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Sola idea lets salon pros run own businesses

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BOULDER — The entrepreneurial spirit is not limited to mad scientists and technology gurus. Salon professionals who want to be self-employed, but with affordable overhead and limited risk have an option: Sola Salon Studios LLC.

The concept of Sola Salon allows professionals to be their own boss, but not bear the responsibility of maintenance of salon space or managing other employees. Hair-care professionals can lease working space from Sola Salon Studios, located in Boulder at 3280 28th St., removing the investments and financial risks that are come with starting up a freestanding business.

Jackie Rylander, who has been a hair-cutting specialist for the past 10 years, received a mass-marketing mailer in 2004 that caught her eye, and she was persuaded to lease studio space from Sola. "It was a chance to own my own business and take control of my future as a stylist," Rylander says.

The Boulder salon offers rental spaces that range from 100-square-foot single studios priced starting at \$180 per week to large single studios priced at around \$270 to 200-square-foot doubles that are priced at around \$360. The business model differs from traditional salons, where hairstylists or cosmeticians work for the salon owner, not themselves.

Rylander, co-owner of Studio 7 at Sola Salon, and color specialist Tami Turczyn worked together at another Boulder salon before embarking on their venture at Sola. Rylander and Turczyn, who began leasing Feb. 1, moved in and set up shop. "The studio was equipped and ready to start," Rylander says. An added benefit was "much of the overhead is provided for you."

Rylander is glad to have her own business without having to fulfill a human resources role. "It's nice to be able to own my own salon without managing employees," Rylander says. She doesn't see any drawbacks to the arrangement. The salon has



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Jackie Rylander, co-owner of Studio 7 at Sola Salon in Boulder, cuts the hair of Travis Foster. Hair-care professionals like Rylander can lease working space from Sola Salon Studios, located in Boulder at 3280 28th St., removing the investments and financial risks that come with starting up a freestanding business.

ample parking, and the décor is hip and funky.

Sola Salon Studios was founded in 2003 and is Colorado owned. The first location opened in Highlands Ranch in July 2004. Plans are in the works to open other locations in Boulder and Cherry Creek in the future.

More to come

According to Stratton Smith, Sola Salon Studios owner and founder, a Centennial location will open in March. The company currently has salons in Atlanta and Wichita, Kan., and plans to add additional salons in La Jolla, Calif., Seattle and Kansas City, Kan.

Yvonne Dvorak, a stylist and colorist, rents a large single studio for \$275 per week, based on a two-year contract. Unlike the single, Dvorak says the large single includes a color bar (for mixing hair color) and extra cabinetry in the back.

Dvorak, a recent Las Vegas transplant who has been in the business for 18 years, spotted the Sola Salon building from across the street and wanted to find out more. "I didn't know what it was, but I knew I wanted to be part of it," Dvorak says.

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Dvorak says she set up a meeting with Smith, picked out the studio she wanted, mulled it over for one day and then signed the lease. “It’s the best of both worlds,” Dvorak says. “I’m in heaven.”

Beyond the ownership benefit, Dvorak says she also liked the flexibility to arrange the space according to her specifications. “It’s really cool that you can go in and design it however you want,” she says. For her space, Dvorak changed the lighting, painted the walls and decorated according to her tastes. Sola pays for water and electricity, provides hydraulic chairs, the cabinets and the shampoo bowl, but the specifics of the space are left to the renter.

Dvorak enjoys the camaraderie. “It’s a nice salon community,” Dvorak says. She likes the proximity to colleagues, to be able to visit and share a laugh with the other stylists, but is happy to have her own space.

“Salon politics can be sticky,” Dvorak says, and the lack of politics at Sola is a big plus.

Smith and partner Matt Briger rent space to established salon professionals, like Dvorak and Rylander, who often bring their clientele with them. “We don’t really market,” Rylander says, and notes that many of her clientele followed her to Sola.

While word-of-mouth brings in most of the business, Dvorak says has the option to advertise on her own and is considering the possibility of doing joint marketing with other businesses at Sola. Additionally, walk-in appointments account for some of her business.

Both Rylander and Dvorak are complimentary of Smith and Briger. “I think they’re absolute geniuses,” Dvorak says.

“It’s a great place to work, and the owners (Smith and Briger) are wonderful,” Rylander says.