurately report your income, you are vulnerable to IRS audits. Tax fraud and tax evasion are a criminal offense and can lead to legal action, including fines and penalties and potentially jail time.
2. It decreases your borrowing power. Down the road, you may decide to buy a home or open your own salon/spa. Your ability to borrow money is based on your reported income. If you report less than what you actually earn, you may be ineligible for a loan. You may make enough money to make it happen, but if it isn't on paper, it will not come to pass. Income needed to borrow money must be documented.
3. You are paying less into Social Security. It may be hard to think about retirement since you are just beginning your career; however, that is the

best time to start planning. One part of your retirement plan will be your Social Security. If you underreport your income, you are reducing the amount of Social Security benefits you will receive at retirement.

4. It lowers the Bureau of Labor's endorsement as a sustainable industry. Why is it important what the Bureau reports? Simply, their data is used to determine if this is a viable career. If the Bureau of Labor considers this a nonviable career, it could lead to lower federal loans and grants available to future beauty and wellness students.
5. It devalues the legitimacy of the beauty and wellness industry as a whole and consequently results in a lack of respect for you as a beauty professional.

Not reporting all income is not only against the law, it is detrimental to your financial prosperity. It may seem that it is more fun to have a few extra dollars in your pocket each week and not to report your tips, but the truth is the joy of a few extra dollars each week does not outweigh the benefits of accurately reporting your income.

The reality is you are the only person who can create your future. You have the ability to control how much money you make. You can establish a financial standing that will afford you everything you want! Don't jeopardize your dreams and your goals by breaking the law. Set yourself up to win—and at the same time, raise the bar in the industry and help set future students up to win as well!

Personal Budget

It is amazing how many people work hard and earn very good salaries, but never take the time to create a personal budget. Many people are afraid of the word *budget* because they think that it will be too restrictive on their spending, or they have to be mathematical geniuses in order to work with a budget. Thankfully, neither of these fears is rooted in reality.

Personal budgets range from being extremely simple to extremely complex. The right one for you depends on your needs. At the beginning of your career, a simple budget should be sufficient. To get started, take a look at the Personal Budget Worksheet in **Figure 21–6**. It lists the standard monthly expenses that most people have to budget. It also includes school loan repayment, savings, and payments into an individual retirement account (IRA).

Personal Budget Worksheet

A. Expenses

1. My monthly rent (or share of the rent) is $_____
2. My monthly car payment is _____
3. My monthly car insurance payment is _____
4. My monthly auto fuel/upkeep expenses are _____
5. My monthly electric bill is _____
6. My monthly gas bill is _____
7. My monthly health insurance payment is _____
8. My monthly entertainment expense is _____
9. My monthly bank fees are _____
10. My monthly grocery expense is _____
11. My monthly dry cleaning expense is _____
12. My monthly personal grooming expense is _____
13. My monthly prescription/medical expense is _____
14. My monthly telephone is _____
15. My monthly student loan payment is _____
16. My IRA payment is _____
17. My savings account deposit is _____
18. Other expenses: _____

TOTAL EXPENSES $_____

B. Income

1. My monthly take-home pay is _____
2. My monthly income from tips is _____
3. Other income: _____

TOTAL INCOME $_____

C. Balance

Total Income (B) _____

Minus Total Expenses (A) _____

BALANCE $_____

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▲ **Figure 21–6** Personal budget worksheet.

Keeping track of where your money goes is one step toward making sure that you always have enough. It also helps you to plan ahead and save for bigger expenses such as a vacation, your own home, or even your own business. All in all, sticking to a budget is a good practice to follow faithfully for the rest of your life.

