

[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 join us here today. My guest on today's episode is Tom White from the Melbourne Salon by the name of Same, same, but Different. Now, these days we talk a lot about the changing culture in salons and the changing needs and expectations of today's workforce, and Tom is a salon owner who has an interesting take on what creating a modern salon culture is all about. So in today's podcast we talk about brand pillars. We talk about flexible working hours, motivation, profit margin, salon, retail, and lots more. So without further ado, welcome to the show, Tom.

[00:01:20] **Tom W.:** Thank you very much for having me, mate. Really appreciate it.

[00:01:24] **Antony W.:** Now I'm really looking forward to this conversation Tom, I think you, uh, you, you bring an interesting sort of energy to salon ownership. I know before we were, before I push a record button, you know, we were having this conversation about the new generation of salon owners, and it's an interesting time because, you know, I think Gen Z, you know, younger hairdressers now are demanding a different way of thinking, a different way of working, and, and that's great. I'm all for that. But the problem is, is that a lot of salon owners are from a different. I'm not going to say work ethic. They're from a different way of doing things. And so you have this sort of, uh, battle between the two of, of, uh, listen, I've still got to try and run a profitable, viable business here, and staff members saying, but I don't want to work Saturdays. I only want to work three days a week. You know, yada, yada yada. So, the, the sort of general theme of how we're going to talk, or, or the way I want to take this interview is talking about you because you are very much the new generation of salon owners. So you are not having to be convinced to do things differently. You think differently anyway, uh, which is great. But listen, I've already, you know, gone ahead of myself. Uh, let's, let's just go back a little bit. I want you to do what I, what I ask everyone to do, uh, pretty much everyone, and that is to introduce himself. So, uh, who is Tom White? So give us your two minute backstory and then we can get into things.

[00:02:51] **Tom W.:** Yeah, thanks mate. Um, yeah, so it's nice I'm still classed as that new age generation cause I'm 35 and some people think it's a bit over the hill sometimes. So I'm really glad that I'm still part of that new generation. Um, so as you said, talk Yeah, just right. I'll take it though. I will take it.

[00:03:07] **Antony W.:** an age, age is a mindset, and you have the mindset of the younger generation.

[00:03:12] **Tom W.:** That's why I'm saying immature of it uh, right. So I'm from England originally. Uh, I grew up in Wolverhampton or just outside Wolverhampton, which is in the

Midlands. I moved over to Australia in, uh, 2010, so I've been here 13 years in March. I lived in Sydney for a year. Wasn't really my jam, moved to Melbourne where I, I kind of found my corner, I suppose. Um, I didn't start hairdressing until I was 20 years old. I'd kind of bounced around a little bit. I suppose the same as any English young man. I wanted to be a footballer, didn't work out like most of us chose hairdressing. I really found a love, not necessarily for the art side of things, but for the technical side of things. I'm not an arty guy. I never have been. I can't draw, I can't paint. But I like building things. I like building structure.

[00:03:57] **Tom W.:** So, I kind of found my love, uh, hairdressing there, especially in haircut. Um, moved to Australia. Uh, I worked for a couple of different companies. No one big, really. I've never worked for anyone like, like a Trevor Sorbie in England or like, I've never done anything like that. I've always worked for local independents and just worked my ass off to try and be as good as I possibly can. So, one thing I've always had is a really good work ethic. Never been the most talented. I've just been, had a really good work ethic, so I'll outwork people. Um, and it's all kind of eventually come to this point where I own a salon. Uh, I travel internationally, educate, and I've won a few awards. I've meant to hairdresser of the year.

[00:04:31] **Tom W.:** And one few business awards finals from business awards. Uh, but I, I'd very much say I'm very much at the very, very beginning. Of what I plan to do in terms of, and I, I'm not afraid to say it. I want to build an empire. I want to change some things. I want to make sure my way isn't necessarily the accepted way, but it's a way that people can look to 'em and go, oh, I can pull a few points out of that and use it for this. So, this is why I'm so keen to come on here, if I'm honest.

[00:04:56] **Antony W.:** Okay, good. Alright, fantastic. Do you have any Italian blood on you?

[00:04:59] **Tom W.:** Me. No, I don't know, my wife is Italian background, so I reckon 10 years of this.

[00:05:04] **Antony W.:** I, that's exactly what I'm getting at. Uh, there's a bit of interference coming cause you're, because you're, you're waving your arms around, you're banging the, the microphone. So, uh, that I was, I was being, uh, a bit of a smarter asking you that. Um, okay, so let, let me just start with the fact that you now have your own, uh, salon. Uh, it has an interesting name and the name itself is, I think, sums up an awful lot about you and your whole philosophy. So, the name of the salon is called Same, same But Different, which is an unusual name for a salon. But tell us your, your thinking behind that because it's more than just a name.

[00:05:40] **Tom W.:** Yeah. It is more than just a name. So, when, so what I wanted to do was create a place and a working environment that I always wanted to be part of as an employee. Now, I know this sounds quite cliché, and that's really technically what you're supposed to be doing when you're building a business, but it's a lot harder and a lot harder to actually put in [00:06:00] place, um, than what it turns out to be, right? So when I was building it and when I was working the because I built the framework of the company first

and built the structure of the company first. And as I was doing it and talking about it and I was speaking to two mates who also hairdresser and we were at, um, our version of like Salon International in hair in uh, Australia. It was called Hair Expo at the time. And we sat around graving some food and we were talking about these ideas and my mate turned around and said, you know, it's like same, same but different, isn't it?

[00:06:31] **Tom W.:** And I was like, that's actually exactly what it is. It essentially, we are a salon. You can't, you can't look past that. We're a salon, we do hair, but the framework, the way we're doing it and what we're trying to achieve is different. I grew up in a time, and I think it was a very back end where salons were the cornerstone of the community. Everything that good that happened in that town ran through the salon where I did my apprenticeship. And I loved it because it was just, even though you weren't involved in a particular aspect of the town or the community, you still felt involved. because it was running through the salon one way or another, and I wanted that back.

[00:07:08] **Tom W.:** I want that feeling back where people come to the salon, not just have their hair done, but for a bigger, um, I suppose a bigger area of their life where they can connect with other business owners that come into that salon. So, you create a proper community within that salon, not just from hairdresser to client or guest, but from guest to guest to guest to guest to guest and build a proper community. So that was kind of the cornerstone of what I was trying to do. But then on the, the, I suppose the working aspect of it, um, for the employees. I, I, I admire Scandinavia for what they've done over the last 12, 15 years. Now, if anyone hasn't studied the model of what some Scandinavian countries do, their approach to work life balance is like no other in the world. It is beautiful, productive, profitable, and I believe the way it should be done.

[00:08:01] **Tom W.:** So, what they've done is they've, they've thrown away the 38-hour working week, they've converted to 31, and now they're doing 31 hours over four days, which is also on a 38 hour a week salary. So, they haven't dropped wages. What I've noticed is that productivity has gone from around about 67% in most full-time workers to beyond 80%, and that's in offices. That's, I don't know whether it was much in hairdressing. It wasn't really part of the data that was accrued. Put in offices, in engineering, in architecture, all these kinds of jobs that didn't just speak to the left-hand side of the brain or the right-hand side of the brain. There were mixes, it worked across the board. So, I was like, well, why can't we do that? Like what's so wide about that? So, I put it forward and said, this is what I want to do. I want to open four days, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, no weekends. I believe, listen, it will change eventually, but right now in Melbourne where I am, because of what happened with Covid and it did play a key factor with it's being locked down for so long and a lot of people working from home.

