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Boulevard's Guide to Salon Recruiting

It's a whole new world out there, and salon recruitment is changing for good — and for the better.

Here's everything salon owners need to know to get recruiting right and nail the challenges of today's industry.



Contents

Salon Recruiting Right Now — Taking the Industry’s Temperature	03
There’s No Place Like a Salon — The Industry’s Unique Recruiting	05
Self-Care Standard — Keeping wellness front and center	06
Expansion Goals — When salons aim for the stars	07
Hire the right person for the job	07
Pave the way with next-level training	08
Empower, deputize & trust your people	08
Catalyst for Change — An evolution in the workforce	09
6 Steps to Successful Salon Recruiting	11
#1: Write a killer job description (and post it in the right place)	11
#2: Get your tech stack right (it matters more than you think)	12
#3: Invest in company culture (the real recruiting secret sauce)	13
#4: Build meaningful relationships (at every level of your team)	14
#5: Prioritize accountability (clear boundaries help everyone)	15
#6: Celebrate your team (don’t take top talent for granted)	16
In Closing	17
About Boulevard	18

Salon Recruiting Right Now — Taking the Industry's Temperature



Recruiting has always been an important investment for salons. No matter what services you provide, at the end of the day, salons are relationship businesses. The people on your team determine the experience you can offer your clients, the vibe of your space, and your business' ability to grow and thrive. But recruiting doesn't look the way it used to, and recruitment strategies have to change along with the shifting sands of the salon industry.

In 2017, recruiting was the [number one](#) concern for salon owners. But in the years since, the specific challenges of salon recruiting have evolved. Instead of struggling to keep talent on board, salon owners are now struggling to find and hire talent in the first place. It's a complaint that extends far beyond the salon industry; during [the Great Resignation](#) of 2021, a record [45 million](#) Americans voluntarily left their jobs.

The quitting trend is a sign that employees have started reclaiming much of the power that was once held firmly by employers. Any old job won't do the trick anymore — in today's market, workers are no longer willing to settle for a company that offers low pay, little respect, and limited growth opportunities. Salons are being forced to rethink the details of the employment packages they offer, from hard compensation numbers to softer points like company culture.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic placed emphasis on self-care. The employees that have returned to work (or are open to it) are committed to better balancing their professional and personal lives. People’s priorities have shifted, perhaps permanently. In that vein, salon industry professionals are searching for different types of work now than they did pre-pandemic. According to a [2021 State of the Industry](#) report compiled by Talent Match, 50% of salon professionals said their careers were impacted by COVID-19.

12% moved from employee roles to renter structures, while 36% left the renter life to become employees. A further 2% left the salon industry completely. Safety and schedule changes due to family commitments were among the top three reasons professionals made those career transitions, but the most pressing concern was perhaps the most obvious: financial needs.

In order to solve the modern recruitment puzzle, salon owners need to get with the times. So long as inflation is the law of the land and costs of living keep going up across the country, compensation will need to rise to get and stay competitive. Salon owners will need to keep an eye on both overall job market patterns and industry-specific hiring challenges. If the Great Resignation has taught us anything at all, it’s that there’s no such thing as one-size-fits-all employment — or recruitment, for that matter.

In this guide, we’ll take a detailed look at how salon recruiting is changing, examine the role of culture in creating future-proof salon teams, and explore a step-by-step approach to successful salon recruiting in 2022 and beyond.



There's No Place Like a Salon — The Industry's Unique Recruiting Challenges

Although many of the challenges that salon owners face when it comes to hiring are industry-agnostic, other concerns are unique to the wonderful world of salons. **Let's look at some of the issues that are specific to the salon industry, and explore ways to climb those recruitment mountains.**

Self-Care Standards — Keeping wellness front and center

Salons are monuments to self-care. From regularly scheduled appointments like touch-ups and trims to styling for special occasions and treats just because, the salon experience demonstrates just how closely connected looking good and feeling good really are. Interpersonal connection is also an important part of the wellness aspect of salons. Sure, checking out your new look in the mirror after a double process color treatment is exciting. But don't we all relish the few minutes we spend with our heads in the sink for a relaxing shampoo under the well-trained hands of an experienced assistant?

