



Gadget A Go-Go

The latest trend in the nail industry? Using cutting-edge machines and equipment as a new profit source.

By Ilona French

Most modern Americans can't wait to get their hands on the newest gizmos and gadgets: sleek, stylish cell phones, the hottest high-performance notebook PCs or all-in-one BlackBerry devices. Such smart, edgy products can be used for personal and business purposes, and now some of the most cutting-edge equipment is available exclusively for salons, helping make services better and business more profitable.

Using the latest equipment during manicure and pedicure services signals a growing trend in the nail industry. In such a competitive market, discovering new ways to cater to clients is key. Devices such as LED light therapy machines, precise-application nail art machines, heated nail bubble spas and single-use paraffin systems help nail technicians stand out from the rest—and keep loyal clients coming back for more.

Go Go Gadget!

Here's a look at tech-inspired equipment sure to jump-start your manicure and pedicure services.



The **HotSpa Heated Nail Bubble Spa** from Helen of Troy offers a stimulating bubble

massage for a soothing and relaxing pre-manicure soak. The spa manicure prep machine softens cuticles and conditions nails. The device provides a heated microbubble water massage and keeps water at a comfortably warm temperature. The ergonomic hand and wrist rest allows for relaxation, while the large water reservoir with an easy-to-read fill line accommodates most hand sizes. The sleek, compact design fits at any nail station. The lightweight, portable unit comes with nonslip feet for convenience.

800/480-8832, www.helenoftroyusa.com.

File, shape, clean, buff and dry natural and acrylic nails with one unit: the Helen of Troy **HotSpa UV-Lite and Drill Nail System**. Ideal for use during manicures or pedicures, the unit features seven interchangeable styling accessory attachments: the shaping disc files shape and shorten nails; the filing flattop cone removes rough skin and calluses during pedicures; the pointed cone removes dead skin and softens calluses; the polishing cone polishes and buffs natural or acrylic nails; the callus remover treats heels, soles and other areas with rough skin; the round shaping attachment gently files and shapes thin nails; and the thin filing cone files and treats the surfaces of thick toenails. **800/480-8832, www.helenoftroyusa.com.**



Designed to easily apply nail art in seconds, the **Nail Fashion Printer** from ImagiNail produces high-quality images—with vibrant color and photographic clarity—directly onto natural nails or enhancements. Thousands of images are built into the system, and you can add your own artwork or digital photographs. More traditional images, from French designs to subtle shadings and color gradients, also apply quickly and easily. Nail fashions may be enhanced with rhinestones, glitter or other artistic accompaniments. **877/544-4250, www.imaginail.com.**



The Kupa **KP-6100** electric file features touch-button technology and options that allow techs to use the machine in multiple locations. The unit is designed to make customizing work spaces, tables, pedicure carts and spa units easy, efficient and economical. The electric file control box includes a template that enables the installer to cut the table or spa unit and insert the control box so the machine is flush to the surface. Sealed and water-resistant, the box can be easily removed for maintenance. The electric file features speeds up to 30,000 rpm, electronic touch controls, illuminated speed controls and a thin, lightweight hand piece. **800/994-5872, www.kupainc.com.**



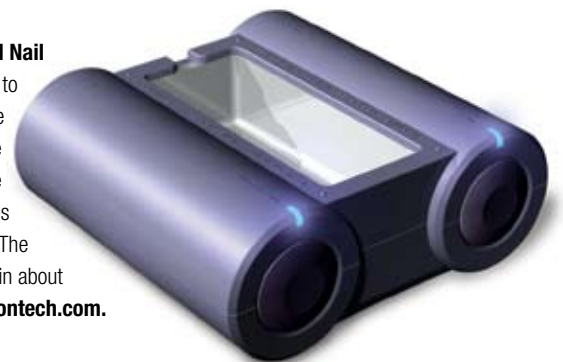
Create a pampering spa manicure or pedicure by adding a warm oil pour and massage to your regular spa treatment. The **Massage Oil Warmer** from LCN evenly warms oil to the selected application temperature in about eight minutes; once heated, the oil can be maintained at the selected temperature. Techs can then pour it in a steady stream over the client's hands or feet. The Massage Oil Warmer has an innovative heating system (positive temperature coefficient, or PTC) and complies with the highest safety standards. **800/86-NAILS, www.lcnusa.com.**



The colorful and modular Nailite **Nail Drill** is designed for ultimate control. The wide foot pedal allows the user to easily push down for a steady increase of rpm instead of a burst of speed. The latest technology also makes the drill nearly soundless, and a switch on the back of the drill allows the user to switch

between standard 110V electricity or the 220V electricity available in some countries. **800/222-4472, www.nailiteinc.com.**

