



## Create Your Perfect Salon Team by Hiring Recent Graduates

What better place to recruit your newest salon team members than from the top cosmetology schools? No employee is more fresh, motivated and ready to give their enthusiastic best than a recent graduate. Your staff is your biggest investment and your most valuable asset. By taking the time to assemble the best possible team, you will ensure that your investment is well made and you will be rewarded with a smoothly running business for years to come. Lauren Gartland is the founder of Inspiring Champions, a business and coaching company offering live training seminars, coaching and leadership services. She regularly advises clients on how to create the perfect Dream Team and shares her simple three-step process:

### Step One ~ Envision Your Team

It is very important to first envision exactly what you want in a team member. Start by making a simple list. Make two columns side by side and in the first column, list everything you DON'T want in a team member. Gartland says, "Think about past employees who performed poorly. Were they consistently late, unreliable, negative, dishonest or gossipy? Write it down; soon smoke should start coming off your pencil!" Now in the second column list everything you DO want. Think of team members past or present who you wish you could clone. What are their most valuable attributes? Enthusiasm, politeness, being proactive, energetic and presenting a good image are factors that may come to mind. "Do not leave anything out in either column. Then, once you have fully completed both

lists, cross out the column with the attributes you don't want. Now, focus all your attention on the attributes you DO want. Whatever you focus on, good or bad, will expand and grow!" Gartland emphasizes.

Next, create your Salon Vision Statement for your ideal salon team members. A few preliminary things to consider are how many people you want to hire and what the objectives of each position are. You will need a separate vision statement for each position you are filling. Think about what your expectations are and the qualities that these individuals will need to have for their respective jobs. Now, take your list of positive employee attributes and expand on it. What are the key characteristics and traits that you would like your future team members to have? List the four most important strengths and core values that you are looking for. Think about how you will be able to recognize these traits in your future employees. Now write out a few paragraphs describing your ideal team members. Date it with a realistic timeframe for finding and hiring. Gartland instructs, "Vision Statements are written in the present tense and are filled with details. Anything you leave out will be less likely for you to attract in your new salon and spa professionals. Think about how attracting people or things into your life is a lot like listening to the radio. You need to first tune the radio to the station you want to hear. In order to listen to your music of choice, your radio has to be on the same frequency that the radio waves are on!"

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## Mentoring Diamonds in the Rough

Your Vision Statement might look something like this. "My new salon team member is an enthusiastic new cosmetology school graduate. She is trained in all the latest haircut, haircolor and hairstyling techniques and is willing to keep on learning throughout her professional career. She is a positive person who can't wait to get to work each morning to help her clients look and feel their best. She always looks great with a well groomed image and loves to meet new people and share her ideas and creativity with them. She loves to recommend products and services to help extend her client's salon experience and is always stretching herself to achieve and learn more. She believes in herself and knows the sky is the limit for her success!" Wow; what kind of new team members might you attract with these types of expectations!?

### Step Two ~ Seek Them Out

Now, take those great expectations and create a "WOW" advertisement in your local newspapers, online at Craigslist.com or on beautycare websites as well as to post at your local cosmetology schools. "Make it so compelling and exciting that it drives people to you. Make it positive and list the benefits of working in your business. Use motivating headlines and sub-heads like; 'Are you seeking a work environment you can soar in?' or 'Are you seeking your dream job?' In the ad, list at least four of the most important career attributes that you are seeking. Be creative, so it does not look like everyone else's advertisement," notes Gartland. Avoid making these common mistakes: Do not say you need someone 'immediately;' as that denotes desperation. Only advertise one job even if you have more; it sounds needy and you can only hire one person at a time. Don't go into unneeded detail in the advertisement; save this for the interview. Don't word the ad too rigidly with requirements as you may repel even hard workers! Finally, ensure the ad is well written and free of typos.

You should also visit each of the local cosmetology schools to personally meet some of their future graduates, share what you are looking for in new recruits and possibly even get a preview of their work. If you meet an upcoming graduate whose skills may be raw but who seems promising, remember that skill is something that can be developed. More important is their attitude, willingness to learn and their people skills. Perhaps your salon has a training program with internships for new stylists or you offer your clients separate pricing tiers for stylists with a range of experience levels.

### Step Three ~ Interview Effectively

It is often difficult to make an accurate assessment of a potential team member after talking with them for only a short time. Gartland actually recommends having three interview sessions.

"The first interview should be on basic topics, yet consist of meaningful, in-depth questions. The second should include details of your business, with facts like policies, procedures and compensation structures. The third should be a practical demonstration of their hairstyling skills, along with their client service skills."

During the first interview, review their application form and have the candidate read a copy of your ideal team member vision statement. Gartland notes, "Remember to ask probing questions during the interview, which will significantly increase the odds of hiring the right person. This will give you the clarity needed to know if this person is the right fit for your team. Since the candidates will be recent graduates, form the questions around their current experience since they will not have had an actual salon job." Some of the questions could include, 'What do you want in your new career that other jobs didn't offer,' or 'What three things drove you crazy in your school training?' If their answers to any of the questions are vague, always ask for more clarity. However, always stay in bounds, steering clear of illegal questions such as those that have to do with religion, race, sex, or imply a bias against working moms or dads. Your recent graduates may not be able to supply traditional job references for you, but they can supply references from such people as teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, family friends or even clients from their cosmetology school workshops.

Before you begin, consider some of the basics about hiring. "The candidate must have the image that you want your team to portray to the public. This is the best you will ever see him or her look! Watch for positive body language, openness and good eye contact. Your candidate should want to pursue a professional career, not just come to a job every day. If anything within you says that the applicant is not a good fit, do not proceed any further," cautions Gartland. During the second interview, you should discuss your work culture and review all of the details about your business policies. The third will be the demonstration of their hairstyling or aesthetic skills and techniques, if you haven't already seen them in practice at their school.

"Once you really commit to creating your dream team and take the necessary steps – you will find them!" asserts Gartland. "You must not waiver, compromise or sell-out on what you truly want in a new employee. If you do compromise out of desperation, I can almost guarantee that you will regret it later." Start the steps today to invest in your salon by creating your ideal dream team. Including recent beauty school graduates on your team will ensure your business is complemented by young, vibrant minds with great creativity, high hopes and smiling faces!