

## Teamwork vs. Individual Work

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We're all familiar with the stereotypical salon: the owner is either a clueless pushover or a domineering autocrat and the "workers" are lazy, crazy, dirty, incompetent or otherwise toxic. How does anyone tolerate that level of dysfunction and maintain their professionalism? Is this the best the beauty

industry has to offer? Of course not, but this conception has become so pervasive that many newly licensed pros don't bother searching for a salon with a supportive team environment and choose to work alone instead. Not to minimize the challenges of business ownership, but cooperation, leadership and teamwork don't apply in the privacy of solo salons, and that's to the detriment of our industry.

### **The false choice between working in a dysfunctional salon or entirely alone limits your options when searching for your next workplace.**

My early career involved five different hair salons in the first five years after beauty school. At each salon, the owner was a licensed cosmetologist working full time while others rented stations. As a prospective renter, I don't recall ever being asked to complete an application, submit a resume and references, demonstrate my skills or provide any evidence of competence, financial stability or compatibility. Red flag: Failure to screen renters should be a sufficient warning of weak leadership, financial

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desperation and low professional standards.

There's not much teamwork when multiple pros compete for clients within the same workplace. Responsible for handling our own businesses, my coworkers and I did not cooperate in the way that would be expected of employees. The only salon meetings I can recall were held in response to an immediate crisis or simmering tensions, and they usually devolved into unproductive gripe sessions.

Whereas some blame their salon problems solely on poor communication, most salons lack leadership and structure with clearly defined roles (job descriptions, duties, rights, responsibilities, policies and procedures). Moreover, owners tolerate unprofessional behaviors (tardiness, harassment, substance abuse, theft and poor workmanship) that reflect negatively on the salon and would be cause for termination if they had employees. Lesson learned: No one individual, regardless of their role, is so important that they can be allowed to disrupt the entire salon.

Despite the promises of "independence," what many aspire to may actually limit professional growth and decrease job satisfaction. While avoiding conflict and having control may be reason enough to work alone, some admit to feeling lonely, uninspired and burdened. When isolated from others, where's the opportunity and incentive to cooperate? How can you develop leadership skills or benefit from a group effort?

**Working collaboratively with other beauty pros could be the spark that sustains or reignites your passion for the industry.**

If you're struggling to discover the perfect salon, business partner, boss, employee or coworker, consider what you bring to the work relationship and how you could improve. Learn how to cooperate and compromise without sacrificing your integrity.

If you'd like to share your experience and be featured in a future column, please email me at [jaime@precisionnails.com](mailto:jaime@precisionnails.com).

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