[00:09:10] **Tom W.:** It was the perfect opportunity to open four days and work Tuesday to Friday as a test, as a pilot. And it just worked really, really well. The staff are very productive with, instead of staff members having like 15-minute gaps here, an hour gap here, 45 minutes here, they're pretty much back to back all the time. Cause even though they've got the same amount of 38 hours to work in. Clients think that we are not open as much. So they're more on top of rebooking for the year, making sure they're recommending friends so they can get their bonuses and stuff like that. Um, so I really wanted to build something that was for not just the guest, but also for the hairdresser, where we are available for you whenever you want. That's how you make money. You

have to appease the masses in a way, but you also have to make sure that your staff, and number one really, really is number one, your staff have to be really happy. They're happy. They're productive. They're productive. They make money. They make money, you're happy. So that's kind of what I built it around.

[00:10:01] **Antony W.:** alright. That, that's, that's fascinating. Lots to dig in there. Uh, first thing I want to, to, to just clarify. So, you've said in Scandinavia that's what's happening. So where, where are we talking? Finland, Norway, Sweden.

[00:10:12] **Tom W.:** Norway and Sweden are the two main ones. Norway and Sweden, I'm pretty sure Denmark, and Finland have variations of it. But the main case studies I saw were coming out of Oslo. They were the main case studies.

[00:10:25] **Antony W.:** Yeah, yeah. That's interesting. And, and it's not, uh, any specific industry. You are, you are saying that this is a fairly accepted way of now working in, uh, those countries.

[00:10:36] **Tom W.:** and it, it has been for, like, it has been for, I reckon it's got to be close to a decade now where it's been a regular part of working culture.

[00:10:44] **Antony W.:** Right. Okay. Alright. Um, so me with my salon owner hat on, I'm going, okay, so Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, you're open, you're busy, you know, you're fully booked, you're making money. And as a salon owner, I'm then thinking to myself, well, why shouldn't we? Also then, I'm not saying that people should necessarily work more than four days a week, but I'm looking at it, I'm going, well, I'm still paying rent

[00:11:11] **Tom W.:** Mm-hmm.

[00:11:12] **Antony W.:** Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Maybe there's an opportunity here to have a different shift. With different people, you know, different team. Literally that works Saturday, Sunday, Monday, uh, to create that option for people because I know people that, um, I, I know someone who has gone back into the industry specifically because she can only work Saturday and Sunday because that's the day her husband's home to look after the kids. So, husband works in his job Monday to Friday, uh, to put a bit of extra money in the, you know, in the family, you know, budget. She loves working all day Saturday, all day Sunday, uh, in the salon without impacting on their family life cause husband's home looking after the kids. So, from, from, so there is definitely a market for people that is not a one-off situation who want to work Saturdays and Sundays. And from a salon owner's point of view, you are definitely still paying your landlord rent even though your salon is closed on a Saturday, Sunday, Monday. So, talk to me about the Tom White opinion on what I've just said as to why you wouldn't do that or shouldn't do that.

[00:12:16] **Tom W.:** I, I, I actually fully agree with you. I do. I think that the problem that I have at the minute is we've been open for nearly two years putting this new theory. It's not really a new theory. There's other people that do what I'm doing. Maybe not all of it put together, but there's people that open four days a week and Tuesday to Friday. But it's still

a very new concept. It still takes people a lot of time to get used to, and I really want to drive home the fact that it works. You can open four days a week and make more money than if you're open for six. Right? And the reason why I say that is cause I've proven that it can be done so we turn over more, the profit's higher, uh, everyone gets paid more.

00:12:59] **Tom W.:** It's, it's more all across the board. But what you are saying is completely right and that is where I'd like to take my business next is have a Saturday, Sunday, Monday team, which want to work Saturday, Sunday, Monday. See, I've got a crew that don't want to work Saturday, Sunday, Monday. They don't. They want to go out gigs on Friday night with their mates and they want to have a few drinks and not worry about coming to the salon nine o'clock to do Mrs Smith's colour They don't want to worry about it. So at the time it suited me, the crew, their direction that wanted to put the salon. It worked. It just married well together. But I'm totally with you. If I could get a team that want to work Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and I can get five or six of them, mate, the salon will be open tomorrow on Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Cause I'm not going to turn down extra cash. Cause you're right, I'm still paying rent for the seven days, what am might have for four. But right now until I systemise a salon where I can scale it at a proper level, cause that's what the idea is to open 2, 3, 4, maybe even five. Depends how dumb I get It depends how much I like torture. Well, depending on how many I open, um, until I get to that point where I feel that the systems are so well in place, they're so embedded into people's minds that I technically don't have to be there at all. That's where I want to get it to, even though I will be there, I want to get to a point where I don't have to be there at all. Hmm.

[00:14:19] **Tom W.:** Then I think then Saturday, Sunday, Mondays, I can start looking at that and playing around a bit more with it. Even get independent contractors in for Saturday, Sunday, Monday where they can rent a chair. There's lots of different things I'm playing around with at the minute, but they are, they're definitely a year or two off.

[00:14:33] **Antony W.:** Okay. Alright. Uh, so how many, how many chairs have you got in the salon?

[00:14:36] **Tom W.:** Uh, I've got 50, uh, on, on, uh, 15 chairs. Yeah.

[00:14:40] **Antony W.:** Right? How, how many staff have you got there?

[00:14:42] **Tom W.:** Uh, there 10 now.

[00:14:45] **Antony W.:** Right. Okay.

[00:14:46] **Tom W.:** Yeah. But that's a mix of support staff as well.

[00:14:48] **Antony W.:** yeah, so what, what was the point where you were working for someone else? and you thought it's time to go out there and do this on my own. What,

what was that though? What was the catalyst for that? What, you know, what, what was, uh, the point in your life where you woke up and thought, I've got to do this by myself now?

[00:15:06] **Tom W.:** You know what, seriously, the very first day I started my apprenticeship I was just like, sod this always, and it never was supposed to be, it was never like, I listened, I love your podcast. So I listened to it all the time and I listened to idols of mine that you have on your podcast, and it, it was, there was a certain point in time where someone went, right, this is where I need to do it, and this is what I want to do. I didn't have that mine was just as soon as I started in the industry, I. Whether it was an inflated ego, possibly I mean, I was 20 years old, English, bit of a geezer do you know what I mean? I had a big ego for a long time. So, um, I reckon it was inflated ego and I was just, I, I know I can do this different or better. I know I can, wherever I can do it now, whether it's 10 years down the track, I don't know. Um, see, it was always from the very beginning, I suppose when it really hit home. It was time when I was over here, and my permanent residency came through so I could actually stay here for good. Um, I'd settled down a little bit. I was probably 27 when I was like, all right, I need to give this a bloody red hot go. I'd been educating for companies for a while. Not much but doing a bit. And I was like, I like the education. I really do. But I always saw myself trying to put a, an imprint on the industry one way or another.

[00:16:27] **Antony W.:** Hmm. What? What? What do you wish you'd known before you opened up?

[00:16:33] **Tom W.:** Do you know what? Genuinely nothing. Absolutely nothing because I, I found, I suppose I used to be part of a, group where there used to be three salon owners, three salons. Um, it was structured a little bit differently where one person owned a little bit more than the other two of us. Um, and I kind of had a bit of a, an apprenticeship in there. So, I used to work for that salon, and then I bought into it.

[00:16:59] **Antony W.:** Okay. Got it.

