

GMSB 176 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.

[00:00:29] **Antony W.:** Hello, and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and it's great to have you here with us today. My guest on today's podcast is Pedro Inchenko, who along with his best friended business partner, Johnny Othona, started the Ena Salon in London's Covent Garden, as well as the offshoot education brand Allilon Education. Now, I think it's fair to say that in today's workplace, there's a lot of talk about what exactly is a modern salon culture, and as a salon owner, how do you find the balance between offering more flexibility to the team? While at the same time managing a business that accommodates a client's needs and still run a profitable salon business.

[00:01:21] **Antony W.:** I often talk about the theory of that, but there's nothing better than talking to someone who is actually doing it, and that's why I'm speaking with Pedro in today's episode. In today's podcast, we will discuss what it takes to create a modern salon culture, the importance of remaining curious and the need for flexibility in a modern salon environment, and lots more. So without further ado, welcome to the show Pedro.

[00:01:50] **Pedro I.:** Thank you, Antony. It's great to be here.

[00:01:52] **Antony W.:** Mate. It's really good to have you here. I've been wanting to get you on the podcast for a long time. We've known each other for a while, and I know that you've got so much wisdom and so much experience to, share with our audience that they're gonna get a lot of value out of. So, Pedro, I know that, you are well known in the UK and you travel a lot to different parts of the world as an educator, but inevitably there'll be lots of people that don't know who you are or what your business is. So can we just start off with a sort of a two-minute, overview? Just give us your sort of two-minute backstory of, who you are and, and what your business is all about.

[00:02:27] **Pedro I.:** Yeah, no problem. currently, I have two businesses. I'm a co-owner, so I have a business partner who's called Johnny Othona. , both businesses are almost like both sides of the hairdressing coin. So one is very consumer-focused, which is Ena, which is the salon. And then we have the trade-focused side of the business, which is Allilon, which is focused on education. The hairdresser, businesses started in 2009. we currently have, 35 people working at Ena and six full-time educators working for Allilon.

[00:03:02] **Antony W.:** Okay, fantastic. Alright. I didn't realize it was 2009. That's gone quick, isn't it?

[00:03:07] **Pedro I.:** Yeah, 13 years.

[00:03:09] I still think of you as a young business owner. and so I wanted to ask ,

[00:03:12] **Pedro I.:** So do I

[00:03:15] **Antony W.:** Well, I wanted to ask you a question about that. in the context of being a young business owner. If you can look back over the years and ask you what, do you wish you'd knowing before you'd opened a business? ,

[00:03:29] **Pedro I.:** Great question. I also, I often posed this question to a lot of people that I come contact with for like pieces of, like gifts that they can give you, like, and things that they could, go back and whisper in your ear and give you some advice. What would I whisper to myself? I would probably say be patient. like, no, it's a long road and there's gonna be things that you're gonna get wrong and you're just gonna learn from them and adapt from them. And overall you're probably, have a lot more confidence in your decision-making. cause I always think of it like, when you start hair, you're in your apprenticeship and when you start your first business, again, you're just starting from zero. You are in your apprenticeship again. So just be patient and client to yourself, I'd probably say would be the best thing.

[00:04:22] **Antony W.:** Yeah, good advice. what, from a business point of view, we're gonna talk a lot, during this podcast about the sort of culture, of your salon. But before we get into that, if you had to sort of sum up, in a sentence or so, what your sort of overarching philosophy of what a salon should be all about, what, how would you answer that? Like when you and Johnny decided to open

Ena, what was it that you wanted to be different about it? Because it is different. you have got something quite unique and special way.

[00:04:54] **Pedro I.:** Yeah. I mean, I think at the beginning you're always looking for like, that, that you always. You're always thinking about, is it the aesthetics? Is it, the way that the clients feel when they come in? what is the vibe? but I think the more experience I have in it is just, it's just about people, we're all about, like investing in the team and make, ensuring that they've got all of the, opportunity to, to be the best version of themselves. And that's not just hair, that's all aspects of life. And I think, yeah, I think what clients feel when they come in is a team of people that generally feel loved and cared for. Yeah. And I think that's probably the thing that I'm most proud of.

[00:05:39] **Antony W.:** Yeah. it's sort of, I know your business, on the inside and see a lot of the stuff that you do. And I know what you've just said is the sort of thing that other people might say, but all I would say to them is that I think you've taken it to another level. and as we get into this podcast and talk more about the things that you have in place, I think that will become, apparent. let me ask you, here we are at the start of 2023. a lot of businesses have had a lot of challenges over the last, sort of two or three years. what changes have you made to how you do business? in 2023, based on what we've been through the last couple of years?

[00:06:14] **Pedro I.:** Great question. I mean, for our experiences, Anthony, there was always this thing, I dunno if you remember it, like obviously working for a big co big company, you, everyone was employed, but within our industry, there's a big, divide between employment and self-employment, renter chairs, booth rentals, all of this kind of different ideas of how the structures of a salon can work. what I felt coming out of, difficult times was I've always had, an employment structure that Ena, that everyone's employed. However, what the last few years have taught me is to, it's just a method of payment. it is just the structure that really. Is not really important. It's more about giving people freedom, whether they're employed or self-employed. And that sounds a bit crazy if they're employed, the rigid structure of society says, okay, you work five days a week and you, we set you your shifts and if we need you to work weekends, you work weekends. And I think the biggest shift for me was coming out of it is that generationally I think people need more to be more fluid in everything that they're doing. like the rigid structures of business have to change but people, again, they want the security of employment. they want their holidays paid, they want, the security if anything happens to them, illness, that

they're looked after. So I think the biggest shift in my mind was to actually create a system that actually does both. So, gives people security and gives people freedom. So one of the things that I did when I got back, from the, from lockdown was to just, I think I wrote five questions to, and I sent them in individually out to each team member and questions were like, do you wanna work weekends? like, what would you change if you could change something about your job? like, how do you feel about the hours that you work in the day? how many days a week would you like to work? And these are all questions going out to employed team members. So it was a real shift in my mind, and I think it was coming from me being sensitive what they needed from me as a leader.

