

Creating Your Own Junior Stylist Training Program

PART 1

A Step-by-Step Process for Employee Training & Development

by Jon Gonzales

Hairdresser Career Development Systems

In today's competitive and changing business environment, one of the main challenges you must address as a salon owner to build and grow your business is finding and keeping committed professionals who share your vision and who truly want to exceed owner and client expectations. Your salon's future and growth depends heavily on the performance, stability, and productivity of your staff members. They must be able to meet and exceed client expectations, keep customers coming back, and encourage referrals for customers' friends, relatives, and business associates. Remember, positive word-of-mouth referrals will always be your cheapest and best form of advertising.

No business will ever achieve long-term growth and profitability with a constant merry-go-round of staff instability and turnover. Business and staff stability is critical if your business is to succeed and remain profitable. When staff turnover occurs, everyone is affected. Turnover and business interruption is certainly not conducive to creating a positive and professional salon environment for your staff and also for your customers.

After 40 years as a working salon owner, I've distilled my experiences into these words of advice to develop a winning team and grow a successful, profitable salon:

- A trial-and-error approach to employee training is just too costly in today's

competitive and changing business climate.

- Invest in your salon's greatest profit potential: invest in educating your staff.
- If you want to attract an upscale clientele and charge upscale prices, then you must develop an upscale salon with upscale professionals. "Good" is not enough anymore.
- Tomorrow's hairdressers will have to know more than how to cut and style hair if they want to gain that all-important competitive edge.
- Your biggest challenge to develop a successful and profitable business will depend on your ability to find, keep, and motivate your team to higher levels of excellence.

Establishing Your Quality Control Standards is a Must

As the salon owner and leader of your team, it's essential that you establish your own quality-control standards for your salon and staff members.

Over the years, I've developed my own quality-control and educational standards for my salon and staff. Remember, if you want to attract an upscale clientele and charge upscale prices, then you must find, keep, and develop upscale professionals.

In addition to developing their artistic and technical skills, your hairdressers must



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develop other critical skills to meet and exceed client expectations. These additional skill sets include client retention, people and communication skills, sales capabilities, customer service, self-management, solid work habits, and positive attitudes. Hairdressers must have these critical skills to stand above the crowd.

As a concerned hairdresser/salon owner, I formed Hairdresser Career Development Systems, free of any special interest groups, to fill this educational void and to help hairdressers and salon owners meet consumer demands. I urge you to follow my educational materials as a guide to develop your team and grow your business. They'll help you meet the growing challenges of salon ownership.

In the absence of apprenticeship or internship programs that other professional services use, creating your own Junior Stylist Training Program can be a cost-effective and valuable way to develop young talent who'll meet job market and consumer demands without compromising your high quality-control standards and client-retention efforts.

Allowing young talent to practice on paying customers at regular salon prices is just too costly, especially in an upscale salon. Employee training by trial-and-error is simply unacceptable! However, with young talent, you won't have to undo a lot of poor work habits and negative attitudes. They're much easier to develop and train.

Is Beauty School Training Enough to Meet Consumer Demands?

I think you'll agree that nine months of beauty school just isn't enough time to educate and train young hairdressers to prepare them to meet job market and consumer demands in today's competitive market, especially if they want to work in upscale salons, charging upscale prices.

Lack of hands-on experience—especially in the areas of commercial haircutting, styling techniques, customer interaction, and other important skills—will be their biggest obstacle. Our profession would benefit greatly if we had an apprenticeship or internship program like Europe's highly successful programs. Sadly, not enough salon owners speak out about this critical need in our profession.

Beauty school curriculum is designed to protect the public health and safety of the consumer. Beauty schools see their main purpose as preparing young hairdressers to pass state board exams and receive their licenses. They're not designed to teach students all the skills they'll need to compete in a changing and competitive business environment.

In my travels, I've met wonderful teachers and school owners who truly want their schools and students to succeed. I urge a better partnership between salon owners and beauty schools. I believe we all share the same values and vision about our profession. We're all part of the same team.

Grow and Develop Your Team by Creating Your Own Junior Stylist Training Program

You can use my training program, outlined below, as a guide to develop your own program. The training program I use is based on my HCDS learning programs and comes from 40 years of experience as a salon owner, hairdresser, and educator.

As a salon owner, I have had great success in developing young talent. Their desire and excitement to succeed is at its highest level during the first stages of their development, which is why it's so critical to implement a solid employee-training program at the beginning of their employment. During their initial salon orientation procedures, it's critical that you instill positive and professional work habits and attitudes at this time of their development. We're all creatures of habit; why not instill positive work habits and positive attitudes right at the beginning?

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This Junior Stylist Training Program allows inexperienced hairdressers to build self-confidence and gain valuable hands-on work experience and training while working in a relaxed and professional salon environment. Junior stylists work at reduced prices under the supervision of a master stylist or director of education, without compromising client-retention efforts.

STEP 1 **Build Your Team**

The first step to develop your own Junior Stylist Training Program will be to carefully select quality, career-minded young talent who share your vision and who sincerely want to be a valuable addition to your team and are willing to participate in your Junior Stylist Training Program.