Giving Yourself a Raise

Once you have taken time to create, use, and work with your personal budget, you may want to look at ways in which you can have more money left over after paying bills. You might automatically jump to the most obvious sources, such as asking your employer for a raise or asking for a higher percentage of commission. While these tactics are certainly valid, you will also want to think about other ways to increase your income. Here are a few tips:

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- Spend less money. Although it may be difficult to reduce your spending, it is certainly one way to increase the amount of money that you have left at the end of the month. These dollars can be used to invest, save, or pay down debt.
- Work more hours. If possible, choose times when the salon or spa is busiest, which are the most convenient for clients. Come early and stay late to accommodate clients' booking needs. Saturday is a peak workday in most salons and spas.
- Increase service prices. It will probably take some time before you are in a position to increase your service prices. To do so, you need a loyal **client base**, which is customers who are loyal to a particular nail technician: you. Also, you must have fully mastered all the services that you are performing. If you have a loyal client base and service mastery, there is nothing wrong with increasing your prices every year or two, as long as you do so by a reasonable amount. Do a little research to determine what your competitors are charging for similar services and increase your fees accordingly.
- Retail more. Most salons and spas pay a commission on every product you recommend and sell to your clients. If you sell more products, you make more money!

Seek Professional Advice

Just as you want your clients to seek your advice and services for their nail care needs, sometimes it is important for you to seek the advice of experts, especially when it comes to your finances. Research and interview financial planners who will be able to give you advice on reducing your credit card debt, investing your money, and planning for your retirement. Ask the officers at your local bank if they can suggest bank accounts that offer you greater returns or flexibility with your money, depending on what you need.

When seeking out advice from other professionals, be sure not to take anyone's advice without carefully considering whether it makes sense for your particular situation and needs. Before you buy into anything, be an informed consumer about other people's goods and services. ✓ **LO4**

Activity

Go through the budget worksheet on page 467 and fill in the amounts that apply to your current living and financial situation. If you are unsure of an expense, put in the figure you have averaged over the past 3 months (or give it your best guess). You may need to have 3 or 4 months of employment history to complete the income item, but fill in what you can. If the balance is a minus number, start listing ways you can decrease expenses or increase income.

- How do your expenses compare to your income?
- What is your balance after all your expenses are paid?
- Were there any surprises for you in this exercise?
- Do you think that keeping a budget is a good way to manage money?
- Do you know of any other methods people use to manage money?

DISCOVER THE SELLING YOU

Another area that touches on the issue of you and money is selling. As a nail professional, you will have enormous opportunities to sell retail products and upgrade service tickets. **Ticket upgrading**, or **upselling** services, is the practice of recommending and selling additional services to clients. These services may be performed by you or other professionals licensed in a different field. **Retailing** is the act of recommending and selling quality products to clients for at-home use **(Figure 21–7)**. These two activities can make all the difference in your economic picture. The following dialogue is an example of ticket upgrading. In this scene, Marie, the nail technician, suggests additional services to her client, Ms. Brand, who has just had her nails done for a wedding she will be attending that evening.

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▲ **Figure 21–7** Sell quality nail products to clients.

Read the script yourself and change the words to make them fit your personality. Then try it the next time you feel that an additional service could help one of your clients.

Marie: I'm really glad you like your new nail color. It will be perfect with the dress you described. Don't you just love formal weddings?

Ms. Brand: Yes! To tell you the truth, I don't get dressed up very often, and putting the look together was harder than I thought it would be.

Marie: Yes, I know what you mean. You'll look great! Are you all set with your nail products and makeup for tonight, Ms. Brand? It would be a shame to have a beautiful new dress and gorgeous nails, and then have to worry about your makeup.

Ms. Brand: Well, actually, I was sort of wondering about that. I'm wearing this long black dress and I'm not really sure what the best look is for the occasion. Got any ideas?

Here's a Tip:

Increasing your service prices in $3.00 increments is a great way to increase your income each week, without it costing clients so much that they consider not using your services any longer.

Marie: Well, as you know, my specialty is nail care, but we have an excellent makeup artist right here. Shall I get her for you?

Ms. Brand: Definitely. That sounds terrific!

Marie: You know, since this is such an important occasion, you may want to consider having Stephanie, one of our hairstylists, do your hair. That will ensure that your total look is the best it can be.

