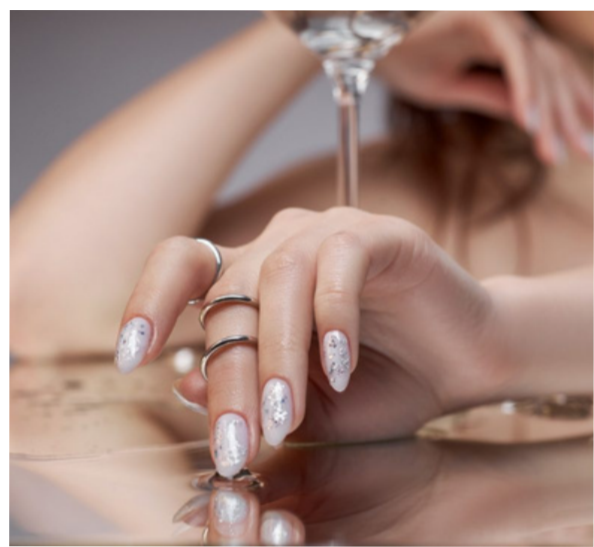




Let's Get Started

BUILDING YOUR DREAM CLIENTELE

WHETHER YOU ARE NEW TO THE INDUSTRY, JUMPING BACK IN AFTER A BREAK, OR JUST TRYING TO GROW, THIS GUIDE CAN HELP YOU BUILD A LOYAL CLIENTELE.





HEY, I'M DARCY

You're growing (or starting) your clientele, and I hope this guide gives you ideas and encouragement along the way.

When I started growing my business, I was in a town with a population of just 1,200 – and more than half of that population was children. We were 15 minutes from the nearest grocery store and that town still only had around 2,500 people.

When I eventually moved my salon to that “big” town of 2,500, I actually had to hire and train new nail techs (yes - actual W2 employees - but that is a conversation for another day) to help me handle the number of clients that wanted to book with us.

I am living proof that no matter how small your town or how quiet your zip code, there are clients out there looking for exactly what you have to offer. You just need the right strategies to help them find you.

LET'S GET TO IT!

Darcy

Your Guide to Building (and keeping) a Clientele

Building a strong nail clientele doesn't happen overnight — it takes strategy, consistency, and a commitment to great customer service.

When we start out, none of us are fully trained in delivering flawless services. Our skills develop through time, continued education, and a whole lot of practice. I can't stress this enough — *keep learning, always!* There are so many free and low-cost educational opportunities available, but they only work if you invest your time and effort into mastering them.

Networking with other professionals — whether online or in person — is another major key to growth. Many experienced techs are happy to share advice if you just ask. Not all guidance will be perfect for you, but every conversation helps you shape your own techniques and ideas that set you apart.

And remember — there's no “cruise control” stage in this industry. Unless you're planning to retire soon, or simply leave the industry, growth never really stops. The beauty industry evolves quickly, and staying current is what keeps your career thriving and your clientele growing.

Here are some key approaches that I used, to attract and retain clients:

1. Provide an Unmatched Client Experience

Set yourself apart from everyone else, focus on what you can do to best serve your clients. Yes, we are all in business to make money and thrive, but if you really focus on what is best for your client, you will win.

Think about what you love about your favorite experiences with other businesses, and implement similar practices, so your clients think about your business that same way.

- **Exceptional Cleanliness & Professionalism:**
 - Create a safe, pampering environment for clients.
 - Follow state sanitation and disinfection guidelines—exceed them whenever possible.
 - Wipe down all surfaces before you begin your day, to remove lingering nail dust, as it settles overnight even with extraction units.
 - For gel services, pay special attention when cleaning curing lamps after each use, especially around openings and the bottom plate, to prevent product buildup and client discomfort.
 - Cured gel often pops off smooth surfaces with light pressure; if needed, use a metal spatula or 99% alcohol for removal
 - To prevent the gel from sticking and allowing it to pop off easily, you can use car wax on the curing lamp base.
- **Thorough Consultations & Attuning to Client Needs:**
 - Ask about their lifestyle and preferences to personalize their service.