The **Sonic Touch 3 Ultra Sonic Artificial Nail Remover** from Salontech makes it simple to remove enhancements without damaging the natural nail. Using ultrasonic vibrations, the Sonic Touch heats pure acetone to remove full acrylic enhancements in 15 to 20 minutes and acrylic nail tips in 5 to 10 minutes. The machine also takes off standard nail polish in about 30 seconds. **877/725-6683, www.salontech.com.**



Skincare Technology **HandSpa** uses red and amber Revitalight LED light therapy to help stimulate collagen production on the backs of hands, which makes hands look plumper and suppler, and reduces the appearance of veins, fine lines and age spots. HandSpa can also enhance the therapeutic benefits of creams and serums applied before a session by helping them seep deeper into the skin. Salons that offer this technology often include the service with a manicure. The company suggests a 10-minute session once a week for four to six weeks to achieve optimal results. **888/807-SKIN, www.revitalight.com.**

The Spa Revolutions **PerfectSense Paraffin & Aromatherapy** system makes dipping, pouring and ladling paraffin and cleaning messy tubs a thing of the past. Hypoallergenic, medical-grade gloves and booties are prefilled with physiotherapeutic spa-grade paraffin. The sanitary, single-use, disposable and portable paraffin system contains minerals that consistently heat paraffin to a prescribed 122-degree immersion temperature in only five minutes. As the minerals heat, the machine emits the client's choice of pure essential aromatherapy oil for an added treat.

PerfectSense is also available in retail take-home kits for skincare maintenance. **888/827-4683, www.sparevolutions.com.**



"Using innovative machines and equipment during manicures and pedicures is definitely a growing trend in the salon industry," says Glenn Hogle, president of Escondido, California-based Spa Revolutions. "This trend continues to develop because salon owners and clients continue to expect new treatments with high-quality results."

Hogle explains how his company's PerfectSense Paraffin & Aromatherapy system was introduced: "Both spa directors and their clientele were rejecting paraffin treatments due to archaic systems that were very messy and posed the threat of bacterial cross-contamination. PerfectSense offers an all-natural treatment and delivery system; the paraffin is heated with food-grade minerals, which eliminates the need for messy heating tubs and cumbersome electrical cords."

"I think new technology is very important," says Anna Davitian, manager and co-owner of Varnish salon in Los Angeles. "Clients see that you are keeping up with current products. They love that. It coincides with the medical spa trend. It's all about technology. To a client, that shows advancement and progress in the industry."

Medical spas offer medical-grade treatments such as laser hair removal, acne laser therapy, photorejuvenation, microdermabrasion and electrolysis. These spas are thriving as baby boomers seek new ways to look their best, and there's an apparent correlation between the success of medical spas and nail techs' increasing use of high-tech equipment in salons.

"I do believe that this trend corresponds with the growth of the medical spa industry," Hogle says. "In a medical spa setting, clients/patients expect higher quality, results-oriented treatments. As these expectations grow, they continue to impact other areas of the industry, including day spas and salons."

Nail techs now have more options than ever when incorporating machines and equipment into salon services. And going beyond the average manicure and pedicure—thinking outside the box—helps techs stay ahead of the curve.

"Two things right off the top: No. 1, you

can have the most beautiful nails in the world, but if your hands aren't attractive, people are going to notice," says Jim Raim, vice president of Chicago-based Skincare Technology, which manufactures HandSpa, an LED light therapy machine designed to reduce the appearance of veins, fine lines and age spots on the backs of hands. "We feel that you certainly have to address more than just the nails when you look at the hands. No. 2, from a profit standpoint, all salons are looking for new profit centers, and this type of equipment is a new profit center for nail techs."

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New salon equipment has been introduced not only to provide great results, but also to help nail techs save time, which leads to more earning power. "In the past, nail art has been applied by hand, which is a beautiful, but time-consuming process," says Netta Selego, vice president of systems and technology for Clearwater, Florida-based ImagiNail, which makes the Nail Fashion Printer (NFP). "Airbrushing and stick-ons have allowed for a quicker application process that's not as detailed. Using the Nail Fashion Printer, a nail tech is able to offer nail art services in a more detailed and timely manner; in turn, the nail tech increases her profits and clientele."

"We use ImagiNail," says Davitian. "It applies any image or picture directly onto the nail. You can take a picture of your boyfriend, dog, mom—whatever you want—and have the exact image applied on your nail. The image usually lasts for about one week, or up to two weeks on acrylic

nails. You apply special canvas coats to the nail, and when the nail dries, put the client's hand in the computer. The image prints on the nail like it would on paper."