Ms. Brand: I think that's a great idea. Thanks for the suggestion!

Principles of Selling

Some nail technicians shy away from sales. They think that it is scary, that they are being pushy, or that it's beneath them. A close look at how selling works can set your mind at ease. Not only can you become very good at selling after you understand the principles behind it, but you can also feel good about providing your clients with a valuable service.

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To be successful in sales, you need ambition, determination, and a good personality. The first step in selling is to sell yourself. Clients must like and trust you before they will purchase nail services or nail care items or other products and services.

Remember, every client who enters the salon is a potential purchaser of additional services or merchandise. Recognizing the client's needs and preferences lays the foundation for successful selling.

To become a proficient salesperson, you must be able to apply the following principles of selling:

- Be familiar with the features and benefits of the various services and products that you are trying to sell and recommend only those that the client really needs. You should try and test all the products in the salon or spa yourself.
- Adapt your approach and technique to meet the needs and personality of each client. Some clients may prefer a soft sell that involves informing them about the product, without stressing that they purchase it. Others are comfortable with a hard-sell approach that focuses emphatically on why they should buy the product.
- Be self-confident when recommending products for sale. You become confident by knowing about the products you are selling and by believing that they are as good as you say.
- Generate interest and desire in the customer by asking questions that determine a need.
- Never misrepresent your services or products. Making unrealistic claims will only lead to your client's disappointment and make it unlikely that you will ever again make a sale to that client.
- Do not underestimate the client's intelligence or knowledge of her own nail care regimen or particular needs.
- To sell a product or service, deliver your sales talk in a relaxed, friendly manner and, if possible, demonstrate the use of the product. **(Figure 21–8)**.

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▲ **Figure 21–8** Demonstrate a product's benefits.

- Recognize the right psychological moment to close any sale. After the client has offered to buy, quit selling. Do not oversell, except to praise the client for the purchase and to assure her that she will be happy with it.

FOCUS ON...

Overcoming Objections

Making a sale isn't easy. Sometimes, a client is stuck on a nail color that isn't flattering. Other times, she may not feel convinced that a product is any better than a drugstore brand or she may have a genuine price objection. To overcome an objection, reword the objection in a way that addresses the client's need. For instance, let's say you recommend a cuticle cream based on the fact that your client has complained of dry cuticles. In response, she says she already has hand cream, and that should be enough.

First, acknowledge what she said. Then reword her objection that she already has hand cream in a different way, which gets her thinking. For example:

> "Yes, that's good that you have hand cream, your hands feel soft and smooth. The cuticle cream, however, is specifically designed to deliver rich nutrition to your cuticles and nails, which will help grow your nails and eliminate the cracked skin. I will apply some during your manicure and leave some at the reception desk so you can think about it."

If the objection is a price objection, base your reaction on the client's. For strong objections, acknowledge the price and offer a free sample, if you can. If the objection is moderate, acknowledge it and restate the product's benefits.

> "It's a little more expensive, but if you really want your nails to grow and become stronger, delivering nutrition through your cuticles and keeping the skin healthy is key. This is the best product I have found. After I apply it during your manicure, you can experience the results and let me know."

Always state things in terms of the client's benefit, based on the information you gathered during the consultation.

Here's a Tip:

Wondering how to successfully sell retail products to nail clients? In a nutshell, it takes:

- Reasonable expectations for selling products in a month's time.
- An incentive program that rewards everyone—the salon, the nail tech, and the client!
- A positive attitude. No one wants to buy products from a person who is not genuinely happy to be at the salon.
- Smart promotional pricing and/or some kind of added value for the client who is making the purchase.
- Eye-catching displays.

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fyi

The standard retail sales commission for nail technicians is 10 percent of their total retail sales per week.

