

GMSB 175 TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] **Antony W.:** 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.

[00:00:28] Hey, it's Antony here and welcome to today's podcast. Today is the second in a series of podcasts that I'm doing where I'm talking with people that represent the trade media. I always find that the media representatives have an interesting insight into what's going on in the world of hair and beauty, and many of them also have a multipurpose role, not just as publishers of magazines, but they also facilitate awards and various industry events.

[00:00:58] Now in episode 173, which was the final episode of 2022, I spoke with Stacey Sobel from Salon Today to get a North American perspective. On today's episode, my guest is Linda Woodhead. Now Linda is the founder and owner of the Mocha Group, a multilayered media company and publisher of magazines in the Australian hair, beauty and barbering space.

[00:01:22] And as well as that, they also facilitate events and awards in the hair and beauty industry. In today's podcast, we will discuss how the role of the hair and beauty media has evolved over the last few years, the impact that the internet and social media have had on traditional print media and the trends around recruitment and the changes in industry events, and lots more. So without further ado, welcome to the show, Linda Woodhead.

[00:01:54] **Linda W.:** Thank you very much for inviting me.

[00:01:57] **Antony W.:** My pleasure. It's really good to have you here. I wanna start off, before we get into things, Linda, I mean, I have the pleasure of knowing you, but a lot of our audience, outside of Australia will not yet know you. So, can I get you to begin by giving us your sort of two minute backstory of, how you got into the industry?

[00:02:15] **Linda W.:** Yes, absolutely. look, I've been in publishing my entire life. I think I started in publishing when I was in my early twenties, actually back in the UK, immigrated to Australia, in 1986 when I was 23. and worked with a couple of publishing houses over here, and then launched my first magazine, which was in the music industry. I had a street press weekly newspaper. That was very hard work. I think weekly newspapers were hard work back then. So, moved into that then had a various number of different publications. I dabbled in the hair industry, for somebody I knew that had a publication and we, looked after the print on license for that for the first few years. So I sort of, got to know the industry, I guess a long time ago, but launched, my business that I currently have now, which is the Mocha Group, which is basically a media marketing events publishing company for the hair, beauty, and barber industry with magazines, online, socials, E D M and all the rest of it that now comes with it as well as for major awards for those four, for those three industries. So, okay. a small

company, a boutique kind of business. you know, that we assimilate very much with small business owners cuz we are one of them as well. so yeah, that's pretty much in a nutshell.

[00:03:35] **Antony W.:** Okay. Well, I often think that the media side of the hairdressing industry has a really interesting insight or overview of what's happening in the industry as a whole. But like every business, the media has had to adapted a lot to, changes, you know, technology changes. And then over the last couple of years, you know, COVID has had a further big impact on all that, but particularly the technology side of things over the last 15 or 20 years, the internet and social media has had a huge impact on the publishing industry. so talk to me, about how trade magazines, specifically your magazines hairbiz and the other magazines have pivoted because you know, I know before we started recording you mentioned that you were a publishing company, but very quickly it transitioned into a media company. So talk to us about what that means.

[00:04:28] Look, I think we've had to evolve massively because of the changes obviously within media and the way that people can communicate. I think we also have to look at different generations as well and the way that they communicate. We have a responsibility, I guess, you know, as a trade business to business company predominantly. even though, you know, we are dealing directly with hair salon owners, beauty salon owners, barber, barbershop owners. We've had to look at ways that we can communicate with them for our clients. And our clients predominantly are advertisers, and those are product companies. Whether they are selling a product or a service, we need to communicate on their behalf through our media channels. Because the industry has changed and you know, if we go back and it's not that long ago, if we go back, you know, 15, 20 years ago. , everybody just read magazines. it, it really has changed very quickly, whereas now people will get their information and their news from a myriad of different ways, whether that's social, whether that's email, whether that's a website, whether that's so, so for us to remain relevant and be able to still make a living, I guess as well, we have to move with those changes and we have to look at probably more than most how we can, you know take responsibility for the money that people pay us to get a message out and how we can best do that.

[00:05:55] **Linda W.:** My, my main aim is that if I have a company that I go to see, or any of my staff go to see. . and they want to have a certain result within a certain period of time, we have to achieve that result and give them a return on their investment. And if we just had a magazine print, that's not gonna do it anymore because we are dealing with a market that look at all sorts of different areas. and we'll, you know, I think it, it's not a new concept to me. It's a little bit like when I first started in publishing, and you used to go and see somebody to try and sell them advertising you used to talk to people about how people would spend money in print, in radio, in tv. In, you know, flyers in mailboxes, all the old-fashioned direct mail things. And so people did spread their budgets in different ways. Nothing's really changed it just means that they're now spreading their budget across different media channels because we now have the ability to do that through the internet and through websites and through emails and through socials. So for us to stay current and relevant, and still get budget, basically it comes down to having to. Offer all of those mediums to everyone and learn about that too, because this is something that, you know, was new to everyone. We've all had to learn it, you know, young people. Have kind of grown up with it. We haven't, we've had to,

you know, I think the world at the moment is such a huge changing place. Probably bigger than I've ever seen before, whether it comes to technology, whether it comes to humanity, whether, you know, all those different things that we're all learning. but I guess the bottom line is to stay in business, you have to evolve. and that's what we've had to do, to make sure that we've got all of those channels for everyone to get the content from.