[00:08:23] **Antony W.:** Yeah. And how did they respond to that? what changes did they want?

[00:08:27] **Pedro I.:** I mean, first of all, they were like, the reason why I do what I do is because I love feeling, the reward of people feeling grateful. , when you give and someone, you feel that gratitude back, it's amazing. And I think their first instinct was like, wow, you're telling me that I can do a free day week, and I've always done a five day week? And I'm like, yeah. And they're like, what's the catch ? Like, there's no catch. just talk to me. Tell me what you want. and I'm fortunate it may not be possible for all businesses to do this, because obviously the size of the business enables me to almost like, look at it like a puzzle. So if you're working with a small team, there's huge implications to the business for business owners that do that. But when you've got 35 people that you can almost put like a jigsaw puzzle in place. Like, Evie doesn't wanna work weekends anymore. but Jake really likes working weekends. . Evie doesn't wanna do early shifts anymore, but Jake really likes doing early shifts, and you can look at it all together and get all of the information. It's like you, you're put, you're asking him for the data. , give me the data and then let me create a system which can, give everyone. And I said to them, I said, I'm not gonna guarantee everyone's gonna get what they want, but I'm gonna do my best to get achieve it. And if I can't do it now, I'm gonna ensure that it's in my mind for the future. and it just worked. some people have gone from five days to two days. Some people have stayed with five days. Some people don't work weekends anymore because they never liked it, so it's about,for me it was an,what it, what was born out of that rigid structure prior to covid. , Like, or what Covid created for us was an opportunity to be more loose and more free with the way that I think about business.

[00:10:16] **Antony W.:** Yeah, that's interesting. So talk about the trade off between shorter hours and therefore earning less money. Yeah. was that cool? were people just prepared to, look, I only wanna work a two day week and I accept the fact that therefore I'll earn less money. Or were they sort of thinking, I only wanna work a two or three day week, but I still expect to earn the same amount of money. Because that's often the, where the sticking point isn't it?

[00:10:37] **Pedro I.:** I think what it is that a lot of them aren't doing nothing in their, idle the time that they've allocated for themselves. they're looking at it as an opportunity. So I've got a guy called Sam who's, always had a passion for photography.

[00:10:50] **Antony W.:** Yeah.

[00:10:51] **Pedro I.:** Now he's producing, like, this is one of his pieces in the background. You know not everyone can see that one day it may get viewed live. But basically Sam is a photographer and he goes around taking photos of hair dryers, in toilets, in random places all over the world, in restaurants. And he's given the he the hand dryer, and identity, and that was in his creative book from it. And now he goes, he goes around to exhibitions and he, like he, sells his work, his prints, and yeah, it out for him. he's doing maybe three days a week now in the salon, but he's giving his love to his time, to the love of these other passions. And I think a lot of people have done that. like coming out of that moment. I think a lot of people have questioned whether they're in the right space, they're in the right industry, they're in the right career. and I think. if you are just too rigid with them, like, Nope, you have to be here for this many days. You know the business can't change for you. Yeah. What happens? You end up losing amazing people because of your rigidness. yes, the earning potential is decreased, but they have earning potential elsewhere. If I'm confident as a business owner that I can feel, if someone's working three days a week, I can find someone else to come in and cover them two days elsewhere. it might not happen overnight, but I'm confident enough to say that the business will be better for it by having happier people that, that work with inside the organization that are doing other loves. I've got team members that are doing nutrition. I've got team members that are doing life coaching. I've got team members that are going off and exploring different industries, you know, but at the same time staying with Ena, Which I'm really proud of because it's that's fantastic.

[00:12:39] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, because I think that's, the challenge a lot of salon owners have is seeing how they can make it work and you have to make it work. I mean, yes, it might create a little bit more of a challenge in terms of putting, staff, rosters together. but you've gotta find a way. Because at the same time, you'll have salon owners saying to me, how do I attract staff? Or how do I, keep staff? And the answer is, you need to approach your business in a different way. You need to offer more flexibility so that, in terms of recruitment, people go, wow, do you mean I can get to choose the days and the hours? Yeah, you can, or in terms of retention, that they had the opportunity to go off and do other stuff and work part-time in the salon so they can still earn an income. So it's a win-win for everybody, I suppose, is what I'm saying there.

[00:13:24] **Antony W.:** Okay. your business, before we got on the phone, on this call, on Zoom, sorry. I was saying that I really wanted to talk a lot about your team, and your team culture because. You have this great culture in there and I always make some notes before I, I get on the call just to sort of center myself and, I wrote down about team culture, and for the listeners, I've been into, your salon multiple times and, know some of your team. and I just wrote down that it's cool and it's laid back and it's professional and there's a strong element of team there and there's a strong element of the client experience. So if I'm sort of summing up what your business signifies to me they were the sort of first five or six words that come to mind. So talk to me about how do you create. That sort of culture because it, when I go into your salon and I haven't been in for a little while, it just feels good. It feels comfortable, it feels like home. It feels professional, but it also feels like you're in an environment where the people that work there are really passionate and really caring about what they do. So talk to us about how you create that sort of culture.