[00:17:00] **Tom W.:** and that, that kind of gave me, uh, an insight into what being a business owner was. But it never taught me anything because I stayed away from the numbers. It wasn't really something that I, I found myself drawn to. I was still very much technical hairdresser. I wanted to win awards. I wanted to be on stage. I want my name in lights. That's what I wanted at that particular time. Um, and that was just purely to satisfy my ego. I knew it at the time, then I know it at the time now. It was more to give myself a pat on the back and go, yes, you made the right decision.

[00:17:31] **Tom W.:** Because even though I don't care what people think, I don't, and I mean that in the most respectful and loving way in terms of, I hold my opinion of myself always hard than anybody else's. If I could look myself back in the mirror and go, you're doing a good job. Your morals are good, you're pushing the right buttons, then I don't really care what anyone has to say. but I, I knew, I've always known that I've had an ego that I've had to satisfy, and I always thought that would be through awards and name up in lights and doing shows and all this. And it never satisfied me enough. Um, so when I, when I left the group, I was with and started the new salon, I actually found that that drive and hunger for my name up in lights actually wasn't about my name up in lights. It was more actually

changing things, believing what I intrinsically believe to be the best way to work and the best way to treat people and the best way to build people up, the best way to teach people. That's what I want to push out.

[00:18:31] **Antony W.:** Okay. Very interesting. Uh, I know you are in for our audience. I, I know that you are in Melbourne at the moment, and I know that they've just, that had a big electrical storm, uh, a and so we're seeing a little bit of, uh, static on the screen and you are freezing a little bit, et cetera. So I don't know if it's that or if it's the fact that you're jumping around so much

[00:18:55] **Antony W.:** there's a little bit of, there's a little bit of interference and stuff, I think with your microphone as well on your shirt. So, uh, anyway, um, so that's, that's an interesting business model in itself that you just touched on, where there was a group, there's a lot of power in a group as well. There's that, that power of group think and different people at different levels of knowledge that they can share with each other. And, and it is quite like, you used it as an example, if it was quite a nurturing environment for you to sort of learn the ropes without all the risk. Is that model something that you would ever consider as a way to grow a business?

[00:19:33] **Tom W.:** Oh, absolutely. So, I believe, and I think you've touched on this with someone, it might even be, uh, Gordon in a previous podcast, uh, that I listened to and I totally agree with it. Why we don't as an industry have a setup like accountants and lawyers where we partner and grow the business that way is beyond me. I don't know whether it, once again, it's ego that stops people with doing it or whether they genuinely believe they can do every job all the time on their own.

[00:20:00] **Tom W.:** But it anything like that, you are going to get to a point, and you are going to stop. You can't grow past a certain point because you can't do it all on your own. So yeah, the plan is to bring, I've got three or four at the minute where they're all kind of keen. Um, I, it's more that we, both parties aren't quite ready yet. I'm looking at selling number two this year. I think this year might be the time where I pull the pin and actually go, go for it. Um, I would love to bring some of the staff that I've had for, who have been with me for five years. I'd love to bring some of them into the business, open new salons and build this from the inside out. Um, so yeah, I would love to be able to do partners and stuff for sure.

[00:20:42] **Antony W.:** Yeah, I think, you know, when we started off talking about this being a sort of a new way of working, a new way of looking at the industry, I think that is an area where there's potentially a lot of growth. Um, did a podcast, it was with a gentleman by the name of Blake Evans. It was episode 156, and he has that very model where there are partners in the business. So, if you haven't listened to that or of the people that are watching or listen to this one now, if you want to check that out and find out more about it, I highly recommend it because, uh, he's a very open book on it and really shares how to make that work. And, uh, and he definitely does make it work, or they definitely do make it work. Um, which, which I think is a great way to grow. It's a great way to expand. Um, I know that when you opened your business, you had a business partner. Um, talk to us about that.

[00:21:34] **Tom W.:** Yes, that, that was, that was in the, that was in the old group. I said had one direct business partner, even though there's three of us. Um, the way we'd structured it over here in Australia, once you, I don't know whether it's the same anywhere else, but once you go over a certain amount of salary spend per year, you pay an additional tax on top of that salary. Right.

[00:21:54] **Antony W.:** That's a, that's a uniquely Australian thing as far as I'm

[00:21:56] **Tom W.:** There's a lot of uniquely Australian things that I've found difficult to

[00:22:00] yeah. There are, to the UK I was like, there's some stuff that I was just like, this is insane. Um, yeah. So, what we did is we structured the company. So even though we ran under an umbrella company, all three businesses were separate. So they never got grouped for payroll tax is what we call it. Um, so I had one direct business partner. That direct business partner was an a, a trained accountant. um, also a qualified hairdresser, but did accountancy first. Uh, and it worked. It worked well. It worked well. Um, Connie, she stayed in her lane. I stayed in my lane. I looked after the salon and the correct direction of the salon and what we wanted to do, she stayed in her lane, looked after the accounts and the money, and paid the wages. All the stuff that I thought was absolute crap. I didn't want anything to do with, because I thought it was just time that taken up that I could be design a new haircut. how little did I know that this would be my absolute passion would be the numbers behind the company.

[00:22:57] **Tom W.:** And what I would learn from the numbers actually dictates the creative direction in which I'm taking the salon now, which I find very ironic. because I consider it to do. Um, partnership worked well. It just got to a point where I wanted to do things very differently. There was one or two thoughts in my head. One, if it didn't go wrong, if it didn't go right, sorry. Which I'll be honest, I had no doubt it would go right, right. That's just my self-confidence. Um, but if it did go wrong, I didn't want to drag anyone else down in it. I thought that was unfair. Um, secondly, I actually don't think she wanted any part of it anyway. I thought she thought I was fucking bat shit crazy. Sorry for the language, but I thought she was, she thinks she thought I was nuts. So, I think she was all right just to get out. So, I bought her out and then started again. But it did mean I had to learn all the business side of things very, very quickly, which I've enjoyed massively. And it was all during, uh, COVID. So the company opened in, uh, April, 2021 and in Melbourne we shut down for four months in June, 2021. So, I just spent about \$200,000 and then we went to earning \$0 for four months. So it was tight. Very tight, but best thing ever did.

[00:24:15] **Antony W.:** Okay. So, did you start off right from the get-go Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, uh, the open days, and that was it? Or have you, have you consolidated it back to that?

[00:24:25] **Tom W.:** No, we opened from the GetGo. Um, we, we did, when we reopened after we came outta lockdown because was, we were only allowed five guests at any one time in the salon. We did open Saturdays for the first three weeks until that rule dropped. Um, yeah. But that was the only reason why. It was just to make sure that we could get everyone done before Christmas because we were the, the, most famous and loved people in Australia at that point. Hairdressers when we reopened.

[00:24:51] **Antony W.:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. So what else have you, I mean that in itself is, you know, really interesting, the four day week and it being only Tuesday to Friday. What else have you brought into the business, which you would say is a new way of doing things? What are some of the other things you put in there?

