



# Future-Proofing Your Salon: Trends, Tech, and Tactics to Grow in 2026

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# Introduction

The salon industry has always moved fast, but rapid advances in technology and unprecedented changes in client expectations have led to salons evolving faster than ever.

With new trends that come and go and powerful AI tools reinventing themselves overnight, it can be difficult to stay on top of everything happening outside of your salon doors. And honestly? Your time is better spent focusing on what goes on inside them.

That's where our guide comes in. We'll help you cut through the noise and break down the top trends, technologies, and strategies that will shape salon success in 2026 and beyond. Let's dive in.



# The State of the Salon Industry Heading Into 2026



## Market Outlook

- The global beauty market is expected to grow 5% by 2030, though many executives cite uncertainty and reduced spending as the biggest risks to growth.
  - The US salon industry has grown to around \$60 billion in revenue over the past five years.
  - 57% of consumers believe the economy will be weaker in the near future, and will likely be tightening their budgets as a result.
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## The Impact of AI

- The National Hair & Beauty Foundation found that many salons are ready to embrace AI, seeing it as an opportunity to streamline operations and improve efficiency.
  - Clients aren't as convinced, however. The same report found that more than 70% of clients are either skeptical or uncomfortable with AI-powered styling suggestions, and 80% would not trust it for color suggestions. **100% said that human interaction is a crucial part of the salon experience.**
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## Rising Competition from Unlikely Sources

- Economic conditions are causing many potential clients to look for other ways to get their salon fix. At-home and self-service solutions are being viewed as an alternative to costly visits at the salon.
- Salons need to find ways to meet this growing need, either by finding new ways to entice clients back into your space or by creating take-home packages that offer value.

# Trend #1: Personalization Becomes Non-Negotiable

One thing is absolutely certain: Personalization is here to stay.

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A [McKinsey study](#) dug into what people are looking for from their favorite brands and found that they want relevant service recommendations (67%), tailored messaging (66%), targeted promotions (65%), and celebration of key life moments and milestones (61%). It also found that businesses who really nailed personalization saw a 40% increase in revenue compared to the average company.

In 2026, those numbers have fully solidified. From our [Self-Care Client Report 2026](#):

- **66% of clients say that remembering preferences** is a key factor in earning their long-term loyalty.
- **55% say they expect to be offered relevant add-ons**, memberships, or retail options as part of their experience.
- **41% of clients expect a same-day follow-up** after an appointment, whether that's a thank you email or text or a chance to book their next appointment.

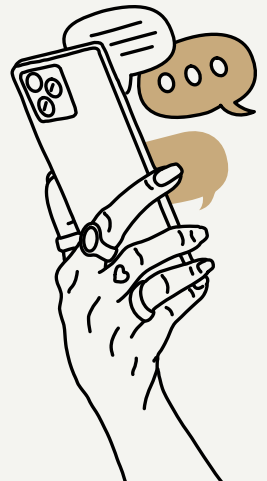
## Personalization at Scale

Ok, so you know every client wants to feel like they're the center of the universe. But you have a lot of clients. How can you achieve this type of personalization at scale?

The first step is embracing technology and processes that allow you to manage client profiles and track preferences across each visit. For example, if a client comes in for a hair color treatment, your client management [platform](#) could automatically surface data on the best time to come back in for a touch-up, so staff can bring it up during an appointment and your marketing platform can automatically send email or text reminders when the time comes to rebook. Meanwhile, AI-driven consultations built-in to your website can help fill the gaps, allowing clients to find their perfect look even when your shop is closed for the day. The possibilities are endless.

### Key Takeaway

Personalization is table stakes for any salon looking to build and grow. Clients expect you to know what they like, remember key milestones, and make suggestions relevant to their specific situation. AI-powered client management tools can automate a lot of this for you, allowing you to provide highly individualized (and memorable) experiences at scale.



# Trend #2: Memberships & Loyalty Programs Drive Predictable Revenue

It's not just you: The economy is in a real squeeze right now. Everyone's trying to do more with less just to get by. And while a vast majority of people are keeping salon visits in their monthly budgets (73%, according to our data), they're being much more intentional about how they spend that money.