Other tech toys include Helen of Troy's all-in-one concept, the HotSpa UV-Lite and Drill Nail System, which features seven interchangeable attachments; the Helen of Troy HotSpa Heated Nail Bubble Spa, which soothes and massages clients' hands before a manicure; the Kupa KP-6100 electric file, which features touch-button technology in a unit that can be customized to fit your work space; and the LCN Massage Oil Warmer, which helps create a pampering spa manicure or pedicure.

Raking in the Revenue

Now is an ideal time to trade in your horse-and-buggy mentality for a more modern and sophisticated business strategy. In the first months of 2007, decide which direction you want your salon to take; the buying decisions you make now will impact your business for the rest of the year and beyond.

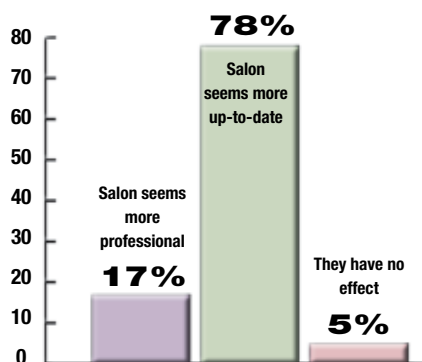
Purchasing some of the latest machines and equipment can prove a worthwhile investment. These devices are considered a capital expense and can therefore be deducted from business taxes. Furthermore, many of these products have little or no learning curve and, once used in the salon, can be very lucrative.

Skincare Technology offers a creative way for techs to obtain its equipment. A nail tech or salon owner may either purchase the HandSpa or request that the manufacturer place it in the salon for no charge; with the latter option, the professional pays only for the time she uses. Raim offers an example: "The tech will charge \$10 to \$30 for a 10-minute session. We will install the machine for free—no investment whatsoever. She'll purchase a smart card from us with, let's say, 20 sessions on it." A smart card resembles a credit card in size and shape, but features an embedded microprocessor. "On the machine is a smart card reader. The tech will pay \$5 per session, meaning that the 20-session smart card will cost \$100, but earn her \$200,

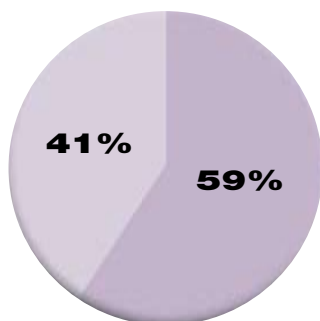
Clients Speak Out

We conducted an informal survey of salon clients to find out what they think about the use of machines and equipment during manicure and pedicure services. Below you'll find the results, along with their opinions.

Question: What type of effect do machines/equipment have on the salon?



Question: Do you think nail techs provide a more personal service when they don't use machines and equipment?

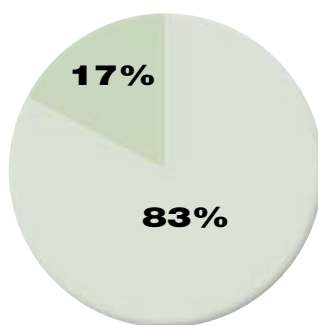


Yes-41% No-59%

What they said:

- "Using equipment provides more time to communicate with clients, so you get to know them better."
- "Personal service comes from the people involved, not the machines/tools. It all depends on the manicurist and the salon setting."
- "As long as the salon still provides a personal service, such as actually painting your nails, massaging your hands/feet and serving you tea/coffee, then the personal service is being met."

Question: As a salon client, do you like the idea of nail techs using machines/equipment during manicure or pedicure services?



Yes-83% No-17%

What they said:

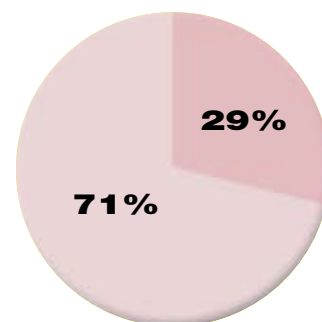
- "I like new and innovative uses of machines and equipment as long as they enhance my service. When new equipment is used, I think the tech is keeping up on the newest and best products in order to give me a better service, and I'm likely to trust her ability even more."
- "As a consumer, I like the comforts of new and modern equipment. Otherwise, I expect to pay much less for the services I am getting."
- "There are some really neat nail applications and skin treatments that can be done with the help of machines. The only thing that would have to be closely monitored is the noise level. When I go to the salon, it's my time to relax; the last thing I want to hear is a bunch of machines going off."

Question: If your nail tech has used machines/equipment during your appointment, what type of equipment did she use? Describe your experience and the results.

