

great manicure!

By Andrea Sercu

When a client enters your spa for nail services, expectations are high. Many clients test-drive a spa with a manicure and if they find the service only so-so, they're unlikely to return for a second try. What does it take to make a manicure great? We spoke with nail industry experts to find out all the components needed to create top-notch spa-level nail services.



Cleanliness and Sanitation

Long before CNN and 20/20 reported the story of the salon that didn't flush out its pedicure jets—and the clients who ended up with bacterial infections—stories were circulating about

less-than-tidy nail salons. Despite increasing education, some techs reuse nail files, fail to disinfect nippers between clients, and offer no means of sanitizing their hands or the client's before a service.

"I don't know if I'm a clean freak, but I expect everything to be sanitary," says Christina Jahn, president of marketing for Cuccio Naturalé/Star Nail International, Valencia, California. "For instance, I don't want my tech to flip over the towel she used on the previous client or use scuffed-up blocks."

Top-notch sanitation practices not only put your clients at ease, they also provide added customer service opportunities. Files, birchwood sticks and blocks make great end-of-service guest "favors" that express how much you value the client's patronage, while reassuring clients that you don't reuse implements. Personal implement packs and the use of sanitizable blocks and files also allow you to educate clients about your commitment to their well-being.

The Technician

Another key component to a great service is a great service provider. There's one essential skill that both psychologists and nail techs must possess to master their respective trades:

Clean nail stations and sanitary service practices send a reassuring message to clients.



"The best manicure I've had was a full spa treatment for the nails. I had a scrub to remove the dead skin from my hands and cuticles; a masque to replenish; and a fantastic acupressure massage. The technician asked me if I had any problems with my nails and treated them accordingly. She then cleaned my nails, filed them in one direction and did an incredible polish job with no lacquer left on the cuticles."— Suzi Weiss-Fischmann, executive vice-president, OPI Products, North Hollywood, CA

"My best experience was a manicure by Tom Bachik. He works efficiently, precisely and with perfection, but he's very gentle. My fingertips never hurt after a rebalance or manicure with Tom."— Jan Arnold, co-founder, Creative Nail Design, Vista, CA

"It was like cuticle excavation! The tech pulled out nippers and cut and dug. I've never seen so much tissue left on a towel. (My cuticles remained ragged and shredded for two months afterward.) She then applied a mineral oil lotion, alcohol and polish. By the time I got into the cab, the polish was sliding off my nails. What's more, she charged \$40, and hadn't even done a hand massage!"— Jan Arnold, co-founder, Creative Nail Design, Vista, CA

"The worst manicures I've had are in salons where the stations and implements haven't been properly disinfected or cleaned. That really drives me crazy!"— Nancy Hokama, director of marketing, ibd, Gardena, CA

the art of listening. According to Jahn, although some clients would rather use their manicure time to just sit back and relax, many clients develop a relationship with their

techs and look forward to their services as a time to visit and share news about their lives.

In addition to great listening and conversation skills, a nail tech must play the role of a detective, listening for clues that can help her better serve the client.

"Techs sometimes don't take the time at the beginning of a service to find out a client's preferences," says Ellen Genco, vice-president of marketing for Orly International, Los Angeles. She recommends having new clients fill out client cards to uncover any medical issues and asking the client before the service about personal preferences such as desired nail shape.

Dixie Eklund, vice-president of sales, FPO Products, Farmington Hills, Michigan, advises techs to start with a skin and nail analysis and customize the service based on the information the client provides.

"The same base coat shouldn't necessarily be used on everyone," says Genco. "Really good techs will look at a client's nails and prescribe the proper strengthener just for her."

Nail techs should also demonstrate their expertise by describing the differences in the lotions they sell, advising clients on seasonal trends in nail color and cross-selling other spa services. "I recommend staying up on the trends and the newest colors and lines. Make

Successful nail technicians are able to establish a strong rapport with their clients.



manicure magic

"Everything my tech brings out is new and clean. She cracks off a nail file from a fresh pack and offers the board to you when she's done. Everything she pulls out is either for you exclusively or sanitized, including individual dishes for acrylics or gels." — Christina Jahn, president of marketing, Cuccio Naturalé/Star Nail International, Valencia, CA

"I go to a salon where a group of businesspeople have a standing appointment every Friday evening. We network; it's almost like a club. From the minute you sit down until the moment you leave, it's a very relaxed atmosphere. All the techs are trained to work the same way, with the same products, so everyone gets the exact same service, even when a tech is filling in for someone on vacation." — Essie Weingarten, president, Essie Cosmetics, Astoria, NY

manicure mishaps

"The tech left polish on my cuticle, so I asked her to clean it up before I left. Most techs will use an orangewood stick and some nail polish remover. Instead, she told me, 'It'll come off when you take a shower!'" — Ellen Genco, vice-president of marketing, Orly International, Los Angeles, CA

"I had acrylics done at a salon where the techs sent all the clients to one sink where there was one brush. I know some techs sanitize the brushes, but I want my own." — Christina Jahn, president of marketing, Cuccio Naturalé/Star Nail International, Valencia, CA

it more of an active relationship, in which you help to educate the client," says Shel Pink, brand manager of bio solutions, Los Angeles.