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That's why salons are increasingly turning toward recurring revenue models. If you can guarantee that a certain amount of money is going to come in every month, you can maintain steady staffing levels, keep inventory stocked up, and make plans to grow your business in a more sustainable way.

## Members Only

Memberships are one highly effective way salons have been building stable revenue streams. For an annual or monthly fee, clients can access exclusive services, discounts, and gifts that they can't get anywhere else. For clients who know they need monthly or weekly trims or colors, memberships offer a great way to get a deal on services they're already booking while giving you recurring revenue you can rely on.

## Driving Loyalty

Loyalty programs can help you drive repeat visits, too. These don't necessarily need to bring in their own revenue through a subscription fee, but they can give clients an incentive to choose your salon over the competition by offering rewards for sticking with you.

The most important part of any loyalty program is to design rewards that feel experiential, rather than transactional. Discounts and coupons are nice, but try to include options that provide one-of-a-kind visits, like hands-on instructional opportunities, free consultations, or a VIP package including drinks and other comforts that only your most loyal clients can get.

## How to Design a Program **That Works in 2026**

- **Make it simple.** If clients need to consult a spreadsheet to compare the benefits of each membership package, you've made it too complicated. A couple of tiers with clearly outlined offerings is plenty to provide a nice balance of choice and value.
- **Embrace digital.** You and your clients should be able to manage their membership and associated rewards within your client management platform. Clients can log in to an app to check their progress, and you can automatically apply rewards at checkout. It's a win-win.
- **Make rewards meaningful.** Clients should feel like there's a real benefit to being part of the program. Miniscule discounts on basic services just won't cut it.

### Key Takeaway

Recurring revenue streams generated by memberships and loyalty programs are a great way to build a solid foundation that can carry your salon through tough times. Keep programs simple and make rewards impactful.



# Trend #3: Sustainability and Conscious Beauty Go Mainstream

2026 isn't just the year for financial sustainability; it's about environmental sustainability, too.

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Beauty businesses are pushing eco-friendly products and practices into the mainstream, infusing a thoughtfulness for the environment right into the roots of their business models. For example, [Nova Arts Salon](#) is eco-certified thanks to its diligent focus on tracking product waste and recycling single-use components and hair clippings. Not only does this approach help them reduce their impact on the environment, it also helps them stay on top of costs as they get as much as possible out of the products they pay for.

Sustainability can come in many forms, including:

- **Environmentally-friendly products and supplies**, made ethically and with minimal use of harmful chemicals.
- **Refill stations** where clients can come in and fill shampoo and conditioner bottles to reduce plastic waste.
- **Clean beauty services** that focus on natural, organic treatments.
- **Recycling hair services** to turn trims into compost, hair mats for soaking up oil spills, and even twine!
- **Water-efficient tools** to reduce water waste while achieving the same quality service and comfort your clients expect.

You can also turn your sustainability efforts into a key marketing differentiator, helping you drive sales success.

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## Case Study — Freecoat Nails

Everyone who's been in a nail salon knows that that nail care is traditionally chock full of solvents and polymers that are both harmful to the environment and anyone nearby unfortunate enough to catch a whiff of those pungent fumes. [Freecoat Nails](#) flipped the script. This nail and beauty bar franchise put its non-toxic and fume-free services front and center, even creating many of its products in-house. The result? A rapidly growing nail and beauty bar franchise with locations across the United States.

## Key Takeaway

Taking an environmentally conscious effort to running your salon isn't just good for the environment. It'll help you reduce product waste, while saving you money in the process. Plus, showing you take a thoughtful approach to the services you offer is a great way to stand out in a crowded market.

# Trend #4: Technology is Transforming the Client Journey

Smart devices are everywhere—literally. Recent research found that 91% of North Americans own a smartphone, and nearly 60% of internet traffic comes from mobile sources. These devices aren't just an accessory, they're central to the lives of many of your clients. If you're not building a client journey that takes technology into account, you're going to miss out on bookings and sales.