[00:07:45] **Antony W.:** Okay. you very consciously have talked about different generations and young people and you know, it occurs to me that in this industry, you have two very different audiences, that you have the business owners, the manufacturers, et cetera, that you deal with, the salon owners, and they will generally be of one generation, whereas more and more so the majority of this industry. It's always been a young person's industry. So more and more so you are gonna be dealing with you know, Gen Z, that they are also your market. Although they may not be the market that is spending money with you today, they will be the market that is spending more money with you tomorrow. So I suppose what I'm thinking about as you are talking about that is in terms of magazines, do you think that young hairdressers today have lost interest? In magazines because they're now more interested in the spontaneity and the instant, you know, the instant thing that social media brings to the game. Like what are your thoughts about that?

[00:08:47] **Linda W.** Look, I think number one, I think salon owners , even though we are very much and always have been about talking to business salon owners. Salon owners are getting, I mean, we are getting older, but they're definitely getting younger. , think people are, you know, and that's now kind of in a good way. I think they are becoming a lot more savvy than what they used to be. you know, We can see how well the business is going because when we send our magazines out, we get those returns back for closures of salons. And so it's quite an interesting way to look at how business is going. In general, hair has always been a lot higher than beauty for example, hair, you know, on average there's about a 10 to 12% churn rate. So, so 10 to 12% of sounds will close down pretty much every year. I think up until about maybe. Maybe five, six years ago, we were still growing. We're not really growing much anymore because the same amount that are closing that are coming, you know, coming back in as new ones or they're being taken over or whatever, beauty has always been probably closer to about 6 to 7%. So it's less, but I think that's also because the business owners, even though they're also still seeming to be younger, you need to have a lot more money to open up a beauty salon on nowadays because they are more of a clinic. They have, you know, equipment that costs a hundred thousand dollars plus, so it's not just opening up a \$20,000 salon on, it's like this is kind of big business.

[00:10:09] Barbers definitely got hit hard, through Covid because I think when we hear, I'm not sure what happened in other countries,. When you're dealing with 25 to \$50 per head and you can only have three people in there as opposed to 10, that makes a massive difference. So we saw a bit of a decline, but that's now kind of come back up again. I think for me, with the message to the age and generation of people is a lot of the salons that we are talking to from a business perspective, you know, they are salons that, not all of them, but they are salons that are really nurturing their staff. you know, we have our awards as well and we have categories in those awards for young people, for apprentices, for new creative talent, for, you know, and I think that. At the end of the day, the salon owner is the person that's

gonna spend the money, and therefore my advertisers want to get to them. So I have to do my job of that. But at the same time, I'm also having to send messages to younger people because they are the salon owners of the future. And also they are our entrance to our awards and they are growing. you know, we have a couple of young, competitions, one's called Hot Shots for Hair and one's called Beauty Squad for beauty. and that's very much about really nurturing the young ones into a different kind of thought process, I guess. I mean, I think, you know, everyone talks about skill shortage. Everyone talks about how hard it is to get staff. I don't think I've ever not heard that conversation in the 20 years that we've had this business, you know, that, that isn't changing.

[00:11:50] I think there are quite bad figures over here for not so much the number of apprentices that are coming in, but the ones that are completing. I think people are changing their way of thought with who they employ. but I do think when it comes to print, at the moment from what we can see and from what research we do, which is purely based on, you know, telemarketing, two salons, and that could be somebody could pick up the phone who's a receptionist, not necessarily the business owner. And we asked the question, do you still wanna get the print magazine? Because. . If they all said no, it would save me a fortune. I mean, we would probably have to charge a bit less in advertising, but if we went fully online, we wouldn't have print, we wouldn't have post. but it's a resounding 100%. Yes, we still wanna see the magazine, but, but that's interesting is that the owners or the startup, or you think both.

[00:12:40] **Linda W.:** it's the, it's whoever answers the phone. Right? We normally ask them straight away. Yeah. And then we will say to them, you know, if you can speak on behalf of the owner, or we'll ask to speak to the owner. But when I personally go into salons, and looking at, you know, even just when we do stories like, you know, when we put out a magazine, we also have a digital online version. . So we send that out on our email, database so that, you know, so for hair for example, that goes to like 14, 15,000 for beauty, it goes to, around 10 to 12,000 and even though, you know, I think we were talking before we, we started the podcast. Our open rates are good, but when you look at how many people actually look at the magazine, a lot of people go to the online version to look at it. and they're on there for a reasonable amount of time in terms of impression and how long they spend on a page and that kind of thing. But it's not huge. The percentage is quite low. if you think about how many people that goes out to, we find that, you know, if we do a story in the magazine and then we share that link to that page, to the person that we've written about, and that could be about somebody young. It could be about somebody 20, 21, 22, and we've done an interview with them about their career path or whatever, they will share that link and quite often. It's funny because even though they may be the ones that are embracing social more so than the older ones because they share it, we get more hits on that than we would do on maybe a 50 year old business owner who might share it, because they don't have the following. Sure. So it, it's kind of weird because it works quite well on, on either way.

