1102. / COLLECTIVE FIELD GUIDE 001

BEFORE YOU RENT A SALON SUITE.

Costs, contracts, business systems, and the decision to work independently.

A decision-making guide for licensed beauty professionals. Includes a financial-planning companion workbook.

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1102 Collective | Founded by Dawn Austin

Independent beauty-industry education, research, and professional development.

Read this before you commit.

A private suite can create independence, but it also moves more of the financial and operating risk to you. This guide is not a sales pitch for renting. Its purpose is to help you decide whether the arrangement fits your finances, available customers, working style, and professional goals.

Work through each chapter with your actual numbers and a copy of the proposed rental agreement. The included spreadsheet turns your assumptions into monthly scenarios. Do not treat an advertised rent rate or a busy week as proof that the business model works.

Inside this field guide

Chapter	Question to answer
01 Your reason	What would a suite improve, and what could it make worse?
02 Real costs	What will you pay before opening and every month?
03 Demand	How many paying appointments can you reasonably produce?
04 Break-even	How much work must happen before you pay yourself?
05 Contract	What obligations are you agreeing to?
06 Operations	Which business systems must be in place?
07 Alternatives	Is a suite the best operating model right now?
08 Decision	What evidence would justify moving forward?

Educational information only. This is not legal, financial, tax, licensing, or insurance advice. Rules vary by location and change. Verify applicable requirements with the responsible authority and qualified professionals.

Know what you are buying

A suite is not just square footage. It is a commitment to a different way of working.

Many professionals picture the independence first: control over scheduling, the environment, products, and the customer experience. Those benefits may be meaningful. The less visible side is the fixed commitment. Rent is due whether clients book, cancel, reschedule, or take a break.

Start by stating the exact problem the suite is supposed to solve. If the problem is a restrictive workplace, independent space might address it. If the problem is inconsistent demand, limited cash reserves, burnout, or unclear service economics, a more expensive location may magnify it.

Define the result, not just the location

- Schedule: Which days and hours would you actually work? Does the contract permit that schedule?
- Services: Which services would you offer repeatedly, and what equipment and time does each require?
- Client base: How many people already request or reliably book those services?
- Profit: How much should the business generate after direct expenses and business overhead?
- Lifestyle: Do you want customer service, inventory, marketing, cleaning, and administration to remain part of your work?

A practical test

Write two sentences: “My suite would be successful if _____.” and “I should not lease if _____.” Use measurable conditions. For example, a requirement could be having enough verified recurring demand to cover rent and other costs during a conservative month, plus a separate reserve for personal emergencies.

A suite is one possible career structure. It is not an achievement milestone that every beauty professional must reach.

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Calculate the complete cost

The price on the flyer is usually just one line in the budget.

Treat costs in three groups: cash needed before opening, expenses that recur regardless of sales, and costs that increase with each service. Do not mix refundable deposits with income or treat a temporary promotion as the long-term rent rate.

One-time cash required

- Deposit, move-in fees, first rent payment, and any advance payments
- Furniture, chair, mirror, tools, lighting, storage, and any installation
- Initial retail or backbar stock, sanitation supplies, linens, equipment maintenance
- Business registration, licenses, insurance deposits, signage, software setup, and moving costs
- Any security, access, parking, cleaning, or facility costs not covered by rent

Recurring fixed commitments

- Base rent converted into a monthly equivalent; weekly rent × 52 ÷ 12
- Insurance, booking software, business phone, internet, and essential subscriptions
- Utilities, laundry, cleaning, accounting support, and minimum marketing expenses
- Installment payments for equipment and any required continuing operating costs

Variable costs per appointment

List product and disposables used, payment-processing fees, refunds/adjustments, and any commissions. Some costs have both fixed and variable portions. Service-specific product use matters: a short haircut and a chemical service have different contribution margins.

Promotional rent can distort the decision

If a space costs $190 per week temporarily and $250 per week afterward, monthly rent changes from about $823 to about $1,083. Use the ongoing rate to make the lease decision. Model promotional savings separately as temporary cash relief, not permanent profitability.

Write the annual equivalent as well: long-term weekly rent × 52. A $250 weekly commitment is $13,000 a year before any other business expense.

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