The Psychology of Selling

Most people have reasons for doing what they do, and when you are selling something, it is your job to figure out the reasons that might motivate a person to buy. When dealing with salon clients, you will find that their motives for buying salon or spa products vary widely. Some may be concerned with issues of vanity. (They want to look better.) Some are seeking personal satisfaction. (They want to feel better about themselves.) Others need to solve a problem that is bothersome. (They want to spend less time maintaining their nails.)

Sometimes, a client may inquire about a product or service but still be undecided or doubtful. In this type of situation, you can help the client by offering honest and sincere advice. When you discuss a nail service with a client, address the results and benefits of that service. Always keep in mind that your first consideration should be the best interests of the client. You will need to know exactly what your client's needs are and a clear idea as to how those needs can be fulfilled. Refer to the sample dialogues in this section. One involves ticket upgrading and the other involves retailing; both demonstrate effective selling techniques.

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▲ **Figure 21–9** Place the retail product in the client's hands whenever possible.

Here are a few tips on how to get a conversation about sales started:

- Ask clients what products they are using for home maintenance of their nails, hands, and feet.
- Discuss the products you are using as you use them. For instance, tell the client why you are using the particular base coat, top coat, or cream and what it will do for her. Also explain how she should use the product at home.
- Place products in the clients' hands whenever possible, or have them in view **(Figure 21–9)**.
- Advise the client about how recommended services will provide personal benefit (stronger nails and longer-lasting nail polish, for instance).
- Keep retail areas clean, well lit, and appealing.
- Inform clients about any promotions and sales going on in the salon or spa.
- Be informed about the merits of using a professional product as opposed to generic store brands.

While you realize that retailing products is a service to your clients, you may not be sure how to go about it. In the following scenes, pay attention to how Cassandra, the nail technician, highlights the benefits and features of a product to her client, Ms. Jewell. Note that price is not necessarily the most important factor.

Ms. Jewell: I just love the way you always make my cuticles and hands look like they're in such good shape.

Cassandra: I always use a penetrating cuticle oil on your cuticles, Ms. Jewell. It's a wonderful product and one you should be using on your cuticles every day. I suggest you use the cuticle stick and hand cream regularly to keep your skin soft and cuticles healthy.

Ms. Jewell: Is that the lotion you use with the great lavender scent?

FOCUS ON...

Retailing

For quick reference, keep these five points in mind when selling:

1. **Establish a rapport with the client.**
2. **Determine the client's needs.**
3. **Recommend products/services based on the client's needs.**
4. **Emphasize benefits.**
5. **Close the sale.**

Cassandra: I love that light lavender scent, too. It's a really great moisturizing lotion that we swear by—it's fabulous for treating dry and even chapped skin. It soothes that dry, rough skin that can accumulate on hands and feet, especially in dry winter weather. When you use this lotion at home, any dry flaky skin will be taken care of!

Ms. Jewell: Great! LO5

Activity

Pick a partner from class and role-play the dynamics of a sales situation. Take turns being the customer and the nail technician. Evaluate each other on his or her performance, with suggestions about where you can improve. Then try this exercise with someone else, as no two customers are the same.

FOCUS ON...

Social Media to Create Buzz

Originally created as a tool for family and friends to interact, social media has become a popular marketing tool to drive your business. To make social media the best tool for your professional use, you will want to consider the purpose of the page. Is it for generating discussion so members can interact with one another and post messages, or will it be an information source where the owner of the page will post information and special promotions? Determining the purpose of your social media page will guide you in setting up the access privileges. Regardless of the level of interaction you grant members of the page, social media can become a marketing tool to share news, promotions, education, photos and upcoming events, complete with invitations.

Before launching your social media page, visit the Web sites of other salons or spas and look for the link to their social media page. After viewing several examples, you will learn what type of page will work best for you so you can begin marketing your business through social media.

The following are some simple tips for a successful social media business page:

- Create a separate page on social media for business. Ensure the page is used for business only and that all activity is for that purpose.
- Think before you post. Ask yourself if this information will enhance the image of the salon or spa and yourself.
- Think before you "tag" someone in a photo. People may not want their photo made public, so ask for permission before posting.
- Keep your page fresh. Post useful information regularly, so people have a reason to visit your page to see the latest promotions or news.
- You can ask members to write reviews for you to promote your business. If you do not allow postings from members, simply post their review and add their name to the bottom. Always ask for permission before posting.