The inability to hire the right staff—team members who share your vision and the goals of your salon—is one of the leading causes of staff turnover and business instability. Sadly, far too many salon owners hire people in a haphazard manner with no staff development plan in place. Only later do they suffer the negative consequences of this decision. A hit-and-miss approach to team building is one of the biggest mistakes salon owners make. I urge you to read my book *Creating Your Salon*. It will help you create your own staff development program.

Once you've decided to add a new stylist to your team, it's critical that you train and educate this new staff member by sharing your team philosophy and vision. In your orientation procedures, be sure to emphasize job duties, job expectations and how they'll be measured, salon procedures, and, of course, your salon's quality-control and educational guidelines.

STEP 2 **Create Your Employee Handbook**

The Foundation for Employee Training & Development

Your learning program should start with your employee handbook. My book *Growing Your Business* will help you write your own employee handbook.

How can you expect your staff to perform if they don't know what is expected of them and how you'll measure those expectations? Your employee handbook should serve as the foundation for training and developing a positive and professional team. It'll help you with the heavy duties and responsibility of managing people. Plus, it'll be an effective tool to combat salon gossip, negativity, pettiness, and staff turnover. Your employee handbook will set the stage for a positive and professional salon environment.

Many salon owners ask, "How can I let young starters with little hands-on experience work on paying customers without compromising my client-retention efforts?" You can do this by creating a Junior Stylist Training Program, so they gain gradual hands-on experience. Unfortunately, without this type of apprenticeship or internship program, salon owners are forced to let these young hairdressers learn by trial-and-error on paying customers who expect the best. A Junior Stylist Training Program will help you avoid compromising your high quality-control standards.

STEP 3

Implement Your Training Program

On-the-Job Training

After you've implemented your salon's orientation procedures, I urge you to review my employee training guides, consisting of my books, videos, and CDs. These are designed to give your new employee the tools to meet job market and consumer demands. Gradually mold the trainees into your team by allowing them to observe your master stylists at work.

After they review your educational techniques and you've quizzed them about their meaning and content, you can let junior stylists assist in shampooing, blow-drying, cleanup, etc. Once they adapt to your artistic and educational guidelines, they can practice on doll heads (perm wraps, partings and sectioning, weaving techniques, etc.). They should do these activities under the supervision of the director of education, you, or one of your senior staff members.

When you feel comfortable with the trainees' development and feel they're following your educational guidelines, they can

bring in live models (friends and relatives) and practice what they've learned. Once again, the junior stylists remain under your supervision. This is your opportunity to ensure they fully understand your quality and educational guidelines.

Once you feel they've adapted to and understand your educational guidelines, you can move them into a junior stylist position in which they work on salon customers at reduced prices, under the supervision of one of your stylists or director of education.

This technique allows your young starters to practice on paying customers at reduced prices. This strategy won't damage your client-retention efforts. The income they generate will usually pay for their wages. In fact, this offering to customers will improve profits as well.

With little hands-on experience, you certainly cannot allow the trainees to charge the same prices as your senior staff members. Learning and gaining hands-on experience at the expense of customers while charging regular prices can compromise your salon's client-retention efforts. Negative word-of-mouth advertising affects everyone at your salon.

Once your new staff members adjust to their new salon environment and better understand your salon's educational guidelines, quality standards, and learning system to your satisfaction, you can allow them to assist master stylists in shampooing, blow-drying, applying tint, weaves, wrapping perms, or any other salon tasks you feel are important. I urge you to meet briefly with them each day to review what they've learned.

Once you feel they're ready to work on paying customers, let them gain their experience at reduced prices as junior stylists under the supervision of one of your master stylists or director of education. Once you feel they're following your artistic and educational guidelines to your satisfaction, you can gradually allow your new hairdressers to service clients at regular prices, eventually elevating them to master stylist status at regular prices on a permanent basis. To build camaraderie among other staff members and make them feel they're valuable members of your team, I suggest throwing a little congratulatory party for them.

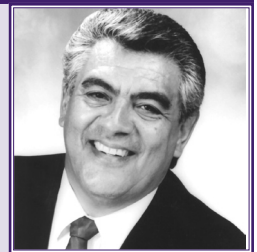
How long does it take to move a junior stylist to master stylist level? Some hairdressers can make the transition in three weeks, some may take three months. You'll have to decide when each person measures up to your educational and quality-control standards.

Salon owners who are willing to share their vast knowledge and experience and invest in training and educating their team members will truly be masters of their own ship.

Part 2 Will Present a Sample Training Schedule to Create Your Training Program

In Part 2 of this series, you'll see a sample training program that has been successful for me and my salon. This schedule will serve as a guide to help you develop your own Junior Stylist Training Program and meet your salon's quality-control standards. ■

Jon Gonzales is president and founder of Hairdresser Career Development Systems, which is dedicated to educating and guiding hairdressers and salon owners on their journey to success. Jon travels extensively throughout the United States and Canada, conducting his popular business management seminars for salon owners and his personal-growth seminars for hairdressers. He's the author of *The Hairdresser's Guide to Success: Personal, Professional, and Financial* as well as multiple books, DVDs, and videos on the topics of success, management, and personal growth. An outstanding industry leader, Jon draws from his decades of in-the-trenches experience as a working salon owner and his fiery passion to improve the careers and lives of hairdressers and salon owners.



