

The Magazine for the Hairdressing Professional

INSTYLE

January/February 2014

**SUPER
BRAND
STYLE**

TONI&GUY 50/50 COLLECTION

**HAIR
CHALK**

COLOUR WITHOUT LIMITS

**PLAN YOUR
PROGRESS**

2014 EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

L'ORÉAL
PROFESSIONNEL
PARIS

NO.1 SALON COLOUR
BRAND IN AUSTRALIA*

*2012 Kline Salon Market Analysis, Australia.

Country Plush

Creating a strong brand in a country area where there's often a stigma that price reigns supreme is no easy feat – and as Plush Hairdressing owner Kathleen Lindsay believes, it's about being confident enough to charge what you know you're worth.

“**T**he 80s were coming to an end when I started in the industry, but they were still brilliant years! To me being a hairdresser was a cool career, and I was in love with that persona, complete with spiral perm and puffed fringe, all held in place with too much hairspray,” said Kathleen.

“I started my apprenticeship in 1989 in Wellington NSW, moved to Canberra in 1992 and then progressed to Wagga Wagga to be with my family in 1995. Plush opened in 1999,” she said.

• What have you done to grow the salon in recent years? What have you done to increase profits?

It's been imperative for me to micro-manage and concentrate on the quality and strength of our philosophy and salon culture. It's one thing styling beautifully, but another altogether to perfect all the things that the clients and your team can't see like; the feel, the love and the flow.

In hairdressing its super hard to find the balance between what you need to pay for and what you want to pay for. There's a fine line between supporting the philosophy of business you want and increasing profits! For me I have found that clear control of finances and a focus on individual staff turnovers has been the most rewarding.

With three apprentices, three seniors, a business manager and herself, inspiration comes from all avenues for the team at Plush including, other stylist's work, photography, challenges/competitions, fashion/art, environment/seasonal, food and beverages.

• How do you inspire/educate your team?

“As a team we've done everything from a week in Bali including a day at the sublime Bvlgari Luxury Resort and Spa, to industry experiences and opportunities with stylists we admire. We have given dinners at Tetsuya's in Sydney, Tiffany&Co jewellery, stayed in some amazing hotels and given concert tickets, just because.”

Experiences change our thoughts and hopefully, with a wee bit of luck, they remember how they felt and offer the same to their clients. I like to give my team the incentive to reach for what they want – for their career, for their own personal goals.

I want to encourage that it's all possible, and hopefully they have bottled the feeling they get when they experience something great, when they see something amazing, and when they have a moment that they want to repeat.

Regardless of the age or experience of the stylist; clean and precise foundations are imperative. Personal development is also a key focus along with inner strength and wellbeing being paramount to our family.

• What strategies do you use to charge premium prices in a regional area?

No strategy – we charge what needs to be charged for the salon to run in a professional and progressive direction. I never understand the mentality of thinking it's less expensive to run a salon just because it's in the country! It's not just clientele or friends or family that



question it, the industry does, too. I used to feel like I needed to justify my talent and profession to somehow compete with the argument at hand but I just don't reply anymore. I'm booked months in advance and 'premium prices' don't seem to concern my clients! “I know myself if I get less than I expect, I'm disappointed – I talk; if I get more than I expect – I talk; if I get what I expect... I say nothing.” My clients get more than what they expect, and although I can't always please everyone, I'd hope that their expectations are more than met; again this is the reason the pricing isn't an issue.

• As a member, how does the AHC help your business?

The AHC has given our industry the dignity that we have been missing. In my eyes there has always been a small portion of the industry that have been strong enough



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to hold their head up high of their own accord, but there has also been a large portion of the industry sheepishly wondering if they warrant respect. In the 80s when I started working, although it was kind of cool to be a hairdresser, hairdressing was what you did when you weren’t smart enough to do anything else and unfortunately this stigma is still around today.

The AHC family tree includes a wealth of five star professionals, training and education specialists and support, business advice, legal, marketing and product support and amazingly, it’s all available to the members of the AHC. I have called upon most of these areas of resource at one time or another.

The Facebook group would probably be my most used daily/weekly tool of information. A chance to talk about your day good, bad or ugly can sometimes be invaluable. It’s an opportunity for your fellow members to help nut out an issue, discuss targets, laugh, whinge and whine. Most importantly it’s a sense of belonging and support that to me is priceless.

**** What has been the hardest point or time in your business?***

In the beginning I really had no idea. My son was three months old when I opened and was diagnosed with major heart issues a week after he arrived. We knew he needed medication, surgery and time to recover but I was convinced I’d be best to do it all this way.

The first five-to-six years was the toughest: with a couple of awards under my belt and a wee bit of attention I thought I was pretty special! I thought it was a great time to expand into the vacant shop next door, expand my team, and then build their self-esteem so much they stop remembering that it’s your business or that you even exist. The really stupid part of this time in my career was that I managed to de-value my own persona. I lost the respect of my team along the path of my self-focused travels of everyday life. The salon culture was lost because I was toxic.

I fought, defended, cried and yes completely lost my mind! I struggled to make ends meet and relied on the guidance of my accountant to cover all the ‘other stuff.’ I almost lost my shop because I was naive. I suffered depression and anxiety for two years afterwards and lost friends, family and staff because of that. Some I’m grateful to have lost, some I miss, and the ones that stayed are without doubt family, whom I adore and love dearly.

Five years after I expanded into the shop next door, I closed it and went back to what once worked. The new and refreshed Plush Hairdressing was born and in the first year our turnover was nearly 30 per cent more than the year before with less staff and a salon culture that was fun and committed. Although it’s taken me years to crawl to the surface, I’ve never looked back and, let’s face it, the past is behind you for a reason!

The hard times in business and, especially in hairdressing, should be and are supported by our ability to ask for help. We should be better as a group and make our industry shine to the community. Our industry is better for programs like the AHC and Salon Select means by seeing the bad, we have more of an opportunity to aim for the great. **IN**



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