[00:25:08] **Tom W.:** It there it is. More systems that I've put in, which might slightly differ to, um, every other salon. I mean, like I said, there is people that do this, but it's more to put it all together so we don't have, starting from the very base of it, right? We don't have a mission statement. We have brand pillars. Now, the reason why we have brand pillars and not a mission statement is I want everyone to look at our brand pillars and put their own spin on it. I want them to connect with the brand pillars on their own personal level, not me ramming down someone's throat what I want them to think. So, our four brand pillars are community, creativity, diversity, and honesty. And these four things means so indifferent to every single one of the members of staff. Now, the reason why I found this was so important was because as an employee, I found that when I got told we are a family of hairdressers and do this all that, and we are creative and all this, I was like, I looked at him and went as crap. Not though. No, I'm not. I'm not a creative person, so I don't want to be classed as a creative person. Like I'm technical, I'm analytical, I reverse engineer pretty much everything in my life. I do to-do lists. I wake up, I write a to-do list, I write a to-do list before I go to bed. I, I'm very analytical, so I wanted someone to feel connected to the company intrinsically through their own feelings. So, I thought brand pillars were always better.

[00:26:30] **Tom W.:** And then on the flip side of it, I also wanted guests to be able to relate to brand pillars and put their own spin on it. We can tell 'em what it believe, what it means to us, but they can also relate to and say what it means to them. And I found that has been a beautiful way of bringing clients, not just into the salon, but loving what we are doing and being part of the diversity, the general neutral pricing, all this stuff that we've done. People are connected to it because they can relate it back to their own life one way or another. Whether it's a feeling story, a family member, something like that. People are connected to it rather than just loving what we do with their hair. The general neutral pricing for one, I can't believe, and I, I'm going to be real blunt with this, I can't believe anyone still charges men's prices and women's prices. I really can't believe it for multitude of reasons. Uh, one, they take the same amount of bloody time. Like they take the same amount of time. You try and tell me a fade in half an hour and be perfect. Unless you're a barber, you can't do it guaranteed. It's the same as like if you do a teardrop bob right?

[00:27:31] **Tom W.:** It, it's going to take 45 minutes to an hour. A solid fade and a haircut. Men's long haircut, right? they take an hour. It's the same amount of time or it takes 45 minutes. So, we charge for time. So, the gender neutral pricing, getting in pink tax and all that was very, very well received amongst our community. We also have a very big, um, non-binary and trans, uh, transgender community where I am on Chapel Street in Melbourne. Um, we're surrounded by, uh, gay bars and the Nightlife's Epic. There's drag shows all the time, it's awesome, awesome. And we want you to deliver a, a safe space for people to come in. And I know that sounds like, oh, everyone's doing safe spaces, but genuinely you can come in and be whoever the hell you want to be. I, we don't care what you identify as what you want done. We just want to make sure you feel good, look good and come back cause you're connected to us. That's all we want. Um, so I think we, I think

we've simplified the salon experience or everyone's trying to ramp it up and deliver more of this and more of that and more touch and more feel.

[00:28:31] **Tom W.:** We've simplified it and gone. Like our menu is simplified. It's not like we haven't got 17 different ways to do balayage. We haven't got 15 root stretches; we haven't got anything like that. We are pushing it more to just charging for time. So, we hopefully within six months I've already started, everyone will just have an hourly rate. You're just charging an hourly rate plus product on top. So, this opened for me, bringing salon scale in, which I think is just, it's been so good numbers wise to understand what you actually spend on colour per head. I kind of knew, but you don't until you have something like this. And it is revolutionized how I do my orders and my, my budgets are tighter than ever, but like when I say tighter, as in I know exactly what's going to be spent and I know exactly that's going to work well before, even though my numbers were good, it's still ebb and flow here and there. My numbers are always good now. Um,

[00:29:26] **Antony W.:** Let the way go look. I, I just want to go back. I only managed to write one of them down. I was too busy listening to you. Uh, the four, the four brand pillars, one of them was diversity. What were the other three?

[00:29:37] **Tom W.:** Uh, community creativity and honesty.

[00:29:41] **Antony W.:** Okay. Okay. And, um, the, they're charging for time thing. Let's dig into that a little bit. So, at the moment, you're sort of a bit one foot in, one foot out, is that mean, I, I agree with you about it. It's, it's 2023. I mean, you can't. You, you, you have to be, you can't charge women and men at different price for exactly the same service. And you get all these people that rattle on about, oh, but my education is a lady stylist, this, that, the other, it's got nothing to do with it. It, it, it really comes down to when, when you strip our business down to its most essential element, what we are really doing is buying and selling time. Like I'm buying my employee's time and I'm repackaging it and selling it to a potential client. And in the middle is, is that what I need to operate the business on and make a profit? Do you know what I mean? Um, and that is the reality of it. And to, to be charging, uh, more for a man's haircut than a, sorry. Be charging more for a woman's haircut than a man's haircut with the same appointment time. It's wrong. The only validation you can have for doing it is when you say, our men's haircuts are 30 minutes. If that's what you chose to do. I'm just using this as an example. Our woman's haircuts are 45 minutes, therefore there is a different price point to them vote, you know? Um,

[00:31:06] **Tom W.:** right.

[00:31:07] **Antony W.:** uh, but, but even then you could, you could dig into, into,

[00:31:10] **Tom W.:** women have fades. have long hair. Do you know what I mean? It, it, literally, it's crossed a, like that concept for men's and women's haircuts came from the 1950s and sixties where women were taking an hour and a half inside salons to have beehives to be under the hood dryer. And men were literally just having the side shave and it slipped back. That's where that came from. And it was all based around charging for time. And then somehow through the 17th, eighties and nineties it's been misconstrued,

and we've just kept the same thing. Even though both styles have merged together, we've kind kept the same thing. I do honestly believe that our industry is so stuck in its way sometimes and it falls behind so many industries in progression. But then all we do is shout about progression. I find it so ironic cause I think we're actually one of the least progressive

[00:31:58] **Antony W.:** Yes, I agree

[00:31:58] **Tom W.:** industries in the entire world, but we think we're really progressive, but we ain't.

[00:32:02] **Antony W.:** Yeah. I know, I know. We, but we are in the change business. We change appearance,

[00:32:06] **Tom W.:** We won't change ourselves and the business we run, it's

[00:32:09] **Antony W.:** E exactly. I, I, I talk to salon owners about, you know, have you got online booking? And like, oh no, I haven't got that.

[00:32:14] **Tom W.:** Yeah. Hello?

[00:32:15] **Antony W.:** yeah, it's like, you know, do, do you book your holidays online? Oh yeah. Do you book a pizza online on a Friday night? Oh, definitely. What about Uber? Oh yeah. I've got, I've got to have my Uber, but it, it's like, yeah. Uh, uptake as an industry, as a generalization, our uptake on technology is, you know, slow. In fact, I don't know if you've listened to them. I've, uh, I think the second one actually just comes out today, on the day of recording this, uh, I'm doing a series of interviews with, um, the trade media. I did the first one with Stacey Soble from, uh, salon Today in the United States. The second one is with Linda Woodhead from, Australia.

[00:32:53] **Tom W.:** I love Linda, one of my favourite

[00:32:55] **Antony W.:** third. The third one I've done is with Hairdressers Journal in the UK. Yep. And it's interesting because I wanted to get a very global perspective from their point of view on the industry because they have quite a unique perspective on the industry because they deal with salons, they deal with, um, you know, manufacturers, et cetera. And so they have an insight that is, that is different. And so it's been intriguing for me as I've, I've interviewed them because what is really apparent is that when I started hairdressing, the trade media was a magazine. magazine.

[00:33:32] **Tom W.:** Yeah.