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## Mobile-first experiences

Your tech overhaul should start with your booking flow. Two-thirds of Gen Z and Millennials are willing to leave their favorite salons if their booking experience isn't seamless, so getting this step right is absolutely critical. Mobile bookings should be a one-to-one match to their desktop counterparts, and it should be easy to pick services, purchase add-ons, choose the date and time, and even request particular stylists. They should be able to opt-in to text-based reminders and communication, too, so you can stay in touch and keep the spark alive.

## In-salon tech

Augmented reality is taking the beauty experience to the next level. All it takes is a smart device and an app, and clients can see virtual representations of their favorite brands, styles, and colors before they make their decision. If you want to go all out, you can install a smart mirror at each station, which takes this experience out of the client's phone and puts it on a massive, wall-covering mirror display. That way, clients can try out new colors and give the OK to their stylist without ever leaving the chair.

## Back office

Your back office tech is the bassist of your salon band. Sure it may not get all the attention, but it's the support that enables everything else to work together in harmony. Client experience platforms like Boulevard integrate scheduling, payments, and marketing automation into a single space so you can manage all of these critical processes under one roof. Boulevard takes them a step further with features like:

- **Precision Scheduling™**, which schedules “best times” appointments for you, filling gaps and reducing downtime to maximize your stylist's day. Precision Scheduling helped Hudson Hawk keep its stylists busy and its clients happy across all their locations.
- **Offset**, which automatically calculates the credit card fee percentage from the transaction and shares the fee with the client to help reduce and stabilize overhead.
- **Marketing Suite**, which includes AI-powered tools to help you create, target, and deploy custom ad campaigns that convert lapsed clients into bookings.

## Key Takeaway

Embrace the technology available to you to elevate the client experience and streamline operations. A mobile-first approach to bookings will meet clients where they are, while augmented reality tools in the salon can give clients a virtual hands-on with new styles and colors. Marry the two halves together with smart back office tools that can automate the hard work for you.



# Trend #5: AI in the Salon — Harness the Tech, Keep the Magic

It's easy to get wrapped up in the hype and view AI as a magic wand you can wave to do everything for you, so it helps to take a step back and understand what AI is, what it can do, and what its limitations are.

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## AI as an Assistant, Not a Replacement

AI cannot replace your employees. They bring their unique personalities with them when they work with your clients, and offer personal insights that no AI tool can.

However, AI can augment their workflows. Take scheduling for instance. Once a client books an appointment in your client experience platform, AI can take that data and slot it into your schedule where it makes the most sense. A vast majority of your bookings will be for straightforward services, so let AI handle those services so your staff has more time to spend with clients who need more help finding the right service or product.

It's the same with other tasks, like reminders, confirmations, inventory management, and data reporting. All of these steps are essential, but they're time consuming, and some details are inevitably going to fall through the cracks. If you let AI manage the menial stuff for you, you and your team can spend more time on the tasks that matter most to your business. You'll also be able to spend more time giving better service to your clients — that thing you got in the business to do in the first place.

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## Case Study — Willow & Birch

Executing customized ad campaigns for each of your clients is a tall order, especially when you're running a 20,000 square foot salon and spa destination like Willow & Birch. The company embraced Boulevard's automated marketing suite, which helped the team create and send texts and emails to each of its clients. The results were almost instant, with revenue gains of \$127,000 in the first year!

## Boosting the client experience

We've already talked about the importance of personalization. Offering a unique experience across all client touch points is critical for gaining and retaining clients long-term. AI is there to help you give them that personal touch, from bookings to balayage.

Automated tools built into your client management system (like Boulevard AI) can scan client histories to detect their favorite products and go-to services. With this data, your marketing suite can automatically create highly-customized emails targeting these clients with discounts on the services you know they want the most, all without lifting a finger.

## Key Takeaway

When used intentionally, AI enhances the human touch rather than replacing it outright. From helping you craft the perfect message to filling scheduling gaps, AI tools are there to work alongside you and your team to help you get more done with less.