- Determine if they prefer a quiet appointment or if they'd like to chat—let them set the tone.
- If they enjoy conversation, focus on learning about them; being *interested* is more valuable than being *interesting*.
- If they prefer you to lead the conversation, share insights about your business—highlight your commitment to high-level disinfection, premium products, and ongoing education. Share stories about your professional world and experiences you have had attending event to continue your education. It is natural that over time, your relationship may evolve with some clients, and you will likely share little tidbits about you and your life, if that suits you.
- **Personalized Touches:** Remember details like their favorite colors or preferred nail length. – Keep a note on each client, as you grow, you will not recall all of these details.
- **Use Professional Only Products:** If you want to set yourself apart, I advise you to use professional only products. When clients see you using products that they can also buy anywhere, it decreases the feeling of quality in the service.
 - If I went to my colorist and she was using box color from the store, odds are that I would not return and I certainly would not expect to pay an elevated service price.
 - I am not referring to disposables here, like orangewood sticks, cotton, toe separators...things like that are fine to purchase in bulk from any available resource. I am specifically referring to the products we use to perform our specialty services. Gel, gel polish, acrylic, nail lacquer, lotions, oils...Stick with professional brands. They perform better and elevate your status with your client.
 - Additionally, we have all heard it before – many think that what we do is so easy, once they see us doing it, they think they can do it easily too. Of course, what they do not realize is how much practice it took, for us to make it look so easy.
- **Product Knowledge:** Be sure you are fully trained in the product line you work with. This will ensure that you have the most complete knowledge of what types of products will work best with a range of lifestyles and nail types. It also builds trust when clients ask you about your products, or why you chose them, and you can answer confidently.

2. Build an Irresistible Online Presence

For many, this will be their first point of contact with you. Keep this in mind as your posting...

- **“Clean up” your social accounts!**
Maintain a professional image on all social platforms associated with your name or business.
 - Clients and potential clients will check your profiles to see both your work and personality.
 - Clearly state where you are in your social profile – at least a city and state. (there is little that is more annoying than finding someone's work you love on social and trying to figure out if they are even in your area)

- Sharing glimpses of your personal life—like your pet, a family photo, or favorite things—helps clients feel more connected to you. Just keep it aligned with your professional brand.
- If you want to post unrelated personal content, or controversial topics, consider a separate account using a variation of your name to control visibility.
- Avoid controversial topics on your business accounts. We all have things we stand for, but posting this on social media rarely ever changes anyone else’s mind and it for certain will alienate approximately 50% of the population. (those who have differing opinions, or those who just do not want to hear about said topic.)
- **Showcase Your Work:**
 - Post high-quality photos and videos of your nail designs on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Most phones take great photos now, just be sure the lighting is great.
 - Use engaging captions and just a few relevant hashtags
 - Search for local hashtags, exclusive to your town or city
- **Be easy to find.** If you have several social platforms and a website, a scheduling link, or a professional group or page on socials, utilize one of the link platforms, that will show all of your links on one page. Many are completely free. (linktr.ee, Beacons or use your favorite search engine to find “link in bio tools” for the most current options.)
- **Utilize Social Media Engagement:** Follow, comment, and interact with potential clients and local businesses to increase visibility.
- **Build a website:** There are many options for free websites available (e.g., square, wix, use a search engine to find the best options for you), even if you only create a single page site. Be sure to include:
 - A list of services
 - Photos of your work, if possible
 - How to contact you, or how to schedule an appointment (booking link, text...)
- **Leverage Local SEO:** Create a **Google Business Profile** so locals can find you in searches. Encourage happy clients to leave reviews.

3. Charging your worth

This can be a highly debated subject. When it comes down to it, it does not matter what the salon down the street is charging. You do not know their costs to operate, and their expenses are most likely completely different from yours. Pricing yourself like others in the neighborhood could put you out of business quickly.

- Calculate all of your costs and necessary income, instead of copying competitors.
- Price services based on your cost to operate your business, time, skill*, and product costs.
- Offer value-adding add-ons instead of discounts to maintain profitability.

*Another key point here is skill; I am going to give you a little tough-love here and say that we need to be realistic in our skillset. With 25 years experience, I still always see imperfections in my own work and continue to work on improving my skills.

If you are new, your work may not be as developed yet, and services may take longer. That is okay, we all start at the beginning, and it takes time to grow.

The most important thing to realize is this, it truly is our responsibility to continue to educate

ourselves, practice our skills, develop them to fine tune the finished product, so we can provide great quality services, work efficiently and be profitable.

Building a clientele, especially as a new nail professional, takes time, consistency, and dedication. By showcasing your work, providing exceptional service, and leveraging both in-person connections and social media, you'll create a reputation that attracts and retains clients.

