

Welcome to the grow my salon business podcast where we focus on the business side of hairdressing. I'm your host Antony Whitaker, and I'll be talking to thought leaders in the hairdressing industry discussing insightful, provocative, and inspiring ideas that matter. So get ready to learn, get ready to be challenged, get ready to be inspired and most importantly, get ready to grow your salon business.

Antony:

Over the last few years, there have been many changes in the hairdressing industry. One of those changes has been the continual evolution of all things, hair colour, and inevitably and in hand with that has been the rise of the hair colorist. I would never say that colourists were ever the poor cousins to stylists, but stylists were more likely to be the rock stars of hairdressing. However, these days, there's definitely a feeling that colourists have really come into a league of their own. One such person is my guest today, Mr Jack Howard, who is definitely one of the very best colourists out there. Jack works out of the prestigious Paul Edmonds Salon London's Knightsbridge servicing a high profile clientele as well as spending a lot of time as a freelance educator. He also produces a great podcast of his own titled the everyday hair colourist that I recommend you check out. So amongst other things in today's podcast, we will discuss what's been driving the changes in the hair color market, competing against the home color market, pricing of salon services, the importance of professional consultations and lots more. So without further ado, let's jump straight in and talk to our guest today. Welcome to the show, Mr. Jack Howard.

Jack:

Thank you very much. That's a very nice intro. Thank you.

Antony:

Well, it's my absolute pleasure. Jack, it's been great. I've been really enjoying listening to your podcast, so it's great to have you on the other side of the microphone so that I can dig in a little bit more to what you talk about and your expertise for my audience. So let's start with an overview of your background. For anyone who isn't familiar with who Jack Howard is, give us your, you know, your two minutes, two to five minute, whatever. It takes a backstory of who you are, what you do.

Jack:

Well, my name's Jack Howard. I've been in the industry full time now I think 38 years, like a full time. I started as a Saturday boy in Lincolnshire and that's sort of somewhere in the depths of the English countryside. And then I qualified, I came to London in the early let's say eighties, nineties. And sort of really didn't have a focus on my career at all, I just, it's supported more my sort of going out really, I think to be honest with you. And then I sort of got wanderlust which a lot of English people do. I think it's living on a small Island. They want to travel and things. And I ended up with a job in Washington and that's when I think my career truly started because that's when I realized the potential of being a commercial colourist and then I've been in London for 10 years now. I've the global role as the global ambassador for Blonde Me with Schwarzkopf professional. I have my own product company products launching this year. I've aligned myself with a collaboration with Paul Edmonds, which is a fantastic thing. And, I'm busy, busy, loving my job still. Great. Fantastic.

Antony:

That, that sounds interesting. Your own product. So you're talking your own hair colour or are we talking hair colour tools or would you rather not say at the moment?

Jack:

No, I can, I can say the sort of the preliminary stuff around it, it's I was so frustrated as a colourist with the quality of tint brushes it seems to be an add on from manufacturers and they're all, the same moulding nothing spectacular at all. And it just frustrates me to the point where I thought I'm going to make one I'm going to make something that I enjoy because I was always cutting up hair tools and changing them and pulling out, you know, bristles and things like that. I put Together I drew it. I figured out what I liked, what I didn't like. Then I got a designer to draw it And then i made a three-D printing of it and I took it to Denman which are huge product company. Mmm. British. Oh, Irish, English UK product company. And they liked it. And then we have been working on it for, two years. Because I was really very clear about what I needed from a tint brush I'm going to launch it this year.

Antony:

Great. Fantastic. Well I hope that's a great success. I'm sure it will be all the very best with it.

Antony:

So you know, I did a little bit of research about you to make sure I was up to speed before we, you know, got on the, on the call here and you built a lot of your reputation after a number of years in the US you, you returned to the UK. And I see that you're often referred to now as the King of Balayage, which is, you know, quite a, quite a title. And you're often acknowledged as someone who's responsible for balayage in the UK.

Jack:

Yes, that's very flattering.

Antony:

Well, it's, you've certainly, you know, made that your calling card, so to speak, that, you know, I'm always led to believe that balayage, I'm a similar vintage to you. That balayage was something that started in France in the 70s and it never, really, you know, took off in the UK. I mean the British were always very much into foils. So why, why didn't balayage take off? In the seventies or eighties? Why did we become, you know, addicted to foil. And then another sort of way of rifting off that question is why did we get into it now?

Jack:

Gosh, that's a huge question, isn't it really? There's so many different factors in it. So of course the Carita sisters are credited with Launching balayage in 1974 and of course, Jacques Dessange, those iconic eighties images that are still iconic now that, I mean, they're fantastic. In the UK the market was very different and there was a lot of, I believe sort of in the 70s and eighties about the precision hair cuts and precision colouring that went with it. And it wasn't a lot of freedom in It was like a mathematical equation. But meanwhile in the States hairdressers were, have always looked at celebrity and models and things like that for their go-to on colours and hairstyles. And it just so happened that in the early nineties there was a balayage revolution that started with loreal professional and Nancy Braun and myself who were teaching that.

Jack:

We were the only product company doing that at the time. And it really spoke to hairdressers behind the chair. It just produced this really lovely kind of soft Victoria secret type hair at that stage of the game. By the time I came back to the UK in 2010 a number of things that happened in the UK, there'd been obviously an economic crisis and the days of people coming in every six weeks for a full head of foils had gone, people weren't spending that kind of money, didn't want to. And there was also a, I believe a revolution at that time with social media had started happening. Instagram had started and I think that young women didn't want to look like their mothers. And it was a sort of rejection of that you want to go to the mother's hairdresser who maybe had been in the business 20 years. They wanted something different. They were looking elsewhere for inspiration personally, I think that at that time in the UK a lot of people took their eye off the ball and just thought, Oh, this is a fad. And they carried on foiling. People were leaving them in droves because they were looking for something else. Young women.