[00:14:20] you know I'm sure that there are young hairdressers and beauty therapists out there that, you know, may not be interested in looking at the magazine. But then, like I said, our magazines have always been more so about, the business owner, other content creation, which is through social, and that's more for the young ones. So if we go to a salon and do a

bit of a walk through a salon and we make it a real, you know, make it really cool and fun and, you know, A lot of that for us in terms of a business strategy means that we are also all over socials. So I'm currently getting phone calls. We've been really, it's been a very big focus. I've brought in a new general manager in, August and his. He's had a huge focus on, you know, an influence I guess in, in what we've been doing lately. And it's, he's younger. It's much more about, you know, talks about eyeballs all the time and all that kind of stuff. And what's happening with that is that I'm getting calls from companies that we haven't done business with for a long time who are ring you saying, oh my God, you are just everywhere. We need to be a part of that train kinda thing. Yes. So.

[00:15:27] **Antony W.:** How many issues do you do a year of the magazine?

[00:15:31] **Linda W.:** We've got 16 in total. So Hairbiz is six a year. Beauty Biz is six a year, and barbershop is four a year. Right. And that's been the case ever since we launched. Right. So that's, so essentially we're putting out, we're, yeah. So not sorry, we're putting out, we're putting out No, we're no that. Absolutely not. We in fact, even through Covid, through the few, you know, two years I guess, you know, where things were pretty bad. And, you know, Melbourne is a classic example Victoria was like one of the highest lockdown cities in the world. A lot of salons suffered, especially beauty in that. cuz they, they were lockdown for longer than here. I think even throughout the entire covid situation. we only didn't publish one magazine, and that was a Beauty biz edition. Yeah. and that was because it was just tough. And we didn't, not publish because we, again, we did research. We, I never kind of just. , you know, think that I'm right because I, you know, I love print, but I'm not gonna stick my head in the sand if people don't want it. It's a business decision. but when we spoke to a lot of people and said, you know, are you still getting your mail?

[00:16:38] Yes. They were. Even though their salons might be closed. Do you still wanna get the magazine? Oh my gosh, yes. Because it's the only way that we can get all the information and they still wanted to feel part of that industry, and they looked forward to receiving it. From the product company point of view, none of the reps were on the road. So they really had very little way to communicate other than through media companies. Yeah. So the fact that we could then say, you know, and look, we looked after them as well. We did a lot of free stuff over the year or two to try and kind of keep people, you know, going and communicating and, you know, offered as much as we could. We did sort of podcasts, we did lives, we did all sorts of different things because we were still operating. Yeah. They weren't. So it allowed us to be a voice for the people that couldn't be a voice, in that one to two year period.

[00:17:29] **Antony W.:** Sure. do you see a day where there won't be printed magazines?

[00:17:34] it's, I hope not

[00:17:35] **Antony W.:** said in the Australian market that they're, you know, that you are, you haven't shunt at all, that you've been very consistent.

[00:17:41] **Linda W.:** No, not at all.

[00:17:42] **Antony W.:** So, I'm just curious about that because I sort of imagine the staff room of 20 years ago. That the magazine arrived and it would be put on the staff room table and everyone would rip the cover off and wanna flick through it and look at it. But I'm imagining the staff room of today is got these young hairdressers in it that are scrolling through their phone when they don't have a client. And you know, the instantaneous interaction with what they're seeing on Instagram is more important and maybe even more relevant to them than the magazine. So, I mean, obviously, I don't know, it's just in my imagination, I'm sort of, yeah, intrigued that's what staff rooms would be like. So I'm intrigued about why you are, not seeing that as something more in the future.

[00:18:28] **Linda W.:** I think it's just, don't think there's one rule that fits all, to be honest. I mean, I think there would be some salons that probably, you know, would get it, the business owner would get the magazine, take it home, the staff wouldn't even see it. and they're happy with that. And my advertisers are happy with that. Cause actually they wanna get to, but then on the other hand, I think that there are other ones that, you know, I think we write off. You know, the Gen Z, the Gen Y, that a lot of those as being this instantaneous kind of, you know, not interested, kind of group. But in actual fact, the ones that, you know, we've got some salons that we deal with quite closely who themselves are, say Gen Y, and they might employ Ys and Zs and get so much out of them as long as they deal with them in the right way. So if they nurture them and they take 'em along for the ride and they support them in, you know, shoots or education or mindfulness sessions in the morning. I mean, whatever they do, it's kind of, you know, they've had to evolve as well. So I think, I don't know what happens in the staff room anymore. All I know is that, advertisers are still using us as a medium and they're getting results for that. Yes. So somebody's gotta be reading it. I think that, but having said that, We can't just go into somebody now and say, you know, book six full pages and it's gonna cost you X amount and you know, and that's gonna be great for your brand.