"I've noticed that it doesn't matter if it's a dentist, eye doctor or dry cleaner. When the professionals have confidence in their processes and products

and explain to me what they're using and why, I go back," says Eklund.

Technical Skills

A salon might have impeccable sanitation practices and priceless décor, but if the nail department's technical skills suffer, even the most inexperienced client will soon grow disenchanted with the results. Take, for instance, cuticle pushing. "Some techs apply the oil and jam the pusher across the nail. If you push the cuticle under the eponychium (nonliving tissue that sticks to the nail plate), it has a tendency to make the cuticles look puffy. Instead, you want to remove the nonliving cuticle while respecting the eponychium," says Jan Arnold, co-founder of Creative Nail Design, Vista, California. "Otherwise, cuticles grow out unevenly and create ragged edges."

Arnold advises a four-step system to help techs master this essential step:

- Apply cuticle remover.
- Use a pusher to loosen the cuticle from the nail plate.
- Use a curette (mini melon baller) to peel away nonliving tissue.
- Trim hangnails with a sharp nipper.

The same attention to detail should be applied to filing, says Essie Weingarten, president of Essie Cosmetics, Astoria, New York. Weingarten has found that



A blissful prolonged hand massage during the manicure service ensures client loyalty.

manicure magic

"During my favorite manicure ever, the technician chatted happily with me on the way back to her station, which was spotless. She asked me what I liked best about my hands and what I would change if I could. I thought that was brilliant! She had me sniff all five of the cremes on the station and asked me to pick a favorite, which was peach vanilla. She pulled out peach vanilla polish remover, cuticle oil and effervescent soaking balls. She explained everything she was doing, what she was using and why."— Dixie Eklund, vice-president of sales, FPO Products, Farmington Hills, MI

"The better manicures I've gotten have included a wonderful massage. This really seems to make the difference for me between a good service and a great one."— Nancy Hokama, director of marketing, ibd, Gardena, CA

manicure mishaps

"I was out of town for more than two weeks and had to do a show, so I decided to go into this salon on the West Coast. I was better off before I went in than when I left. I'm so used to having my polish applied lightly, not heavily like this person did. Whenever I'm at a new salon, I tell the tech not to file or cut my nails. And no blades on my feet!"— Essie Weingarten, president, Essie Cosmetics, Astoria, NY

"The manicurist cut the cuticle too close and made it bleed, then panicked and rushed the rest of the manicure. She sloppily polished the nails and basically asked me to leave."— Suzi Weiss-Fischmann, executive vice-president, OPI Products, North Hollywood, CA

many techs will file the nails into a square, round or squoval shape, depending on *their* preferences rather than the client's. And Arnold won't let anyone use a file with less than a 240-abrasive grit. "Anything harsher peels or shreds the edge," she says.

A great, long-lasting polish job also begins with the basics. Techs should always start with a well-

as a thinner application will dry crisp and be more durable.

Massage

The hand and arm massage is an integral part of the spa manicure. If you want to give your clients the best manicures of their lives, make sure your nail techs aren't skimping on this vital element. Suzi Weiss-Fischmann, executive

"I knew I was in trouble when the tech's version of sanitation was to plunge my fingertips into a mixture of water and dish soap. Next, she used her fingers to fish nippers out of a disinfectant jar that had a half-inch of sludge at the bottom. For the next 20 minutes, she talked about the fight she'd had with her boyfriend and ended up filing my nails too short. Then she gave me the worst hand massage I've ever had."— Dixie Eklund, vice-president of sales, FPO Products, Farmington Hills, MI



Technical expertise is a non-negotiable feature of the great manicure.

cleansed, dehydrated nail plate. For best results, Arnold recommends scrubbing with soap and water. To finish the job, she advises applying a natural nail cleanser with a fiber-free pad and pulling back the lateral folds of skin that surround the nail to remove any hidden oils.

"Several thin coats of polish are always better than one thick layer," Arnold notes. The solvents in a large pool of enamel will evaporate unevenly and smear the whole manicure, where-

vice-president, OPI Products, North Hollywood, California, believes the best manicures should double as mini getaways, with the massage as the main event. Nancy Hokama, director of marketing, ibd, Gardena, California, agrees. "I think a minimum of 10 minutes should be devoted to massage, and the cost should absolutely be included in the service."

Hokama also believes the choice of lotion has a great deal to do with the quality of the massage. "It should have a nice scent but not be overwhelming. There should also be enough oil in it to add slip, so there's no friction."

Special Touches

Special add-ons make your services stand out and increase their value in clients' eyes. At the Tulsa, Oklahoma, Marriott spa, nail techs offer a hot rock massage and manicure that can knead the stress out of the weariest hands. Baby river rocks are placed in a mini Crock-Pot and heated. A non-oily, silky massage lotion is applied,

NEW FOR MANICURES

Is your nail department keeping up with the latest manicure products and services? Here's a selection of some of the great new products that have been introduced to the industry in the last few months.