[00:33:33] **Antony W.:** That was it. They did a magazine and we think that our industry as headress behind the chair, has changed dramatically. It's hardly changed at all. When

you look at the media, how their industry has changed dramatically. Like the awards, the trade shows they do, the digital media, they have, um, you know, the, the publishing of a magazine is now a very small part of what they do. So, yeah, I, I totally agree with you. We, we go on about how we're all about change, but when you look at how, uh, other industries have had to change, it's, uh, it's an awful lot more than what we've had to do. But anyway, I've, I've, uh, interrupted your flow of things. I, I want to ask you about the culture in your business, like how you, I'm intrigued what the culture is like, but, but b I also want you to talk to how do you create a culture? I mean, your four brand pillars are sort of the fundamentals, the pillars of your culture but talk to us about that.

[00:34:39] **Tom W.:** that. That's a great question. Um, I tell you, I could literally do four hours on culture. It, it's possibly my most favourite thing to talk about and also to implement as well. So, culture I think gets, gets chucked around a lot, um, without anyone actually fully understand. And it means different things to different people. But to me, Culture is a lifestyle, right? It's a, it's a lifestyle. If you want to build a culture within a business of any sort, you have to have the foundations. That's where the brand pillars came in. So, we've built, the majority of our culture is built around the four brand pillars. The main one being honesty. I believe there is zero bitching in my salon and I can hold my hands and say, I can guarantee there is zero bitching in my salon. And the reason why is cause there is, if there is, there's more than likely that person's going to leave quite quickly. Cause it's something I won't put up with. We don't tolerate any form of bullying.

[00:35:38] **Tom W.:** There's always an open, uh, I don't want to say open door cause that's what shit managers say. my door's always open. It's not really. Um, but the culture is built around honesty and not just being honest with other people. More importantly, being honest with yourself, understanding your strengths and weaknesses and being open to being critiqued in a positive way So you can get better and achieve the goals that you want to achieve. That is the cornerstone of everything we've done is education So our entire culture is built around honesty, which is then floating to education, which is then coming to self-worth. And now when self-worth, what that has opened up to is people being so open with each other that the culture is all about love now. People want to nurture and protect each other. That the level of teamwork in my salon it, and I can't take credit for this. All I did was open the door. It's the crewed that I've got have built this culture to something that I honestly didn't think I could ever have in a salon. Me personally, um, no one is ever left behind. No one leaves. If someone's running late. You'll see three people jump on a blow-dry if the client's okay with it, right? To make sure that everyone finishes at the same time.

[00:36:52] **Tom W.:** There's not one person that Hoovers, there's not one person, sorry, Hoover. I mean, vacuum, Hoover's a very English thing, kind to remember that. I mean, vacuum. There's not one person that vacuums, there's not one person that puts all the hot towels on with the lavender. There's not one person that cleans the basins. There's not, everyone does everything all the time. We have morning huddles where everyone builds each of up and they look at each other's columns, not just their own, but each of is to see. I could probably help you out here. If you are struggling, you probably won't, but just in case, just gimme a heads up. You don't have people hiding in the back room. They're out on the floor. Do you want more foil? Do you need more colour mixed in between clients? The, the culture that we have is awesome. I bloody love it.

[00:37:33] **Tom W.:** I'm so proud of it. But the one thing that it's done is it's driven Way more guests into the salon because you can see my staff are genuinely happy at work. Like genuinely happy. They want to be there, they enjoy it. We have a massive laugh on the floor, like its, people come in and think it's like a club. We don't play club music. We usually play eighties cause we're all a little bit older. there's, I've got a lot of 19, 20, and 21-year-olds, but there's a few of us that are in our thirties and forties and eighties just seems to get the whole sound up and about. So, we play eighties music really loud. We're talking about stories, we're open about our personal lives and that's not through force. That's just people feel that comfortable to tell each other about things that their partners had done or whether they went out and had maybe one too many. A client will tell us and they fell over and that's why their hairs singed cause they fell on a bonfire. That's a true story as well. By the way, So there's a lot of this our culture is by built around honesty, education and self-worth. I believe those three things are the cornerstone of any culture you need to build. If you've got honesty, self worth, and education, I can't see what else you'd need to have a happy, honest, integral workplace. And isn't that really what we're all after?

[00:38:46] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, sometimes new salon owners, young salon owners, um, you're not that young, but like, you know,

[00:38:56] **Tom W.:** Yes, I am

[00:38:57] **Antony W.:** booger but, but, but sometimes new salon owners, they decide to open a salon because they don't like where they're working.

[00:39:04] **Tom W.:** . working. Yeah.

[00:39:05] **Antony W.:** Okay. Uh, in, in fact, I'll take it one step further. They don't like the way the salon is being managed.

[00:39:11] **Tom W.:** Yeah.

[00:39:11] **Tom W.:** Yeah

[00:39:12] **Antony W.:** Okay. So, they decide to themselves, I could do this better. I'm going to go and open up my own business. So that off they go, they open up their own salon and they open it with the premise of, I can do this better. I'm not going to manage people. I'm just going to employ nice people that all get on and we all share the same values and we're all, you know, going to stand around the morning and sing Kumbaya and live happily ever after.

[00:39:37] **Tom W.:** Yeah.

[00:39:37] **Antony W.:** But then, and, and that's the, their ethos with which they go into opening their business,

[00:39:43] **Tom W.:** business. Yeah.

[00:39:43] **Antony W.:** but then often they get a rude awakening because six months in, 12 months in or whatever, they realize that actually to varying degrees, people do need managing if they are to become the best version of themselves possible and the business to deliver some, you know, consistency and some standards, et cetera. So, I'm wondering where you fit in relation to that and the, the ultimate question I really want to ask you about is, so based on what I've just said, how hands-on are you as a manager of directing the orchestra, so to speak?

[00:40:24] **Tom W.:** Very, very, and I think to begin with, it was very obvious. My hands were on everything. Um, so the one-on-ones we do, they're very consistent. We have organized one-on-ones like most salons do every month. But really, I pretty much have one or two every single week. Um, and this is more just to check on how they're feeling, but what's going on in their lives, that kind of stuff. What, what I've done. I'm obsessed with neuroscience, and I have been for a good decade, but it's only recently where we really started looking into it and seeing, I want to understand how people think. So I believe as hairdressers, we are just glorified salespeople. We still do sales. We're not selling a physical thing, but we're selling feelings. We're selling haircuts. We're selling people, right? We still sell things to sell things properly. You need to understand the market that you're selling to now, whether you niche yourself, which I think a lot of people like doing.

[00:41:17] **Tom W.:** I personally don't like it, and I'm yet, I might be proven wrong with this as time goes on, but I, I think you can build a salon that's for everyone and not niche yet providing you build the team properly. But I'm, I might completely cock that up and in two years time I'm always saying, sorry Antony, I was wrong. But I believe that when you are trying to do something like, like this, and you're trying to work out sales, you need to build the neuroscience behind the sales. So, you need to have people that confident, not just in what they're selling, but them at the themselves and understanding how they intrinsically build goals that mirror in with the goals of the salon. So it's connected. So when they win, I win, not just me winning and they get a promotion or a pay rise, actually setting quantifiable goals in their one-on-ones, teaching them how to build goals and motivational stacks and discipline. So, what I mean by motivational stacks is, um, to build an intrinsic motivator. And so, you know, what do you want me to go over? Intrinsic and extrinsic motivates very quickly, just so everyone understands what I'm coming from here.