Antony:

Okay. I mean I with great authority but not based on anything except a gut feeling and I'm being very tongue in cheek about us. I've always talked about the thing and you just, you did just touch on it. So I don't feel that I've completely got it wrong. I've always talked about the resurgence of balayage happened or came about because of the economic collapse that pre 2009. You know, people were pretty cashed up and you know, they thought nothing of a full head of foils and spending a lot of money on that. Fast forward 2009 economy collapses. You know, people's discretionary income tightens up. And so the salon industry responds by, okay, how can we still do colour, but how can we make them quicker services that use less product? And so therefore you know, charge less for them. So, so that was, you know, when the balayage thing, that's what drove this major resurgence. Now I'm not pretending for one minute that Using less product and taking less time has continued. But the initial sort of the beginning of balayage I've always talked about it in that context. Have I got it wrong or have I got it sort of part right. Because you're sort of alluding to, it was actually the beginning of the two thousands where you were saying that you were working on it with somebody else and you know, it wasn't fueled by economic, you know, desires to come up with quicker processes. What are your thoughts about that?

Jack:

I don't think this could be contentious. I don't think it was a trend that evolved into a regular day everyday salon service that was pushed to the forefront by salons, I think salons had to react on the, on the trot Really. I think that if you look at Bleach London the dip-dye was the compensation piece in all the beauty press at that period. And it was like, it's okay to have roots. Massive roots. I also tie that in to the fact that younger women wanted to be more fashionable enough, a see a perfectly placed foil didn't really speak to them at that time. And then add in the economic piece but I don't think that hairdressers were pushing it or the, the names in the industry weren't pushing it I think they were pushing back at it and it was a great opportunity for me to come in and say, I had a hashtag on Twitter that said Foils are dead. Long live balayage, you know kind of thing. And it was a great place for me to slide in the English market and just get on with it.

Antony:

Yeah. And get on with it You did! You know, you talked about how the Carita sisters in Paris, you know are credited with, you know, starting balayage And you know, the world became foil obsessed, you know, 80s, 90s, et cetera. Did the French just carry on doing balayage right through that?

Jack:

Yeah. Cause I don't know a French person that works in France that does foil, it's an English thing. And even the English use, the smallest width foil in the world where everyone else uses wider foils. I mean, they make their life even harder sometimes. This tiny little foil. Yeah. But yeah The French don't do it. They don't like it. They don't like the look of it.

Antony:

Yeah. Or maybe they, maybe they've got something. Right. I mean they get a lot. Right. But yeah, I mean, I think it's a, it's a beautiful, more natural feeling to hair colour.

Jack:

It's changed though, you know, because of course in the 1990s when it was like Victoria secret hair, it was a very soft, delicate paint. Now you look at the industry as it is now, and I mean, I'm doing these massive heavy paints that's still supersoft when they're finished, but it's very different to how it was. So like everything, Things evolve and people play around with them and people adapt them and people that can't necessary paint find a way to get a painted effect with a foil. So it becomes a look, doesn't it?

Antony:

Yeah, exactly. How long were you in the US for?

Jack:

Oh, I was there like 17 years? Okay. So I, did like all foil to begin with. I mean, I did a very English foil to begin with. It was just, you know, I'm never going to work in a very busy environment and I'll learn how to use to an American wrap and, you know, less sections but Plenty of hair colour you know, you learn if you want to stay fresh and relevant, you learn.

Antony:

What do you think the US market does? The US hairdresser does from a color perspective? What do they do better than elsewhere? Because the color business over there is very strong. What would you sort of focus in on? Is it the marketing? Is it the pricing? Is it the speed of the services? What are some of the things that you think that you know, we can learn from them?

Jack:

I think American hairdressers are just really good at communicating. Okay. So they, and they see it as an opportunity to upsell and there is a reason why they're upselling. I think they're incredibly good at that. And I found that after being there for so low when I came back to the UK, I was able to speak to beauty press in a language that most technicians in the UK couldn't speak. They got too technical. And so you sort of, you know, even things like glossing and glazing, you know, give your hair some shine all those little ways and the Americans are so good at it. I think American women in are willing to go above and beyond to get the result that they want. Whereas sometimes the English market is a little bit of hesitancy and They don't necessarily want to do all that. So Different markets.

Antony:

Okay. All right. You don't have your own salon. You, you work out of a, I alluded to it earlier before you a very prestigious London salon, Paul Edmonds salon in Knightsbridge, why don't you have own salon? Have you ever thought Of having your own salon?

Jack:

You know, there were those moments of craziness and I think, Oh, I'd quite like to have a salon. And then I realize that I wouldn't, I think that certainly, I wouldn't want a salon in England because I think it's really hard to find motivated, disciplined staff. I like a solution to a problem. I don't want to reason why we can't do something I'm solution driven very much like my American friends. I just feel like I can be so independent during this collaboration at Paul's. They have a great styling voice, he has a huge heritage of film and TV work. I know I can go in and I can be at my colour voice for them and make them be a styling voice for me and It just works really, really well for me and it also allows me to do all the other things that I want to do.

Antony:

Okay. So you aren't an employee, you're like an independent contractor.

Jack:

Yeah, so independent contractor. I mean I have my own company Jack Howard and because I'm not just in there and I've got other revenue streams going, it works. It just works really well. I like the fact that you know, I turn up to work and if I don't work, I don't get paid. I like the fact that, that that drives me. I'm motivated by money obviously. But a lot of people aren't they just sort of see it as a job, whereas I see it as a career.

Antony:

So you know, whether you're talking in the United States or the UK, Europe, Australia, whatever, there is a real push in that area of People working freelance people working as independent contractors. What's, what's driving it. And can you talk a little bit about how it works for you from a, from a financial perspective, if I'm some, you know, a young hairdresser, you know, listen to this and I'm thinking, well, I don't want to open my own Salon but I don't just want to carry on being an employee? I want to have other strings to my bow. What what does that look like? financially?

