

# SalonNews

The Magazine for Salon Owners

## Meet the Design Team

If you build it, they will come. However, finding the professionals you need is more than half the battle.

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**B**uilding a new salon—or redoing an old one—can involve a considerable cast of characters. And as the salon owner (read: coach), you need to pick the pros who can make your dreams a reality. The key players on your team are an equipment specialist, an architect and a general contractor. Then come the supporting players—electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters and others who will collaborate on the project.

Depending on your vision, your budget and your do-it-yourself capacity, which professionals you hire can vary tremendously. “I got a lot of clients’ and friends’ opinions about who they used, how long it was going to take and how much it was going to cost,” explains Robert Allen, owner of Robert Allen Salon and Spa, Inc., in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., who finished construction on his new space a year ago. Here, a look at the essential members of the design team.

### THE SALON EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER

Even before you hire an architect or choose a location, you need to find a reputable salon

equipment manufacturer who will help you plan your layout, asserts Richard Ouellette, the owner of four Allen Edwards salons in Southern California. “The space plan is the first thing you do,” Ouellette explains. “It may take three or four different plans to determine how you feel the flow of traffic is going to be best.”

“The everyday flow pattern of the salon is what equipment people specialize in,” says Norman Litfen, manager and senior vice president in the spa division at Mr. Beauty and manager at Takara Belmont U.S.A., Inc. They are also experts on getting the most out of your budget, space and location. Scott Buchanan, owner of the Scott J. Salons and Spas in New York City, who has just worked with Litfen on his day spa, recalls, “I spoke to Norman and told him I was interested in expanding. He helped me tweak the plans, gave me some ideas and gave me referrals. He also helped me work out financing.”

In most cases, a consultation and discussion of initial design plans is free. When the owner chooses furniture, Litfen provides a line drawing and in many cases a prototype station to help the owner visualize what it will look like.

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## Small Miracles

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multi-use nippers, a toenail trimmer, a toenail rasp (to prevent ingrown toenails), a curette (used to clean along the side walls of the fingernails) and a cuticle pusher.

For an added edge, the company even teamed up with a podiatrist when designing the toenail trimmer and toenail rasp. "The shape is new to the industry," says Suzanne Damon, senior marketing manager at Creative Nail Design of the trimmer. "It has a straight blade that comes right out of the handle. With this straight blade, there's the least incidence of accidents." Although pricing on its new line is yet to be determined, Creative will offer a lifetime warranty. However, nail technicians will be required to pay the \$5 shipping and handling fee.

Which brings up another deciding element—product warranty. "For a salon owner to get the product replaced free if it breaks is wonderful," explains Locascio, whose tools are covered for life.

Jerry Mennicken, coo of Mehaz, agrees, saying that Mehaz warranties its implements for a lifetime. These tools include a \$30 stainless steel cuticle nipper, the \$30 Triple Cut and the \$20 Comedo Extractor (for removing whiteheads and blackheads). "Mehaz guarantees its implements—if they're broken, they'll repair or replace them for free, and they will sharpen them for \$3," Williams reports.

That sharpening service is another benefit to keep in mind when selecting tools. While both Mehaz and Tweezerman offer lifetime free sharpening without processing, shipping and handling fees, Creative tacks on a \$5 processing charge.

## SANITATION DUTY

Salon owners must analyze which tools are easily—and efficiently—disinfected. "The biggest [implement] concern for the nail technician should be sterilization," says Suzi Weiss-Fischmann, executive vice president of OPI. "Knowing that the implements have been sterilized always puts the client at ease." In light of

that, OPI offers two easily sterilizable nails-only items—the stainless steel \$24.95 Pusher Plus cuticle pusher and the \$24.95 gold-plated Quick Cut cuticle nipper.

Creative Nail Design made sanitary concerns paramount when it chose the materials for its upcoming line. "We began with a high-quality stainless steel implement that we coated with a zirconium shield—the combination is highly resistant to corrosion, which means that it can be disinfected more frequently," says Damon of the patent-pending metal alloy.

In addition, alternating between tools will keep sanitation at a maximum. Rhine recommends that you encourage your nail technicians to keep at least six nippers at their station at any given time, and also suggests that estheticians always have three sets of tweezers on hand.

