

Community Conversations: Hiring, Training, and Retaining Rising Stylists

With Special Guest Diana Varvaro, School Director, Paul Mitchell The School, NYC

Before going Live, we asked if you had any questions for the students of Paul Mitchell The School NYC. Below are the questions we received from you, along with the student's responses.

- **What struggles do students have with salon owners?**
 - They feel undervalued and that owners are more concerned with them cleaning than they are educating and teaching them. There isn't a lot of open communication that they are experiencing and they are confused on how much money they will make and how they will grow.
- **What's your biggest motivator? Is it money, satisfaction, helping people, etc.?**
 - They truly enjoy this profession as a whole, and that is why they chose it. They want to make people feel good while doing something they love. They find that rewarding. They feel proud of their accomplishments. They want to make money but didn't choose the industry because they want to be rich.
- **All apprentices must work the front desk as part of their training. This is because the front desk is the best place to learn: schedule management, customer service, communication, and multi-tasking. Will this turn you away from wanting to work here?**
 - This would not turn them away, in fact a lot of them showed interest in this, especially those who would like to own their own salon or sola one day.
- **What makes an ideal boss?**
 - Someone who is friendly and keeps control of situations. Is a good leader and acts as a mentor to help others grow; enjoys teaching and supporting them. A person who is relatable and successful that they can look up to. A person who does not gossip about or talk down to others. A person who values them has open communication and can be flexible. If there is an emergency or they have a vacation, they would be able to take off without being afraid of losing their job.
- **What determines whether you stay at your ideal salon home for the long term?**
 - Feeling like they are a part of a team in a salon with a good atmosphere and culture. Healthy work environment that is fun and not stressful. They are looking for enough pay to not have to struggle. They would love benefits and vacation time. They want to be treated fairly. No favoritism. Want the team and co workers to be nice to them and teach them. They want a place that has a good amount of walk-ins that will help them grow their clientele. They want a lot of education and explanation of why they

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should do the task the way they are asked to or know the theory behind what they are doing.

- **What's the 1 thing you're looking for in a salon?**
 - Working with someone who is skilled and willing to teach and mentor them. A salon that is successful with a large clientele and has been established. Where they would get walk-ins. They want to work in a salon that they feel comfortable in, where people are nice to them and can help them grow. A clean and organized environment that looks nice. Has a nice aesthetic. A place that pays good compensation and doesn't have a high term turnover of employees that's willing to give them time off for vacation so they can have a work life balance.
- **Besides technique & education, what's the 1 thing you want to learn at your new salon?**
 - They want to learn the business side of things, including inventory and ordering. They want to learn how to book clients and build a clientele and best practices for business, as well as technical education.
- **What is the #1 thing Rising Stylists are looking for in a salon?**
 - They want to be somewhere they will grow and learn. Most of all, they want a mentor.
- **How do you inspire them to become dedicated not only to their craft but also cultivating relationships with clients?**
 - PMTS NYC teaches their students to show an appreciation for the customer.
 - *Robert's experience/input: Appeal to Rising Stylists' humanity by constantly talking about the human behind the client. Talk about things you know your client must do or deal with to get to the salon on time. With this constant reminder, Rising Stylists tend to adjust to showing more empathy and providing better customer service through relationships and appreciation.*
- **Are you willing to train for 6-12 months? This is not a mandatory time sentence, but 90% of our apprentices need at least 6 months, but the majority need 12 months of training.**
 - Yes, they think 6-12 months is a great time frame
- **Our experience with Rising Stylists is that they need a lot of training in customer service. What do you do to give yourself an advantage over other applicants in the area of customer service and communication? professionalism? Etc?**
 - They feel they learn a lot at Paul Mitchell about communication and following systems to ensure great guest experiences. They like to connect and speak with the guests during the service and build relationships. They care about making connections with clients. They said being attentive and making sure they are happy is important to them. Engaging with them and making sure their needs are met.

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- **What challenges do you have when communicating or thinking about working at a salon or with a salon owner? and/or What challenges are you concerned about having with salon owners?**
 - They are nervous about the Salon Owners judging them and thinking they are not good enough or know enough or do things the way they want them to. They just expect them to know without showing them things. They are also nervous that owners will take advantage of them. They feel intimidated and feel like they may not have patience with them as they are learning and trying to be a good assistant. They often say the tone they are spoken to makes them feel bad. They said Salon owners and stylists can make them feel like an idiot and embarrass them.

A local Virginia Salon Owner came on to share their thoughts and tips, which we have paraphrased and included below.

- Social media informs and empowers employees to make demands that salon owners are not used to receiving.
- Salon owners should not focus on meeting all of the demands but should hone in on their brand, understand what desires they fulfill, and lean into those things. This does not mean that you will not need to update your systems and practices.
- Rising Stylists are very interested in work-life balance, which translates into them not working as many hours or days as previous generations.
- There are Rising Stylists out there who will work harder than others, so if that is important to you, you will have to compete for those people. Use your salon's social media to tell potential employees why they should work at your salon.
- Building your social media should include the type of work you do so customers can see that you can do their hair!
- Team up with local businesses and do cross promotion by using the collaborative functionalities in social media.

We also received feedback and questions from the students of Paul Mitchell The School, NYC

- They feel that Salon owners should have a list of what they're expected to do and what they're going to offer them as a worker.
- Rising Stylists want to know what's in it for them and why they should want to work at your salon.
- They want a person who's going to invest in them, train them, and build them up to be the best.

This is a list of questions the students will have for Salon Owners prior to working at the salon. **TIP**** Prepare answers to these questions in advance for all interviews!**

1. How many days/hours are you going to give me as a schedule?
2. Are you flexible if we need time off or vacations, holidays or emergencies
3. What kind of benefits or incentives do you offer? And when will we get paid?
4. What does your training program look like?
5. Is your salon busy?

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