What they said:

- "Paraffin warmers and bubbling water soak machines. It was pure luxury! I had warm, soft hands and happy feet."
- "My manicurist has used the bubbling water soak machine. The results were great. It made the experience more enjoyable. And if she offered other services, I would most certainly want her to tell me about the benefits so I could enjoy those too."
- "Paraffin warmers. They feel nice and make your hands look and feel awesome."
- "A bubbling water soak machine. My experience was relaxing with a massage-type effect."

Question: Do you think you receive better service when the tech uses machines and equipment?



Yes-71% No-29%

What they said:

- "A machine is used every time I go to a salon. I can't imagine it being any other way."
- "I don't think that I'm getting the full service when there isn't a machine or equipment being used."
- "I don't think the machines themselves will create better service; it's still going to be up to the employees to create that level of service and give personal attention."

because she'll sell those 20 sessions for \$10 apiece. So she at least doubles her money. It's a great way for a tech to get the machine for free, and all she does is pay for the time."

Clients are also usually willing to pay more for services if they feel they're getting something extra. "The larger investment for nail technicians gives them the right to charge a few extra dollars to ensure consumer safety and offer better results," Hogle says. "The PerfectSense Paraffin system costs salons only a few extra dollars per treatment, yet the individualized paraffin gloves and booties are being offered for \$10, \$15 and sometimes \$20."

With the NFP, nail art can be applied to the nails quickly—in less than three minutes—and the nail tech establishes her own charges. "The service price is established by each salon based on its location," Selego says. "We have seen it range from \$10 to \$40 in addition to the price of the regular requested service, such as a manicure or fill. Using the NFP will increase income while saving time on the detailed art application. Techs are typically able to pay back the cost of the NFP in three months."

Attracting Foot Traffic

Creating a technological presence in your salon is the first step to higher earnings. The second step requires marketing your services so that you and your clients can reap the benefits of the equipment.

"The salon world is an upsell world," Raim says. "It's no different than choosing options on a car or appetizers with a meal. If you can bundle everything and give clients a better price structure while helping nail techs make more money, it's a win-win situation."

Upselling clients may require you to change your service menu, including your brochures and price lists. For example, you can offer a HandSpa treatment in conjunction with almost any other nail procedure,

such as after a paraffin treatment or after the nails are polished, while the portability features of PerfectSense Paraffin make a valuable and convenient add-on treatment. Techs can simply advertise prices for each service and offer a price break when clients receive more than one treatment.

"My clients like the modern kick to the usual manicure that modern equipment and machines offer," says nail tech Nory Gonzalez from Charlotte's Web in Key Largo, Florida. She incorporates machines into her services with a heated nail bubble spa, hand and foot paraffin warmers, and computer-generated nail art.

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In addition to bundling services together to increase business, you can encourage clients to sample a new service by offering them a free trial. "Clients like to hear 'free,'" says Gonzalez, who asks clients if they'd like a complimentary paraffin treatment. "Everyone can use one."

Offering a service for free once can reward the tech when the client asks for the service again and pays for it. Clients are also more likely to tell their friends about a service if they've experienced it themselves.

Don't forget the most obvious marketing technique: Simply talk to clients about your services. Clients enjoy versatility and are intrigued by hot, new trends. Hype the treatment and sell them on the option.

"These services need some help from

you to make them trendy or popular," Gonzalez says. "I live in a small and very conservative area, so I have to know how and to whom I should sell. Don't feel frustrated if the service doesn't pick up clients quickly; it'll take a bit of time."

"Techs can help market new and innovative services by highlighting their benefits and the recognition the treatments are receiving," adds Hogle.

Additionally, manufacturers often offer marketing material to help you generate interest in the service. For example, marketing material for HandSpa includes two countertop posters, 50 brochures with a stand and a large window poster. Be sure to ask the manufacturer or your rep about materials to help you sell the service.

"Marketing can be easy when you use the product yourself," Davitian says. "Wearing an image on your own nails always sparks interest. Teens and young adults are usually the most interested."

"The NFP's designs can relate to fashion, holidays or themes, or can be photos of a new grandchild or most recent vacation. The machine allows you to customize your nails to match fabrics, express loyalty to a team or group, or sport a casual, classic design for the workplace," Selego says.

Davitian offers this advice on using new technology: "You need to know how to use the machines properly and efficiently. Use the machines on employees before trying them on clients."

Once you're comfortable using the devices, you'll soon start to make money with them. Think back to when you first bought your cell phone or computer. What used to be tricky soon became second nature. The same concept applies to some of the new, innovative salon gadgets. Both you and your clients will be excited to try them out and, over time, will come to rely on the benefits they provide. ▼

Ilona French, a former cosmetologist, is a writer and editor based in Southern California.