

Salon Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Salon Manager interviews usually combine a conversation with the owner or area manager and a practical look at how you run a floor. Expect questions about rostering, people, compliance and the commercial side of salon life.

- **Operational and process:** Questions about rostering, stock, pricing and daily takings.
- **People leadership and behavioural:** Questions about recruiting, training, appraising and handling staff issues.
- **Client-facing scenarios:** Questions about complaints, refunds and difficult client conversations.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about hygiene, infection control and work health and safety.
- **Commercial judgement:** Questions about pricing, stock selection and keeping the salon profitable.

Typically one or two interviews. The first may be with the owner or manager and covers your background and how you would run the salon. A second may include a walk-through of the venue and scenario questions. Some employers ask you to talk through a rostering or stock problem on the spot.

1. Walk me through how you roster stylists and therapists for a busy week.

Why they ask

This tests your operational thinking and how you match staff to bookings.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step walk-through: start with the booking data, then staff availability, then gaps, then adjustments.

Example answer

"I start by pulling the forward bookings from Timely and looking at the previous week's pattern. I check which stylists and therapists are available and their skill mix, because a senior colourist handles different work to a junior. Then I block out peak times and make sure I have enough front desk cover. I look for gaps and either move shifts or call in a casual. I publish the roster a week ahead and check it daily for changes. If a client requests a specific stylist, I lock that in early."

2. Tell me about a time you dealt with an underperforming team member.

Why they ask

This assesses your people leadership and how you handle difficult conversations.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"At a previous salon, one stylist was regularly late and her column was running behind. I sat down with her privately and asked what was going on. She was struggling with the early starts because of a change in her personal circumstances. We agreed to shift her start time by half an hour for a trial period and set clear expectations around client handovers. I checked in weekly. Her punctuality improved and her client feedback picked up. If it had not worked, I would have moved to a formal performance plan."

3. A client complains about a colour service and demands a refund. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your client-facing judgement and how you protect the salon's reputation.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: listen, acknowledge, investigate, offer a fair resolution, follow up.

Example answer

"I would take the client to a quiet area and let them explain what happened without interrupting. I would acknowledge their frustration and apologise that they are unhappy, even before I know the full story. Then I would look at the service record and ask a senior stylist to assess the colour. If it is a genuine salon error, I would offer a correction at no charge or a refund depending on what the client prefers. If it is a maintenance issue, I would explain the options and offer a discounted fix. Either way, I would follow up in a few days to check they are happy."

4. How do you decide which retail products to stock and how to price services?

Why they ask

This probes your commercial judgement and inventory management.

How to structure your answer

Framework: client demand, margin, shelf life, supplier terms.

Example answer

"I look at what clients ask for and what my team recommends most. I track which lines sell through and which sit on the shelf. I check the margin on each product and whether the supplier offers good terms or training support. For services, I price based on time, product cost and the local market, and I review prices every six months. I also run small retail promotions to move slower lines. The goal is a tight range that clients actually buy."

5. How do you ensure hygiene, infection control and WHS standards are maintained daily?

Why they ask

This checks your compliance mindset and how you build safety into the salon routine.

How to structure your answer

Checklist and culture: daily checks, training, reporting, leading by example.

Example answer

"I start with a daily opening and closing checklist that covers tool sterilisation, bench and basin cleaning, and fresh towels. Every new team member gets induction training on our hygiene and WHS procedures, and we do refresher sessions. I make sure incident reports are filled out and acted on. I also lead by example: if I see something out of place, I fix it or ask someone to fix it on the spot. Keeping the salon audit-ready is just part of the daily routine."

6. How do you keep a team motivated during quiet periods?

Why they ask

This tests your people leadership and how you manage morale when bookings drop.

How to structure your answer

Specific tactics: communication, training, goals, recognition.

Example answer

"I would be honest with the team about the quieter period and focus on what we can control. I would use the time for training, like upskilling junior stylists or practising retail recommendations. I would set small team goals around rebooking clients or reaching out to lapsed clients. I would also recognise good work publicly, even for small wins. And I would make sure the roster is fair so no one feels singled out. A calm, busy team keeps the salon ready for when bookings pick up."