Even though salons have a reputation for being respites from the real world, too often, salon owners forget to extend their wellness missions into the back office. Employees today want to be able to bring their whole selves to work. Even if someone is good at their job and ready to work hard, today's workforce also expects there to be an element of care in their employment. That may inspire them to look for a positive work culture, or even just the ability to leave work at work and protect their personal time.

"There are two sets of clients in every business; the ones that pay us for services and expertise, and the ones who work for us. Our teams require the same care that our clients do... I would even argue they require more. After all, this is the individual who interacts with our clients. They're a big part of how we put food on the table."

SHANALIE WIJESINGHE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, BOULEVARD

Think of it this way: the smell of luscious creams and essential oils wafts by a client's nose as soon as they enter the door of your salon. What will your new hire smell first? Will they get an exhilarating whiff of a supportive, nurturing, exciting environment that values and respects all people? If not, hiring (and retaining) top-quality talent is going to be an uphill battle.

Expansion Goals — When salons aim for the stars



For many salons, their first location is just the beginning. Dreams of global domination business expansion are incredibly common, and can take many shapes, from multi-location structures to franchising models. **But one of the most critical components of successful business growth is having the right people in place.** Say an owner has to bounce across town to handle a crisis at the new salon — who's left running shop number one? And are they set up to succeed?

These are a few of the most important elements to consider when it comes to building a tight-knit, growth-minded team that's ready for anything:

Hire the right person for the job

Everyone wants to hire talented folks — that much is a no-brainer. For a leg up, make sure you're matching each individual with the right job. **Take the time to get to know the unique skills a prospective hire brings to the table, and then place them in a position that makes the most of their strengths.** It's always a good idea to give employees room to grow, too — once someone has the fundamental job requirements covered, find ways to keep them challenged enough to stay learning, growing, and engaged for the long haul.

Pave the way with next- level training

Offering opportunities for advancement is a good way to get employees invested in not only their own performance, but the whole team's success. When the rungs of the ladder are clear to see and there are incentives for doing well together, it's virtually impossible not to want to excel. But you can't just throw your employees in the deep end and expect them to swim. Provide the training your team needs to climb that ladder tomorrow, and get today's job done.

That can include offering future-focused educational programs, but it starts with in-depth training on the processes and standards you expect. **Efficiency, collaboration, and teamwork don't happen by accident; ensuring systems are in place to keep everything running smoothly will pave the way for sustainable and replicable growth throughout your business expansion.**

Empower, deputize & trust your people

The tendency to micromanage is perfectly understandable. The salon is your baby, and you want it to run exactly the way you envision it. But it takes a village, as they say, and salon owners know better than anyone that success is impossible without the help of a team. **Owners also need to become mentors, investing in and developing their staff members to learn and take on that vision for themselves.**

Once the right people are in the right roles and everyone is trained up on the skills, systems, and processes that create the conditions for success, salon owners can step back into overarching leadership roles with confidence. **Instead of staying up to your elbows in the day-to-day, empower managers to make game-time decisions, and deputize trusted employees to be responsible for specific projects or even areas of business.** It takes a lot to trust your people, but that trust will go a long way. And the more you trust your team, the easier it will be for clients to trust them (regardless of their job title or seniority level).

Catalyst for Change — An evolution in the workforce

It should come as no surprise that as the nature of work is changing, so are worker attitudes.

Generation Z — people born between 1997 and 2012 — now makes up 25% of the global workforce.

Their behaviors and expectations reflect a life spent connected to the internet, with a worldview informed by major global events like the reality of climate change. Those that are entering the job market post-pandemic have an even more unique mindset; COVID-19 shined a spotlight on the importance of flexibility for working parents and a new understanding of what it means to have work/life balance, for example.