[00:14:36] **Pedro I.:** Yeah. I mean, I've had, I've read a lot of books. I've been to a lot of seminars, and I've taken little gems from everywhere that I've been and everything I've read. but a lot of it is, it's just creating happy people, And to do that, it takes a lot of investment and a lot of energy, like salon owners out there will know, it is, it takes big shoulders. to run a business, it's not an easy process for, I have two young children, and I don't mean to be patronizing, but I'm also in a way of father to 35, the way that I'm looking at them and thinking about what they need and what development and what guidance that they need. And so, I do think that, a lot of it is, I keep going back to that. I always say, and it sounds really crazy when I say it, but our product isn't hair our product is people, And the sooner that sooner, as that switched in my head, I knew that what needed to happen, and Ena is an amazing place for clients to come because Ena

is an amazing place for people to work. and they get support, and I knew very early on that I was take, at the beginning of the business, I was trying to be all of the things to them, but as a business owner, it's very, exhausting to be all of them things, to many people. So there was a tipping point where I knew that I needed to source people that could help, so we do a lot of outsourcing for our support to our team. It's not just Pedro, the support to 35, it's Pedro who is, finding all of these amazing people that can help support the team. So I can't get into more detail about.

[00:16:26] **Antony W.:** Gimme some examples of what sort of people you've brought in?

[00:16:28] **Pedro I.:** I mean, we have, physiotherapists, we have osteopaths, we have nutritionists, a few nutritionists. we have a variety of life coaches. And when I say life coach, a variety. I mean, there's life coaches. Those of you who have experienced life coaches. There is, I do think there's genres of life coaches, Some are more in tune with, wellbeing. Some are more in tune with business, and there's a spectrum, and there's many of them. And we've had many of them Yeah. in our time. and then, business coaches such as yourself, like we bring in and we outsource. and then we have personal trainers. And probably the most recent one, the one that came after, the end of, the pandemic was, a psychotherapist. and I knew. the skills that I have, I'm very sensitive. like I think we all become therapists as hairdressers over a certain period of time. but to have them skills that, are needed, with everything that's been happening in the world, I had to put my hands up and say, I need someone who's can come in. And when I know that someone's struggling, with depression, with anxiety, with, dark faults, it's too, it, I'm not equipped to cope with that. So I found someone who has been working with us for the last two years. And what I do with my leadership team is that they have all of these tools available to them. So when Evie's got five people that she's mentoring. She knows that if she's chatting to a certain individual that she's mentoring, that she's got this ability to say, oh, you need to see an osteopath. Your back's not right, or someone's struggling with their sleep. Maybe it's their diet that needs to be looked at.

[00:18:06] **Pedro I.:** Someone's having, had a really bad traumatic experience. Okay, let's go and see the therap, the psychotherapist, like, so it's all that Evie has this, she's not just, now she's a, she's in a leadership role, but now she has the ability to have all of these tools to be able to facilitate the needs of our people. And I think that's, probably the thing that, one of the things that Ena does behind the scenes that no one really sees Which creates that, feeling that

you are feeling when you come in family togetherness, you know the energy that's in there, but everyone's being professional at the same cause they're cared for, they're loved,

[00:18:41] **Antony W.:** And what so the company pay for that?

[00:18:45] **Pedro I.:** Yep.

[00:18:45] **Antony W.:** Okay. So company's not so much that you bring in, I know it's probably a bit of both here. It's not so much that you bring in people to do a talk. It's, it's that and that you'll do one-on-one things where you'll send people to a specialist, whether it's a physiotherapist or a chiropractor or whatever it is, dietician, et cetera.

[00:19:05] **Pedro I.:** Yeah. A hundred percent. we've, we allocate a budget for that and we finance it, and in a way, like people need to be doing this for themselves. However, we all know that's not the case. like we all know that, oh, okay, I know I need to see this person and there'll be an excuse for it. there'll be, oh, I can't afford it. Or I dunno, the right person, or whatever that excuse may be. There are people who are active and will look to kind of support themselves, which is amazing. However, I think the majority of us struggle with that. And we don't ram it down their throats, like, it's very much very soft, like, this is available to you when you're ready. If you want me to reach out, I can make this happen for you. And sometimes I have, I've had team members that have said, no, I'm good. No, I'm good. No, I'm good. No, I'm good. And then they get to a point where say, yeah, I'm ready for that now. I need to see someone about this or that, or whatever it may be.

[00:20:01] **Antony W.:** Yeah.

[00:20:01] so, It's, it's, I just think it's an amazing tool and if you can budget for it, instead of budgeting for your, advertisements for new employees, , Use that money, to maintain the ones that you have. so that whole thing about clients, isn't it? It's like we, it's all about the retention. the retention. Why is that not the same for our team? in 13 years I've never had a team member leave to work in a local business.

[00:20:29] **Antony W.:** Wow.

[00:20:30] **Pedro I.:** They've, the only time they've ever left would be a change of career or a change of location as in internationally wanting to live somewhere else and I can't fix that.

[00:20:39] **Antony W.:** Yeah of course you can't.

[00:20:40] **Pedro I.:** I can't fix that desire.

[00:20:42] **Antony W.:** Yeah. That's a great.

[00:20:43] but no one's never gone down the road or a mile away and taken their clean tail because they're looked after.