4. Leverage Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word of mouth is the most powerful factor in building—or damaging—your business. Every client will share their experience, so ensure it's one you want them talking about

- **Deliver Exceptional Service:** give your clients something to talk about and they will.
- **Wear Your Own Work:** Your nails are a walking advertisement! Clients often want what you wear, so always have business cards or a QR code on hand.
- **Ask for Referrals:** Let friends, family, and past clients know you're accepting new appointments.
- **Encourage Social Sharing:**
 - Take photos of clients' nails, post them, and tag them—this increases visibility as their network sees your work.
 - Clients love to share photos of their nails too, offer to send them a photo you took, so they can post it themselves. (some will take great 'nailfies' and some may not)
 - Display a sign encouraging clients to check in on social media or tag your business in their posts.
- **Engage in Local Facebook Groups:** Offer helpful advice in community groups while maintaining a positive and supportive presence. Interacting with other posts and recommending other businesses can also build goodwill and prevent your posts from feeling overly promotional. (be sure all comments are positive and helpful, not necessarily mentioning your own business. As people see and hear your name more, and just see that you offer helpful information in your community, they will seek you out)
- **Offer service promo's to highly visible individuals.** Think cashiers, waitresses, bank tellers... These are people that many others will see, could receive complements on their nails and potentially refer new clients to you. Offer them the referral program perks.

5. Offer Flexible & Convenient Booking

- **Online Booking System:** Make it easy for clients to schedule, whether calling or texting, or using an online scheduler. Make sure they know the best way to get an appointment. There are some free online calendars available (e.g., Square, Calendly, Setmore).

- Now on this subject, I do not have my clients book themselves online, but I still used the online booking system, so it would send them reminders well in advance of their appointment and I also include my cancellation policy in the reminder.
- **Evening & Weekend Availability:** Consider offering non-traditional hours to attract working professionals. This is something that you can do strategically, choose a day to begin extra early and an evening to work later to accommodate clients. Once established, your schedule can be modified as needed. Often clients' will adjust their schedules to stay with their trusted professional, but we first must earn that trust.
- **Rebook clients before they leave.** Let them know that the best way to secure the time that works best for their schedule, is to book it now. (Simply asking "Would you like me to secure this same time for your next appointment as well, so it does not get booked by anyone else?" If there is any hesitation, you can always remind them that if a change is needed, they can get in contact with you well in advance of the appointment.
 - **On the subject of changing appointments** – We all have things come up in life, so, I do go out of my way to try to be accommodating on this when my clients give advance notice requiring a change. At times I have even contacted another client, who I know has a pretty flexible schedule, to see if we could make a switch. Now, for those who no-show or are consistently changing or showing up late, this is handled differently. I charge a no-show or late cancellation fee and I am not so accommodating when clients are consistently having scheduling issues. I do try to find them a time that is available, but not at the inconvenience of anyone else.
- **Implement a reminder system.** If they do not rebook before leaving, have a standard message set up that checks in with them and reminds them to set up their next appointment. This could simply be a note you keep in your phone, that you copy and paste into a message.

6. Offer Limited Specials (Without Undervaluing Your Work)

- **Do Not discount pricing.** When you set lower prices, it creates the "real" perceived value of your service and clients will wait for the next "deal" to be announced, before booking with you. Create more value in your services by offering upgrades.
- **Referral Program** (e.g., "Bring a friend, and you both get a free add-on service").
- **Introductory Offer for First-Time Clients**, but let's not forget to reward referrals from existing clients too.

Offer an "upgrade" for a client, instead of discounts.

 - a complementary item (cuticle oil or lotion)
 - a complementary nail art add on for 2 nails (have a select display for them to choose from)
 - luxury moisturizing treatment (deep moisture mask with a heated wrap)
- **Loyalty Rewards** (e.g., "Book 5 services, get a [Insert special offer here] such as, complementary nail art on your 6th visit, paraffin treatment, or hand massage with deep moisturizing heat treatment...).

7. Network & Partner with Local Businesses

- **Salon Collaboration:** If you're renting a booth, introduce yourself to hairstylists, estheticians, and massage therapists, offer them a one-time only discounted or complementary service for marketing—they can refer clients. (pedicures often have a low overhead cost, so this can be a great service to offer)
 - Offer hand massage or cuticle treatment to their client's as they process, polish a child's nails while they wait, little acts of goodwill will help you to earn trust and build a reputation.
- **Local Boutiques, Coffee Shops & Service Businesses:**
 - Offer a one-time only discount nail service as a marketing promotion, to another service worker, such as waitress/waiter, bank teller or grocery cashier, in return for referrals. (they see a lot of customers and people are bound to comment on their nails)
 - You can also work out an arrangement with this person going forward, for free upgrades to services, based on their referrals. Be sure you have a way to track referrals (business cards with their name on the back, or a code the new customer would use to also get a complimentary upgrade)
 - Offer a small display with business cards and a special offer for their customers.
- **Pop-Up Events:** Set up at community events, craft fairs, or farmers' markets offering mini manicures, nail art or consultations.