## TO RETAIL OR NOT TO RETAIL?

As a general rule, most nippers, pushers, tweezers and the like have been designed for professional use only. "It gets too expensive to retail the items," explains Mennicken. "If salon owners sell the products to the client it's about twice the cost [of implements available for retail elsewhere]. It's strictly a question of price."

However, Tweezerman does offer a special salon retail program. "It is a courtesy," explains Locascio, noting that these instruments are not the same as the ones the pros buy—for example, while Tweezerman's retailable purse-size, 3-inch Tweezerette costs the client \$4.50, pros are charged \$16 for its popular Slant Tweezer. Other resale items include a Folding Ilashcomb and Super Curl Eyelash Curler, both \$5.50. The items are dispersed through 40 salon distributorships around the country.

A word to the wise: Thoroughly explain these tools to your clients prior to purchase, especially in the case of nippers. "Implements can be dangerous, clients can really mess up their cuticles if they don't know how to use nippers properly," warns Williams. Mehaz, OPI and Tweezerman all include instructional guides along with their tools. ●

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good equipment manufacturer? "It goes back to reputation and recommendation," Litfen says. "I'd ask through associations, guilds, people you know in the industry. Ask about the stability of the company," he continues. "Do they stand by you if something happens? Do they warranty and guarantee the equipment? Who are the clients they deal with?"

## THE ARCHITECT

An architect who shares your vision is crucial. He will draw up the blueprints of your salon illustrating even the tiniest, most technical details in a language that can be understood by everyone involved. In addition, he will monitor city building codes and other regulations to which you must adhere.

When interviewing an architect, follow the same rules you used when interviewing the equipment manufacturer. Buchanan brought several candidates to his space and told them, "These are my definites: 16 chairs, retail areas, five shampoo bowls, five treatment rooms. Can you do it, and what's your idea?" Either they said, "Yes, I love it, let's do this." Or they meandered on about something ridiculous."

Don't be afraid to ask questions about money, the pros say. "My architect was \$75 an hour to do a walk-through (an initial assessment of the space and a design plan)," Allen reports. And Allen paid the architect to draw up the floor plan—which used a separate page for electrical wiring, air conditioning lines, plumbing, etc. "But," Allen explains, "he said to me in the beginning, 'It's \$1,500 a page, and you're going to need six or eight pages.'"

Bob Henry, principal of Robert D. Henry Architects in New York City, who has overseen a number of high-profile salon projects, counsels: "Ask about his track record and anything that has to do with design. I'm talking about creating a successful image, matching your budget and successfully completing the job within a specified amount of time. If he meets those three criteria and your needs on a functional level, as well as a visual

level, you're golden."

## THE CONTRACTORS

The general contractor—also referred to as the builder or designer—is the person who coordinates the execution of the architect's plans, finds and oversees the subcontractors and contributes ideas to the design on an ongoing basis. He also makes recommendations on subcontractors—the bit players who take care of small but important parts such as electricity and lighting.

"After the architect, I interviewed contractors," Buchanan relates. "That's even more of a marriage. The contractor hires everyone that works on your space—painters, sheet rockers, plumbers, electricians."

He chose to work with Chris Kofitsas, who co-owns New World Design Builders in West Patterson, N.J., with John Farese. According to Kofitsas, the key qualities of a good builder are the ability to work within a design team and attention to function and detail. "The owner should choose someone who's knowledgeable about what a spa needs from a functional standpoint and a design standpoint," Kofitsas says. "You can design an esthetically pleasing salon, but if it doesn't function correctly it's not worth much."

Once plans are agreed upon, the general contractor negotiates contracts with the subcontractors. You'll need a plumber and an electrician, and probably a cabinetmaker, too. Allen also needed an engineer to help him determine the specifications for the air conditioning—and an a.c. specialist to install the proper unit.

More ambitious jobs call for additional specialists—for instance, a lighting designer who will create just the right illumination for your cutting and coloring areas and the outside of your salon; a wall specialist to handle things like machine-inserting screws into steel studs, or an acoustics expert.

With so many different people on a job, chaos is a constant threat, but it can be avoided with a winning team. "I have a team I've assembled that I know can get the job done," says Kofitsas. "It's my job to hire them, coordinate them and pay them. Most owners prefer it that way. It leaves it in your hands." ●