

HR Department Toolkit



Training the New / Retraining the Veteran Salon Employees

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Finding the best staff possible is one of the most important duties and leadership requirements for a salon manager. However, the next real challenge is to HOLD ON to those excellent employees that you labored so hard to hire. There are many incentives and motivations that can be used to do that but they all should follow a good organized training program. Without good training, all the incentives in the world will never be seen or experienced because untrained and, consequently unproductive employees are those that don't stay around. No one wants to feel that they are not contributing to the success of their work place. If they are of that attitude it's because of poor work attitudes they brought with them or more than likely that they have not had time invested in them by management. The most critical time investment in any employee is in showing and explaining to them what is expected. But so often, managers make the hiring of a new employee, show them how to run a basic transaction and then walk away to let the new worker flay around trying to do their job in a sea of confusion and frustration. New workers who have not been developed are often workers who feel that their employers just don't care about them and their feelings of accomplishment. This can create worker resentment of their manager; terrible attitudes toward fellow employees and customers and in extreme cases may be cause for insubordinations and ethics issues. The result of these issues is unavoidable turnover of workers either voluntary or involuntary and that costs the salon revenues, profits and market reputation. Worse than that for the manager is his or her reputation in the eyes of their bosses, the salon's owners. If ever there was an example of the adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" it is with the good judgment to give good training to good employees.

Training and Your Attitude

Customers have expectations to be met but so do employees. One of the most popular but misunderstood phrases is "The customer comes first." This is not a true statement. Employees come first either by your belief or by theirs. You can't expect employees to put real emphasis on giving good customer service if they have not been given attention first by their bosses. One of the top attentions of bosses expected from all employees of all age groups is to have their skills developed, which, when done will enhance their self-esteems. As the manager, no one is in a better position to do this than you. Let me emphasize this. **It is not only your opportunity to be a better-perceived boss but it is your obligation as their employer to do this. You owe it to your employees.** In turn, they should owe you their loyalty. You will neither earn nor deserve that loyalty until you help them develop as a productive worker.

When you take the time to properly train people, their skill level is raised--and so is your relationship with them because it shows you care. If an employee can clearly see that you are truly interested in, not just yourself and the salon's success, but also in their personal success and well-being, they will often pledge their loyalty and efforts with incredible commitment.

Training begins the process of "bonding" and bonding is what glues the employee to you as their leader. And, there are many components of bonding. Training, skill development, and self-esteem enhancement are only some of the pieces. There is no coincidence that an earned loyalty from bonding with employees eliminates insubordination, unnecessary tardiness, absenteeism, dishonesty and a host of other problems.

In addition to bonding, training gives the employee job definition and direction, which most workers seek in their lives. Because the personal lives of employees often do not have a solid, consistent definition, a well-defined workplace can almost be a haven in their lives. This is the reason some people border on becoming “workaholics.” Give good training and you just may create a “**preferred world**” for your employees when they work in your salon. At least, work will be, or should be, something they look forward to.

Certainly, the most important reason for good training is that your employees are in charge of your most important asset--**your inventory of satisfied customers**. Successful retail service industry outlets are not just successful because of price, cute slogans, massive inventories or megabuck advertising. They succeed because of vastly superior service. Customers can and will make the conscious decision to pay more when their shopping experience is dramatically better than somewhere else. In most cases, the providers of superior service are your "front line" workers - the employees who are the first to face the customer that can make or break a company's goodwill. Because of this, among the many things your training should teach a new worker is the proper care and feeding of customers. However, first things first. A good training program is vital mostly to teach and improve skills faster in a few days than employees could do on their own in weeks. And here is a critical rule to remember; the time taken to train someone is much less than the time taken later to undo mistakes.

The Critical Requirements of The Training Process

Note the use of the word “process.” No effective training is done on the spur of the moment nor is it done in a five-minute run-through of worker duties. Good training is a well thought out process that is like most other good management practices that are performed and re-performed with discipline for their execution. What that means is that the good manager/leader is a manager who focuses on the requirement of a thorough completed training regimen.

Here are steps you should take to make your training work be successful:

1. Start a “buddy system.” All new employees should be assigned a peer or fellow employee; someone the trainee can feel comfortable with to approach on everyday questions. This works because new people may feel fearful or embarrassed of asking questions of their immediate superior and a desire to impress their bosses. Because of that they won't want to ask many questions that may make them feel “stupid.” Nobody wants that! The buddy, however, is less threatening and the trainee will tend to ask more questions of and share more concerns with a buddy than with a boss. When selecting a buddy, be certain he or she is very knowledgeable about salon and company operations-especially that of handling customers. A buddy should be one of your better employees. After all, you want to clone only good employees. To keep the buddy's interest and emotional investment in the new worker you need to set up a reward plan for them. As an example, establish with the buddy that when the trainee stays with the salon for a period of 90 days and has above satisfactory performances the buddy will be rewarded with a cash payment of \$75. You can make it better by awarding them an additional \$75 after another 90 days. The investment of the \$150 reward will be cheap if the buddy takes ownership in helping you thru the development of this new worker who then becomes a good long-term performer.

