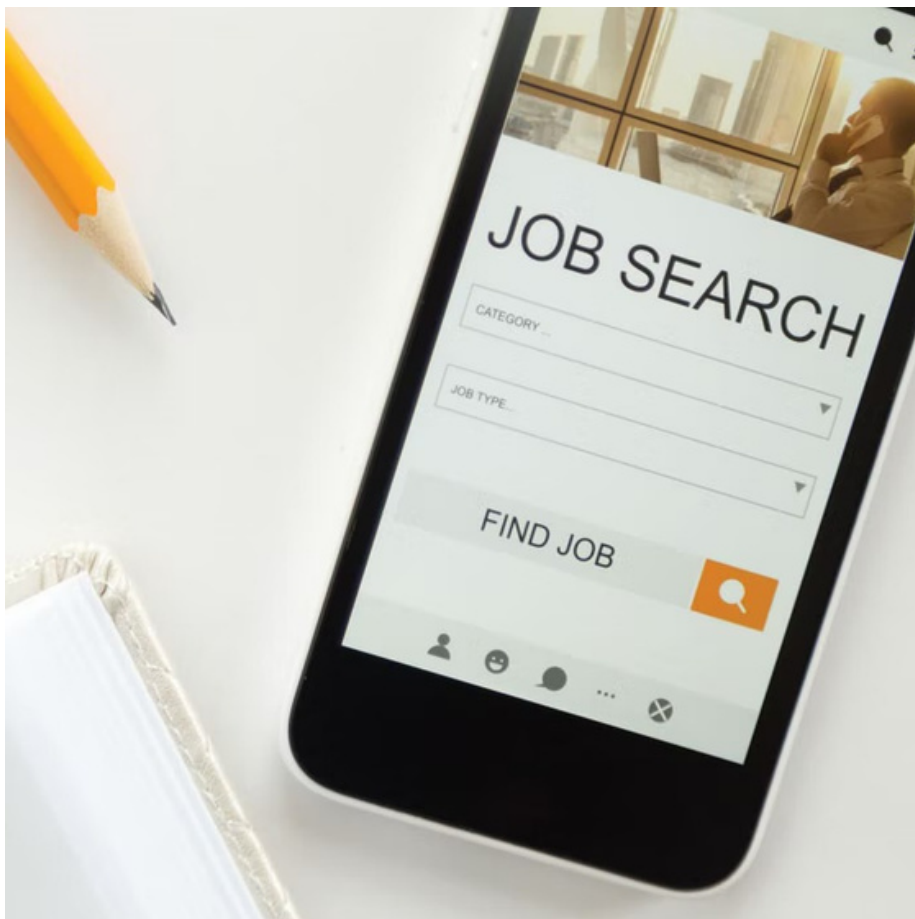


A Guide to Finding a New Job and Advancing Your Nail Career

Dec 3rd, 2018 | By [David Simpson](#)



If you're coasting, struggling or losing passion at your current nail salon, a new job could be the answer.

You may have spent several productive years at the same salon, but a nagging feeling keeps creeping up on you that it might be time for a change. Then the fear sets in over the actual prospect of changing jobs: What if you don't nail the interview? What if you lose clients? What if your situation is worse at the next salon? No matter your fears, you'll be rewarded if you take the plunge, says editorial manicurist Elle. "Every time you switch salons, you learn a different way of running a business, and that's invaluable," she shares, noting that she got her "never say no" work ethic from one of the 10-plus salons she's worked at, and attributes that lesson learned to her current success.

Whether you're so comfortable that you no longer feel challenged, your skills have exceeded your income or you simply need a change of pace, the following tips will help you take that next big step in your nail career.

Leave Your Comfort Zone

When the familiar becomes comfortable and your day-to-day routine turns stale, the time has come to move on. “Complacency can ruin your progress from performing your very best,” says Irma Lieras, spa nails educator at Bellus Academy in Poway, California. Candice Idehen, owner of [Bed of Nails](#) in New York, agrees: “You can carve out a niche, fill your book and limit your ability to grow by maintaining a client base that you can do with your eyes closed. Seeking new opportunities keeps you on your toes and brings new levels of creativity to you as well as your clients.” Finding a new job will not only revive your passion for nails, but will also open you up to new business practices that can take you to the next level, says Ryan McEnaney, owner of [Frenchies Modern Nail Care](#) in Woodbury, Minnesota. “Even with years of experience, seeking out new opportunities can provide inspiration and introduce you to advancements in the nail industry,” he says.

Fear of the unknown, however—like a new salon environment and culture or a potential loss of clients—often keeps experienced nail techs from pursuing new opportunities. Don’t worry about losing clients; many will follow you, says Elle. In fact, Desiree Abhiram, regional manager for Frenchies Modern Nail Care, shares that changing jobs actually helps you grow your clientele. “If you stay in the same place forever, you’ll only see the same people. If you change your surroundings, it allows you to grow your base and invite new opportunities,” she says.

[PODCAST: Pro Beauty Talks – Jan Arnold, CND Co-Founder and Style Director](#)

Identify Your Move Motivators

Poor pay, stunted growth, the lack of continuing education or inflexible management are only a few things that can spur your career move. “Think about how you want to structure your business (booth renter, salaried, etc.), and if the salon owner isn’t willing to raise prices or give you a bigger commission cut commensurate with your skill, talent and/or following, that’s a sign it’s time to go,” Elle says. If the salon owner forgoes providing continuing education to keep staff motivated, on trend and up to speed with industry norms, you’ll want to seek salons that prize education. “It’s about knowing your value and what you bring to the job, but also how you can grow yourself,” she says.