[00:20:49] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah. So it's a very human face of your business as opposed to, because I didn't realize you were gonna, that you'd done all those things, but I am aware of the next part of culture that I was gonna talk about with you. And as you are talking, I'm thinking the bit that I am sort of big on is this bit here, which is the documenting and the defining and the designing of your culture. So, and when people say, what, how do you mean by that? It's things like mission statements and a vision and all that sort of stuff. And I know that you've also done an incredible job of doing all that. the sort of, the written element, designing this is what our culture's going to be. But what you've just talked about with having these other resources that you can send people to is very much the sort of, the human element of what being a business is all about today. And with those sort of, Staff retention, numbers that you've just given us. I mean, that sort of speaks for itself. So talk to us a little bit about the things that I just touched on. So, the vision statement, the mission statement, designing your culture. What you've done and why that's important to you and, and what that looks like. Because again, when I say what it looks like, I, I know your brother's an artist and he's helped, put some of that together. But it's this holistic approach to what you do. That's what I'm trying to say. It's this holistic approach, which is really something special. And it's all part of your brand ethos, isn't it? So, over to you.

[00:22:22] **Pedro I.:** Thank you, Antony. I just, I think it must have been about eight, nine years ago, I entered one of your classes and. we went through, one of your, I think it was a management class, and it was all about, mission statement, vision statement, and all of these kind of things. And I really went away from it and I was like, I don't have that, or what we do have, does it really represent the brand and the company. And what I've learned over 13 years is

that changes. like your, my, this mission statement that we have now was probably the fourth generation of mission statements.

[00:22:58] **Antony W.:** Yeah.

[00:22:58] **Pedro I.:** Cause we're changing, we're constantly evolving. So those of you who haven't written it recently, I would just encourage you to revisit here. So this is, I mean, Ena's mission statement at the moment. So this is the mission statement to the clients, is to make you happy in our home. A passionate team of like-minded people providing a welcoming experience to an uncompromising standard. and then we have a, an employer's promise. on the back of that, I think this is something that when I went away from your class, Antony, I started looking into all big corporations, like what they have, what they don't have, how they structure it. And I think a lot of it was in the hospitality industry, which I thought they had an amazing, way of delivering. And I think a lot of, hotels in New York, came up, like, like in the Google search. Yeah, all of this kind of stuff. the Waldorf of Astoria, all of this kind of like, this idea of like service and delivery and team. And I've done a lot of, research in it and I mean the employees promise. I mean, based upon the things that we just spoke about, I hope I'm fulfilling my employees promise at Ena Salon, our staff is the most important resource in our service. Commitment to our clients by applying our values of teamwork, professionalism, family, passion, integrity, generosity, and humility. We nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company. Ena salon fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and Ena Salon's family is strengthened.

[00:24:36] **Antony W.:** Yeah, I love that. See, I think that is fantastic and a lot of people. They will listen to this and not think, yeah, I'm only a small salon. I don't need all that. . Yeah. But as I always say to them, that's how you become a big salon. If you want to be a big salon, you have to lay this framework of defining who you are and what you are all about, because that's what attracts and keeps people, But I'll get people that saying to me, they'll call me up, help, can't attract staff, or I can't keep staff. And it's sort of like sometimes that they want a magic wand and there is no magic wand. It's like, let's go right back to the beginning and look at your business and look at who you are and what you are aiming to achieve. And, sometimes hairdressers go, mission statement, vision statement, I don't need all that. I'm a hairdresser. But all it is a vision, is, what do you want to do? That's all it is. what do you wanna do? What do you want to achieve? What do you wanna create? Where do you wanna be in five years time? That's

what a vision statement is. And the mission statement is, and how are you gonna do it? and that encapsulates your values. And as I always say to people, it's one of those things that you're better to have it than not have it. And because the more you put these pieces in place, the more it defines who you are and what your culture is so.

[00:25:47] **Pedro I.:** And just by having it Antony, it doesn't mean that you don't have this, don't have the same struggles that everyone else does. Yeah. I still have struggles finding the right people. Yeah. I still have struggles, bringing in enough clients for everyone, being able to eat around the table. they're not, they'll. . It's like I can sit here and say, oh, look at what I've done. But trust me, just by doing it doesn't suddenly, lose the struggles that every salon owner has, on a daily basis. and the pressures that they, we have. However, what this does, it just brings clarity to me on a daily basis, a reminder of why we're here, what I'm doing. And the team, it gives them clarity of being a part of something. cause some, a book that I was reading recently, called Sapiens, it was really interesting. And what I got from it is a really hard read. I mean, my wife was watching me read it when I was on holiday and she was like, and I was reading stuff to her and what I was learning and she was like, Nope, I don't wanna know. it's too heavy. And I was like, but what it told me was the difference between us and any other animal on the planet is that we have the ability to tell stories. so by having the ability to tell stories, we can move people, move, lots of people in a direction or a belief, and that same thing's been happening since probably, I think it started around 200,000 years ago when, homo sapiens had the ability to just start using their imagination and tell stories prior to that, we were just foraging.

[00:27:18] **Pedro I.:** And when it got to that point, I always liked using the analogy where if you had like, 50 chimpanzees, they would be able to say to each other, there's a lion on the ground, everyone run up in the trees, there's danger, and then there'll be an eagle in the sky and they'll be like, everyone, get down. There's an eagle in the sky. There's danger. So they'll be able to do that. But the difference between them and us is that we could say, oh, you see that lion? If we offer it a sacrifice, our harvest next year will be prosperous. It's just a story. Yeah. If you get enough people believing in that story and it can actually create a movement, and Ena is a story.