2. Together, the buddy and the manager should review a training checklist. This is a list of basic but critical duties and procedures that the new employee is expected to learn and show proficiency with. No training plan works without a checklist. It's critical to have the involvement of forming the checklist with the buddy because he or she will be doing much of the formal and informal training. You want them to agree with what is to be taught-when an employee is part of the decision process they will support that process that much more. (See a suggested basic training checklist at the end of this chapter. Add or subtract from this list to match the actual procedural needs of your salon's operations)
3. Start your training with the attitude that most employees come to a new job with a desire to do well. Nobody starts a new job with the intentions of doing poorly. It's a natural intent for new workers to want please their bosses and to avoid criticism.
4. Don't try to cover your entire checklist in one day or even in one week. "Cramming" for a test may have worked for short-term retention of information but is not effective for long-term understanding and comprehension. Do your training in short, planned installments. The brain needs time to absorb new concepts.
5. When introducing each new part of training, always tell the employee the reasons for what they're to do. Employees react well to the logic behind a direction.
6. In all training stages, it's effective to use the "show me" approach. After you've covered each section of your training, have the employee show you how to do what you just explained or have them explain back to you as though you were the new worker.
7. Tell your new employee that mistakes are expected, and that they are learning experiences. If failures can be treated as good teachers, you'll get employees to do more self-evaluation. Self-correction is always a more powerful lesson than anyone else's teaching.
8. Be certain that at the end of each day during training the new employee is encouraged by reinforcing comments about his or her positive achievements of that day. New employees need to look forward to their next time at work and always remember to occasionally praise employees publicly in front of other workers. (Re-direct or reprimand in private.)
9. Training is not a one-time thing, nor is it just telling. It is:
 - Instruction on each duty and procedure
 - Showing the new worker how and why it's done a certain way
 - Observing the new worker as they do each duty and procedure
 - Coaching them on how to do it better
 - Follow-up on a periodic basis to be sure the lesson has "stuck"

- Reinforcing the positive actions and achievements and giving suggestions and direction on how to make weaker performances better.

10. Your immediate and most important goal in training is to get the new employee productive as soon as possible. Get them doing something positive – anything!

This will build confidence in their abilities to do the job. Also, give them your attitude of high expectations for their success. If the new trainee is not someone that you can do that for then they should not have been hired in the first place! A supervisor's high expectations are powerful in motivating people to either perform up to down to those expectations.

11. The correct way to give instructions can also make a significant difference in how they are received, understood and performed. Here are some key points in how you direct employees when doing your training:

- Give instructions, not orders. Orders of what to do and when to do them may be more appropriate with employees who are experienced in salon operations and the requirements of their jobs. These folks should have the required self-esteem to occasionally be "directly directed." For new people in training, however, your directions should be instructional with a tone of voice that indicates you want to help them develop their performance. An order makes sense when an employee has handled a similar project before or when you're confident that they understand your expectations. The key here is the word "new." With new employees or when you have a new direction or new methods for veteran employees, or new products, instruct but don't order them about. Teach them, coach them, and be their "cheerleader."
- Tailor your instructions to each employee's comprehension level and ability. Some employees will require more instruction in certain areas. To measure the amount of instruction necessary, ask the employee if he already knows something about the area you're going to teach. New employees will often know very little about your business, especially if working in your salon is one of their first jobs. Also ask the employee whether you are repeating information you've already given. In the swirl of training activity, it's possible for the trainer to forget what has already been covered. Of course, the consistent use of a checklist can eliminate much of this confusion. Also, reuse the same checklist 30-60 days after initial training has been performed to see if your efforts "stuck." Again, have the trainee initial and date the checklist.
- Speak in understandable terms. Every industry has a jargon all its own and so does indoor tanning. A new employee may have little understanding of your salon and the industry terms. And most new employees will be too embarrassed to ask what a new term means. For example, most workers new to the video industry will not know what the abbreviation "PVT" stands for and they may be too embarrassed to ask. You need to use words anyone can understand. So, when you use jargon, be sure to define the term. This will make them feel good, to be part of the "inside" terminology.

- Be specific. Tell them precisely what you want done, when it's to be done and how and why. Those areas where the employee will have latitude to make their own decisions should be clearly covered. Explaining why something is to be done is very important. All of this gives the job duties definition. Workers want specific guidelines on basic tasks. This gives them a set of secure activities to do and feel good about.
- Demonstrate what you want them to do. People remember much more of what they see than of what they read. A demonstration of how to handle a transaction or of customer service will go a long way toward helping the trainee know the right ways to perform these crucial jobs. If you want new people to be good at helping customers leave the salon happy, they need to see examples of how to do it. (The trainer and buddy or boss is always being watched. So, if you are not as good at customer handling as you should be, you shouldn't be demonstrating this part of the training.)
- Observe progress and give helpful, non-threatening feedback. Be aware of the new employee's progress along the checklist and always give positive feedback when progress is being made. Positive feedback is always important, and the level of performance justifying it should constantly go up as the person develops.
- Do not give new employees negative feedback! Give them "re-direction." When you use redirection or instruction on how certain duties could be done better and you "sandwich" it between comments of positive feedback, the trainee will accept it as another opportunity to get a pat on the back. "Inspect what you expect" or observe the results of your training instructions and "catch people doing something right!" Give them all the positive feedback you can because it is critical in their early stages of employment. Be careful, however. Don't give unearned praise, or positive feedback will lose its effect. Don't praise a new employee for mishandling a customer, rather, sandwich some redirection of customer service between other areas they seem to have grasped well. If it's too early to have seen positive activities, remind them of some of the good qualities you observed during the interview. Here is a classic "feedback sandwich": "Lisa, you may not be great yet with customer handling, but if you use that positive enthusiastic attitude with them that I saw during our interview, you'll be sensational at producing happy customers." If nothing else, compliment the new person on his efforts. At least then he'll know that you know he's trying.

Final note: After all of this, if a new employee doesn't produce, you and the rest of your staff will know that the performance problem was not because of your efforts or lack of efforts. This will give you a clearer business conscience and more likely stronger, better producing employees. Also, you'll save your turnover cost dollars and improve customer service.