[00:19:50] They're very much more about return on investments. I mean, also because a big change in media has been, and I mean that's because I'm old now, older now, but the marketing managers that we are dealing with in some of the larger companies are young and they're coming out with, you know, what they want out of a contract, what they wanna see, how many eyeballs they wanna get, what the followers are gonna be, what you know. So all this stuff, they speak in an acronyms all the time. Like it, it just did whole different language. Yeah. so you have kind to be their level, I guess, and understand what they want out of that. But also I believe that we also, have, you know, we have to do our own kind of due diligence and we have to, we have a responsibility that if someone's gonna give me some money to do something for them, I've gotta do it the right way. So, you know, we can offer them. , I guess by having all of these different media channels, we can offer a lot and look, the young, a lot of the young ones that I'm seeing and I'm dealing with, we have a lot of young, as I said, competitions and you know, programs that we run. They're just hungry for information. They, yeah and they will quite often comment on a story that they read. you know, I think definitely in media. I mean, I've been involved publishing for a long time. So I've seen a lot of changes obviously from, just from a production point of view. When I first got involved in it, we were still doing hand manual cut and paste as the there was no desktop publishing.

[00:21:18] and so that's changed massively. There are industries now that just don't exist, that used to exist in the way that we used to publish. So that tends to sell tell me that. Yeah. Things are definitely evolving and things are definitely changing. however, . I do also think that, you know, media has become such a broad thing, and sometimes you just have to give people what they want. And everybody at the moment in a media contract with a media company, they want us to give them everything. and that's been hard that probably has been the toughest challenge I would say. I've in business because, you know, we were trucking along for quite a long time, you know, doing what we do. And then suddenly in the last probably only maybe five, six years, we've had to suddenly, you know, create email databases out of nothing and create social media pages and then. You know, when, probably a year ago, maybe 18 months ago, we had something like 14 different, Instagram accounts and Facebook accounts, because when we started, nobody really knew what was happening. So we would have, you know, one for each magazine and one for each award, and one for all different things. And so we had to make a very big decision 12 months ago and say, look, let's rebrand. My company used to be called Mocha Publishing. It's now called Mocha Group. We wanted to move away from just being seen as a publisher. Yeah. Even though that's essentially what we are. We got rid of a lot of our Instagram and Facebook. so then Mocha was the brand we wanted to promote. So we put a lot of those together and we now just have three Mocha Hair, Mocha barber, and Mocha beauty. Yeah. And whether it's awards, competitions, social events, networking, magazine staff, anything, it just goes under those three. Yeah. and that's a lot easier to manage.

[00:23:06] **Antony W.:** Yeah, I'm always. Thinking of it from the hairdresser's perspective, you know, me trying to have an overview of what the, of what's happening at the salon level and when I go back to, you know, to my day behind the chair, entering the wards, doing photographs, all that sort of stuff, it was very much about. You really wanted to get your work in print. There was nothing better than seeing your picture on the cover or, you know, double page spread inside. It was a real endorsement of who you are and what you did. And one of the interesting things about social media is it's enabled a lot of people to break through because there was no one vetting their work. There was no one saying you are good enough or not good enough. And that's been a really powerful thing about Instagram in particular, that anyone can, you know, take pictures of the work they do, they can put it out there and so they get a lot of endorsement and a lot of recognition from the amount of likes and followers and you know, whatever that they get for their work that they're putting out there. And so I'm wondering from that perspective, again, getting back to young people and magazines, are they less interested? And I wanna talk to you about awards in a minute. Cause I know you, you have awards and events that you do. Are young people today less interested in awards as being their recognition because they get their recognition from the wider filled through social media and have total control over it? What are your thoughts about that?

[00:24:45] **Linda W.:** I think there's two different types of recognition. There's consumer recognition from their clients, and then there's peer recognition and with not all of them, but with some of them. And I don't think this has ever really changed. There is a group, and there will always be a group in my mind that year, that peer recognition, Peer recognition then comes in a couple of different ways. One is obviously, to get recognition amongst your peers as to the work that you're doing. If it's, if we're talking photographic, the photographic, the work that they do for competitions is very different to the work that they're gonna quite often

put up on socials of the work they're doing in the salon. So if they're, you know, really proud of, you know, an amazing. Or something look that they've done, they put that up and they get all their follows and they get all their likes and if they own a salon and people come to the salon because of that's one thing. But when they get peer recognition, it's almost like then, you know, somebody's saying to them that they're, they are an artist, they're incredible at what they do. and with that can quite often then come a lot of other accolade. So it's not just about. Wow, that looks great. It's about, yes. That's great. You've become a finalist. You've won an award. You quite often then through that, can become a commodity, which means that you can earn more money because you then have interest from product companies. you know, I know a lot of salons that use things like awards even instead of recruitment budget because then they make it look so amazing that they want people to go, oh my God, I'd love to go work for them. Look at what they do. That's crazy. They're at fashion week or they're at, you know.

[00:26:19] So I think, industry recognition is a very different game to consumer recognition for a salon. And both are equally important to the other, but not everybody is equally interested in both. Yeah, but there is still definitely a place I think that those creatives and there will always be those creatives because there are salons already that are creative and they nurture their staff to be the same. And then you get your odd ones that kind of come outta nowhere that are just incredible in terms of creatives and usually hopefully will find themselves in a salon that will support that side of things as well. they are the ones that still wanna see themselves on a front cover of a magazine or, you know, in a six page spread or, because that is then almost the ultimate for them.