[00:28:00] **Antony W.:** Ah, yeah. I get it. Okay. That's great. I love that. I love that. I wonder down with that. That's fantastic.

[00:28:05] **Pedro I.:** And we have an obligation as leaders to tell stories, that inspire people to move and to do things and be a part of something. So defining all those things, writing those things down in terms of your culture, your employee promise, your mission statement to clients, et cetera. That is all part of the story. It's defining the culture of your brand. People wanna be, feel like they belong to something.

[00:28:28] **Antony W.:** Yeah.

[00:28:29] **Pedro I.:** Like if they don't feel like they belong to something, they don't have purpose. Yeah. And that's when depression, anxiety, all of these things kick in. . But fundamentally we've evolved. Too quickly for our own good. We've gone from the middle of the food chain 200,000 years ago. to the top of the food chain, and we still haven't, our minds hasn't had the ability to adapt to that. Hence, we're living in these huge mega cities and global structures that our minds just aren't developed. Evolved enough for, and we're all looking to be foragers still. That's why when we retire, we end up in the country . We're going back to what feels like riot, Okay. So, sorry, I'm going off track.

[00:29:09] **Antony W.:** Yeah, no, that's okay. So what else do you have in place there? I mean, I've pulled out mission statement and vision statement and employee promise. Anything else that you've got there that you've sort of documented it? Because I mean, I've seen it, not just talked about it and it looks beautiful and it encapsulates again, your Yeah. Your whole brand. and that's, I think also what makes it come to life. It's not just words. It's, yeah, it's a feeling. It's a way of being.

[00:29:34] **Pedro I.:** I mean, the vision, we broke it into, five sections. it was to become, to have, to do, to give, and to share. I mean, it's, I'm not. Look, when this is, when I read this, it's more about, like what my to become is different to your, to become what my to have is different to your to have. So for Ena is to become recognized as a company of forward thinkers. Who are inspiring innovators and environmentally aware. To have uncompromising standards within the company . To help create a secure and sustainable business. To do our best as a company. To serve our team and help create a sustainable and secure business of like-minded professionals. To give opportunity and education while nurturing our team to share our knowledge and experience with clients and colleagues to help achieve growth within our business.

[00:30:29] **Antony W.:** Fantastic, really good. what do you, there's a lot of talk these days. I often talk about them. Gen Z, I know you've got kids that are Gen Z. I've got Gen Z, children as well. and a lot of people have Gen Z staff members. so what I wanted to ask you about is you've been in business since 2009 And it's been a fairly tumultuous time, especially the last three or four years. but what are the changes that you see in Gen Z compared to previous generations in the workforce?

[00:30:57] **Pedro I.:** Great question. I am, just remember when I was just started a bit as a soon, I was 17 years old. I was a teacher by the time. I was 18, 19, and my manager at the time was a gentleman called Steven McKenna. He was in his forties at the time. and I just looked at him and I was just like, wow. like he's the same age as my dad. But he's just so much younger than my dad. like he, the way the industry, what it does, you know what I recognize at that point, it keeps you so, engaged with youth. Yeah. and I'm forever grateful for that feeling of, feeling like I'm staying connected. But recently I'm struggling with it, if I'm honest. I'm on the other side. I'm on, I'm 43 years old and I'm starting to feel like I'm on the edge of feeling a little bit uncomfortable. And what I've come to realize is that, is because I'm moving away in generations. And as much as the industry keeps us connected to youth, you by never living in their time, you really never really truly understand how they think and how they operate. So I'm feeling very uncomfortable. And some of your viewers may be thinking, oh, 43, that's not old, I'm X, but I'm just saying, this is how I'm feeling. I'm feeling like I'm on the edge of something and I have to keep reminding myself of, like my value is experience and hopefully a little bit of wisdom and, like all of these things that you are bringing to the table. However, I don't like the way I sound sometimes. I dunno if you feel that, Antony, like, I feel like I'm, when I speak out loud to my team, I'm like, did I say something wrong? was I PC in what I said? Was it, and sometimes I refer back to some of my younger team and I say to him, did I, how was that? Was that all right? ? I need the reassurance.

[00:32:54] **Antony W.:** Yeah. I'm with you on that. I get that.

[00:32:56] **Pedro I.:** I'm not sounding

[00:32:57] **Antony W.:** That awareness in itself. and acceptance that things are changing and, what's the word? and being prepared to, evolve and being prepared to change. And I know when we were talking about this recently, not on today's call, but a couple of weeks ago we were having a chat about this and you gave me a really tangible example about that. I dunno if you can remember

it, but you were talking about. Verbiage, you were talking about certain words that you use, that you just use habitually when you talk to team members and that either someone pointed out to you or you had a recognition yourself that actually, that's maybe not cool to talk like that anymore. Do can. Can you remember where we were with that?

[00:33:37] **Pedro I.:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, just to be clear on the way that my brain works. Yeah. I always want to be the better version of myself than I was in previous years. I'm always looking at like development. Yeah. Yeah. Like modernizing the way of my leadership parenting, book I'm reading at the moment is the book you wished your parents had read.

[00:33:56] **Antony W.:** Yeah.