Find Your Best Lead Generators

As soon as you’re ready to start looking, turn to the internet to conduct your job search. Job boards, like the International Spa Association’s (ISPA) Job Bank, feature thousands of job listings, both locally and globally, and can be helpful when looking for hourly or commission jobs,

according to Lieras. Once you see what's available in your area, she suggests personally scoping out the salons that match your needs. "Make an appointment to talk to a manager or owner to get a feel and some knowledge about the work environment," Lieras recommends. You can also check local salon websites for job openings or peruse broader job sites, like Indeed (a favorite among salon owners interviewed for this story) or LinkedIn. If you're social media savvy, follow salons that appeal to you on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook; they'll often post job openings as they become available. Or, as McEnaney suggests, join industry-specific Facebook groups, which often post career networking events and job opportunities.

Get Yourself Out There

Don't forget, securing a new spot is a two-way street. Ready your resume and post it on sites like Indeed, LinkedIn and Craigslist. If you maintain an Instagram feed, this is the time to be strategic; be sure that you're showing your best work and keeping a professional tone. Salon owners, like Hilary Dawn Herrera, owner of [Lacquered Loft](#) in Orem, Utah, skim the platform for new talent, citing the built-in portfolio aspect as a major draw. "It also allows us to see where artists have improved, where their strengths are and how they interact with people, as well as helps us gauge their drive to expand and level-up their career by the consistency of their posts," Herrera says.

Come Prepared

When you secure an interview, be prepared to put your best foot forward. Though Lieras says you're not required to show proof of your license when interviewing, Elle stresses that doing so will only help your image in the eyes of the interviewer. "For an owner, that's the first thing to ask," she says. "I want to know that you're up to date [on it], too." Bring an updated resume outlining your work history, and be sure it includes any continuing education classes or credentials that you've acquired. "A resume showcases your professionalism and drive for success," says McEnaney. But beyond that, he values resumes because they allow you to talk about your background. "The specific roles listed are less important than how the applicant discusses her experience," he says. "Does she coherently list her responsibilities? Does she creatively showcase her unique talents and abilities?"

RELATED: [How To Develop Your Nail Education and Skills on a Budget](#)

Don't forget to include business references—not family or friend references. “Work references give the interviewer a bit of insight on your work ethic, interpersonal skills and work history,” says Idehen. “I like to see on your application or resume that I'm able to contact your previous employers, and if not, there should be a very valid reason.” Be prepared to demonstrate your skills on the spot. “I ask to see a perfect practical manicure,” says Idehen. “You should bring clean tools even if tools are provided because you never know what you'll be given or not given.” If tools are provided, don't place the blame on them if the manicure comes out less than perfect, she warns. “An experienced nail tech should be able to provide an excellent manicure with whatever tools and polish are given—period!”

Finally, do your due diligence. “Be observant of the salon you're interviewing, and point out products that you know, use and like,” says Idehen. “Do research on the owner and salon if possible and share that.” Ask Questions While you may be trying to get hired, don't forget that you're interviewing the salon, too, to see if it's a good fit. Be sure to ask your interviewer questions, for example, if the compensation is salary-, hourly- or commission-based; whether there are periodic reviews; if there are benefits, such as healthcare and paid vacation; if there's room for advancement; and how hours are structured. Because continuing education is paramount to a successful career, Lieras recommends being upfront and asking if and how often the employer offers it, and whether you're expected to pay a percentage of the cost. How your interviewer answers could be the deciding factor on whether you want the job or should continue your search until you find the perfect fit.

What Salons Want

You secured the interview; now, what does the interviewer really want to know about you? Our pros weigh in on what you should do to nail the interview—and what you should leave at the door.

DO Be Open-Minded “Be open to sharing your expertise, but willing to be humble enough to learn new things from others around you. Veteran techs sometimes aren't willing to learn new ways of improving their skills—especially from someone younger.” —Candice Idehen, owner of Bed of Nails in New York

DON'T Speak Ill of Past Employers “We obviously know you're seeking [a new job], but negative talk about a previous salon or owner is a red flag to us.” —Hilary Dawn Herrera, owner of Lacquered Loft in Orem, UT

DO Demo a Solid Set of Nails “A good salon owner will look at your work and ask you to do her nails. While Instagram may work as your portfolio, you still need to prove yourself, and a demo will do that.” —Elle, editorial manicurist based in New York

DON'T Be Unprofessional “Arriving late, smelling like smoke and being dressed unprofessionally sets a negative tone from the start and makes the interviewer question: If you act this way for the interview, how will you act once hired?” —Ryan McEnaney, owner of Frenchies Modern Nail Care in Woodbury, MN

DO Strike the Right Balance “Work to avoid a lack of confidence, false confidence or an overinflated sense of self.” —Desiree Abhiram, regional manager of Frenchies Modern Nail Care

When to Say Goodbye

If you're wavering on whether or not to search for a new job, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your current job offer you educational opportunities to help you further your skills?
- Have you grown your client base and seen your commission, salary or prices increase?
 - Can you grow in this position?
 - Are the working conditions, such as salon cleanliness, licensing or work breaks, acceptable to you?
 - If you work at a multiservice or full-service salon, are your nail services valued?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, break out your resume; it's time to start looking for your next job opportunity!

—by *Karie L. Frost*