Cellex-C Hydra Hand Cream and Skin Firming Hand Cream work together as a two-step daily regimen to keep aging hands smooth, moist and young looking. Hydra Hand Cream, an intensive, nourishing moisturizer, is totally greaseless and ideal for preventing the photo-aging effects of sun and water exposure with water repellent silicones and SPF 15 sunscreen. See www.cellex-cUSA.com for additional information.



The secret to Cuccio Naturalé's Papaya Anti-Aging Revitalizing Hand Facial is the naturally produced enzyme or fruit acid, papain, which stimulates cell renewal. The system includes the luxurious Sanitizing Soak, Revitalizing Complex and Hand Protection Lotion. All three contain papaya infused with green tea, a known anti-oxidant, which helps protect skin from damaging free radicals as it seals in moisture. For more, visit www.cuccio.com or call 800/407-7797 for a special introductory offer.



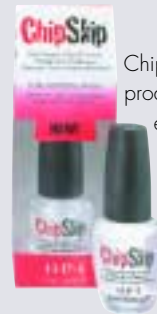
Orly International, makers of bio solutions, introduces The Gripper Cap, a revolutionary new bottle cap created especially so nail technicians can "get a grip" and work more quickly and efficiently. The cap's uniquely shaped hard plastic core is covered with a sleek rubber coating with easy-to-grip dimples. Look for the innovative cap and the new company logo not only on all of Orly's nail color but also on its new Won't Chip Polish Shield and its complete line of nail and cuticle treatments. For more information visit www.orlybeauty.com or call 800/275-1111.



Calling all pickers, biters and paper cut victims! Creative Nail Design's new C:U3 Renu Cuticle Therapy Cream lets spas offer these clients the restorative benefits of copper. Protein chains bond with copper to form a restorative complex that deeply penetrates the epidermis and repairs from the bottom layers up. Alantoin protects the skin from damaging environmental elements and panthanol and aloe moisturize while the wound heals. For more, visit www.creative4pros.com.



Billionails, the latest launch in Essie Cosmetics' Comprehensive nail treatment line, uses an exclusive formula of wheat and vegetable proteins enriched with vitamins A and D to strengthen and protect nails. Billionails prevents drying and splitting and adds flexibility to the nail as it bonds the layers together. It can be used under nail color or as a top coat. For more information call 800/232-1155 or visit www.essie.com.

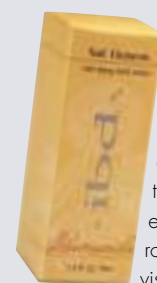


ChipSkip, a patented nailcare product proven to dramatically extend the life of a manicure, is a one-of-a-kind technology exclusive to OPI Products.

Unlike other chip prevention products, ChipSkip keeps nails chip-free longer by priming the surface of the nail so that nail lacquer adheres better. Use it to give your salon manicures added value and offer it at retail. Call 800/341-9999 for details on an introductory display or visit www.opi.com.



The Fusion Manual Microdermabrasion Resurfacing Kit from FPO reveals fresher, younger-looking hands immediately in just one treatment. The Microdermabrasion Resurfacing Tool uses magnesium oxide diamond-shaped crystals to exfoliate dull, dry skin thoroughly and safely. Followed with the Fusion Replenishing Treatment, the service leaves hands smooth and hydrated with more even skin tones. For more on adding this innovative handcare treatment to your menu, visit www.FPOproducts.com or call 888/544-8214.



Ibd introduces Chamomile Anti-Aging Hand Lotion, a refreshing handcare product containing an anti-oxidant complex with retinyl palmitate to protect skin against daily exposure to weather and environmental pollutants. The formula visibly improves the appearance of hands by fading age spots and diminishing wrinkles. The compact boxes promote impulse retail sales. For more, visit www.ibdbeauty.com or call 800/221-2743.

Serve a cup of jasmine tea to the client while her hands soak.

The finished product of a great manicure is beautiful nails *and* a happy client.



and a warm stone is placed in the palm of the client's hand, with smaller stones placed between the fingers. To seal in the heat, wrap a warm towel around the hand.

The same special touches used in facials and body treatments can also be applied to the hands. Try integrating masques, scrubs, lotions and anti-aging moisturizers into your basic manicure. You can also tie all the

senses to an aromatherapy theme. Serve a cup of jasmine tea to the client while her hands soak in a water bowl infused with tiny star jasmine flowers, then massage her hands with jasmine-scented lotion. Or create an aromatherapy bar where the client can choose the scent, such as vanilla, papaya or rose. Jahn suggests infusing manicures with scented soaps, massage oils, lotions and effervescent balls that bubble and release fragrance as they condition.

The best manicures possess mystique. To create that aura, the total service package—from the cleanliness of the station to the conversation to the way a tech pushes and files the nails—must all work in concert to create a lasting impression and make clients say, "Great manicure!" ♦

Andrea Sercu is a *DAYSPA* contributing editor.