[00:33:56] **Pedro I.:** It's like , I'm always trying to be a better version of myself. yeah. And recently this has kind of led me into re the realization is that, cause I'm maybe not, my verbiage isn't quite on point. maybe I'm feeling a little bit, on the edge of, my communications not being current. I do, I've looked into, race, I've recently read a book called Me and White Supremacy, by Layla's Sad. And also on the other side of things, more like, the feminism, so I've recently read a book about Women Don't Owe You Pretty, by Florence Given and having a 13 year old daughter, just feel like it's relevant. I need to understand what is going on in the generation and not just in. age, but also in with race, with gender, all of these things. So a lot of my readings and listenings recently have been more associated with that. like, I really wanna understand, I want to get my verbiage right.

[00:35:00] **Pedro I.:** I'm making an, I wanna make an effort to understand the struggles of black people and, it's called bi bipoc. So black people, indigenous people, and people of color. I wanna understand all of these things more. yeah. So that's just, I think it's just born out of my curiosity. I've always been curious as I was that child that, my mom and dad always tell me is like, why is that like that? Why is that like that? And that's just, it's just continued.

[00:35:26] **Antony W.:** Yeah. So, so what's a change you've made? What's an example?

[00:35:29] **Pedro I.:** Where I would maybe. I used to, I, I have this thing cause I come from like the Bob Marley. I li I just listen to Bob Marley all the time when

I was a kid. So I dunno if you've noticed in my emails and sometimes I say one love at the end of things.

[00:35:42] Yeah. I do. Yeah.

[00:35:43] **Pedro I.:** I dunno that's staying, I haven't really worked that one out, but some, sometimes I say, love you or, thanks. Beautiful. Or, I'll use the word beautiful a lot and for me, I'm thinking like I'm lifting someone's confidence up. yeah. However, generationally it may be received like that, but it may not be. Yeah. So I'm being more conscious about the way that I communicate. sorry, an Antony, the way I communicate with especially, I would say, younger girls. I recently had four 19-year-old girls start as apprenticeship in their apprenticeship. And one thing I've done, which, which I wanted to stay connected with is I'd be like, what are you listening to? Like, what artists are you listening to right now? and this is me, obviously, again, worried about the generational, like gap growing, but I'm genuinely curious. I wanna know what that generation, musically is into, and I love stuff like that, like, I love being curious about what other people, how other people were thinking. One of my favorite sayings is replace judgment with curiosity. and I've tried to, I try to live by that all the time, like judgment doesn't, help and benefit anyone. The person being judged doesn't benefit. The person judging doesn't benefit. So no one wins. So all we really should be doing is being curious about how that person thinks and feels and wants to identify. As, it's like, oh, it's the curiosity of it. like how, what has it been like, to be in that person's skin, throughout their life. And I think curiosity is for me, is something that I try to always focus on.

[00:37:29] **Antony W.:** Okay. that's really interesting. And I'm, as you're talking, I'm thinking about how different cultures use different terminology. And in the UK for example, especially in the north of England, a lot of people will call people love. Yeah. and it's sort of . Yeah. They'll call them all sorts of things, sweetheart, darling, whatever. and what might have been appropriate for one generation is not necessarily appropriate for another. And so there, there has to be a degree of constantly, being curious as you've just said, and analyzing and thinking about, am I sounding old? Am I sounding outta touch? Does this sound condescending now? Do you know what I mean? and in many cases it does. okay, so look, I'm fascinated with all that, but I know that other people will be interested in the business side of your business as well. So I wanna, diversify into that a little bit. from a, from someone who's been in business since 2009, and, the salon industry all over the world is essentially a small business industry. You have a, what is considered a large salon with, I know you used to have pre covid

up to 50 staff, and now you are down to, I think you said 35, but that's still considered a big business. But I wanna ask you this question here about profit margins. What profit margin do you think a salon in your experience should realistically achieve? Because I know you don't necessarily teach business, but a, you are a business owner, and b I know you travel a lot for, education so know you have quite a, wide range of salon owners that you come into contact with, so, so can you put some numbers around that from your experience?

[00:39:02] **Pedro I.:** Yeah, of course. just to be clear, over the last, since 2009, I've never been over 10% profit.

[00:39:11] **Antony W.:** Never been over. Okay.

[00:39:13] **Pedro I.:** Yeah.it's been 9% for quite a few years. Yeah. but fluctuating between four and nine, I would say for a lot of that time. Where the difference is, how can I say? Because we're so invest invested in people a lot of the time I'm developing generations, so to have these 35 that we have now, there's probably like five or six generations within them. As in four or five guys, being apprentices at the same time coming through together. Then the next four or five, then the next four or five, and the next four or five. So yeah, you've got a generational, team. And because of that takes a huge investment, to develop people from within. so a lot of our profit margin has been affected by that. And then, by having people taking them on straight away, maybe not having enough clients to kind of feed them straight away has a detrimental effect on it all. I wouldn't change any of that, because my philosophy is if everyone's getting, if everyone's feeding their families and there's still enough for us to grow and develop as a business, then I'm happy. Yeah. I'm not looking for 15, 20% profit margins if it compromises the values and the mission and, promise. Yeah.

[00:40:33] **Antony W.:**no, on those sorts of figures, you are sort of above what the average salon is making. Whether you're talking in the US, UK, Australia, wherever our listeners are, you'll pretty consistently here. You know, numbers about in the middle of what you said, about 5%, , but a lot of salons make no profit at all. A lot of salons are, what is termed a lifestyle business, meaning that, the owner drives a nice car, gets some paid holiday, and pays himself a decent income. But in terms of there being something left after that, a lot of salons are just breakeven. So, they're a lifestyle business. So,

[00:41:03] **Pedro I.:** I mean, at the moment I'm forecasting for the next few years to be breakeven because of all the loans that had to be taken out to survive

Covid covid. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. So a lot of, there's gonna be a lot five years of repayments of quite large loans just to kind of stay in the game. Yeah. so I would've expected them type of loans to open a second salon. Yeah. Not to just survive the first one, but Sure. That's the cards that we've been dealt we're being positive and, like I said, everyone's feeding their families, so we're good. We're good to go, and I've just signed another lease extension for 15 years.