[00:42:25] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:42:26] **Tom W.:** it'd be very quick. So, intrinsic motivator is something that you internally believe that is going to drive you forward. Right? So, for me, my main intrinsic motivator is my wife. I love her with all my heart. She's the reason why I get outta bed in the morning. The reason why I work so bloody hard the reason why I want to conquer as much as I conquer nothing to do with me anymore. It's, I want to be able to deliver the, the life I promised my wife. And I want to be able to show her the bloody world. And to do that, I need to work hard, right? So that's my intrinsic motivator. One of about 25, right? An extrinsic motivator to begin with is money. right. If I was just solely motivated by money, that's only going to take me so far. Cause my heart can never be in money. You might want money. Absolutely. Jesus. I don't know who doesn't.

[00:43:12] **Tom W.:** Money buys freedom. Freedom buys happiness in my opinion. But intrinsically that is not going to push you far. Having something that your heart is on the line for that is going to, you are never going to stop. You're never going to stop. I know mine and I wanted that feeling for everybody. That works for us. I wanted everyone to feel what I feel cause it is. it, it's beautiful. Like I wake up every day and not one, I mean, don't me wrong. Some days I wake, I go, geez, I can do an extra couple hours in bed. Don't me wrong. I'm not perfect. But most days when I'm outta bed, I'm like, all right, let's go and make these 1% better than yesterday. Let's go and do it. Like I'm, I'm, I know I'm, I can do it. I know I can build this empire that I told myself I can build. I don't care. He says, I can't. I'm going to do it. So I wanted to give people that feeling. So there's a science behind it on how to build motivational stacks. You use curiosities to feed into certain things that you are curious about, and then you can link that to your job once you link that to your job. Most people find in hairdressing, they are more passionate about the people they serve, not themselves.

[00:44:15] **Tom W.:** The best hairdressers always care about the people over themselves, always, right? You don't have to be the best technical haircut or the best technical, uh, colourist to be the best stylist. Like people who think that are kind of missing the point of what a good stylist is all about. Um, so by me showing them away and with a few, hours to force it. And I actually lost a couple of staff over this that couldn't cope with it. And I was o I knew that was going to happen and I was okay with it. I had to kind of take a step back in terms of losing a few out the team to build it back up again. Cause I needed the right people there to drive the core of this company forward. Um, once I got them onto it and they started doing it and we started doing exercises every Wednesday morning for half an hour, people started to feel this kind of urge to do something bigger than themselves. And because of the company, what we've got, where we are very, we know how to do all types of hair types.

[00:45:08] **Tom W.:** Now I know in probably American, in the UK, everyone knows how to do Afro hair, right? In Australia, that's not a thing, which still blows me bloody mind. But there is very, very white areas of Melbourne, and same as Sydney, Brisbane, they're very, very white areas and there's, there's now more colour coming in and around the area, it's becoming more diverse and as a lot more different types of people in and around areas, different religions, different races, different hair types. We know how to do all hair types. And that came from us talking about intrinsic motivators and making sure that we love on everyone. And one of the big motivators behind the culture was we want to make everyone feel. to make everyone feel welcome. You have to be able to do everyone's hair. You can't turn someone away cause their hair's too curly for you.

[00:45:57] **Tom W.:** Like that's nuts. So that was another thing. So, the culture was driven through them finding out what they actually want to do and then me linking it to something in their life and then linking it back to the salon. So, they might say, I want to buy a house, for example, Cole, well you are going to need X amount of money, so you need to earn 110 K a year. This is what you need to bring in for the salon to earn 110 K a year. This is how you buy a structure works. You get to, here, I'll give you 110 K a year. It's, it's black and white.

[00:46:26] **Antony W.:** Okay, so how much of the, the training that you give your team is technical and creative sort of training as opposed to how much time do you spend on.

Personal development on mindset stuff, because I'm all, all over that. Uh, I 100% agree with you that there's no point in trying to teach someone to, you know, set goals, sell shampoo, you know, achieve certain figures if their beliefs and you know, et cetera are not in line with that. You need to work on their mindset before you work on those, you know, those communication skills of how to do certain things. So, so talk to us about, about what, what that looks like in the salon.

[00:47:08] **Tom W.:** So it's, I, I'd say this, this year coming, so what I've got projected for this year, it's pretty much a 50 50 split. I'd say we, we've got 23 days of internal education books for this year and I run them all the way through to September and then October, November, December, I give 'em a break cause they're usually over me by then and they don't want to hear any more education by then. Um, yeah, we've got 23 days and I reckon they're split 50-50, but, uh, for example, so we are doing your Super Stylist right? So we're about to start that. Um, so that's in there with the mindset. Cause I know you touched on some of that as well, which, and hearing it from a different voice can drill home certain aspects that I'm not able to drill home. Um, so that, that, we're really looking forward to that. The technical side, I'm big on. Um, I think the difference between a craft hairdresser and a good hairdresser is their bad day. And the way you make your bad day, a good day is on making sure your technique is perfect or as close perfect as it can get. And the only way your technique gets better is by practice, practice, practice. Repetition, repetition, repetition, discipline, discipline, discipline. Um, so that is part of the culture where we go over haircuts five or six times sometimes in our training until it's imprinted in their brain so hard that even if they try to forget it, they. they just can't forget it. So that way if they have broken up with their boyfriend, they've had a shitty morning, um, the, the mom doesn't like them or they've fell out with their dad or whatever it is, right? I know that the technical side of their ability is so tight that their one o'clock on a Friday isn't going to have a different haircut than 2, 6, or 8 weeks ago when they were jubilant.

[00:48:51] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah Ok Alright.

[00:48:52] **Tom W.:** And I believe that is how I think that's the cornerstone of a company in terms of creating money.

[00:48:58] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Um, we, we don't have long left, we've got about 10 minutes left, but I wanted to, there are two things I wanted to talk to you about. Um, so we're going to need to do them quickly. I want to talk about money and, and numbers 'cause I know that's a, uh, something you've become very passionate about. But before we do that, I just want to, I just want to ask you about Gen Z. So, you know those people in your workforce that are under the age of 25, so, you know, they're, they're the Gen Z is, um, and they get a fair bit of stick, um, often un, often unwarranted in my opinion. Um, Uh, but what I want to ask you about, I know you said you've got a lot of people on your team that are in their, in their thirties, et cetera.

[00:49:36] **Tom W.:** it's 50 50 split. It's it's a 50 50 split. Yeah. I've got 50 50 split.

[00:49:41] **Antony W.:** so, so what did the, the new gen, the Gen Z employees, what differences do you see in them compared to when you were their age? Like what, what are they bringing to the table that is, that is good for, for you and your business?

[00:49:58] **Tom W.:** business? Oh, they give a shit about the world a lot more than I ever used to. Bloody hell, they give a shit about the world a lot more. Like I, when I was 19, I did, couldn't tell you what a plastic bag did. I didn't know that it, I didn't even know that it didn't decompose, I reckon like, because it wasn't a story, it wasn't a, it wasn't a discussion point, it was just plastic bag that you got from Tesco's and then it just went in the bin. That was it.

[00:50:21] **Antony W.:** Hmm.

[00:50:21] **Tom W.:** So, I've learned, I, I rec, I've learned probably more off, um, my crew than I reckon they've learned off me collectively, genuinely. Um, certain things like the way we approach, um, the safe space for transgender and non-binary, I knew enough because I've done my research, but I've actually got people from those communities who work for me. So I was able to get first-hand information. How would you like this approached? How would you or your friends who is transgender, how would they like this to work? How would they look at that and go, I feel really.

[00:51:01] **Antony W.:** Mm-hmm.

