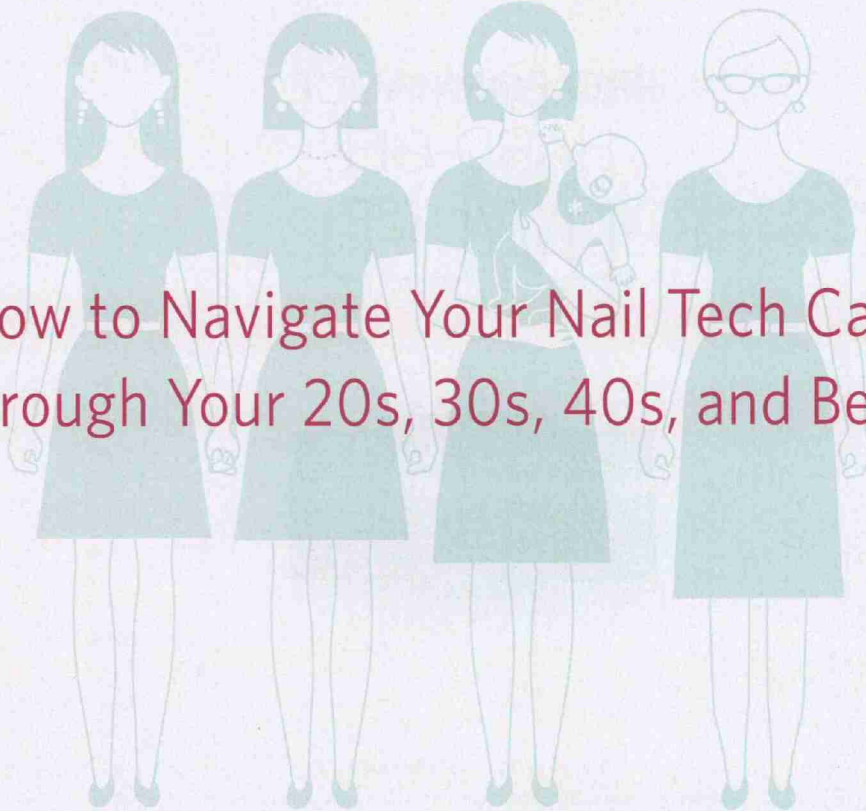


LOVE *the* AGE *you* ARE



How to Navigate Your Nail Tech Career Through Your 20s, 30s, 40s, and Beyond

Whether you're just starting out or you're a seasoned professional, developing a sustainable nail tech career means taking care of your fiscal — as well as physical — well-being. BY TRACY RUBERT

The financial information here pertains to everyone, but because 94% of nail techs are female, the health advice offered is geared toward women.

Nobody ever knows for certain what the future holds, but it's still important to plan ahead, set goals, and stay on top of health and finances so that small issues don't become larger (and more expensive) ones in the future. Even if you're well into your nail tech career and you haven't yet achieved as much as you'd like in terms of health and finance, there are ways to catch up. NAILS takes a look at the most important issues you should take action on in each decade of your professional life.

>>>

in your 20s

FISCAL

In the beginning of your nail tech career, you're building a foundation, which is your clientele and your personal brand. It takes a tremendous amount of networking, building relationships, being consistent, and being outstanding as a nail tech. Paul DiGrigoli, owner and CEO of DiGrigoli Salon, DiGrigoli School of Cosmetology, and national motivational speaker for the beauty industry, says that it takes approximately three years to create a solid client base. "Your request ratio should be at least 85% after three years, meaning that if you do 10 clients a day, seven of them should be requests," DiGrigoli says. "If that's not happening, then you're not holding on to your existing clientele and you're not having repeat business. Repeat business = requests. Requests = referrals. Referrals and requests = financial stability."

Jaime Schrabek, owner of Precision Nails in Carmel, Calif., and salon consultant (consulting@precisionnails.com) says that it's imperative that nail professionals always be informed about their employment status and tax obligations. Because federal, state, and local laws apply, you must know what's required, whether you're an employee, booth renter, or salon owner. "The basic things to know are that tips count as income and must be reported, and cash is income and must be reported," says Schrabek. "Commission makes you an employee, and employers need to pay their share of your taxes. Booth renters should provide a 1099 to the salon owner for rent paid. And don't waste your money on equipment, products, or any training that doesn't make you a better nail professional."