As trends like these take root, a new standard has emerged that benefits all employees at all stages of life. According to Talent Match's 2021 State of the Industry report, two-thirds of beauty school students plan to find employment in salons, while a full third plan to work for themselves when they graduate. 83% of students say that a flexible schedule is an important consideration (a further 17% say it's somewhat important). More than half say they believe working weekends should be optional always and immediately, while only 32% say it should take between 1-5 years to earn the privilege of taking weekends off. Almost two-thirds of students say they won't even consider taking a salon job that doesn't offer benefits.



Meanwhile, a whopping 95% of students research salons before applying to their job listings, mostly using Instagram, salon websites, and customer reviews. Today's workforce is accustomed to being online, and social media platforms and digital tools put countless job search resources in workers' pockets at all times. 68% of cosmetology students and professional stylists say they look at individual employees' Instagram profiles to learn more about a salon's team before submitting an application. If your staff is singing your praises, it's all out there for prospective talent to see. But that also means if they're less than satisfied, that information is available too.

When you post a job listing, you're probably focused on the expectations you have of candidates. But today's applicants have expectations of their own, and salons that don't anticipate them and adapt accordingly will miss out on everything this bright and eager workforce brings to the table. If they make it to the interview stage, candidates expect the process to be comprehensive and detailed; 90% of students and stylists want scheduling, training requirements, performance expectations, compensation, and team culture to all be covered in their first interview.

But this isn't just about Gen Z; younger generations have simply set the standard for trends and attitudes that are taking root across all age groups. **Younger generations and global events like the pandemic have nudged today's workforce to begin reclaiming power for themselves as employees, instead of following the whims of employers.** At a minimum, meeting the expectations set by Gen Z workers means that for more advanced applicants, you may even exceed them. Modern workers of all ages know that they have options, and they refuse to be pigeonholed into the way things used to be done. Salons must adapt and live up to those expectations if they want to attract and retain today's top talent.

6 Steps to Successful Salon Recruiting

We've taken salons' temperature on the topic of recruiting, and we've looked at some of the specific challenges that the industry faces when it comes to getting talent in the door (and keeping them there). Now let's get down to brass tacks with a step-by-step approach to nailing salon recruiting right now.

1

Write a killer job description (and post it in the right place)

If you're used to cutting and pasting a stock job description across a bunch of different roles, think again. People want to know what's special about your company and why they should want to join your team. Here are a [few tips](#) to make your job listing stand out from the crowd:

Get specific: You're probably not just hiring for a "stylist." Senior or junior? Full-time or part-time? Include enough detail in the job title to allow candidates to determine fit.

Define expectations: Outlining the skills and past work experience that you expect will help ensure you only receive applications from qualified candidates.

Describe duties: It's important to explain the duties and responsibilities that come with a role so candidates know what is going to be asked of them on the job.

Commit to compensation: Compensation is about more than salary; you should also outline your commission structure, bonuses, and any benefits you provide employees.

Strut your stuff: In addition to describing your salon, how long you've been in business, and the kinds of services you provide, make sure that your entire job listing reflects the spirit of your business. It may be the first time a prospective hire is interacting with your brand, so it's important to deliver an experience of who you are and how you do things.

2

Get your tech stack right (it matters more than you think)

Perhaps more important than the content of your job listing, though, is where you post it. According to Talent Match's [2021 State of the Industry](#) report, Instagram is the number one way beauty school students find salon jobs. Schools are the second place job source, either through career fairs or on-site visits from salons, and job site Indeed is in third place. If you're relying on old-school job websites to spread the word that you're hiring, you're probably missing out on a huge candidate pool that's already looking for their next opportunity.