Jack:

Well, I don't think it's for everyone. But I think that the drive has been that people. The pay can be incredibly poor. in hairdressing for people. And it seems like salons take huge amounts of money out of the salons, but don't pay it to the staff. But I mean, there are many reasons for that. There are. You know, there's, in the UK you've got your social security or national insurance, your, Your taxes, pension, all those things going plus the business rates. The business rates are huge on salons and so they can probably, they can't give as much as somebody thinks they are worth. If you've got a clientele and you want some freedom and you want to make more money, probably is the way to go because then you set up your own business and then you pay your own taxes. But you need to be disciplined in that I think. And I certainly, the reason I did it when I came back to the UK, it was because I couldn't get a job anywhere. Nobody was interested in me and if they were, they wanted me to fail. Yeah. And I didn't want to do that and I decided that I was just, I had money in the bank anyway. Which is always a help. And I decided to have a go at it and do it my own way. But the hours were long you know you get to work. When I first started, I could have a nine o'clock and I could have an eight o'clock in the evening and that would be it. I mean, my first paycheck was horrendous. I remember it really clearly. You know, I found my voice and I would have some great opportunities and I took every opportunity I could.

Antony:

So someone in, in your sort of situation, would they typically pay in the UK would they typically be paying a percentage of their total sales to the salon or would they be paying a fixed dollar amount?

Jack:

So I have at Paul Edmonds I have a service fee that I have to pay. And that is to pay for the beautiful environment that I'm in.

Antony:

And it is a beautiful environment.

Jack:

It is beautiful. It's really high end the attention to detail is perfect and it just fits my market really well and it pays for assistants and all those things. And then there is after that's done, then there's a percentage I get every month on all my takings. Then there's retail for me as well on that. And then, well I obviously pay my own VAT. Which is a sales tax for an American audience? I'll pay that as well. I just don't think the American market has a sales tax on hair but we do in the UK It's 20%.

Antony:

Yes, of course. Okay. so, so what do you think about these sort of change in business models? I mean obviously that works for you. Yeah and obviously you're aware in the US in particular and it is starting to happen in Europe and, and the Asian markets, Australia, et cetera, where you're starting to get more salon suites. So there's sort of a business unit of one. What are your thoughts about that? How does that, how does that fit in with, you know, your thinking?

Jack:

So salon suites in the USA I imagine them, they could be quite lonely places that it's just you in a room. And I actually like working in a salon cause I like the buzz and I like the people and I get to communicate with more people and bounce ideas off as a colourist. It's lovely to be in a dispensary and say what do you think of that? Should I do this, I'm going to do this, that kind of thing. I love that aspect of our industry and I wouldn't want to feel alienated by just being on my own in a suite. But one of the things that's happening in London and to a varying degree happening around the country is these lovely, there's one called The Hunter Collective. Spectacular space and people are renting the chair by the hour or by the day so for lots of people who are doing Session or doing education like me, they can go do a few days there and do their clients and then go off and do their other things too. And that seems to work really well.

Antony:

Yeah, that's interesting. I, I'm often asked is the salon suite happening in the UK? And my answer is, is that, you know, because of the real estate situation in Europe in general, that what would work in America because of the size of the place and the real estate and the way people, you know, commute, etc. Is not going to transpose directly to this market, but you're seeing a lot more independent contractors. I saw of figure recently 54% of hairdressers are now self-employed in the UK according to the national hairdressing Federation. So, so there's, it's still happening. It's just happening in a different way. And I know what you mean, The Hunter Collective, I'm familiar with it. I'll actually put the website address in the show notes for anyone who's interested in seeing what that's about because that sort of model is actually a really good fit for what you do, isn't it? You know, so you've got many different roles. You want to be able to dip in and out and use the space

when and as you need it. So yeah, it definitely can work for some people. And it is part of the world that we live in whether some salon owners like it or not. And obviously some people don't like those changes.

Jack:

A lot of people don't like change though, do they? I mean people are resistant to change in all sorts of industries and they're the magical moments where people can do really well by actually going with change.

Antony:

Yeah. And embracing it and looking at how to make it work. Exactly. So in line with that one of the things I'm starting to see more of is specialist colour so colour only. Have you ever worked in one and what are your thoughts about that type of business?

Jack:

So for me for many, many years I specialized in just colour, I trained in everything. Yeah. you wouldn't want a blow-dry from me, pretty disastrous these days. But I've always worked in salons that have colour departments and so their colourists were always seen as specialists. But I liked what you said at the beginning at the start of this there's about how stylists were superstars but it was the colourist that always made the money because the bills are always bigger and there's been, I suppose a lot of it has to do with Instagram, really commercial hair colour is so celebrated. I mean, I think the last decade has been a celebration of the commercial hair colourist and people are specializing within the speciality of colour. You'll get balayage experts, you're getting vivid experts you're getting blonde experts, you're getting red hair experts. It's fascinating how you can get a USP out of something that's already a USP.

Antony:

Yeah, exactly. I know there's a salon in I believe it's in Melbourne, in Australia. And they're the blonde specialists and that's what they do, they don't cut hair they colour hair and not only do they only colour, apparently, they only do blondes. So, which is quite an interesting niche to occupy. And I'll come to that shortly. Are you familiar with, I'm sure you are with Skyler London? Yes. Yeah. So I did a, I did a podcast earlier six months ago probably with Skyler London. And again, I'll put a link in the show notes for people that are listening to this one. You know, she's got this beautiful specialists colour only salon. But one of the things that I really like about what she does is the memberships that she has, the salon you know, membership model. What are your thoughts about that? Well, what is, what is that membership? Well, okay, so it's where you're paying X amount per month. So you might be on a hundred pound or \$100 membership a month, 150 or 200. And depending on the level of membership determines what you can have. So if you're on the top level of membership at Skyler London for example, you can have whatever you want as often as you want. You can literally go in there every day and get your hair washed and blow dry a treatment put on it and a toner put on it. But you might be paying four or \$500 or pounds a month for the privilege of that. Whereas her best selling a membership is the, I think she said it was the entry-level one, and from memory that was, say, 85 pounds a month. So for our US listeners what's that going to be? A hundred, 120 or something, \$120 a month and that entitles them to, you know, two blow dries a month, you know a glaze. I don't know, I'm making this up now, but it entitles them to less services, but you're paying it just like a gym membership. You're paying it as a direct debit once a month, but you're a member of that salon. So every time you go in there, you don't have to have your hand in your purse again.