KEEPING CURRENT CLIENTS AND EXPANDING YOUR CLIENT BASE

Once you have mastered the basics of good service, take a look at some marketing techniques that will expand your client base and keep your clients coming back to you for services. The following are only a few suggestions; there are many others that may work for you. The best way to decide which techniques are most effective is to try several!

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- Birthday cards. Ask clients for their birthday information (just the month and day, not the year) on the client consultation card and then use it as a tool to get them into the salon or spa again. About one month before the client's birthday, send a card with a special offer. Make it valid only for the month of their birthday.
- Provide consistently good service. It seems basic enough, but it is amazing how many professionals work hard to get clients and then lose them because they rush through a service and leave clients feeling dissatisfied. Providing good-quality service must always be your first concern.
- Be reliable. Always be courteous, thoughtful, and professional. Be at the salon or spa when you say you will be there, and do not keep clients waiting. (Refer to Chapter 4 for tips on how to handle the unavoidable times when you are running late.) Give your clients the nail length and shape they ask for, not something else. Recommend a retail product only when you have tried it yourself, and you know what it can and cannot do.
- Be respectful. When you treat others with respect, you become worthy of respect yourself. Being respectful means that you do not gossip or make fun of anyone or anything. Negative energy brings everyone down, especially you.
- Be positive. Become one of those people who always sees the glass as half full. Look for the positive in every situation. No one enjoys being around a person who is always unhappy.
- Be professional. Sometimes, a client may try to make your relationship more personal than it ought to be. It is in your best interest—and your client's best interest—not to cross that line. Remember that your responsibility is to be the client's nail technician, not a psychiatrist, a marriage counselor, or a buddy. Because the nature of the beauty and wellness industry is built on relationships, it may be tempting to take conversations into personal areas. This includes disclosing private information about yourself. However, once you become too relaxed and casual with your clients, you run the risk of undermining your professional image and the quality of your service can become impaired.
- Use business card referrals. Make up a special business card with your information on it, but leave room for a client to put her name on it as well. If your client is clearly pleased with your work, give her several cards. Ask her to put her name on them and to refer her friends and associates to you. For every card you receive from a new customer with her name on it, give her 10 percent off her next salon or spa service or a complementary service added to her next appointment. This gives the client lots of motivation to recommend you to others, which, in turn, helps build up your clientele **(Figure 21–10)**.

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▲ **Figure 21–10** Referral cards help build a client base.

- Follow up for success. Showing that you care about your clients and their satisfaction level goes a long way in building your business. Sending thank-you cards to first-time clients and making "check-in" calls a few days after a service demonstrates your gratitude for their business and a desire to meet their expectations.
- Foster local business referrals. Another terrific way to build business is to work with local businesses to get referrals. Look for clothing stores, florists, gift shops, and other small businesses near your salon or spa. Offer to have a card swap and commit to referring your clients to them when they are in the market for goods or services that your neighbors can provide, if they will do the same for you. This is a great way to build a feeling of community among local vendors and to reach new clients you may not be able to otherwise.
- Public speaking. Make yourself available to speak to local women's groups, the PTA, organizations for young men and women, and anywhere else that will put you in front of people in your community who are all potential clients. Put together a short program (20 to 30 minutes) in which, for example, you might discuss professional appearance with emphasis in your chosen field and other grooming tips for people looking for positions or who are already employed.

FOCUS ON...

The Goal

Always remember that success does not just come to you; you make it happen. How? By being a team player, having a positive attitude, and keeping a real sense of commitment to our work foremost in your mind.

