



The Manager's Handbook to Salon Operations

With Shanalie Wijesinghe and Daniel Landroche



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Introduction

Anyone who owns or manages a salon or spa can tell you it's not the same as running any other business. Even setting aside the beauty expertise needed to know when your stylists are on point, there are all kinds of unique demands and pain points to consider. How do you price haircuts, perms, and coloring? How do you create useful reports that deliver valuable insights into your business? How do you manage transition time between appointments?

Running a salon requires specialized knowledge, insights, and even technology for any chance of success. To help, we went to the experts: Boulevard's industry veterans Shanalie Wijesinghe and Daniel Landroche. With their guidance, you'll be able to manage the heck out of your salon and look good while doing it.



Communicating with stylists (like a boss)

“In the salon environment, it’s essential that team members feel supported by the business. That’s the best way to strengthen productivity across an organization.”
– Shanalie Wijesinghe

Your creative team is vital to your success, so managers must give stylists enough support to help them feel valued and do their jobs well.

Unfortunately, while your beauty specialists are undoubtedly well-trained, they likely have little experience in business operations or finances. As a manager, your goal is to communicate these operational realities in a way that matters to them.

In most cases, stylists want good commissions and some degree of upward mobility that will help them advance in a salon. What they need from you are details about compensation plans that reward performance. The key is to be as transparent as possible — stylists can be very cautious about any change, including those that will benefit them in the long run. Transparency helps include them in the process without worrying that their commissions will be impacted.

Another essential support is training — one of the most consistent pain points of any salon. Even the best stylists in the world need to become acclimated to your salon process, and that takes time. Simply training your team in using front desk software is a time sink, and the high turnover of assistants means this is a common issue. When looking for booking platforms, choose something user-friendly and intuitive, with enough “guard rails” to prevent user error. While it won’t eliminate training completely, it will help team members hit the ground running.

Ideally, the right platform is a manager’s secret weapon, helping to offset work by automating admin and simplifying onboarding.

Creating the perfect salon schedule

“Salons are different from yoga studios, spas, and nail salons. Built-to-purpose tools will always be your best bet for scheduling.” - Daniel Landroche

A successful client relationship starts with a well-organized schedule. Like any service, salons must ensure there's enough time for stylists to do the best possible job. The problem is that our industry has unique nuances that traditional booking platforms can't meet. Any salon schedule must be able to:

- Accurately predict the optimal time-per-service that will maximize revenue.
- Account for transition times between clients for clean-up and appointment preparation.
- Estimate individual stylist times for each service since some may excel at quick cuts while others prefer lengthy appointments.

One reason Boulevard's self-booking platform benefits stylists is because it is salon-specific. Designed by beauty professionals, it aims to meet stylists', managers', and clients' overlapping needs while allowing for customized pricing and services. What's more, optimized scheduling accounts for individual stylist times and transitions between services to maximize revenue for your business.



Getting the word out

“My time at BENJAMIN taught me that your brand is 2/3 of what you sell. Never take that for granted.” – Shanalie Wijesinghe

The modern marketing industry is worth over a trillion dollars because it has immense value to businesses and brands. And yet, many salon owners have little education on digital marketing. It is a giant missed opportunity that almost no one in the salon space uses Google Ads, preferring to focus on word-of-mouth and traditional (i.e., non-digital) campaigns.

That’s the bad news. The good news is that small to mid-sized businesses have a powerful opportunity to tap into a massive audience by investing in digital advertising. Yes, it requires an investment to get going, but it’s worth testing before assuming that digital advertising is a lost cause.

Start with an intuitive platform like Instagram. It’s easy to create ads from a business account, and you can start with a small budget — even \$30 of spend will be enough to validate your efforts. Bonus for Boulevard partners: Our booking widget provides a beautiful, native experience in Instagram ads, allowing customers to book without leaving the app!

What about outsourcing?

Some beauty brands prefer to outsource their marketing efforts to an ad agency. That’s not a terrible strategy if you can afford it, but most digital ad opportunities in 2021 are low-hanging fruit. It’s also far harder to pivot your marketing strategy when working with a third-party. Consider launching a campaign yourself first, before turning to an agency. After all, if it doesn’t work, you can always pause and try something new.