Jack:

That's interesting, isn't it? I don't know whether that is something that I want to do, but I think that one of the it's the innovation isn't it? It's trying things out and doing things differently and like, I don't say anything wrong with that at all. It's not something I just wouldn't want to do that particularly I think that I just want when somebody comes in, I want them to pay for that service there and then. That works very nicely for me. But also I'm not in the salon all the time. So if I wasn't in a salon and somebody wanted that, it wouldn't work for me. But I know people do it with manicures don't they they'll buy 5 manicure get the 6th one free, so, why would it not work for blow dries?

Antony:

Yeah, exactly. Now I know one of the things that you are known for is social media what is your weapon of choice? Facebook. Instagram, I know the answer. I think everyone knows the answer before you even say it, It's funny.

Jack:

It's funny, isn't it? I was talking to myself about my Instagram account this morning while I was walking the dog, I was like, right, I've got to do this and I've got to do that but It is my go-to platform. I've worked really, really hard on it in the last year. Yeah. got those numbers up more now I've sort of figured out, I've found my path as somebody said I keep to that for Instagram. Facebook. It's interesting because I think that Facebook works for a lot of UK salons because it's much more regional and people old people are on that and I do post on Facebook obviously, because whatever goes on my Instagram account goes on my Facebook business, but I don't really pay Facebook a lot of attention, but I know people that it works really well for them. Insta is my thing at the moment. I find it really, really interesting and I really enjoy it as well, but it is a job in itself. And I know lots of people sort of struggle with it, but you don't need loads of followers to have a successful Instagram account. And I think that's where people go wrong. They all think they've got to have these big numbers. What you need to be doing is engaging with people in your, in your market. So if you've got a thousand clients and you're communicating to all of them on Instagram, then that's great. And if you're engaged with them, that's great. For me, I wanted to, as my I had an international role at the time when I really started focusing on my account not a global role and I'd been in a room with some heavy hitters on Instagram and I was amazed because I was I went in and I was like, Oh God, what's this going to be like? I was so nervous. And they were totally normal. They did it all themselves. And, but they did one thing differently to me. And that was, they repeated, repeated, repeated, repeated, repeated. And they did it every day on their Instagram account. And once I got my head around that, that's when I started to see my, my growth, my really good growth.

Antony:

So when you say they repeated do you just mean they were consistent? They were every day.

Jack:

They were consistent and the message didn't change, you know? So for me, what am I known for? I'm known for balayage I'm not known for blow dries. As I told you, I'm not very good at them I found that showing process pictures of the application elevated the idea of what balayage was because it's very visual to look at and it also showcased it as an educator. So I started focusing more on education and it also brought people in because they perceived me as an expert. So it did two things it put bums on seats and it also got me, classes, booked so it's been very successful for me.

Antony:

So most of your new clients that you get are coming directly through social media?

Antony:

All the new clients come through social. I, you know, I, I've done some really good UK press and I've been a color spokesperson for a brand at one point for the consumer but all my clients come through Instagram. It's very nice to be in Vogue. It's lovely to be in Marie Claire. It's lovely to be in the evening standard maybe cause it's read by so many people. ES Magazine, all of those. But that doesn't necessarily bring me, clients, to my chair my price point is quite high. So it's quite a niche for people that come. Instagram pulls everybody in.

Jack:

You seem, surprised by that?

Antony:

No, no, no, not at all. I, I not, not, not at all. I, when I've listened to you talk about your social media before your Instagram, before on your own podcasts, I know you have a little bit of a love-hate relationship with it. That like everybody, I mean, I do too. I mean, and it's, it's often more hate than love but I also recognize the power of it and the importance of it. And it's where our market is. And I mean, you know, you and I are hairdressers, so our market is on that. If you and I, were dentists, we wouldn't be on Instagram. We would probably have very little interest in it.

Jack:

Well, there's only so many bad teeth that you can show. Isn't there! Yeah, that's true. It's a visual tool to your window to who you are as a hairdresser. And I, you know I do have a love/hate relationship with it, at the moment I'm loving it and that's partly because I've just, this Sunday I spent a whole day shooting content for it. So I've sort of got that out of the way and I feel like I've got enough going on for sort of seven weeks now. I can kind of calm down a little bit. Right. But yeah, it's a, it's a fantastic tool. It's worked really well for me, but it's about being consistent with my message and my conversation and yeah. Yeah. I like it a lot at the moment. So not so much hate, but I know lots of people struggle with it. Like we all struggle with everything and that part of my podcast is really talking to people about what they do, what we don't do, what they like or don't like. And with my account, I don't put anything really personal on it. I keep it very professional. My stories allow you to say a little bit about who I am so you can see me having a bit of fun, see me, cooking or, you know also polling people asking people what they want to see on my page. so, you know, it's, it's a full-time job.

Antony:

Yeah. Well, that becomes the point of the next question. How much time do you allocate for it?

Jack:

It's not necessarily an everyday thing. I think that as I just said to you, that I do allocate days where I stop doing content and then I don't post every day. My best days to post are Monday through Friday, specifically Tuesday to Friday. and my best times to post is between 3:00 PM and 9:00 PM at night. And 81% of my audience is women. So I've got that figured out. And then, generally speaking, I have these hacks that I make which show people how I do things, which works really

well. And I do those for a Monday and then I might have a picture that I really love and I want to pop a bit forward, but I sort of have a plan of where I'm going per week. It's ad hoc how I post.

Antony:

So, Jack, you alluded to you were doing content yesterday. So are you saying that you don't do social of clients? You bring in models specifically and spend a day or so developing content on those models so you can do everything your way within your timeframe as opposed to you do a client and at the end of that service, you allow five minutes to, you know, to photograph their hair or whatever.