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To learn how Hairdresser Career Development Systems can help you move to the next level in your journey—personally, professionally, and financially—visit:

www.HCDS4you.com

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PART 2

Use this Sample Training Schedule to Launch Your Program

by Jon Gonzales

Hairdresser Career Development Systems

Creating your own Junior Stylist Training Program is an excellent and cost-effective way to provide hands-on experience for young stylists without compromising your client-retention efforts. These young stylists—your new talent—receive hands-on training and experience in a salon environment. Remember, you can use this learning program for all new employees, regardless of their experience.

Benefits of Having a Junior Stylist Training Program

First, let's recap the benefits of a creating your own Junior Stylist Training Program:

- Helps inexperienced young hairdressers acquire valuable hands-on experience and develop their self-confidence without the pressures of losing clients due to lack of experience.
- Allows you (the salon owner or manager) to closely monitor the progress of junior stylists to see if they are following the salon's educational and quality control standards.
- Allows you to recover training wages and improve salon profits while the junior stylist continues to learn and gain valuable hands-on experience.
- Helps your new hairdressers build self-confidence and self-esteem in developing their artistic and technical skills.
- Helps you minimize customer loss while their new staff members are learning.
- Helps salon owners or directors of education monitor the performance and productivity of their new hairdressers. For example, "Is this new staff member following the salon's educational and quality-control procedures to the owner's satisfaction?"
- Helps new hairdressers control the speed of their development as an incentive to adjust to the salon's training program. If they work hard and meet and exceed management's quality-control standards, then they'll be rewarded by being elevated to master stylist status either gradually or permanently-working at regular salon prices.
- Allows the consumer the option to compare the difference between a low-cost, discount salon versus an upscale professional salon.
- Helps combat low-priced budget salons that attract potential new customers from quality, upscale salons.
- Helps inexperienced hairdressers develop their clientele when they're elevated to master stylists. Many of the junior stylists' clients will follow and then pay regular master stylist prices.
- Gives new junior stylists an incentive to learn fast; the faster they learn, the faster they earn.
- Helps salon owners avoid the heavy cost of customer loss.
- Improves the reputation of a salon in the eyes of its customers when they know this salon places a high priority on educational excellence.
- Offers an excellent opportunity to develop an advanced training center for young hairdressers and students who want to accelerate their artistic and educational skills.



You can use this learning program for all new employees, regardless of their experience.

This sample training program has been successful for me and my salon. (Remember, I have 40 years of experience as a working salon owner.) I hope this serves as a guide to help you develop your own learning and employee training program. I urge you to adapt this schedule to fit your specific qual-

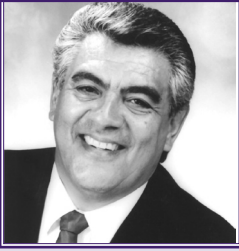
ity-control standards, needs, and time restraints.

Most salons don't have formalized apprenticeship programs, despite the fact that they're desperately needed. Use this sample training schedule as the basis for a good Junior Stylist Training

Program for your salon. And keep in mind that you can use this learning program for all new employees, regardless of their experience, to control your salon's level of quality and customer service. ■

<p>Week 1</p> <p>15 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Salon orientation and meet the team ● Review terms of employment ● Review employee handbook ● Review HCDS educational programs (Success book, videos, CDs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These tools give new hairdressers a better understanding of how to build a successful and profitable hairdressing career. They're especially designed to establish strong work habits and form positive attitudes. ○ I suggest stylists review the videos and CDs in the salon with the owner. ● Quiz on the contents and meaning of the messages in the training materials ● Quiz on the contents of employee handbook 	<p>Week 2</p> <p>15 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Salon orientation, salon familiarization ● Explain cleanup duties, job expectation, chain of command, front-desk procedures, pricing of salon services and products, work schedule, telephone etiquette, booking procedures ● Continue review Success book, videos, CDs, etc. ● Observe stylists, help with cleanup, watch and learn 	<p>Week 3</p> <p>20 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education and training ● Define quality control and educational guidelines ● Review procedures to handle customers ● Present artistic and styling techniques: practice on doll heads or models ● Observe master stylists ● Review employee evaluation process ● Explain your process for progress reports 	<p>Week 4</p> <p>20 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist master stylist ● Review all educational tools when not busy 	<p>Week 5</p> <p>30 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review salon policies, customer handling procedures, basic haircutting and styling techniques for men and women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parting and sectioning ○ Perm-wrap technique ○ Tint and weaving techniques ○ Finishing work: blow-drying techniques ○ Curling and flat-iron techniques ○ Customer exit procedures: pre-booking, referrals, retailing ● Based on their progress and having a full understanding of your educational procedures, start your junior operator program, allowing gradual service with customers
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