Keeping track of your Client's many needs

“Clients are unique individuals — treat them that way, and the relationship gets personal.” - Shanalie Wijesinghe

Every client has diverse and specialized needs that stylists must remember and account for. On top of that, salons often require advanced tools to manage client appointments and interact with them for marketing purposes. Client management tools address both of these issues in many ways by providing options to customize appointments and track useful client information. Most importantly, client management guarantees that the necessary information is at hand during an appointment and at checkout.

Any client management tool worth its salt needs to compile detailed client profiles. We'll go over everything you'll need to look for on the next page.

The screenshot shows a 'Client Profile' page for 'Dino Gislason' in Beverly Hills. The page is divided into several sections:

- Overview:** A summary table with the following data:

APPOINTMENTS	SHOW RATE	WALK-INS	AVG. REVISIT	AVG. VISIT VALUE
27	100%	-	7.3 Weeks	\$266.00
- Scheduled Appointments:** A list of upcoming appointments, including 'Chemical Relaxer with Jessica' on Monday, Apr 17 at 2:30pm PDT in Beverly Hills.
- Scheduling Alert:** A form to set an alert for new appointments, with a 'Save' button.
- Client Notes:** A section for notes, including a note: 'Requests sparkling water during visit' and another: 'Enjoys product recommendations, great opportunity for consult'. There is a 'Save' button at the bottom right.
- About Dino:** Personal information including 'Janitor Johnson & Johnson', social media links for Instagram and Twitter, and follower counts (3894 for Instagram, 9754 for Twitter).
- Contact Info:** Fields for 'First Name' (Dino), 'Last Name' (Gislason), 'Pronouns' (Not Specified), 'Email' (Dino.Gislason@example.com), and 'Mobile' ((860) 555-0130). There are checkboxes for 'Email Reminders' and 'SMS Reminders'.

On the left side of the screenshot, there is a sidebar for 'Abundant Salon Beverly Hills' with a 'Clients' section. It includes a search bar, filters for locations (Beverly Hills, Santa Monica), and a list of filters like 'Primary Locations', 'Purchased', 'Provider', etc. There is also an 'Export current list' button.

History of client appointments:

More than simply tracking the number of visits, a history feature can also track associated appointment metrics. Understanding the average visits per month or average visit value can help you estimate a single customer's lifetime value and plan accordingly.

Services used:

Do clients want a little off the top or a complete beauty package? Along with understanding individual clients, this category helps you know which services are the most popular overall.

Product history:

Whether clients use products during an appointment or buy some before leaving the salon, managers must know what to keep in stock.

Product recommendations:

A client who enjoys a particular coloring product might be interested in similar items from the same brand. A robust client management platform can review histories and make these suggestions.

Social media accounts:

Like many brands, salons can interact with clients beyond the chair. By keeping track of social media accounts, you can offer specialized promotions through a frequently-used platform that meets their precise needs.

Stylist notes:

Keeping notes that do not fit any other management category is usually a good idea. What did a client talk about during the appointment? Are they always early or late? These notes can remind stylists what a client needs before an appointment, or act as an FYI for stylists who see the client for a later appointment.

Loyalty plan:

Having any associated loyalty or rewards profiles on hand can be immensely useful during an appointment. For a start, it can immediately tell you the extent to which a particular client values your sale. Loyalty plans are also a great conflict resolution tool — if a client isn't happy with a service or product, bonus reward points can smooth things over.

Completing your #\$\$@&ing reports

“You only manage what you measure. Reporting is a crucial step in driving profitability.” – Daniel Landroche

Managing finances is just as crucial to salons as any other business, but understanding profitability and forecasting isn't always easy. When you're personally invested in salon services, it can be challenging to measure the cost-effectiveness of each strategy and pivot accordingly. That's why detailed reporting is so vital, even if you'd much rather be working on someone's hair — or doing literally anything else.

Here are some of the questions effective reporting can answer:

The value of product sales:

Is there actually a high demand for those products at checkout, or do you only think you need them? Reports can confirm how long it will take to sell a given product shipment and whether that is worth the investment.

The need for a dedicated manager:

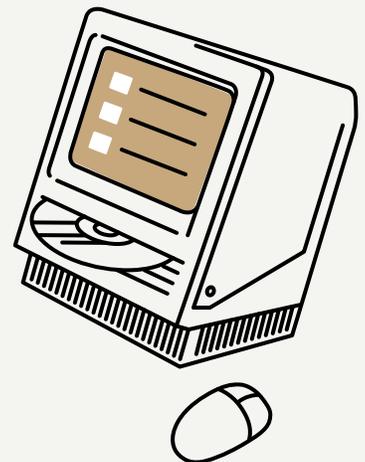
Many owners also act as managers until the business is successful enough to hire a dedicated employee for the role. Knowing that you're earning enough to consistently pay their salary is vital for this step.