Another key component in building a strong financial foundation in your 20s is avoiding credit card debt and saving money. Most experts agree it's a good idea to work toward saving six months' worth of pay for emergencies. It may be tempting to spend the money instead on a flashy car and designer handbags, but this is the best decade to create emergency savings because you usually are not yet dealing with bigger costs, like a mortgage.

DiGrigoli suggests putting away 10% of your paycheck weekly. "The key is not to see it. Have it direct deposited into your savings account," he advises. "You're more likely to save it than if you did it yourself. But if you have heavy debt and a lot of credit cards, it makes no sense to save money until your credit cards and debt are cleared up. When you think about it, you're paying 18%-22% on your credit card and the bank is giving you 0.1%-0.5% in your account, if that. So it's better to erase the debt first."

PHYSICAL

Sara Gottfried, M.D., author of the just-published book, *The Hormone Reset Diet*, says this is the decade where you are most likely to be a perfect hormonal specimen. She says it's important to protect your fertility by getting enough sleep, eating nutrient-dense food, right-sizing stress, and getting moderate exercise. She advises getting your pap, and check for STDs, cholesterol, and blood pressure — plus blood sugar if you are at increased risk.

Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., director of the Practitioners Alliance Network and author of the best-selling book *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* suggests having a diabetes screening and thyroid checkup if you're trying to conceive. "Optimizing thyroid is critical not only to improve fertility, but also to prevent unnecessary miscarriages and learning disorders in children," he says. He also suggests taking a high-quality multivitamin containing at least 15 mg of zinc (important for immune function in both mother and child) and vitamin B6, 25 mg (decreases risk of diabetes). Additional supplements he suggests are at least 2 mg a day of folic acid to prevent birth defects, a highly absorbed omega-3, and 200 mg of magnesium per day.

I'm nearly 24 now, and what I wish I could tell my 21-year-old self back when I was starting out in my venture of gel nails was to be proud of myself, patient, and acknowledge the goals I was achieving instead of being focused on the negativity, disappointment, and stress of not being as fast as everyone else was. Timing comes with experience, but if you're producing quality nails 99% of the time that's all the client cares about. Heading into the next chapter of my career is what I'm focused on — building the best clientele and producing quality nails. I'm so young that the idea of retirement isn't quite there, but someday I would like to start saving when I have my future salon business up and running.



Cynthia McKenzie-Cook
Modish Nails by Cynthia, Vancouver,
British Columbia, Canada

I was 19 years old when I enrolled in the manicuring program in beauty school. What I wish I knew then is that beauty school is for helping you pass your board exams, and that the real learning comes from trade shows, classes, and salon work. In my early 30s I discovered continuing education. I was on fire. It took me 10 years to find what I didn't know I was looking for. I read trade magazines ferociously, drove manufacturer educators crazy with questions. I started looking at my business as a real business. I also started looking for ways to get out from behind the desk, to find more opportunities for artistically minded nail professionals like myself.

Now at 39, I am officially in the last leg of my 30s. I make projections of my annual income. I charge what I am worth and make no apologies. I am six years into a successful journey as an educator for a major manufacturer, and I love it. I travel the country connecting with other nail pros regularly, create nail art and style for ad campaigns, and design looks for fashion week runways.

My husband and I have a 401(k) and life insurance policies. I also have insurance to cover my business, no matter where I'm doing business. I try hard to exercise regularly, and have just started yoga to help with my flexibility. Our jobs are labor intensive and also sedentary, and my hands and shoulders don't move like they used to — add to that the fact that it's easy to gain weight when you work a 16-hour day with no breaks.

Make time for yourself. Remember that you matter. If you don't respect your business, your clientele won't either. Invest in yourself. If you don't think you are worth investing in, no one else will either. Be worth it.