Jack:

So I think this is really interesting because of course I don't think that there are many of my clients that necessarily want to be on the gram, and they're not necessarily coming in fully made up and all of that. And I find it hard to get a picture in the right light in London salon that's incredibly busy. So what I do is I have Fantastic. Access to some beautiful women who are either influencers or models who like my work, who are willing to trade with me so I'll do there colour. They'll do some poses for me or they'll do some content for me, that kind of thing. And so on a content day, what I do, I, I collaborate with different stylists, which is really good fun. And we go for some great looks that we're looking at at the moment and you know, sometimes it's some lovely stuff with Zoe Irwin it was really airy and very Zoe and then I've just finished the ones I've just done are really polished and quite tight, which I'm enjoying as well. And then I'll film every stage of it and I'll preplan things that I want to focus on. Like if I want to focus on the money piece that I want to focus on certain gesture of the application, do all of that and get that out of the way. And then within a salon environment, I dedicate a Friday to press and to influencers and some models and they can come in on a Friday, different location. Of course, he's got two salons, he's got one in Battersea power station, which is absolutely sublime. And I'll do them in there, then I can shoot them and get them to do selfies and things like that. So I've found a way that works really well, for me.

Antony:

Yeah. I often get asked that as a question that you know, my client base, it's not appropriate and I totally get that. And I can imagine with your client base in Knightsbridge with a very high ticket price and the age group of them the last thing a lot of them want to do is, you know, sit there under the ring light and have their photograph taken. It's not who they are.

Jack:

No Paul wouldn't like it either. I think they just wouldn't, they just don't want that kind of thing in the salon and I think it's a little bit intrusive for our market, but I do know people that do it really, really well. Yeah. So it just depends on your audience, doesn't it? Yeah, exactly. You've got to make it worth it for who you are.

Antony:

The other thing I'm wondering about is, you know, I'd come up through an age of hairdressing awards are Important, Competitions and awards had big importance. And I'm starting to wonder now whether the validity of awards is as significant today as what it was five or 10 years ago. And is that because of social media, you know, that you don't need the acknowledgement of some judges. That you've got an audience of 20,000 people or whatever That are, here's my award. I don't need that. Do you think that is happening As a groundswell movement in the industry?

Jack:

Oh, I think it depends on which award it is. I think that if you look at it, if you look at something like behind the chair which their awards are massive and there's some really great recognition in it then Yeah. Maybe go for it. I just think it depends on the award and the type of hairdresser you want to be. So I don't think all the awards speak to all the hairdressers and they're not supposed to. But what I have noticed in the last few years is there have been some really fantastic commercial categories in there I mean, you know, British hairdressing awards their business awards. I got their social media award this year it's the first time they've added that category. And that was really great acknowledgement of how times are changing. So it just depends. I think that people still love, there are certain people in the industry who are industry hairdressers and you go to events and we enjoy it and those people liked the awards and there are other ones that people think, Oh, I wouldn't enter that. But they might enter colour world UK some of these awards because they're more speaking to hairdressers that work behind the chair. So it just depends I suppose. Yeah. Who doesn't like an award? Who doesn't like getting an award?

Antony:

Well, hairdressers love a party don't they love those events from a party point of view. Do they like the award? Yeah, I mean I think some people, I know plenty of hairdressers who would never enter because it's just not their thing. It's just not what they do. There's nothing wrong with that. No, exactly. but they might Quite like still though having 20,000 followers, they're more interested in having 20,000 followers or whatever the number is, you know, then an award. I suppose a lot of it depends whether you're focused on the industry or whether you're focused on the consumer as well. I think those people that are very industry-driven and do education, et cetera, they are very much more award driven than those individuals or salons that are more consumer-focused.

Jack:

Yes. but you know, there are plenty of consumer categories for salons and you see, so you see salons going after those and I think that's amazing. You know, they might get a British beauty award or, or something like that or the Marie Claire awards they're fantastic for consumer recognition. Whereas maybe something like the British hairdressing awards, those images are more hairdressing and they speak to hairdressers, but there is still a lot of kudos to winning them. So what I, what I love the most about this industry is that there are so many different areas where you can go and you can be the best version of yourself within it. It might not be somebody else's thing, but that's okay. It doesn't matter.

Antony:

Yeah. Well said. Well said. Okay. So, social media, I mean I want to still talk about technology, but go off on another tangent. And talk about technology in terms of tools, gadgets, products. How much difference from a colourist point of view has the Plex type products made to the world of hair colour?

Jack:

Well, it was, it was a game-changer in many ways. The Plex conversation. And I think that the thing that scared me about it initially about it in the UK was of course when you get aligned with a product company and you start seeing their rules and regulations for, you know, using products you can't mix other things in there's a liability insurance liability and shit. And that actually got changed in the U K which was cool because up until that point it was a little bit scary. But I think Plex is, everybody knows the name Olaplex and clients come in I use, Olaplex at home It was a once in a

decade product. No. And then everyone, everyone jumped on it. I think that if the hair is super damaged. Whether you put a plex in it or not, I wouldn't be colouring it so beautiful hair colour, as far as I'm concerned, it starts off with beautifully conditioned hair and the plexes certainly helped maintain that. They certainly give longevity to color. You get less fade on your reds, you get less fade on your brunettes, which is fantastic. But if the hair is in a really bad shape, then for me it's a no go and I sometimes worry that people think, Oh, it's got a plex in and I'm fine to slap it on. I don't think that's the case, but it was a fantastic groundbreaking technology. It was amazing.

Antony:

If, we'd gone back in time, you know, to, before the Plex products came out before Olaplex came out and I'd asked you that question, what new technologies do we need or whatever to make the life of colour better. You may very well have answered it by describing what Olaplex does, you know what I mean? Something or any of the plex products, you know, something that would allow you to do stuff to hair that it's just not possible. So the question I'm asking you now is asking you that question now. Meaning what else do we need? What is the new technology? What are the breakthroughs? What are the, what are the things that in 10 years time we will be going? Isn't it amazing that we can do this? Is it, is it that we'll be doing the same things but a lot quicker or what?