[00:27:05] I think. I think it, it's definitely a case of, it's not one or the other, you know, because we've got, I could name some salons over here that don't enter awards, that have incredible social, platform that are very successful salons. Although sometimes they do tend to then enter our business awards because they can show how well they do with business, but they're not necessarily the ones, you know, doing the photo shoots. Yeah. And and I think as well there is that, you know, I guess it's, it touches on them that the ego side of the industry, which is to show that you have had a hand somewhat in, you know, forecasting hair fashion trends. and that's a big thing. and I think, you know, it's the same as I guess in any kind of situation, whether it be fashion, whether it be hair, if it's trend based, music is the same. There have to be trailblazers in that. And those are the people because they're creatives. you know, that may still love what they do in the salon on a daily basis, but also wanna really push the boundaries when it comes to creative. And those are the ones that still love to see themselves imprint. Okay. And, you know, you know, look at some of the product companies. They'll run competitions where they'll have, you know, salons can enter to, you know, create a shot so that company can then use those shoots in their marketing. And, you know, I think there is still, it comes down to marketing, it comes down to merchandising. But yeah, there, there's a lot of different aspects, I think as to why people would do a shoot.

[00:28:29] I've always said to people that if you're gonna do a shoot, then. . You know, entering an award is one thing, obviously, and we love that cuz we have the awards. But at the same time, you've also gotta look at how else you can use that shoot. Can you use it in your marketing? Can you use it in your merchandising? Can you make it really pay for itself?

because everything ultimately has to still come back to getting bums on seats. Yeah. In the salon if you're a business owner. Yeah. And if you're just starting out as a creative, then. , you know, the ones when you talk to the top creatives in this industry, they all started just kind of, you know, handing Bobby pins to somebody else.

[00:29:07] **Antony W.:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:29:07] **Linda W.:** So I, I think there's a, there, there's different groups within this industry in hair especially. And I think there always probably will be as to whether or not print will see the distance. I can't see it changing massively in the foreseeable future. I think that if you have print magazines, that are time-based, so newspapers, things that have, I mean, the magazine I first launched over here, which is called Rave, which was a street press, music magazine, that's now gone. Because it had a gig guide and that's what most people, you know, used to go to their record store to pick it up and see what bands were playing where for that week. , I mean, you just pick up your phone to do that now. So they, the person that ended up, owning that did not want to go digital. and it subsequently closed. Whereas I think for magazines like us, you know, generally speaking. It might have some stuff in there about events, but generally you could pick up that magazine at any time and read it, be interested by what's in it. Yeah. So it's not time based. Okay. and I think that makes a massive difference.

[00:30:12] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Well, I know that you've touched on events a couple of times, and I know that your business is also heavily involved in the events side of things. Tell us about what the different events are that you put on and how they're evolving as well, because events are changing. So, you know, what are the changes that you are seeing in, putting in events on and how they're being, impacted by technology? Because, for example, during Covid, a lot of events sort of became online events with varying degrees of success. So, tell us about your events side of your business.

[00:30:46] So we have four awards that cover all three areas. Our first one was the Beauty Awards, Australian Beauty Industry Awards, the ABIA's. We launched those predominantly because there were no awards in the beauty industry. I'd had some, involvement in awards in the past. And to be honest, we just had a lot of people come to us saying, can you do some awards? Cuz they didn't really have anything national. So we went to Beauty Expo one year and, put together a bit of a, an idea of categories. I wanted to make sure that the categories were all individually sponsored, so there was not one major company. So it became a very collective event. I didn't actually know if it was gonna come off, but we went and saw a few companies and said, look, would you be interested in sponsoring? And by the end of the two days at Beauty Expo, we'd sold every single category. We didn't even have an awards at that point. So then I had to kind of lock myself away and create the beauty awards. The next one with the hair ones. we used a lot of, we had the beauty ones for a couple of years before we launched the hair business ones, and I did the business ones. It's pretty much the same reason that we did hair biz. I felt that, you know, at the time there was hair expo awards, and there was AHIA and they were both dealing just with creative. Nobody was really looking at the business side, and business was my sort of forte and the magazine was very much more business based. And just felt that it would open it up to a lot of other salons that were running incredible businesses, to have that award program.

[00:32:15] **Linda W.:** So we launched the, AHIA's, two years ago we took over from hair expo, and took over the hair Expo awards so that we could have the creative awards. And at the same time, we also launched the Australian Modern Barber Awards. so I guess the creative ones were kind of the final piece in the puzzle. That the barber ones are a bit of a mixture of the two so barber, we have creative categories and business categories. It's a much smaller industry, so you can very easily kind of combine the two. We, I guess we run them a little bit differently. It, they are run online and obviously everybody, anybody and everybody can enter. But one thing that we do that I think is unique to us, and probably our big point of difference is, is how much time and effort we put into after the awards for our final listening for our winners. So I, I've never wanted to just set up an awards program. You know, have an amazing big night and everybody have a great time and give them a trophy. And the trophy goes on a shelf and just gets dusted and that's it. That's not what I'm about. what we try to do is to make sure that everybody gets as much publicity as they possibly can as part of their prize package.