[00:41:40] **Antony W.:** Oh, okay. Good.

[00:41:42] **Pedro I.:** I'm in the building for another 15 years, so I've got no choice.

[00:41:45] **Antony W.:** Okay. What, I know retail is a big part of your business and you do retail really well. what percentage of your total sales, are coming from retail, and is that changing, post Covid v and more online shopping, et cetera? Are you seeing any, change in your retail business?

[00:42:01] yeah. I mean, I wouldn't say. that Ena is very retail focused. I know I've travelled the world talk hairdressers. Some of their percentage of products to service sales is just like, oh wow. up in the fifties I've been like, half of their business is retail. that's not Ena. Ena is always operating between 10 and 15%. we don't really like, have this culture of targets in our business, if I'm honest. we have a very. self-motivating structure, and we understand that everyone is individual. Some of the guys, they, they do a large percentage of the retail on their own because they love it, and there's the others. We all know them , we've all got them in our salon salons that you can teach them, you can motivate them, you can inspire them, you can try so many different things, and they're just never gonna be that person. And something that I've learned in football coaching for youth, my, my son's in the football team is just to focus on what they're good at praise, for their efforts, and that same, it can be applied in adult psychology as well, like that's not just focus on what they're not doing. That's why they here. Let's focus on all the other amazing things that they do, and celebrate that. And then accept the fact that it is where it is. But I dunno what the industry standard is, but it's around 12% are retail sales at the moment.

[00:43:22] **Antony W.:** But, that, that would be, true from my industry awareness, globally you would be about where they are on average in the Australian market, above where they are in the UK, above where they are in the US depending on who you talk to. Okay. Obviously, you get salons that as you alluded to, some of them are unicorns, literally that will do 50% of their revenue and retail sales. But, traditionally what you hear in the UK is something like six

to 8% of total revenue and salons is coming from retail. And in the US it's a similar figure. whereas for whatever reason in the Australian market, the salon average, retail as a percentage of turnover tends to be higher. more about where you are. How important is the retail line you've got, is Davines., isn't it? Davines.

[00:44:08] **Pedro I.:** Davines, yeah.

[00:44:09] **Antony W.:** I know you have a strong relationship with them. and the branding of Davines and the branding of your whole salon in terms of what it looks and feels like, all feels very cohesive. there's a real fit there where it's who you are as a brand. They seem to, represent the same values. h how important is that to, the business?

[00:44:31] **Pedro I.:** Yeah, I mean, what we find is that when Allilon, the education company, our education company travels for Davines as and teaches and, we just get sent to like-minded people. like your, you are all part of a tribe, and like-minded people end up gravitating towards each other, so Ena, is the flagship for Davines UK it is the identity, the two brand identities are completely, in sync. we, I think the best way of describing it is like, you need to feel proud of the association. Like, it's like you're standing next to your mate and it's like, yeah, this is my mate . And you feel proud to be able to say that's your best mate. and I think that should be the thing that you feel when you're choosing someone. And not everyone's best mate will be Davines it's about understanding who your, what your best mate looks like and what values they have and what they represent. that's important. So we met Davines about 15 years ago. And then the UK, they weren't on the radar at all. London is probably one of the hardest markets to break into. They're in probably about 60, 70 countries at the time. But they didn't really have a footprint here at all. but we just loved what they stood for, what they represented, and we've just been with them ever since. And they've grown into a very well respected, company that we've always seen it, but now other people are fortunate enough to see it more as well. So yesterday I was at their launch of their new academy and head office in Kings Cross in Central London. and it's just, they used to work out an office in our salon on in the top floor, which was, five meters by five meters. and now they've walked into a building and it's just so impressive. it's just, it represents, the company and, it's what they deserve. And now they're, there was free people 13 years ago that worked in that office. Now they're up to about 50 people in London. This is just London, the subsidiary of the UK. Yeah. So they we're really

proud of their growth. They've helped us grow to where we've got and we've hopefully been a part of helping them grow to, with where they've got as well.

[00:46:47] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Okay. before we start to wrap up, a couple of things I wanna ask you about. what, first one is leadership. what's the most important thing that you've learned? over the last, since 2009, when you opened, as a manager, as a leader, if there was one, I know we opened with something sort of similar to this, but I really wanna focus on the leadership side of it. What's the most important thing you've learned as a salon manager or as an owner?

[00:47:10] **Pedro I.:** For me it's to be present, to be there. like actually creating time to interact with your people, like it's, I actually get a little bit depressed when I don't. It's really hard one, it's like the f the more and more, the less contact I have with my people, the more I go into a hole. And it's even harder to get out of that hole because you've just like, like you're self-loving a little bit. Like, I haven't contributed, I haven't helped her. Yeah. But as soon as you jump out of that hole, when you start helping people, for me, that's the key. It's like just to be present, to listen, to understand, to be curious, to be sensitive, to the team's needs. Not just work, but all aspects. But there's a line I've also learned, there's a line. You have to be careful how involved that you get. Hence the creation. I think that's probably what helps me move into creating a c a team of people to support, their needs when they need it. Cause it, it's too much to take on for one person to take on that many, souls. To help them in their journeys.