Remember, every interaction is an opportunity to build trust and grow your business. Stay professional, keep learning, and always put your clients' experience first—before you know it, your books will be bursting and you will be adding clients to your wait-list!

A Quick Note About Complimentary Services

I've had a few people ask about this, so I want to clarify something important! Earlier, I said "*Do not discount your pricing*" — and then later, I mentioned offering *complimentary* services to certain individuals. It might sound a bit contradictory, but here's the difference.

When you offer a *single complimentary service* to someone, it's not a discount — it's a **strategic marketing decision**.

Think of it as part of your advertising budget. You're intentionally investing in visibility by offering that experience to a highly visible individual — maybe a cashier, server, bank teller, or even a local content creator who has strong engagement from people in your area.

Here's a simple way to explain it to them:

"I'd love to offer you a complimentary [service name] so you can experience what I do firsthand and share your thoughts with your friends, clients, or followers. This service is normally priced at \$XX.XX, but I'm covering the cost as part of my marketing budget to help grow my business."

This small, strategic investment in the *right* people can create genuine word-of-mouth and community buzz — without devaluing your work or setting an expectation for discounts.

Suggested Next Steps:

- (Starting with that tough-love again) Take a really close look at your work and skills that you may be able to continue to practice or get a little more education to improve.
 - Taking photos of your work is the best way to get a good clear look at the details in our work. This is something we should all be doing routinely, regardless of how long we have been in the industry.
- If you want to work on cutting your timing on services, here is what I did first:
 - Video yourself actually working on your client. You will be surprised of some of the steps that you might be repeating unnecessarily while working.
 - Next, take a further away video, where you can see yourself fully. You might be surprised how often you look up at your client, stopping the work and how many times you are looking for items you need.
 - Talk to your clients hands (or feet) until the end of the service
 - Have all of your tools and products within reach for each appointment
 - The next steps may be require more classes to dial in your timing.
- Calculate your service pricing based on all costs and profit goals.
- Ensure your salon environment is welcoming, clean and fits your style.
 - Enter your salon through the eyes of a client, sit in the client waiting area, then service chairs and really examine the whole environment.
 - Is it as clean as it should be? Does it represent you well? Do you see things that need attention?
- View your social profiles from the client point of view.
 - Are they professional?
 - Are the photos the best representation of your work?
 - Do they know where you're located and how to book with you?
- Map out social content ideas to be consistently visible online.
- Track client visits, keep notes on important details from appointments and follow up with clients.

If this guide has helped you, I would Love to celebrate your Wins with you! Please share with me via any social accounts, email, text (available on my website)...which ever method works for you. I would love to share your success too, so if you tag me on socials, I will be excited to share too! (@DarcyOlin or @MagicGelUSA – anywhere you see me!)

Recommended for every salon professional:

This Ugly Beauty Business, by Tina Alberino – <https://thisuglybeautybusiness.com>

There are many great resources from This Ugly Beauty Business. I highly recommend exploring them based on your role in the industry. If you are new to the industry and just building your

business, one of my top picks is *The MicroSalon Owner's Complete Business Toolkit*. You can find it here:

<https://thisuglybeautybusiness.com/product/the-microsalon-owner-s-complete-business-toolkit>

THANK YOU FOR READING!

I hope this guide has sparked some fresh ideas and strategies you can start implementing right away!

If this has helped you in any way, I'd love to celebrate your wins with you. Whether it's your first repeat client or your schedule finally filling up — those moments matter!

You can share your success with me however you like — social media, email, or even a quick text. And if you tag me in your posts (@DarcyOlin or @MagicGelUSA — anywhere you find me!), I'll be cheering you on and might even share your story to inspire others.

Bonus: I'd love to feature your salon on my Salon Locator at MagicGelUSA.com. Just reach out and I'll be happy to add you — it's a great way for clients to discover you and an amazing tool for connecting with other nail techs. Sometimes we all need to help a client who's moving, or refer out when our books are full — that's what community is all about.

Keep learning, keep growing, and keep believing in yourself — your dream clientele is already looking for you.

Darcy