# Trend #6: Employee Experience Is a Growth Driver

Of course, you want to keep clients coming back. But you should also keep an eye on stylist retention, too.

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One study found that replacing a single employee costs businesses as much as two times their annual salary. And salons that keep their stylists engaged and satisfied don't just see less turnover; they experience nearly 80% fewer call-outs and a 23% increase in profitability.

So what does it take to keep stylists happy?

- **Flexible scheduling:** Your stylists have a life outside of work. Whether they need to have time during the day to attend their kid's baseball game or want to hit a concert at night, your team should have the flexibility to fit their lives around their work schedules.
- **Transparent pay models:** Tips, commission, and hourly wages should be clearly communicated during the hiring process, and any revisions to these values should be made transparently and presented well in advance of when they actually change. Also, ensure your pay schedules are consistent so stylists don't have to wonder when their next paycheck will arrive.
- **Ongoing education:** There's always something new to learn. Providing regular opportunities to instruct your team and improve their skills will allow them to give your clients even better service.

Perhaps most importantly, stylist retention often comes down to building a culture that rewards stylists and allows them to do their best work. One-off solutions are no longer enough to attract top talent in a competitive labor market. You must have a culture that permeates your business from the top down and create an environment that supports your team for the long haul.

## Key Takeaway

Your stylists aren't a replaceable cog in a machine; each one brings unique skills and experiences with them to the job every single day. Keeping them satisfied in their position and investing in their future will encourage them to stick around, reducing personnel costs while boosting your bottom line.



# Tactical Moves for Salon Owners in 2026

## Audit your tech and AI stack

What tools are you using to manage and operate your business? Are they working with you or against you? Examine every touch point your team has with the tech they use and ensure that they're working to help them do their jobs better and more efficiently. If they're not, consider investing in new ones.

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## Introduce one new membership or loyalty initiative

Pick one area you would like to see growth in and create an initiative that will help. Consider rewarding clients with a discount once they reach a certain loyalty threshold.

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## Invest in stylist education

Your team is your most valuable asset. Give them regular opportunities to learn advanced techniques, level up their business skills, and improve their digital presence to help them — and your business — grow.

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## Refresh your service menu with wellness add-ons

Services like scalp care and relaxation rituals can help you increase the value of your services and improve your bottom line with minimal lift.

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## Plan for financial resilience

There will always be tough times around the corner. Building predictable income streams and reducing overhead inefficiencies will allow you to survive the economic hardships while building a solid foundation to help you reap the rewards once things improve.



# TL;DR

**Personalization, memberships, sustainability, AI, and technology are no longer “nice-to-haves.”** They are essential components of the salon of the 21st century, and you should lean on them where appropriate so you can add revenue streams, make operations more efficient, and meet your clients where they are.

**AI should relieve staff of mundane tasks, not replace them.**

Understanding what AI does best will help you get the most out of this powerful tool, while knowing its limitations will ensure you don't use it for aspects of your business that require a human touch.

**Employee experience and financial planning are critical for growth.**

Cultivating a core team of highly-trained and knowledgeable salon professionals will strengthen your offerings and improve profitability, making your salon a force to be reckoned with.

**Salons that embrace these shifts now are most likely to thrive in 2026 and beyond.** A lot can happen in a year; new technologies and economic headwinds can transform the industry seemingly overnight. But these tips will help you build a solid foundation that can weather any storm that comes your way—and make you stronger and more resilient in the process.



# About Boulevard

**Boulevard is the fastest-growing client experience platform for appointment-based, self-care businesses.**

Boulevard combines online appointment scheduling, messaging, marketing, and payments into a single platform that is simple, elegant, and reliable. Founded in 2016, the company has helped thousands of salons, spas, medspas, and barbershops across the nation streamline and grow their business by empowering them to deliver memorable, personalized experiences to their clients. To learn more, visit [joinblvd.com](http://joinblvd.com).

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\*Average impact T+90 days after switching to Boulevard. These are estimated results based on aggregated customer data, results are not guaranteed. Please keep in mind that actual results may differ based on a number of factors, including market, client base, geography.

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