[00:48:18] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Okay. And, also from a advising other people. So a young person listening to this, who's thinking of opening their own salon , what kind of advice would you give them? There was just one thing that you wanted them to take away.

[00:48:32] **Pedro I.:** You're never gonna be ready. So just do it .

[00:48:35] **Antony W.:** There's a point where you just jump, isn't there?

[00:48:36] **Pedro I.:** Yeah. I mean, it's just, when I look back in 13 years into what I know now, like, but it's also, do it for the right reasons. like people feel like that. If that's the natural stepping stone, like, okay, I've done that. I've achieved success in my, now the next step is to be a salon owner. Yeah. It's not for everyone. Yeah. and you'll soon find that out, like if it's not for you. because it's a real shock to the system and I've known some amazing headdresses in my life that have jumped to do it and then literally jumped straight back in. It's like,

nope. Ooh, don't I look at that? that's too much. so yeah, just make sure it's what you want and you're not just doing it for the sake of doing it. Like it's, you feel like it's the next thing to do. some people will have that awareness to be able to make that choice. Others will struggle with knowing that the only way they're gonna find out is if they do it, so just do it. maybe you weren't ready for it. If it didn't work out. Maybe you jumped too soon. some could be something you could revisit in the future. but yeah, just make sure it's what you want, really what you want.

[00:49:36] **Antony W.:** And what about someone at the other end? So, a 50 year old, 55 year old, whatever, listening to this, what advice would you give to an established salon owner to stay relevant?

[00:49:48] **Pedro I.:** Just make sure you, your, the stories that you are telling are inspiring.

[00:49:52] **Antony W.:** So back to the whole thing about curiosity.

[00:49:54] **Pedro I.:** Yeah. And if you don't, if you don't tell stories that people wanna be a part of. Yeah. it can sound like st saying it is a story can be quite in a way you're like, you are cheating people. I dunno if like you are, like you are misleading people, but don't see it like that. See it as in you to tell a story is to inspire. To inspire is to give people purpose. So never feel that you are giving, you are doing something wrong by inspiring the next generation to be motivated and be present in what they love doing. Yeah. And that's our job.

[00:50:29] **Antony W.:** Yeah, exactly. Okay. what do you wish you were better at?

[00:50:36] **Pedro I.:** Marketing.

[00:50:40] **Antony W.:** Okay. Sorry, I don't give, I don't give you any, any advanced audio on this. Just sort of

[00:50:46] **Pedro I.:** Me and my business partner, Johnny, we've always had, we've been fortunate to be born into a education background. But like education, some salons don't have that and they're great at the marketing side or the, developing people to be busy stylists side, like where education was always, given for us. So I wish I was better at the marketing side of the bigger business because I feel like even though I think I'm quite good at telling stories

to motivate my team , I'm not very good at telling stories to the world about what we're doing. Yeah. Yeah. and some people, incredible at telling. and marketing themselves, their business, their people, So we are, like we're Ena, Ena and Allilon are amazing. I just wish more people saw it. . And that comes down to potentially, us you know, for example, Allilon at the moment, through the, what happened with the pandemic.Allilon is diversified in that moment. and it's gone digital, so we have like a subscription business and a digital business. So our education was a hundred percent physical previously, And now it's kind of come into the digital world. And what we've produced, I think is incredible. However, when not enough people see it. Does that really matter how good it is? , like you want it to be seen by many. Sure. And experienced by, it's an amazing education tool that the industry we believe will benefit from. Yeah. But it's just so we're not very good at telling our stories to the outside world. So I wish I was better at that marketing ourselves.

[00:52:37] **Antony W.:** Okay. Okay. whereabouts can people connect with you on Instagram or other social media channels?

[00:52:42] **Pedro I.:**Yeah, so Allilon education is,

[00:52:46] you how do you spell that one? cause I know

[00:52:47] **Pedro I.:** Allilon, my dyslexic side as to kind of look at it. So it's A L L I L O N. So Allilon, so Allilon is ancient Greek for, the idea of sharing one to [00:53:00] another. And Ena is modern Greek for one, as in my Bob Marley statement

[00:53:06] **Antony W.:** Ena is e n a

[00:53:10] **Pedro I.:** E n a. And that's modern Greek for one. And that's again, it doesn't mean one, it means one love, one team, one dream.

[00:53:19] **Antony W.:** Okay, cool.

[00:53:19] when I speak, you speak. So they're both, even though they're two separate entities, the owners are the same. Myself and Johnny, my bus best friend and business partner, he's more, his attention is more in the education business. And I'm more salon focused, but we overlap, He's salon supporting the leadership team. I'm doing shows and seminars for Allilon, so we overlap, but our priorities are on the individual business.

[00:53:48] **Antony W:** Okay. look, I'll put those links, on our website, growmysalonbusiness.com and in the show notes for today's podcast. So if you listen to this podcast with Pedro and 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, Pedro, thank you so much for being on this week's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[00:54:15] **Pedro I.:** It's been amazing, an Antony, you are one of all them people that we talk about. You are one of them people that support me and the team in doing what everything we're doing. So forever grateful to you. Thank you.

[00:54:27] **Antony W:** Thanks mate. I really appreciate that. It's been good talking to you.

[00:54:33] **Antony W:** Thank you for listening to today's podcast. If you'd like to connect with us, you'll find us at growmysalonbusiness.com or on Facebook and Instagram at Grow My Salon Business. And if you enjoy 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.