

# Expert Nails and Spa

A Success Story Written by Angela Clements Cattell

Expert Nails and Spa is a highly successful family-owned business located in Northeast Ohio founded by Co-Owner, Anthony Nguyen. Services offered include manicures, pedicures, nail enhancement, facial hair removal, permanent/semipermanent makeup, and eyelash extensions.

The inspiration behind Expert Nails and Spa can be attributed in part to Anthony's upbringing. In the early 1980s, Anthony Nguyen's parents left Vietnam and came to the United States in search of a better life.

Recognizing the land of opportunity, Anthony's parents eventually started their own business- a nail salon in California close to where they resided. Anthony grew up surrounded by his family-owned business learning many of the day-to-day operations. Not long after he graduated from college, Anthony decided to become an entrepreneur of his own and wanted to open his own nail salon. However, he realized the high costs of real estate and equipment in the area where he lived as well as the difficulty in obtaining licensing in California. After doing some research, Anthony made a life changing decision to relocate to North East Ohio where the start-up and real estate costs were more affordable, and the licensing was easier to obtain.

Anthony Nguyen opened his first business, Expert Nails and Spa, in Mentor, Ohio in 2001. After maintaining a successful business for close to 20 years, both Anthony and his wife expanded their business operations, and opened three more locations between 2018 and 2020 located in Concord (Expert Nails and Spa), Copley (Gaia Nail and Day Spa/Salt Cave), and Cleveland (Gaia Nail Lounge and Spa).



Unfortunately, just like every other 'non-essential' small business owner, Anthony and his wife were forced to temporarily shut down their businesses in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Hit hard by the lack of income while many business costs continued, Anthony needed to find funding quickly in order to continue his business operations.

Anthony and his wife expressed their frustrations to other local business owners who then helped direct them to both the Women's Business Centers of Ohio and the Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Lakeland Community College. Anthony first met with Ohio SBDC Business Advisor, Jim Gray, on April 1, 2020. Anthony was advised by Jim in multiple sessions on applying for various funding. Jim encouraged Anthony to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan. He assisted Anthony on the PPP application and answered questions when needed.

Jim also helped Anthony determine and clarify issues he was having with his Covid-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) after the loan had been granted and then rescinded. He pushed Anthony to contact the Ohio Congressional Members for more assistance and clarification on his initial EIDL loan denial. During Anthony's appeal process, Jim was able to help him resolve the problems behind the EIDL application which included an error on his credit score. Anthony was then able to correct the score through the credit bureau.

In the meantime, Jim Gray continued to find Anthony other sources of funding including an alternative source for a second PPP through BetterFin, a financial management company. Jim also introduced Anthony to other Small Business Administration (SBA) loan products, namely, the SBA 7(a). In addition, Jim directed Anthony to local funding sources such as MEACO (Mentor Economic Assistance Corp.) who had grants available for small business owners.

Because of the help from the Ohio SBDC at Lakeland Community College, Anthony Nguyen was able to obtain funding to re-open his four shops as well as continue the construction on his fifth location. Anthony was also able to call back and retain 33 full time and four part time employees in addition to dozens of subcontracted workers for a total 65 jobs. He plans on hiring another 15 employees once his fifth shop is open. In addition to operating his shops, Anthony Nguyen is in process of patenting a new nail

dipping product and will continue to pursue his invention now that he can be confident in moving forward with his business.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on small businesses' revenue across the United States since the pandemic shutdowns began. However, Anthony Nguyen's advice to other entrepreneurs struggling during this crisis is, 'Don't give up, things will change. This pandemic won't be forever. Get help from (business) resources available. Because once it changes back, are you ready?' The Ohio SBDC is a wonderful free business resource that continues to help business owners find the necessary answers in order to continue operations during challenging times.

Anthony Nguyen expressed his gratitude towards Ohio SBDC Business Advisor, Jim Gray's unwavering persistence and explains, "Jim guided me to seek help with my EIDL applications and I am grateful. Jim Gray is a tough man-he will push you even though you're about to give up. Jim pushed me to not give up."

The Ohio SBDC not only provides free consulting and workshops on topics such as business planning, obtaining capital, and marketing but also gives business owners access to some of the best business advisors who are passionate about helping entrepreneurs stay strong and persist towards a better tomorrow. That strength has helped Anthony Nguyen to re-open his shops and continue on his path of success.



This photo shows Anthony Nguyen (left) and his Assistant (right) standing in front of their newest location in Willoughby, Ohio.