Heather Davis
CND Education
Ambassador, Seattle

in your 30s

FISCAL

If you've started setting money aside for retirement in your 20s, you're ahead of the game. If you haven't, you've got plenty of time to take advantage of compound growth. Schrabek advises that it's never too early to plan for retirement "Consult with a professional, such as a certified financial planner to review your current situation and plan for the future," she says. "Many free resources are available online to guide your decision-making, like articles from *Forbes* geared toward young professionals."

DiGrigoli offers his "bucket" strategy for saving: "The first bucket is your security bucket, where you have at least six months of income to live on that you would never touch unless something happens. The second bucket should be your growth bucket. You should contribute 15% of your income into your growth bucket and that bucket would contribute to a retirement account such as an IRA, stocks, money market funds, etc. The third bucket is your dream bucket, which you should contribute 10% of your income to. That would be for vacation, a new car, a second home, etc."

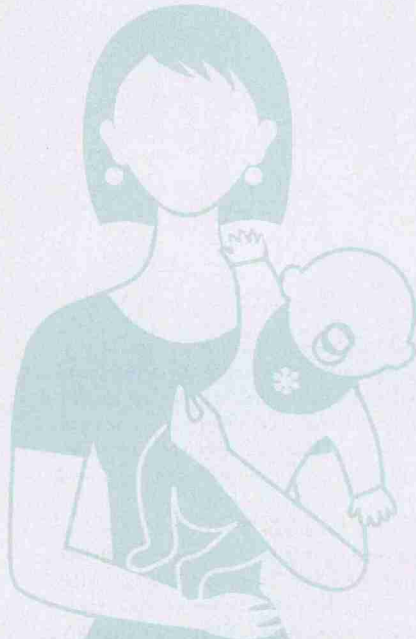
Where most people go wrong, he says, is they take money from the other two buckets toward something they think is a good stock or over extend themselves and buy something they can't afford. "The magic would be never take money from one bucket and put it in another, especially the security bucket. Your security bucket should be in an account that is always compounding, and the same with your growth bucket," he says. "What I have found in 35 years of being a stylist, salon owner, school owner, and being behind the chair for 28 years, a good nail tech should make 25% on tips and probably be able to live off of that."

DiGrigoli says that at this point in your career, you should be booked solid and should be able to raise your prices every year. He also advises that the best time to raise your prices is October — never in January because people are broke, and never in July because people are on vacation. And if you'd like to own your own salon, first and foremost is to have a business plan and a strategy. You must have at least three strong tax returns. The bank looks for 3 C's: credit, collateral, and capital.

PHYSICAL

If you haven't already had children, this is the decade when many of you may be starting a family. Gottfried says that in your early 30s, you have a predictable level of estrogen and progesterone each day of the cycle that helps with pregnancy, and helps to prevent miscarriage and preterm labor. Keep in mind that starting around age 35, however, progesterone may begin to decline around the time you begin to run out of ripe eggs. She suggests getting a pap every three to five years as long as they're normal, and getting tests for STDs, cholesterol, blood pressure — plus blood sugar if you are at increased risk.

>>>



in your 40s

FISCAL

In the HuffingtonPost.com article "Money To-Dos for your 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s," Shelly-Ann Ewaka, CFP suggests that people need to get more aggressive with retirement savings in this decade. "If you're only starting to save in your 40s, then consider putting at least 20% of your gross income toward your nest egg," says Ewaka. And you should still be working to build or maintain your emergency fund. Ewaka suggests taking advantage of bonuses or other lump sum windfalls, like tax refunds to fund your emergency savings goal. It's also time to start working in earnest to paying off credit card debt, if you've incurred it, so it won't be a concern at retirement. Ewaka suggests paying the minimums on all credit cards, but focus on paying off the card with the highest interest rate first.

PHYSICAL

In this decade, you're likely to face perimenopause, the two to 10 years prior to your final menstrual cycle. "Sometime around age 45, you start to make increasing and sometimes erratic levels of estrogen in the first phase of perimenopause," explains Gottfried. "When combined with dwindling progesterone, you're more likely to have estrogen dominance. Signs include breast tenderness and cystic change, difficulty with weight loss, and even abnormal pap smears." To help maintain balanced estrogen levels, Gottfried suggests consuming lightly steamed cruciferous vegetables, plenty of fiber (approximately 35 to 45 grams per day), and limiting red meat, which will help you prepare for an easier transition through perimenopause. She suggests getting a pap every three to five years as long as they're normal, and getting tests for STDs, cholesterol, blood pressure — plus blood sugar if you are at increased risk and add a mammogram (depending on risk factors).