[00:33:20] So We, we have a PR company that we work with who's on contract to us 12 months of the year, who works pretty much solely on, getting PR for our winners. So in turn, it means that whether we get them on, you know, Breakfast TV the following day, or whether we get them into a newspaper, online or print, or if we get them various other opportunities. it's a massive, a huge investment for us. But it's also, you know, it's not just about, you know, every single winner gets their own personalized press release. They get like a how-to how-to get PR, kind of like a, you know, 1 0 1 sort of thing. We give them lists and details of local media in their areas. We, we really try to work them through showing them how to put a press release together, all that kind of stuff. So it's not just enter the awards, win the award, see you later until next year. We work with them quite closely and give them as much publicity in trade as well as, in consumer. so that was part. One of the driving forces I think behind. And certainly from that, I think because people see what we do with that, then the award programs are all definitely growing.

[00:34:30] **Antony W.:** Yeah. so your events are all about awards. There's no, there's no trade fair we so to speak.

[00:34:37] **Linda W.:** No. So basically when hair expo closed, we took over the awards and Intermedia who owns install, they took over Hair Festival, which is called now, and that is a trade show. We kind of came at that together. I was looking at, I'd been speaking to Reid, and we were kind of in the process of us looking at taking over everything. I didn't really wanna do the trade show, I just wanted to do the awards. Intermediate popped up and said that they'd be interested in the trade show, so, well.

[00:35:06] **Antony W.:** lemme ask you.

[00:35:06] **Linda W.:** We kinda came together.

[00:35:08] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Let me ask you about that trade show, side of things, cuz I'm intrigued by that as well. As, you know, we've both been in the industry a long time. Yes. and one thing that's been happening, Over the years, many years is that trade fairs have just been

getting smaller and smaller, because of the internet, and pre covid. You always sort of got the feeling that no matter where you were in the world, that the trade event was getting smaller and looking for ways to sort of reinvent itself. And now we've come out the other end of Covid. There's that sort of, you know, , are they going to continue in the way they were? Is there still a need for them? Lots of people seem to be stepping back a little bit from those, you know, big events, award events, education events, you know, trade fairs and looking for a new way forward. What are your thoughts about that? What do you see happening?

[00:36:04] **Linda W.:** I agree. I absolutely agree. I think, you know, Hair Expo to be a three day trade show. it was pretty big. It was across two, three halls or whatever. hair festival came on board with intermediate they've only had one, so they did, they were supposed to launch in 2021. and then because of covid issues, they didn't do 2021. So they really only launched in this year, in 2022. They will be back in 2023. We always have our creative boards on the last night, we didn't cancel actually in 2021 and we were super lucky because we had it in a window, on, in June, on the weekend where, Melbourne just got outta lockdown like three days before, and then Sydney went in about four days after. So we just snuck in in this little window. but still had a huge event, amazing event. And I think, that was more to do with the fact that a lot of people hadn't seen each other for over a year. So everyone was super excited to get together. Hair festival was a little bit different. It was in a different venue. It was at Carriage Works in, Sydney, which is. as it sounds, an old carriage works like an old railway kind of works and it was kinda had, you know, kinda had that cool vibe sort of about it.

[00:37:10] There was education. there were certainly stands. There were, I think probably the biggest, takeaway difference would be, you know, the big names are not necessarily there anymore. If you took, if you look at the big four or five companies, you know, they definitely are doing things differently. They were all there but didn't necessarily have a. Stand. They probably, they did a few things differently where they had a day, which was a bit more seminar conference style, and some of the major product companies come and supported that. so they still supported it in a different way, but without an actual stand. And I think that's where things have changed. You know, it has also opened it up to some of the smaller brands that, that definitely did support and, and be there. But I think , and look, it's not my business, but I think they're gonna have to continuously, evolve and reinvent and look at different ways that they can do things. But you know, I mean, they still got decent numbers. I think it was just, you know, they've only had the one, I guess, over here, but I think, you know, the days of, you know, for us sort of, you know, 12,000 people coming in through a couple of days and you know, massive exhibition stands and you know, of the big companies and all the wholesalers and all the rest of it.

[00:38:20] And I mean, I remember even walking around Salon International, like that style thing. I think that's definitely changed. education I think is a tough one because. , you know, everybody has got, has been quite spoiled in the last couple of years of getting a lot of education and a lot of free education online. That's become, I think, difficult. However, you know, there are still people that I think also it's the opposite way, where some people have been so starved of human interaction in the last couple of years. Some people are like, can't wait to get back out and get some real, you know, face-to-face education. Because what I'm seeing at the moment, certainly, you know, the individual, educators are all back up and

running and doing well. It's probably the bigger, the bigger ones are tough. we used to run, an event called Habis Forum. We haven't run it for the last couple of years, obviously, cause of Covid. The jury's still out at the moment as to whether we will bring it back. We probably won't bring it back in the format that we used to do it, we ran it for a good seven or eight years. it was basically a live version of the magazine. So we would have a full day, we would always have, a headline act that would come out from the UK, as in hair creative that would do, you know, show on stage. But we used to mix it up, so we would usually have three business speakers, three hair shows, maybe a team, or maybe an interview situation. So it was very much like the magazine to be honest, but just a live version of that.

