

5 THINGS I WISH I'D KNOWN AS A NEWBIE SALON OWNER

By Jodie Rasmus

I recently sold my hair salon and am reflecting on my 32-year journey as a business owner. I've ridden the rollercoaster of trends coming and going, staff learning and developing their skills to fulfil their personal dreams, and clients changing.

Making the decision to sell my business and focus on passing on my knowledge as a salon coach has got me thinking about what I learned over the years, the strategies I developed and the skills I can share with a new excited owner.

As a fresh 19-year-old newbie salon owner, I would have loved to pick the brains of an experienced business owner to help me on my way. If only I knew then what I know now!

So, in the interests of helping other salon owners (newbies or not), here are the five things I wish I'd known when I started out as a salon owner.

1. A KILLER TEAM NEEDS KILLER LEADERSHIP.

I started out a mild and meek apprentice and was quickly thrown into the deep end when I became part owner of a salon. Leadership didn't come naturally to me, but I quickly discovered that it's a skill that can be taught, practised and continuously developed.

It took me years to become a strong leader through years of self education and thoughtful guidance from mentors.

Starting this development earlier rather than waiting to learn every lesson by the mistakes you make, will build a robust foundation for everything else in your salon. Good leaders engage their team and take them on the journey with them. The sooner you start that journey together, the sooner the business magic happens.

2. DINOSAURS ARE NOT AROUND FOR A REASON.

When I'm asked how I sustained a successful business that stood the test of time, the answer is clear - if you don't adapt and evolve, you fail. In that way, the world of business is just like the world of nature.

And our world is moving faster than ever. Trends evolve. Technology changes. Techniques adapt. Team members change. So do your clients. What's right for today may not be right for tomorrow. By embracing the change and keeping up to date, you stay relevant to your clients and to your industry.

As I got more experienced, I focused on educating myself by attending workshops, following my favourite hair and beauty socials and joining in on industry events. It was fun and it kept me relevant and stimulated, which in turn, kept my clients and my team interested and engaged.

Instead of a dinosaur salon on a path to extinction, I was running an ever-adapting, ready-for-the-future business.

3. FIND A BUSINESS HAT ... AND WEAR IT.

Going from employee to salon owner is a huge step. Overnight, I had to switch hats - from free spirited, creative individual to practical, sensible small business owner with big responsibilities: profit, sustainability, breaking-even, pricing and building a team.

I wish I'd had a cool head for business and an instant understanding of ALL these things. My advice is to seek learning early. Educate yourself however you can. Seminars, books, industry peers and a good reliable accountant are great resources. If you don't have a business head (or hat), you won't last long as a salon owner. Just being good at your trade won't carry you through. To get in control and enjoy long-term success, you need to slap on a business hat (and your big girl pants) every single day.

4. KNOW AND GROW YOUR AVERAGE DOLLAR SALE.

One key business number can tell you more about what's happening in your salon than any other metric. Your average dollar sale is critical to the profitability of your salon.

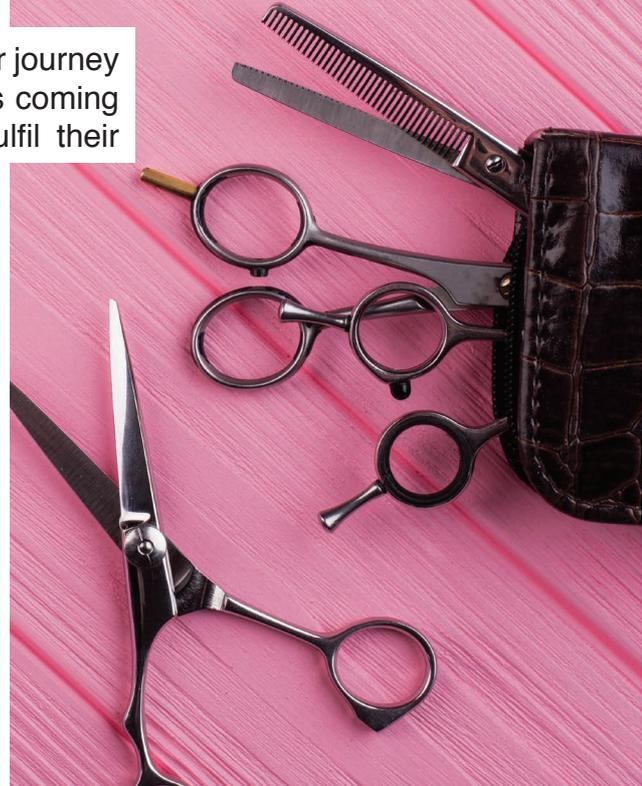
Understanding the why, and the how of improving your average dollar sale is paramount if you want to boost your bottom line. And who doesn't want that?

Work with your team to identify focus areas. Recommending services, educating your clients on products and developing your retail are all effective ways of increasing revenue without expanding your client base.

When you truly understand this metric, you'll be forever finding new and innovative ways to improve it.

5. CLIENTS BELONG TO YOUR SALON (NOT YOUR TEAM MEMBERS).

Over 32 years I employed many, many people. When I sold my salon, there were only five team members left. People leave. They have babies. Some move away. Quite a few left and went into competition with me. It happens - people moving on is a natural part of business and life. The thing that eventually made rolling with the changes easier for me was instilling a culture that our clients belonged to the salon, not to the



individual team member.

Sure, most clients prefer to be looked after by a particular team member. But there are many ways to make sure clients have a sense of the wider team sharing in looking after them.

By clearly and consistently communicating this expectation and setting up my salon practices to reinforce that concept, I became more confident that team members wouldn't take a chunk of our client base with them as they walked out the door.

When you own a salon, you learn lessons every single day. Some are obvious, slap-in-the-face realisations while others are more subtle, slow-burn learnings. But every lesson is a magic ingredient in creating a successful, sustainable business.

Sometimes it helps to have someone look at your business and remind you, teach you, or just pull you back into line and refocus your efforts. I was lucky to have a handful of great mentors along the way - I certainly have them to thank for many successful years in business.

Over your salon-owner journey, I wish you light-bulb moments that come often and (mostly) early, and may they never stop coming because, to achieve the success you deserve, you need to never stop working ON your business.

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