Having the right tech in place doesn't just make your business run smoothly, it also helps you [retain top talent](#). It's true that implementing salon technology can require up-front investment and some initial training time to get your team up to speed. But it's worth it in the long run — improved efficiency, decreased staff turnover, and increased revenue all go hand in hand in the salon world. **Running your business using the right salon management software solution can help you use technology to satisfy management, staff, and client needs all at once.**

Other indirect benefits, like providing better client experiences and boosting client loyalty, also contribute to your salon's bottom line and your employees' satisfaction by keeping your customers happy and coming back for more. Finally, your salon management software should also offer reporting capabilities so that you can keep an eye on your results over the course of the week, month, quarter, or year, and support your staff to meet and even exceed their goals before the clock runs out on the time period you're tracking.

3

Invest in company culture (the real recruiting secret sauce)

Forget location — today's best business advice amounts to a new rule of threes: culture, culture, culture. As much as consumers want to do business with brands that [share their values](#), people want to work for companies that stand for something. Salon owners should be intentional about designing and defining company culture — if you don't, the default culture that can and will develop without your attention isn't likely to be one you're proud of.

It's a good idea to start with your values, but get your head out of the clouds about it. Broad concepts like “respect” and “fun” are fine starting points, but they also mean different things to different people. Drill down into what you really mean by the values you claim for your brand, and set expectations around what embodying those concepts looks like. Does your team [show respect](#) by showing up on time, or by keeping their stations clean? Is your idea of fun an after-work happy hour, or is it about bringing levity and laughter to interactions with colleagues and clients?

If you don't define your values with this level of specificity, company culture becomes impossible to repeat or replicate. When culture is tied to an individual owner's personality, it's difficult to capture that spirit without that person in the room.

No matter how you define your salon's culture at the outset, have the courage to give your definitions room to breathe. If you're recruiting the right people, chances are your new hires will have their own ideas about what your company culture is and what they imagine it could be. Be open-minded, listen to your employees, and encourage your entire team to become invested in the culture you're building together. **At the end of the day, culture isn't a top-down mandate. It's a living, breathing agreement between you and your staff — everyone will be able to sense when it's working well or when something's not quite right.**

4

Build meaningful relationships (at every level of your team)

When the crew is afraid of the captain of the ship, no one on the voyage is safe. That's not exactly a real seafarer's rule, but it should be a salon owner's mantra. Owners and managers need to build close relationships with employees instead of staying above the fray. If everyone stops talking when the manager walks into the break room, there's something broken on that team! According to [Talent Match's research](#), the number one reason stylists would leave a salon job for a new opportunity is bad management (even more important than not earning enough).

Instead, owners and managers should aim to build nurturing, trusting relationships with everyone who works for them. That foundation will make it easier to support and encourage employees to grow and excel, whether that means improving their skills or achieving higher sales numbers.

"People want mentors, not just someone to report to."

SHANALIE WIJESINGHE

One-on-one check-ins are a great way to keep those relationships thriving and healthy. 65% of employees want [more feedback](#) from their employers; what if instead of waiting until someone misses their goals for the quarter to schedule a meeting, owners saw that missed goal coming and worked with the employee to get back on track? **Regularly scheduled one-on-ones support that kind of consistent connection and ensure that every employee gets the attention they deserve, regardless of whether they're succeeding or struggling.**

5

Prioritize accountability (clear boundaries help everyone)

One of the most successful ways to keep your team on track and happy is to bake in systems of accountability from the start. Rushing to implement accountability after an incident won't help much, and depending on how serious the fall-out is, this band-aid approach can even breed resentment. Instead, salon owners should be proactive about establishing accountability from day one. **Setting and sharing clear boundaries leaves nothing to chance, and helps everyone on your team feel confident that they know where their lane starts and ends.** It also gives employees effective resources for when things go wrong, so that everyone is supported and working together, instead of throwing each other under the bus when it comes time to explain the situation to a manager.

Responsibilities: Delineate who's responsible for what, and post or share those responsibilities somewhere public where employees can reference them regularly. If someone's responsibilities change, everyone should be notified so that they can adjust accordingly.

