

Shadow Day Protocol

Coaching with Krista · Jenn · How to run the day + what to watch for · August 2026

The shadow day is the highest-signal test in the whole hiring process. Everything before it is words — this is behavior. The trick is **letting her do JUST enough to reveal who she is, while protecting your clients from anything she could get wrong**. This doc covers what to let her do, what to never let her do, what to observe, and how to close the day without over-committing.

THE RULE THAT SHAPES EVERYTHING

Never let her touch a client in ways she hasn't been trained.

Krista's exact line: "People don't know how to wash hair. She's gonna get your client fucking wet. It's gonna be a fucking nightmare."

What she CAN do on shadow day:

- ✓ **Greet the client at the door** — take her jacket, offer water, walk her to the chair.
- ✓ **Hand you foils** if she asks to help and you're actively foiling. She holds, you take.
- ✓ **Help with rough-drying** AFTER you've done the shampoo yourself. Only rough, not styling.
- ✓ **Restock during downtime** — foils, capes, back bar. Watch whether she looks for tasks or waits to be told.
- ✓ **Sweep the floor** — into the ivac (not around it), between clients.
- ✓ **Fold towels, wipe down surfaces, empty tint bowls** — the invisible work.
- ✓ **Chat with clients** when there's natural space — but observe how she does it (does she listen? does she dominate?).

What she CANNOT do on shadow day:

- ✗ **Shampoo any client.** Ever. She hasn't been trained. She'll get the client wet, leave color in, and ruin the experience. Krista's hard rule.
- ✗ **Apply color of any kind** — even a gloss. Not until you've trained her.
- ✗ **Tone anyone.** Same.
- ✗ **Blow-dry a client's finished look.** Rough dry is fine. Style is not.
- ✗ **Handle checkout, rebooking, or client texts.** That's yours until she's officially on payroll.
- ✗ **Mix color or lightener.** No exceptions.

If she offers to do any of the above — that's data. The right person waits to be shown. The wrong person assumes she already knows how. Take the offer as information, then redirect gently: "Not today — I'll show you how I do it once you're on. For today just watch me."

WHAT TO OBSERVE — DURING THE DAY

Watch these ten things.

Krista's list from the interview guide, adapted for shadow day specifically. Don't tell her you're watching. Just be your normal self.

1. **First five minutes.** Does she ask about the day — clients, plans, what she can do — or fill silence with herself?
2. **Her phone.** Does it disappear on its own, or live on the counter?
3. **First client greeting.** Eye contact? Warmth? Does she use the client's name?
4. **Downtime behavior.** Does she find tasks or stand and wait?
5. **"Try it" moments.** When you ask her to hand foils or do a small task, does she jump in or ask "show me again" three times?
6. **Small mistakes.** When she drops a foil or misses a beat, does she own it in one sentence and move on, or over-apologize?
7. **Reading the client.** When a client is quiet or looks tense, does she pick up on it? What does she do?
8. **The stressed moment.** Let her catch you visibly behind or frustrated. Does she give you space and pick up a task, or add to it with "are you okay?" five times?
9. **The way she asks questions.** Thoughtful and at a good time, or interrupts you mid-application?
10. **End of day energy.** Is she still curious and engaged, or checked out and ready to leave?

CLIENT FEEDBACK — ASK ONE, NOT ALL

Pick your best-vibe client of the day.

Krista's rule: don't ask the needy ones. Don't ask everyone. Pick one client you have a strong rapport with who would give an honest read.

After the client leaves, or by text later that day, ask a version of:

"Hey [client name] — quick one. What did you think of [candidate name] being in the room today? Honest read, no wrong answer. I trust your gut on this."

Then LISTEN. Don't push. If she says "she seemed nice," ask "was there anything specific you noticed — good or bad?" That's where the real feedback is.

What you're listening for: did she make the client comfortable? Did she talk too much? Did she seem attentive without hovering? A great candidate leaves the client with a mild positive impression. A wrong candidate leaves the client with an itch to say something.

HOW TO END THE DAY

Keep her eager, don't over-commit.

Krista's rule: never make the decision day-of. Never over-explain the role. Send her home wanting more, not carrying an answer.

The end-of-day script:

"Thanks so much for hanging with me today. I really enjoyed having you in the space. I have a couple more people coming in this week, so I'm going to get back to everybody by [specific date, 3-5 days out]. Sound good?"

That's it. Don't get pulled into questions about pay, start dates, or "what does the role look like" — you covered enough at the interview. If she pushes:

"Great question — let me hold off on the specifics until I've decided. I promise to walk through all of that if we move forward."

Do not, under any circumstances: tell her you're excited, hint that she's the front-runner, or start describing what her first month would look like. Even if she is. Even if you know. The decision needs 48 hours of quiet — Krista's rule.

AFTER SHE LEAVES

Sit for 48 hours before deciding.

- ✓ **Write down 3 things you noticed** — good, bad, or neutral — within an hour of her leaving. Before the memory smooths out.
- ✓ **Check with your one trusted client** that night or next morning.
- ✓ **Wait 48 hours minimum** before you decide anything. If you're still excited after 48 hours, that's real. If your excitement fades — that's also real.
- ✓ **Compare against your other candidates.** How does she stack against the shadow day of the next-best person?

HOW MANY CANDIDATES TO SHADOW

Krista's number: 3 is fine, 5 is ideal.

More than 5 gets overwhelming and dilutes your gut. Fewer than 3 makes it harder to trust the pick.

Where you are now: **Polly (Tuesday), Jade (upcoming), and any late-stage DMs.** If you can get to 4-5 shadow days before you commit, that's ideal. If not, 3 is enough to make a confident call.

Krista's own experience: she's usually only had 2-4 candidates to shadow, and settled on some she shouldn't have because she didn't have enough options. Get to 5 if you can — this is your chance to do it better than she did.

THE MOVE-FORWARD SCRIPT (AFTER THE 48 HOURS)

If you want her — reach out within 3 days.

"Hey [name] — I've been sitting with your shadow day for the last couple days and I'm really excited about it. I'd love to move forward if you're still interested. Want to hop on a quick call so I can walk you through the role details, pay, and start date? Let me know what works this week."

Only NOW do you talk about pay, start date, and specifics. Never before this point.

The shadow day in one line: *protect your clients from her, protect her from having to fake it, and watch what she does when she doesn't know what to do. Everything you need is in the last one.*