[00:39:50] But the last one that we did, even though we used to get good numbers, it's a huge amount of work and from a commercial point of view for very little return. Yeah. you know, and there's only so much you can do it, it's like from a sponsorship point of view, as far as what a company gets, I guess, with the awards compared to what they get with education. And this is, I don't know, bonus of contention, I guess. awards, they get a lot longer bang for their bark because we do a lot of stuff before they've got the night, they've got the, after they've got all the photos, they've got all that kind of stuff. And, but to get product companies nowadays to spend money on, education is quite hard. On their own. I think at the moment they're all very much, wanting to look after the clients they've got initially first and foremost. And that's taken precedent over getting new. I mean, obviously they're all still trying to get new ones as well, but for us, you know, we needed sponsorship and we got the sponsorship.

[00:40:48] But when you're talking about putting on four or five shows, with models and with everything else, and then also with business speakers. And we used to have the little stands for all the sponsors and you know, we'd have anywhere between three to 500 people in the room. It would take six months lead up. It was a massive two, three days, and then on the night we would have the business awards.

[00:43:06] **Antony W.:** Cool. you mentioned, before we start to wrap up, I just wanna touch on a couple of things Yeah. To get your perspective, because again, as I said at the beginning, you know, I think that someone in your position has a good overview of what's happening in the industry from lots of different perspectives. And so I wanna ask you about recruitment. And you touched on it already and you said something which I would agree with. but I think maybe it's got worse and that is, There's always been recruitment problems. yeah, I think right at the beginning of my career, there definitely wasn't. there was quite the opposite, but we're talking at the end of the seventies and there was a lot of kids that wanted to get into hairdressing and it was this, you know, the, it was a transition period, into. Salons that were, and I hate this term, but the unisex salon because, you know, before that it was, you know, the Barber and the Beauty Salon and now we've gone back again to sort of segregating the two, largely, which I think is a really good idea. but at that point in time there was, you know, a lot of people. Or, you know, queuing up to get into this industry. And for a long time it hasn't been like that. So, what I wanted to ask you about was what are the trends that you are seeing around recruitment? Are you seeing anything interesting that's happening to, you know, try and solve that problem at a salon level or at a national level?

[00:44:19] **Linda W.** Possibly the one change that we've seen in the last few years would be the employment of salon assistance, more so than. Apprentices coming in. There's some pretty alarming figures of apprentices and how many, don't complete their apprenticeship. I think sometimes they start, but they just don't always stop. Yeah. And so, there, there's definitely been a shift. I mean, I know quite a few salons that have still got their core staff of their qualified, you know, stylists. But then what they will do is that they will then employ salon assistants, who will come in and do, I guess, and it works two fold.

[00:44:58] **Linda W.:** They'll still have apprentices, but they will employ some assistants and those assistants will do the stuff that maybe a first year used to do. you know, they can teach them how to wash hair. They can you raise up, they can be the teen, tidy. They can do all that stuff, which then also means that they can put more time into their apprentices. actually training them how to do hair rather than, you know, for the first year just doing nothing. And subsequently, I think in some cases why some of them leave cause they don't love it. So they try and maybe,

[00:45:27] **Antony W.:** so just to be clear,

[00:45:28] **Linda W.:** you get them to love it earlier on.

[00:45:30] **Antony W.:** So just to be clear, when you are talking about assistants, you're talking about assistants that don't intend to be hairdressers they are just,

[00:45:39] **Linda W.:** Quite often, some of them. Yeah, I think some of them, you know, some of them may well go onto deciding that they may wanna have an apprenticeship, but there are also, there's also a lot of people out there that are looking for work that may not look for full-time work. we've got a, One of the things that started not long ago, which Clive Allright, started up over here, which is a thing called Pillaroo. and basically it is an online kind of thing where they. it's face place as well. But they will bring people in, they will train them, they will give them a period of time to train them to be a salon assistant. And if you get to work and suddenly find that, you know, two of your staff were off, then you can get in touch with them and you can get a salon assistant to come into the salon on So it's to help with that. Quite often they can be overseas students, they can be. , you know, they can have other jobs. You might get somebody who's a doctor that just wants, you know, instead of, they don't wanna go and drive an Uber for, you know, three nights a week, but they'd be quite happy to work on a Saturday or maybe after hours in a salon because they can still get paid and they can, you know, so that's something that is new. It's not everywhere. but it's definitely something that. Is changing where people are employing non-hairdressers in a hair salon. that certainly can't really happen in beauty obviously, cause it's, that's not gonna work cause they need their qualification.

[00:46:57] But in terms of just some basic stuff that, that's happening, I think the suite situation that we always talk about, there are some companies that have, suites in different states here. it's not huge. there is a little bit of a, you know, some people are now looking at, you know, working in salons as solo operators, rent a chair, all that kind of stuff. I, I remember talking to a few people from the US maybe four or five years ago saying, oh, it's gonna come

to Australia. It's gonna be everyone. Everything is gonna be ranch chair and that hasn't happened, and I don't think it will in Australia. But it's definitely there. It's just not maybe grown as quickly as what some people thought it would. There are suites definitely where, solo operators, I think one of the biggest areas that we have is, the number of solo operators is, has grown. you know, some have incredible Amazing salons at their homes or you know, wherever. And it's quite a big market that we are having to look at. you know, we introduced a category actually called best solo operator, which was a new one two years ago, which some people didn't love the idea of, but we make sure that they have to meet criteria, they have to have a premises of sort, they have to put pictures of that up.