I wish I had started my IRA 23 years ago. Whenever you hear retirement planning advice, all you ever hear is about how if you put away something like \$350 a month, you'll be able to stop contributing by the time you're 35. I wish someone had pointed out that I could have been putting \$20 a month into that fund and it would have been better than nothing. One less Chai Latte a week and I'd have been on my way to having something saved for retirement by the time I could afford to put several hundred dollars away at a time. Disability insurance is so important. I joke all the time that you know you're a grown up when you stop dreaming about buying new cars or clothes and start buying more insurance! Disability insurance is expensive though. Nobody mentions that part. But there are all sorts of other products out there that are affordable and will come in handy — I broke my wrist two years ago and if I hadn't had a small accident policy through Combined Insurance, along with a small policy from them that provided me with up to six months of disability income, I'd have gone bankrupt in the two months I was out of work. Those are the things I find myself thinking about in my 40s as I move into my third decade of doing nails.



Maggie Franklin
The Art of Nailz, Visalia, Calif.

I started doing nails when I was 23 and was smart enough to follow the training of my nail mentor; she taught me how to always keep my wrists straight when filing to avoid carpal tunnel problems. This year will be 28 years in the nail business with no carpal tunnel issues. See how it pays off to learn from older, wiser techs? But I'm playing catch-up now with saving for retirement because I didn't understand how to (nor know of the need to) invest when I was young. The younger you can start consistently putting money into mutual funds, the more comfortably you can retire. I have no clue when I'll be able to totally retire, but I have cut nails down to part time to work more online growing the Nail Tech Event of the Smokies. It's my goal that within 10 years I can stop working in the salon to work full time on the nail show. Regrets: I wish I had avoided consumer debt, such as credit cards and student loans, because your biggest wealth-building tool is your income. Save up and cash flow all your purchases instead of paying more with finance fees and payments that drag on for years. Just live within your means, have patience, and don't overspend.



Jill Wright
Jill's — A Place for Nails,
Bowling Green, Ky.

50s and BEYOND


FISCAL

By now, you have hopefully funded your emergency savings and have been stashing away money for retirement. But if you haven't and you're still working and over 50, there are ways to catch up. You can begin putting more money into tax-sheltered retirement accounts such as 401(k)s and IRAs. This year, individuals age 50 or older can make catch-up contributions up to \$6,000 in 401(k)s and up to \$3,000 in IRAs. Check your individual retirement plan.

Credit card debt is another big consideration in this decade. Ideally, you've gotten as close to debt-free as possible, so it's important not to take on any new debt. If you still have high balances, consider taking a look at where you can cut back on your flexible expenses each month, and put that amount toward debt repayment.

PHYSICAL

The average age for menopause in the United States is 51, and while you're at risk for thyroid problems in any decade, the risk increases with age. According to Gottfried, the most common signs are fatigue, mood changes, hair loss, constipation, and weight gain. Ask your doctor for a blood test.

After menopause, testosterone declines (and drops dramatically if you have your ovaries removed surgically). "Since testosterone is the hormone of vitality, you may start to feel mildly depressed or blah," explains Gottfried. "Testosterone is also in charge of the important task of maintaining your lean body mass. Keep testosterone at a happy level so you can stay lean, get a response from regular exercise, and live a long, contented life." She suggests getting a pap every three to five years, as long as it's normal, tests for STDs, cholesterol, and blood pressure — plus blood sugar if you're at increased risk, a mammogram (depending on risk factors), and thyroid and colon tests. "If you have risk factors for osteoporosis, check your bone density early," she says. "In your 60s and beyond you should have the same tests but check your colon again, and bone density at age 65." 

To subscribe to Paul DiGrigoli's newsletter, contact Paul at p.digrigoli@digrigoli.com. Dr. Gottfried is offering a bonus with the purchase of her book, *The Hormone Reset Diet*, at www.HormoneReset.com. Learn more from Dr. Teitelbaum at Vitality101.com.