Jack:

I think so for me, So Swarzkopf they put a Olaplex in a pre-lightner which I thought was amazing. And so it's got that in there. And I think that it would be great to see more of that going on so that there's more care in products, but I personally believe the conversation in the next 10 years isn't necessarily about working faster there's only so fast you can work. But I think that sustainability and environment is obviously, it's a huge conversation everywhere else. I mean, it's the sort of the elephant in the room in the hairdressing industry because it's a difficult one for us to re to recycle things. Depending on the country you're in. But I think that's the conversation and that's going to be the point of difference.

Antony:

Really interesting. I want to come back to that in a minute. I just want to finish up with the technology side of stuff. I want to ask you this question about, I interviewed a lady recently who has a product called salon scale comes out of Canada. And It's a measuring app to monitor and price colour services properly. It's on, again, I did a podcast with her six weeks ago or whatever, or I'll put a link in the show notes for it. Do you use anything like that? Any sort of colour apps? There's another one called Vish which is similar but different. Again, both. Well, that's American whereas salon scale's Canadian. What are your thoughts about those sort of tools and technology? Do you use them? Do you see a need for them?

Jack:

I think any technology that helps a hairdresser to be successful is good technology. I think one of the problems that we face in the UK is that the average salon price is actually too low and people can't afford to run their businesses for long. I mean, if you look at it a tube of colour and a bottle of developer, and maybe that comes to 20 pounds and somebody who's doing a root tint for 30 pounds and they haven't taken in the business rates, they haven't taken How much the chair needs to earn every hour and how much it's for an assistant and blah, blah, blah. All those things and they're doing 30-pound colours and obviously that's not sustainable. So I think that most definitely any sort of technology that helps along that way is absolutely, you've got to have anything that makes our working life, the equipment that makes us stand better or cut better All of those things. Brilliant.

Antony:

All right. You just touched on that sort of sustainability, you know, health, hair, colour, that sort of an area, you know, but there's global health, personal health, whatever. One of the things I often find is that some countries are, and the UK is one of them. We have a very stringent approach to doing patch tests for example. Yes. Whereas other countries are very loose about that and you know, if I, if I explain to my American audiences that you literally can't walk into a salon in the UK and say, can I get my colour done? Because they won't do it for you without a patch test and you'll have to book 24 hours later. How did you find that when you came back here? Did you find that a big challenge? What are your, what are your thoughts around that?

Jack:

Well, you know allergy alert tests are so important. I sort of got fed up with hearing, Oh, I've already had colour for 30 years I'm not allergic or this, that and the other. So I actually took allergy alerts or the patch test out of the conversation. So all new clients have to have a consultation with me and they have to come in. You can't be over the phone, maybe over Skype it's an international client, but generally speaking, they need to come in, have a consultation and then I do an allergy alert test while they're there but that's never told to them until they're actually with me. Because that takes the pressure off me. I find it very hard. I think a lot of us in London really struggle with that because you see someone walking through the door and you can't do anything. You can't do the colour unless of course that just having pre-lightened hair and no glazing, then you because you can't allergy alert test for pre-lightner. But if there's the glaze involved, then you're supposed to test for that too. It's very difficult for businesses I think. But I also think that more and more people are becoming allergic and you know, when you see an allergic reaction to hair colour it's pretty scary. What can happen. And so for me, I like to frame it as a consumer safety issue rather than it's a pain in the ass. Sorry, you've got to come in for it.

Antony:

But you, but you tell them they can't book the appointment that day. They're booking, the appointment in for a consultation

Jack:

They're booking an appointment for a consultation. They cannot, they cannot book the consultation and book the appointment at the same time it gets brought up. Yes. It sort of goes off tracking a little bit for you right. In the conversation. But what I found was I had been some resistance to allergy alert tests the word itself. And I also had people booking in for a consult and then not turning up because it was free. Or somebody coming in, you know, I don't want somebody booked into my chair.who's colour correction and she thinks she's a set of highlights. So I like to minimize all the drama. Have somebody come in for the consult they pay for that consultation and that will then be deducted off their final bill when I book the appointment with me and book it out for the time that I need.

Antony:

And do you get resistance about that? The paid consultation?

Jack:

I've had, no, what it does is everyone who pays obviously turns up and those that say I'll call back in a minute never call back. And that's absolutely fine with me.

Antony:

And what do you charge for a paid consultation?

Jack:

So I charge 50 pounds, right. For the consult and it is I've refunded one person because I told them that we just weren't a fit, at all. it wasn't a the conversation was hard, it wasn't happening. And I'm like, actually, I, I'm not the right colourist for you. And one lady who's said to me a few years back now, she, I'll was extremely over-processed hair and she wanted a balayage look. And I told her that we needed to do treatments and hair cuts and all of that stuff and she felt that she could, somebody else could do it for her. And I said well here's your deposit back don't worry about it You go and see someone. Yeah. And then when they come in after the counsult we talk about what's going to happen to them, how are we going to book it and plan the idea. And then I'll take it to the reception desk I book it and then I charge her another booking deposit for the appointment the first-timers And it's about 150 altogether. And that means when they come in 150 pounds is already paid and if they cancelled within 24 hours? I keep the 150 pounds.

Antony:

Right. Okay. Good, good. I think that's great to do it. And I know a lot of hairdressers are frightened to do that. And I, I've heard you talk about that a lot and I'm with you all the way there. I think it's the way to be treated like a professional is to act like a professional.

Jack:

I am a professional and I think that the industry is getting better at it. And I spoke to this, a woman and the amount of cancellations she had over the year, was an awful lot of money. And you know, it's not like, you can fill that spot. Even if you've got a cancellation if somebody calls, 10 minutes before or just doesn't turn up, How do you fill it? I'm so frustrated by that and I think that the industry is frustrated by that. It's like, Oh, it's raining today. I'm not going to go to the hairdressers I've got an appointment but it doesn't matter. Or Oh, went out last night and I'm hungover or I've got something better to do. You wouldn't do that at a restaurant. Why would you do that at a hairdressers.