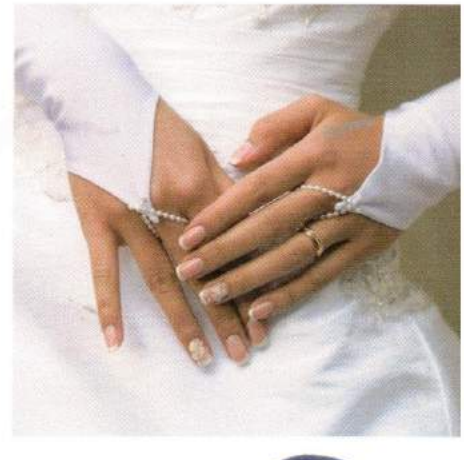
Rebooking Clients

The best time to think about getting your client back into the salon or spa is while she is still in your salon or spa. It may seem a little difficult to assure your client that you are concerned with her satisfaction on this visit while you are talking about her next visit, but, in fact, the two go together. The best way to encourage your client to book another appointment before she leaves is to simply talk with her, ask questions, and listen carefully to her answers.

During the time that you are working on a client's nails, for instance, talk about the condition of her nails, nail grooming habits at home, and the benefits of regular or special salon or spa maintenance services. You might raise these issues in a number of ways.

- **Scenario 1: Enhanced Nails**
- "Mrs. Evelyn, when I did your fill today, I noticed that your nail enhancements need to be completely replaced. Shall I book a full set for your next visit?"
- **Scenario 2: Special Event**
- "Your son is getting married next month? How wonderful. Have you thought about having a deluxe pedicure service so your feet will look as beautiful as the rest of you in that new dress you told me about? I can set up an appointment for the day before the wedding."

Again, you will want to listen carefully to what your clients say during their visit, because they will often give the careful listener many good clues as to what is happening in their lives. That will open the door to discussing their next appointment. Rebooking clients before they leave the salon or spa will ensure that they receive the care they need when they need it, and that your appointment book remains filled. ✓ **LO6**



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FOCUS ON...

Building Your Efficiency

Some professionals believe that the more time they spend with their clients performing services, the better the service will be. Not so! Your client should be in the salon or spa only as long as is necessary for you to adequately complete a service.

Be aware of how much time it takes you to perform your various services and then schedule accordingly. As you become more and more experienced, you should see a reduction in the amount of time it takes you to perform these services. That means clients wait less, you can increase your number of services, and the increase in services naturally increases your income.

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▲ **Figure 21–11** Discuss customer service and technical skills with the salon or spa team.

ON YOUR WAY

Your first position as a nail technician will most likely be the most difficult. Getting started in this business means being on a steep learning curve. Be patient with yourself as you transition from the "school you" to the "professional you." Always remember that in your work life, as in everything else you do, practice makes perfect. You will not know everything you need to know at the start, but be confident in the fact that you are graduating from nail school with a solid knowledge base. Make use of the many generous and experienced professionals you will encounter and let them teach you the tricks of the trade. Make the commitment to perfecting your technical and customer service skills.

Above all, always be willing to learn. If you let the concepts that you have learned in this book be your guide, you will enjoy your life and reap the amazing benefits of a career in nail technology (**Figure 21–11**).

Here's a Tip:

There are plenty of books and Web articles that offer great strategies for building a client base and keeping those clients coming back to you. Look into these and make a list of the suggestions that seem like a good fit for you, your client base, and your salon or spa. Then, choose one strategy to try every two to three months, and see how well it works for you. If it helps you to accomplish your goal of getting and keeping new clients, then put a star next to it and save the idea to use again, when the time is right!

Review Questions

1. List the characteristics necessary to thrive in a service profession.
2. What is a job description, and why is it important?
3. List three common ways that nail technicians are compensated.
4. Why is it important to manage your money, and what method can you use to do so?
5. List the ways that nail technicians can increase their income.
6. What is ticket upgrading or upselling services?
7. How is retailing good for clients, nail technicians, and salons or spas?
8. List five strategies that will help to expand your client base.
9. Why is it so important to rebook clients before they leave the salon or spa?