[00:48:06] They have to be ABN registered, which means they need to have a registered business name. Yeah. with the taxation office. So, you know, we're not trying to get backyard ones. We do want bonafide ones, but I think there's more people doing that. A lot of people have got used to working from home, so they're kind of doing that. Maybe that's partly down to why we have shortage, but, you know, there's a change. It's a bit of a wave, but it certainly isn't, you know, oh my God. In two years time, 50% of the industry's gonna be. Someone, suite or ranch chair, that's not happening. Yeah. Yet. I mean I'm not, I don't have a crystal ball, but it's not, I don't think it's been adopted as quickly as it has in other countries.

[00:48:44] **Antony W.:** Right. Okay. Let me ask you this question. When you look outside the Australian market, what do you see that is happening in other countries that you wish the Australian market, in terms of the hairdressing industry, would adapt more? Is there anything.

[00:49:00] it's hard to look at different countries and try and compare because Australia is such a, you know, it, it's such a unique country, the distance for one thing, you know, it's all very well. Same. Let's put on some education. Because everybody can get to us within two to three hours, even if they're on a train, if they're in the UK. Whereas with us, you know, if they're coming from Perth, they've gotta fly for six hours. I mean, it's logistically, I don't think you can really compare it. I think that, you know, I, I guess. We're very much onto our own, which isn't really answering your question, but I look at other countries all the time to see what they're doing. and I think that we are definitely kind of holding our own, I think from a creative point of view. We've always been seen to be kind of up there as well. you know, I see the way that the US. Has moved, I guess more so in the, you know, but their whole system with employment has always been so different to us anyway, so, I think that, you know, sometimes I think some salon owners feel that they can be a bit restricted because there are lots of laws around what they have to do and how much they have to pay and all those things. And maybe a bit of flexibility. Would be good, but at the same time it also protects the employee and I don't think that's a bad thing either.

[00:50:16] **Linda W.:** I think probably one of the issues, and I don't know how this relates to overseas, is that, A lot of the time, all those additional benefits that we have to pay, to an employee because of award rates, because of all those different things, can put a lot of pressure on, on any salon owner. And I think they get, you know, the small business owner in Australia definitely gets hammered a lot. and after Covid, you know, that's the worst thing that you can possibly do. So, no, I don't really look overseas. I mean, like I said, I went to the awards, I went to the British Hairdressing Awards, and there were certainly a few things there

that I really liked that I will adopt. I love the fact that they brought everybody out on stage and all the finalists got their round of applause and they're two seconds of fame kind of thing. And, we don't really do that. So there, that was one thing. There was, there, there was a few things that I loved. There was a few things that I didn't, and so yeah, I'll always look at what everyone else is doing. But from a business perspective, I just, I think it's trying to, you know, look at apples and pears, right? We're so different over here because of our distance and, and our employment laws that make things easier in some way, but also can put a lot of pressure on the business owner in another way.

[00:51:27] **Antony W.:** Alright, well listen, we need to start wrapping up. It's been really interesting talking with you. Whereabouts can people connect with you on Instagram or other social media channels?

[00:51:35] probably the easiest because all of our links are on our website. So our website is mochagroup.com.au.

[00:51:47] **Antony W.:** mocha Group.

[00:51:48] **Linda W.:** Yep. Just like the coffee.

[00:51:59] **Linda W.:** So the website is www.mochagroup.com.au.

[00:52:05] **Antony W.:** Got it.

[00:52:06] **Linda W.:** Um our socials are the same, whether it's Facebook or whether it's Instagram. we have Mocha Hair, Mocha Beauty, and Mocha Barber but all of those links are on our website as well. as well as details for how to get in touch with us, in any way.

[00:52:23] **Antony W.:** Okay, well, I will put those links, on our website, growmysalonbusiness.com, and in the show notes for today's podcast. if you're listening to this podcast with Linda Woodhead and have enjoyed it, then do me a favor, take a screenshot on your phone, share it to your Instagram stories, and don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple Podcast app. So to wrap up, Linda, thank you ever so much for being on this week's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[00:52:51] **Linda W.:** Thank you. I've really enjoyed it actually. It's been lovely. Good to see you again. I think I'm gonna see you later this year as well. you'll be doing under, I gather?

[00:52:58] **Antony W.:** I am. I am, I think in June.

[00:53:00] **Linda W.:** Yes.

[00:53:00] **Antony W.:** So I will look forward to that.

[00:53:02] **Linda W.:** Yeah. Awesome. Oh, well you can come to the awards my guest.

[00:53:06] **Antony W.:** Thanks again.

[00:53:09] **Linda W.:** Good to chat. Thank you.

[00:53:13] **Antony W.:** Thank you for listening to today's podcast. If you'd like to connect with us, you'll find us at growmybusiness.com, or on Facebook and Instagram at Grow My Salon Business. And if you enjoyed tuning into our podcast, make sure that you subscribe, like, and share it with your friends. Until next time, this is Antony Whitaker wishing you continued success.