Antony:

Exactly. You said before that allergies were on the increase, and I have read that as well, that the amount of people that suffer Allergic reactions today to hair colour is greater than what it was 10 or 20 years ago. Do you think, are you finding that clients are asking now for Do you have, you know, organic product or product that's PPT free? Are people aware of that? Are they starting to request that?

Jack:

I think there's a certain category of clients who maybe are living a more vegan lifestyle or they might be more aware of it. I think it's still quite a niche, but I think that people are much more aware of the environment and things that can happen to them. And so people are trying to do the best that they can do with what they want. Do you know what I mean by that?

Antony:

Yeah, yeah. I do. I think the manufacturers are doing that as well. They want to get results they still want to get performance, but you know, if you make something completely organic and natural, then you're going to have to keep it in the fridge or it's going to go off, you know, once it's opened. And do you know what I mean? There has to be a degree of chemistry in there for it to be commercially viable, to sit on the shelf to be consistent, et cetera, et cetera. Yes. But it is an issue.

Jack:

It is an issue and I think the products have improved in quality so much. The last 20 years haven't they I mean it's all getting better. The end game is healthy hair Beautiful hair colour and a healthy client.

Antony:

Yeah, exactly. That's the ultimate goal. When we're talking before you said that you think the future changes that we'll be talking about in 10 years time will be around sustainability. So, you know, we're talking packaging, we're talking, you know, what we rinse down the sink or not recycling, you know, testing on animals, all that sort of stuff. What sort of things are you doing yourself, you know, in a salon today to sort of go, do you know what I mean? I'm taking this seriously?

Antony:

So I was in, I was in the Netherlands, I think it was end of last year. And there they have this fantastic recycling program for salons where it's bottle caps , tubes boxes of tint, bottles, they recycled everything there was a container for everything. We sort of at Paul Edmonds, we're researching how much of the stuff that we can. So we obviously boxes recycle that and plastic in another thing, but it's like how much more can we do to make us as Green as you know, as carbon neutral as possible. And there's another woman, Karine Jackson who's having a fantastic conversation about that too. I mean, if you travel to Thailand or India or anything like that and you see the pollution and the devastation on the beaches it is absolutely horrific. And we all have to do, our bit. Professionally and privately. Yeah. You know, my hope would be why do we have these one-liter bottles of developer? We, used to buy it by the gallons you never see that anymore why don't we have bigger bottles that are Recyclable. Why don't we have, I don't know a dispenser of colours rather than individual colours in a magically, it would be nice if you could press a button and it would mix it for you straight away, wouldn't it?

Antony:

Yeah, I've seen variations on a theme of that type of technology, but it never seems to take off it never seems to survive, you know, rather like the you know, the things you see in the hardware store when you're getting paint mixed where it's one big thing that has the primary and secondary colours in it. And then according to whatever formula you put in, it delivers a bespoke colour for that. So yeah, maybe that area is being revisited. Who knows?

Jack:

We are seeing shampoos now where you can take your bottle in and get it refilled. Yes. so you know, it's going that way. It's just we need to go the quicker I think.

Antony:

Yeah, I think so. So every little helps. Yeah mentioned a minute ago you said how, you know, products got so much better in the last 10, 20 years and it has without doubt. But it's also got a lot

better in the home hairdressing colour market. I mean, the stuff that's in you know, aisle seven of boots or Walgreens or whatever As box colour is a better product today than it was 10 years ago. And it's inevitable because it's often owned by exactly the same people. What are your, let's have a conversation about the home colour market and just get your thoughts on that and how it impacts on the industry. I mean, you know, more people colour their hair at home than doing salons, et cetera. So talk to us about that

Jack:

So there's this percentage of women who, I want to colour their hair at home and a lot of that is to do with a value for money and also what they see happening in a salon. If you put one bowl of tint out in front of a woman, and put it on her head, one tint, one box. How difficult can that be. We as salons generally we over-index in blondes We do more blondes than we do brunettes So you get more brunettes doing their hair at home, but that you're not going to change the hair home colour market. The piece that we as an industry, I feel as a colourist, its needs to address are the clients that we call mixers. They're the ones that go to the salon, but they also top it up at home. I think that a lot of that is about the fact that people just, and it sounds terrible, just slap a tint on. You know, there's no tailoring about it. I'm not saying everyone, I'm saying that's the perception and there isn't anything bespoke about that. And so if you I mean, I always like to do a little bit lighter around the face. I pull a few pieces through maybe add a glaze to it. It's not just a tint And I think that makes it special and it makes the woman see value in the price of it too often. I believe that you know, if you've got the colour mixed up by the time Mrs Jones comes through at four 30 on a Saturday afternoon, same as usual, and you've got the tint out there, you put it on, it's no wonder, that she goes down aisle seven at boots or you know, aisle seven at Walgreens or wherever or wherever and does it herself. So you're not going to always you're not going to turn every box colour client into a client, but there are those that go-between aisle seven and the salon that mix and they're the ones you want to get in because it's quite a large proportion.

Antony:

What are your have thoughts about, you know, when you and I started hairdressing the client had two choices, a professional in salon colour or box colour, whether she bought it from, you know the supermarket or the, you know, the pharmacy, the drug store, whatever. They were her two choices. Now you have this other player in the middle. I'm sure you are becoming aware of them. I'm sure you are aware of brands like E salon.com. Yes. And Madison reed.com and Loreal own one colour and co.com where they sort of occupy this middle ground because it's online, colour sent straight to your door. Like we get everything now online and sent straight to our door. But it is, it's not a, it's a consultation with a professional online, like you said before when you do consultations with international guests now you do them over Skype or whatever. Yeah. These are consultations that you do with the colorist over Skype or a FaceTime or whatever. So someone can see you, they can see your hair, they can see your skin tone, your eye colour, the density of hair. They can get you to part it, they can get you to put your hair, et cetera, et cetera. And then prescribing a bespoke color formula to you. I mean I see them as having a huge impact on The salon industry potentially and, and really and doing a whole lot for, you know, 10 or \$15 an application sent, you know straight to your door, you can get the cotton wool, you get the gloves, you get the tint brush, you get the bowl you get the, the stain remover. And the instructions and the personalized video, et cetera, et cetera. Talk to us about that from your perspective.