Chain of command: Don't leave people guessing about where they stand in the hierarchy of your salon staff. Mapping out a chain of command doesn't have to be a put-down; instead, use it to provide clarity around manager/reportee relationships and define where employees should go when they have a question or an issue.

Lines of communication: Not everyone is in your salon at the same time, so how do you expect employees to communicate with each other? Whether colleagues are connecting to swap shifts or stylists are reporting end-of-day numbers to managers, define the methods of communication for each case so that nothing falls through the cracks.

6

Celebrate your team (don't take top talent for granted)

In many salon environments, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. But instead of solely focusing valuable attention on low-performing or problematic employees, salon owners should make sure to celebrate the most valuable members of the team too. Take the time to shout out a stylist that reached a milestone or acknowledge a group of employees for bringing in big numbers on their shift together.

You can **celebrate** individual and collective wins, but it's always a good idea to bring the party back to team dynamics. You'll know you've fostered strong connections with and among your team when everyone is pulling for each other's successes and cheering each other on instead of fuming in the corner when a colleague achieves a goal first.

All the retention and recruitment concepts in this guide come full circle here; your top staff are the ones breathing life into your company culture and keeping the fire burning on your team. **If salon owners treat employees the right way, support them when they're struggling, and celebrate when they're coming out on top, they'll be that much more likely to stick around through thick and thin.**



In closing

Salon recruitment is no less important now than it was five years or a decade ago, but the specific issues and challenges that the industry faces are a whole new ballgame in 2022. Global events and trends like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Great Resignation have inspired the workforce to reclaim their power when it comes to looking for — and staying in — jobs.

On top of those industry agnostic and internationally felt influences, the salon industry faces further obstacles that are unique to the world of beauty. Salons are expected to be temples to self-care but historically have not been effective at extending that wellness mindset to employees. Many salon owners have dreams of expansion, but they struggle to hold onto their most promising talent long enough to get business settled in their original locations. At the same time, today's workforce has a low tolerance for toxic work environments and has clear expectations for what constitutes attractive employment (and competitive compensation).

Against the backdrop of this paradigm shift in the industry, salon owners can follow these six steps to nail their recruiting game and retain top talent today:



1. Write **job descriptions** that give candidates a sense of what your salon is really like.



2. Invest in **software solutions** that make your life and your employees' jobs easier.



3. Commit to a positive **company culture** that inspires people to come to work every day.



4. Foster trusting and **supportive relationships**, and treat employees like whole humans.



5. Build systems of **accountability** so everyone knows what their responsibilities are.



6. Stop to **celebrate** big and small wins and encourage employees to be in it together.

Looking for a platform to help you do it all?

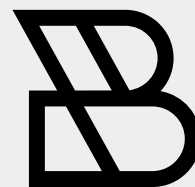
Boulevard was purpose-built to help you manage, market, and grow your self-care business.

[Watch a demo video now](#) to see it in action!

WATCH A DEMO

Salon owners that follow these steps and take a bird's eye view of the job market are sure to get ahead of the game. **Your recruitment strategy shouldn't look the same this year as it did in 2019 or even 2021 — the world is changing, and your salon should too.**

About Boulevard



Boulevard offers the first and only client experience platform purpose-built for appointment-based, self-care businesses.

Boulevard empowers business owners and professionals alike to deliver personable, enjoyable experiences to their clients through online appointment scheduling, messaging, and payments that are simple, elegant, and reliable. A privately held company founded in 2016, Boulevard has earned the trust of thousands of salons and spas across the nation by delivering the world-class technology and genuine, human, personable service they deserve.

Self-care businesses powered by Boulevard typically enjoy:

16%

MORE SERVICES
BOOKED

71%

FEWER NO-SHOWS
& LATE CANCELS

18%

MORE RETAIL
VALUE

24%

MORE GRATUITY
FROM CLIENTS

* Average impact T+90 days after switching to Boulevard