[00:51:01] **Tom W.:** that. So they've got a lot of knowledge about a lot of things and I, they do get a lot of unwarranted stick. But I do also think, and this is, this is kind of where I sit and it's not a fence sitting. I do think the younger generations have to respect what's come and gone. definitely. but I also think the, the, the generations of yester year also need to understand that back when they were the equivalent age, they were trying to train change everything as well.

[00:51:29] **Antony W.:** mm Yeah cool,

[00:51:30] **Tom W.:** all it is, it's you've, they've just transferred the shoe from you to them and you don't like it. And that's it. Right? Everyone's tried. Every generation has tried to screw things up one way or another, and every generation passes like, oh, they don't make 'em like they used to. Um, I've had this off, I've had this off my parents before. Oh, do you know they don't work? Like, oh yeah, cool. We'll bring the good old days back where slavery had just been abolished. Gay people couldn't get married. Oh, they sound like great days. Like racism was rife everywhere. Great days.

[00:52:00] **Tom W.:** Let's bringing those back. It was shit. It, the best day to live in is right now. And the generation that are coming through, I believe will be better than the generations. It's just gone. And it'll be the same in 25, 30 years. They'll be doing the same thing. They'll be looking at that generation going, oh God, look at these. Like, they will be the best generation going through because they, the world evolves. People evolve the way they get taught. Coding and social media. I know shit all about that. I've learned so much

off the younger generation just from that. So I love, I love Gen Zs, I love them. They're brilliant.

[00:52:28] **Antony W.:** Good. Yeah, me too. Okay, so let's talk about money. Uh, before we wrap up. Um, I want to just ask you, you know, now you've got a different awareness of business of, you know, because you don't have the accountant looking after staff. You're, you are in there and you are all over these numbers and you've found it to be a real passion. Uh, I, I often ask this question of different salon owners just to sort of get a reference to how they, how they think. What do you think a salon should be achieving realistically as a profit margin? And when I say a profit margin, I mean after everything's been paid, including you as the owner. Cause a lot of people think that the owner's wage is a profit and that's the owner's wage. It's not the profit. So, so do you have any sort of percentage that you'd like to sort hang on that.

[00:53:20] **Tom W.:** uh, I think anything less than 10%. You're just buying yourself a job. There's no point. You might as well work for someone genuinely. Look, if you are not, if you are not profiting at least 10% that I believe there's no point, the might as will stop. And I really believe that in, in Australia we don't have a staff shortage. We have too many salons, way too many salons. There's so many staff. There's salons everywhere that they've got two, three staff in them. How they're not making 10%. I know the average, the average, I think the average turn or the average percentage over here is between two and 3% for a salon, what's the point you're making? Five, 10 grand max on top of whatever you've earned as a wage. It's pointless.

[00:53:59] **Antony W.:** Tom, you dropped, you dropped Uh, really bad internet, uh, connection here, so, so what did you say? The average salon over there has got two or three people, but believe it or not, it's not that different elsewhere. I think there's a per, I think there's a perception that people go, oh, all the salons in America are big Well, no, they're. not, the average salon in America's probably got about five people in it, and it's probably the same in the UK, but you also have salons in America with a hundred-odd people working in them. But that's not the norm. They are the unicorns. So I, I mean, my, my observation, the average salon all over the world has got less than five people in it. most of them are lifestyle businesses, meaning that the owner drives a nice car and is their own boss, and they have a holiday once a year. But in terms of profit, they're not making anything like 10%.

[00:54:45] **Tom W.:** No, I, my AIM's 20%, I want 20%. But then I, I also want every senior staff member to be earning six figures before I take 20%. If I'm taking 20% and everyone's earning six figures, I've done my job properly. So last, last year we did a, we did a price freeze when everyone else put their prices up, and that was draw more new clients into the salon because we became the bottom side of top end price wise. But we deliver a top end, um, hairstyle and experience. it works really well. We did drive a lot of new people into the salon. Um, we are now putting the prices up, but the, the idea is 10% minimum, 20 percent's the aim, and I want that by the end of 2024. right. 20% profit. I think with that I can I know I say this to everyone, I want to earn 350, \$400,000 a year. And I'm not ashamed to say that people make money the enemy all the time. And I don't know why. Like, there's good people, right? I know assholes who are broke. I know assholes are rich. That's simple, right? just cause you've got money doesn't make you an asshole. Right?

Make, you can do good things with money. You can give people pay rises. You can take people away. You can give 'em education opportunities.

[00:56:00] **Tom W.:** You so much if you have the money to do it. Uh, and people have vindicated money for a while. I'm sick of it. Um, but yeah, 20% I think is really what I'm aiming for any more than that. Genuinely in today's market, I think would be a real stretch to do. I really do with the way it is.

[00:56:17] **Antony W.:** Well, let me ask you about retail then. Um, what, what, what sort of percentage of your total sales and your business model at the moment, what percentage of that is coming from retail?

[00:56:28] **Tom W.:** Uh, and for the annual year. Last year it was 15.3%.

[00:56:31] **Antony W.:** Right. Okay. So,

[00:56:33] **Tom W.:** A little bit lower than what I like. A little bit lower than what I like, but

[00:56:36] **Antony W.:** but, but, but again, well above, uh, above what the average is let me ask you, is that, is that percentage growing or is it shrinking? Cause a lot of people will talk about the impact that, um, online sales is having. So I'm curious as to how you see that.

[00:56:51] **Tom W.:** see. I have a different opinion. I don't, people are bought online for decades. I don't really understand I don't think it's changed really. I really don't. I think as always goes up. As always goes up. But then

[00:57:04] **Antony W.:** Hmm.

[00:57:05] **Tom W.:** the, the way, the way that we, the way we recommend retail might be slightly different in our consultation to what other people do. Um, we don't do, we don't necessarily do the, the whole old school thing and make sure there's three products in front of everyone. They're touching and feeling it. We don't do that. We get them to actually tell us exactly what's wrong with their hair, and then we just give 'em the bloody solution. So, in our consultation, we have a consultation form. We don't give it to everyone. Cause some people you don't. Some clients are like, I'm not a massive fan consultation forms, but they definitely work for the newer stylists to get them into the routine of asking the right question. It's the only reason why we use them. Um, once people are in the routine of asking the right question, uh, you pretty much all you have to do is get the client to tell you exactly what's wrong with their hair. And you go, cool. Well, without going into the whole jargon of it, some people like it, most don't. They're going into all the, the, the fact that it doesn't have so many rest sulfate in it, and it does this with poppy seeds. Most people couldn't give a shit about that. They just wanna know. It fixes the hair so it's really dry.

[00:58:04] **Tom W.:** That'll fix a dry, it's brittle. That'll fix, brittle. You're take it's freezing in humidity. Put this on after you blow dried it, it'll stop the humidity. If they don't want to take it, they look a bit dumb cause they've gone, this is my problem. You've given me a solution. I'm just not going to, I'm just not going to do it. Cool. All right. Well, it's your own thing then, isn't it? Don't come back to me next time and see your hair's still frizzy. Cause it will be Cause I'll give you a solution. You're not going to take it. Um, so yeah, I, I don't think, I don't think online have taken it, I think people just use it as an excuse cause the consultations have got crap, if I'm honest. I, I don't know many, we, we do consultations with every client every time. Even if we've been seeing 'em for six, seven years. Cause you have to do it. Cause people, you don't know what people are going through. They might want to change and you haven't asked them. You're going to lose clients that way. Um, so yeah, we, we are very big on consultation. I think that's why our retail's always grown and always high.