The right time to open new locations:

If your current location is not active and maximizing its revenue streams, what makes you think a new salon will do any better? Owners must know precisely when there is enough demand before they open additional locations.

Meticulous reporting is what helps you analyze operational data and uncover valuable insights about salon performance. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports can even tell you what worked — and what didn't — during a given period. If your sales tanked during a particular week, reports make it easier to pinpoint the cause and course-correct for the following week.

Salon managers must also recognize that not all reporting tools are equal here. You need something salon-specific that is customizable enough to meet your chosen services. Canned reports on Excel templates aren't enough — you need to change columns, track different sales types, and ask specific questions relating to your location. Strong reporting tools will create more operational efficiencies within a business. The right system can cut down the number of hours it takes to process payroll and provide easy insights into the cost of service. One Boulevard partner recently reduced payroll time from nine hours, to just ten minutes with our reporting software. What would you do with that extra time?



How Boulevard can help

One lesson salon managers need to remember is that general business management tools aren't going to cut it for the beauty industry. For a start, there are simply too many variables and custom needs that create gaps in daily operations and reporting. What's more, you need something that stylists, assistants, and front desk staff can interact with easily as well.

That's why we have Boulevard. Our premium, complete client experience platform can assist you at every level.

Self-booking:

Let clients book appointments from AI-optimized time slots to maximize your revenue and stylist productivity (plus, the booking widget actually looks like your brand and lives on your site for a consistent client experience).

POS & payments:

Create seamless checkout experiences with contactless point of sale.

Scheduling:

Create client schedules that reduce downtime and minimize appointment clusters.

Reporting:

Generate customizable reports that grant a deeper control and understanding of your data.

Client management:

Draw on previous visits, purchases, social media profiles, and more to offer the best experience for each client.

Loyalty programs:

Build relationships and retain clients by providing rewards for long-term loyalty.

Offers:

Create perks and benefits that mesh seamlessly with the Boulevard platform, from gift codes to holiday specials.

And much more!

About the authors

Shanalie Wijesinghe

Hi, I'm Shanalie Wijesinghe, Boulevard's Director of Content and a personal platform educator for both in-house staff and our partner salons and spas. As a Bay Area native and first-generation immigrant, I have a passion for diversity in business and creating strong ties between a brand and its customers. After attending college in Santa Barbara, I moved to Los Angeles where I worked in high-end luxury salons such as Sally Hershberger and BENJAMIN for over 13 years, giving me first-hand expertise in the industry. Since making the switch to Boulevard, I've been able to pull from my knowledge and experience within the beauty and tech world to educate staff members and businesses alike on how to fully utilize the platform while putting them on the path to success.

Daniel Landroche

Hello, I'm Daniel Landroche, a salon consultant and Boulevard's Lead Solutions Architect with 12 years of in-house salon experience, including seven years of working at BENJAMIN salon. Along with my insider beauty expertise, I'm also well versed in management, operations, payroll, finance, HR, marketing, and a short stint with the Digital Marketing team at Disney+. I strive to channel my wide breadth of experience and knowledge into my passion for finding and creating content around new ways to help people work more efficiently.



Shanalie Wijesinghe
Director of Content
at Boulevard



Daniel Landroche
Lead Solutions Architect
at Boulevard

About Boulevard

Boulevard offers the first and only client experience platform purpose-built for appointment-based, self-care businesses.

From initial booking to final payment, Boulevard's modern, easy-to-use client experience platform empowers you and your staff to deliver personable, enjoyable experiences that keep clients coming back. Founded in LA in 2016, Boulevard has earned the trust of thousands of salons, spas, medspas, and other self-care businesses across the nation by delivering simple yet powerful technology and the best-in-class support they deserve.

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MAKE A MOVE ON YOUR MARGINS WITH BOULEVARD:

16%
More services
booked

71%
fewer no-shows &
late cancels

18%
More retail value

24%
More gratuity
from clients

*Average impact T+90 days after switching to Boulevard. These are estimated results based on aggregated customer data, results are not guaranteed. Please keep in mind that actual results may differ based on a number of factors, including market, client base, geography.

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