Jack:

Well, I think that there are always, you know, they're always going to, there's always going to be competition for the hair colour market and in different forms. This one might take away from the

box colours, that you buy in the chemist, it might, people might be more edged towards buying that because it is a little bit more personalized in that I don't think you can please everybody. But again, I think that there are different types of people, People come to a salon for an experience. You don't necessarily get a great experience with an online consultation and then putting it on yourself in your kitchen or your bathroom, do you, it's not the same thing. So I think it's important for us as an industry to make sure that we're always upping our game in the way in which we communicate the way we deliver services, the way in which we look after a client's experience from points of entry, which means from the moment she walks through that door to the reception desk, to the chair with me to the shampoo back to the stylists that whole experience has to be fantastic to keep people coming to the salon. There are always going to be people that do at home and this online stuff and they've got some big names behind some of those brands as well. I think that's more likely to bite into the box colour market than it is into our market.

Antony:

Okay. Well, that's an interesting take on it. I mean, I totally agree with your response that, you know, for hairdressers, a lot of that is a tap on the shoulder that you better lift your game here. You know what I mean? You've got to give people a five-star experience because you know as you said, slapping colour on, getting an assistant to slap it on, you know, anyone can put colour on but not anyone can design a colour. And so there needs to be a lot more emphasis put on designing a colour and the degree of expertise and applying it and giving people that five-star experience so that there is no, there is no comparison between getting it done at home by your sister in the kitchen while you're watching, you know, a box set.

Jack:

Yeah, absolutely. Totally. But that's the same for anything and everything, of course, not just tints to hair cuts and blow-dries all those services. I think that people are now looking for an experience as we all seem to be and they want to feel part of the family so We as an industry need to make sure that we all own the top of it.

Antony:

Yeah, definitely. Okay. we need to be sort of wrapping up shortly, but I want to touch on the education side of things. How do you stay relevant? How do you reinvent yourself? How do you, how do you continually grow and learn? So I think that for me and that's a great question because I do worry, I like, to go on classes, I like to go and see things. I use Instagram an awful lot to look at techniques and IGTV I love that I'll go on a course every so often if it's something that I see that I really enjoy. Being behind a chair as well as being an educator keeps me really relevant to what's happening in the market and what women are looking for. And I think that I think education is the most one most important things in our industry. And I think that people don't necessarily spend enough on it. Because you can't be doing what you did 20 years ago or 30 years ago and expect to grow your clientele now you need to adapt. But the education on offer from product companies and from influencers needs to really speak to the needs of the hairdresser behind the chair about how they can either work faster or produce beautiful blondes or do a foilage technique or do a lovely hand-painted technique. It needs to be aimed at that. Not at the geometric asymmetric cut bobs with short fringes and green bits and pink bits, it needs to be relevant. Education needs to be relevant.

Antony:

Yep I couldn't agree more. Okay. right. So what's next for you? Where do you go from here? I mean, you know, you've got some very exciting projects on the go there. What's the, what does the next sort of five to 10 years look like for you? Or is that an unfair question to ask?

Jack:

I dunno, I think we all have hopes and dreams and I think that I still have them, which is great. And I feel incredibly fortunate that I still enjoy this career, so it's not drudgery for me. I'm hoping that the Tint brushes are successful and that line by colourists for colourists works well. I love, I love educating. I want to carry on doing that. I see. I have some ideas, the things I want to do. I don't want to put them out there yet. But I definitely still have things that I'm working on.

Antony:

Okay. Good. Okay, so a few final words. whereabouts can people connect with you on social, online or, or even at events like where is Jack Howard going to be over the next few weeks, months, or if not what are the online social handles that you go by?

Jack:

So it's online, and on anything that you can imagine if it's online, it's Jack Howard color, C. O. L. O. R. It's on Instagram, on LinkedIn, on Facebook, on tick tok. I think that's all I am on now, but generally speaking next week, this week I'm going to be in Dublin, the teaching, then I fly to humbug where I'm presenting essential looks. I'm doing a balayage class for, the Middle East in Hamburg and I'm doing a couple of other things then I'm back in London and in East London shooting in the second part of the global campaign, which is really, really exciting I think I'm really pleased about that. Then I'm running my own education events in London. Then I'm doing an event for Alan Howard, then I'm off to Dubai for three day events for Schwarzkopf Professional blonde me. Then I come back back and I'm in Manchester and I think I'm in Switzerland, so I'm busy.

Antony:

Okay, so I was going to say things, things sound pretty quiet then for you.

Antony:

Yeah so I've got better at it because I was trying to please everybody and I was trying to do full time in the salon and be on the road as an ambassador and give 100% as an ambassador. And I just found myself feeling sick and just not enjoying it. And so I've sorted, you know, if I've got five days teaching, I'm not going to go and do a Saturday in the salon. I'm going to take that day off. And it's worked much better for me to actually respect myself and to look after myself in a better way.

Antony:

Yeah. It's important to find that balance. So on that note, if you are listening to this podcast with Jack Howard and have enjoyed it, then do me a favour, take a screenshot on your phone and share it to your Instagram stories. So, Jack to wrap up, I would like to thank you ever so much for giving me an hour and a bit of your time to be on the grow my salon business podcast. It's been fantastic having this opportunity to talk to you, to ask you the questions that I wanted to ask you. You're an absolute wealth of information and I think you bring a lot of, you know, common sense to the world of hair colour and you know, there were so many things that I wanted to talk about that I didn't get the chance to, so maybe there's another day in it for us to revisit some of the stuff. So in the meantime, Jack Howard, thank you very much for being on the Grow my salon business podcast.

Jack:

Thank you so much for having me. I hope that the audience finds something in there that they can take home and use.

Antony:

I'm sure they did.

Antony:

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