[00:58:54] **Antony W.:** Okay. Alright. Last thing that we've got time to talk about is how you pay people. So, can, can you share with us what sort of system that you have for paying. Your stylists, your money makers,

[00:59:06] **Tom W.:** So, we have, uh, a few different levels. So, we've got master stylist, principal stylist, advanced stylist, senior stylist. We have a merging, which is the third year apprentice that's starting to, well, that's on the floor pretty much full-time. Um, they obviously a tiered system. So, from top to bottom goes up and down. In Bryce, each level has a set per hour rate. So, there isn't a two people on the same level that have two different wages. So, in Australia, here, you cannot hide what you are paying someone. So, before there used to be a rule where it was law where you could put strictly confidential on the top of a contract, and that means that person couldn't tell the, the person in the same position what they're being paid. So, no one could compete in Australia that's been taken away, which I'm bloody for as well. I don't think you should. It's money. You should talk about money. Um, So everyone gets paid a rate for the position they're in. When you go into a team leader or a leadership role within our leadership team, you get paid more. But that's separate. And everyone knows that's separate.

[01:00:11] **Antony W.:** so, hang on. So, each level there is an hour rate and it's a different hour rate as you move up a level

[01:00:17] **Tom W.:** Yeah. So every time you get promoted, you get a, uh, I think the smallest increase is three and a half dollars. The biggest increase is \$6.

[01:00:25] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Okay.

[01:00:26] **Tom W.:** So, it goes up and up and up. Um, there is no, once you get to that top level, there's no limit to what you can earn though, in terms of hour rate, um, uh, you could quite easily earn \$50 an hour plus commission if you're bringing in the cash. Not a problem.

[01:00:39] **Antony W.:** So, so, so where does the hour rate start? At? What, what's the dollar value for the first level?

[01:00:44] **Tom W.:** Uh, so the seniors \$25 an hour, um, which is only just above award. So therefore, people that have just qualified, usually people sit on senior no longer than a year, or their new stylists that have hired that need retraining.

[01:00:59] **Antony W.:** and the highest

[01:01:00] **Tom W.:** level,

[01:01:01] **Antony W.:** uh, highest I mean it's

[01:01:02] **Tom W.:** daily rate. 35, Yeah, 35, an hour. And then we have a commission structure, so that's broken down. So for example, we'll work on master stylists cause that's the highest level, right? So Master Stylist has to bring in \$5,250 minus G S T. So once you've removed your v a t, that's what they need to bring in. Once they hit that, they get 5% of the total they've brought in. Right? So it's what, \$287 as just a clean boat just for hitting the minimum point. Then they, every \$500 they go above, which our average ticket is 2 64. So every \$500 they go above, they get 7%. And then if they go a thousand dollars above, they get 10% of the whole thing. So if you are putting in 6 2 50 a week, you're getting \$625 in your bank account. as a bonus, I then have a separate bonus scheme. The one thing when I first took over my, I believe there's two, there's about five or six numbers. Really, as a business, you should have your eyes over all the time.

[01:02:07] **Antony W.:** Mm-hmm.

[01:02:08] **Tom W.:** Mine personally, my one is, my biggest one is new clients to making sure they're coming in, but then my staff's is retention rate and rebooking. So we've got, they're, they're the same one and the same thing, but we have two different ways of going about it. I'm the one that has to bring them in with my marketing, with the videos and Instagram, we're making sure that the posts are right and that the haircuts are done and the colours are looking good and we're funny and interactive and we do polls and all that kind of stuff that you have to do. A modern day salon, my stash job is to make sure they don't go. We spend so much money on trying to bring in new clients and forget that, and I. I've definitely heard this on one of your podcasts before, that the number of people that are retained after one isn't the number you need to look at. It's whether they've come back after a year, six visits, or five or six visits, they're still there after five or six visits. You've really got them. They, they're yours. You're going to have to do a complete mess up to get rid of my belief. So we, they focus on that number. I focus on bringing them in. We are doing that with the way our, with the way our structure works is with the second part of the commission structure is the rebooking.

[01:03:18] **Tom W.:** I wanted to put a, a dollar value on the rebooking to make it so incentivized, but also link it with something else. If you didn't hit your rebooking, you wouldn't get some, you wouldn't get a certain part of your I wanted all the focus to be on rebooking. So I linked treatments and rebooking. We're a very high treatment salon, so our average stylist is about 12 treatments, uh, a week. And there you see, usually seeing 18 people. So we've got around about 60, 65% of clients having treatments all the time. We have got one that does about 25 a week, isn't an absolute legendary book that's different.

Um, so what they do is with the treatments, they get a 20% of the total money they brought in with treatments providing their rebooking has been hit. So they can have an average week on takings, have a day off, so there's a public holiday and only work three days, miss their target by a hundred dollars, but still take \$200 home in in there. just by making sure they're doing their job and recommending, uh, treatments. I don't target on retail because our retailing's always pretty good and they know it's been built into the culture that if you don't recommend retail, you've not done your job. You're supposed to look after their hair.

[01:04:33] **Tom W.:** yeah. So we, we don't target on retail because we don't want, sorry. If it's that built into the culture where it's part of your job, um, it's just all put into a combined total. Um, most, most of the people in the salon will do a minimum 4 50, 500 retail a week anyway. So we're there, or thereabouts, where your target would be. So, um, But I, I do find that especially coming into Christmas when you've had your Christmas packs come out in November, everyone does \$1,100, \$1,200 a week in, in retail. And then you get to Christmas and everyone's bought everything and you've got, some of these people are chucking in six and a half, \$7,000 a week into till, and they're missing their retail by \$80 and not getting a bonus. I thought that was shit. I was like, that's not fair. You've worked so hard and you don't get a bonus just because you've sold \$1,100 six weeks ago. So I changed it and it's, it's worked well. It's worked really well

[01:05:26] **Antony W.:** Good. Okay. Alright, well, listen, Tom, it's been fascinating talking to you. There's some, some great, um, insights you've got there as to, you know, how you are running your business. Um, we need to wrap up unfortunately. So, uh, if you are listening to this podcast with Tom White and you've enjoyed it, then do me a favour, take a screenshot on your phone and share it to Instagram Stories. And don't forget to subscribe to the Grow My Salon Business podcast and leave us a rating and review if you want on the Apple Podcast app. So, um, Tom, thank you so much for being a guest on the show today.

[01:06:00] **Antony W.:** It's, um, it's been been great. I've, I've wanted to talk to you for a while and, uh, you've definitely got a, you know, a great take on the industry and, uh, it's been really good to to have you here. Uh, whereabouts can people connect with you on Instagram or any other social media channel?

[01:06:15] **Tom W.:** Yeah, so Instagram is probably the best way of getting me at the minute. I'm, I think I'm too old for TikTok. I've been told, but I'm trying, so on Instagram, it's at, uh, Tom White, underscore same, same, but different. Um, you can also look at the salon Instagram as well, where we, we talk a lot about our, our values and our brand pillars and stuff, which is at same, same but different.salon. They're the best two ways to get me. Um, yeah, that's it.

[01:06:41] **Antony W.:** Fantastic. Well look, I will put those links on our website, grow my salon business.com, and in the show notes for today's podcast. So Tom White, thank you so much for being a guest on this Week's Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[01:06:56] **Tom W.:** thanks mate. Appreciate it.

[01:07:04] **Antony W:** Thank you for listening to today's podcast. If you'd like to connect with us, you'll find us at [Grow My Salon business.com](https://www.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.