

[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.:** Hey, it's Anthony Whitaker here and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon on Business podcast. As usual, it's always good to have you here. Before podcasting was such a big thing. I produced a collection of interviews called Unplugged, where I spoke with a range of people from the hairdressing industry, and one of them was long hair expert Sharon Blain. Now, I first met Sharon over 30 years ago, but it wasn't until 2015 that I had the pleasure to interview her and discuss her journey and her many achievements along the way. And now fast forward eight years and Sharon is still going strong and still producing beautiful work. However, she refers to 2023 as the year of her final world tour, where she will be visiting five continents in an array of cities across the world for one final time where she'll be doing, or she does better than anyone.

[00:01:26] **Antony W.:** And that is educating and inspiring another generation of hairdressers into the art of dressing long hair. So, if you haven't had the opportunity to attend one of Sharon's boot camps, now is probably your last chance. But whether you do or don't get to attend her boot camps, I hope you enjoy this special podcast because it's a re-release of an episode that I recorded eight years ago, but I know it will still inspire hairdressers everywhere. No matter what age you're at or at what stage of your career, you at. So, without further ado, it's an absolute pleasure to bring you this special edition of the podcast with Sharon Blain.

[00:02:06] **Sharon B.:** Hi, Antony. How are you?

[00:02:07] **Antony W.:** I'm very good. And it's, a real pleasure to have this opportunity to talk to you today.

[00:02:11] **Sharon B.:** It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

[00:02:13] **Antony W.:** Not at all. Now, let's start at the beginning and, and go back to where it all began for you, because a lot of my listeners won't be, that familiar with you and, it's good for them to have a little bit of your background. I know that you just recently celebrated 50 years in the. can you tell us when and where did you, originally start hairdressing?

[00:02:30] **Sharon B.:** I was a whole 14 years of age when I kicked off, so that's pretty damn young. I, you might say, I was a bit of a dropout from school and I was told to get a job or I had to stay at school, so I opted for a job and fortunately got a job as a hairdresser. So I started in Bathurst, which is a little country town in New South Wales, Australia. and it was, you know, a very interesting experience all the way through.

[00:02:52] **Antony W.:** Okay, so this is in the sixties that you started?

[00:02:54] **Sharon B.:** Yes, that's right.

[00:02:55] **Antony W.:** So in the sixties, 14 year old country town in, you know, country Australia. So that must have been a, a long way from where you've ended up now. I mean, that's a very different, you know, environment to start hairdressing to what, you know, the situation is you've got now. but what was it like then?

[00:03:11] **Sharon B.:** Do you know I on, I constantly refer back to it because they were incredible days and hairdressing if it could be just like those days now, I think as successful business owners would be, would want this sort of business. And when you imagine that people had shampoos and sets, for example, and they would book that same time every week, and if someone happened to die, you'd get the phone call. You didn't know they died, but you'd get someone had heard on the grape vine that Mrs. had died cause they now take her spot. you know, it was really corny, but you know, in a way people were like regular weekly people. They were like, your bread and butter, they came every week and they never missed their appointment. Yeah. And they would all sit under a bar of dryers and they'd have all their hair set and then they would be all brushed out and funnily enough they'd come back the next week not looking any different to the way they left.

[00:03:57] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. I mean that, that lacquer cemented their hair for that whole seven days. But you know, some of the skills I take through into my boot camp today were very strong skills from those setting days. Yeah. Which, I mean, it sounds like archaic when you think about it now, but realistically, some of those old skills have really come back into play.

[00:04:15] **Antony W.:** Sure.

[00:04:15] **Sharon B.:** And it's the basis of a lot of the great looks that we see out there on the red carpet and you know, in magazines.

[00:04:21] **Antony W.:** Yeah. So is that where you were born? In the country?

[00:04:23] **Sharon B.:** I'm a Bathurst girl.

[00:04:24] **Antony W.:** So, what did you do? You did an apprenticeship in this place and then move?

[00:04:26] **Sharon B.:** look, to be honest, I started at one location and I think I lasted about three months and I was sacked. And I think probably it was because I put disinfectant in the lacquer spray and they sprayed it on someone's hair and the boss got a little bit toey and threw me out the door.

[00:04:42] **Antony W.:** You did on purpose, right?

[00:04:43] **Sharon B.:** no. It was mistake cause of the same colours.

[00:04:45] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:04:45] **Sharon B.:** No, I wasn't that smart. So anyhow, and as I'm being shown the door, I was also told, look, it's best that you leave now because you will never make a hairdresser anyhow, you know, maybe I should be giving you the opportunity to look at other options on the work situation. Yeah. So that was great for me cause that I was always going to prove her wrong. Yeah. And that's, they've been, those words have stuck with me forever in a day sometimes. now some people could end up being quite, sort of like depressed over that. Yeah. But they were actually great words for me. Yeah. That really gave me a lot of get up and going. What's kept me going pretty much all the way through.

[00:05:16] **Antony W.:** Yeah. I read, on a few months ago now, Anna, Winter of American Vote she was being interviewed for something and she said everybody should be sacked at least once in their life. And, and she'd been sacked as a youngster and she said it was a real turning point for

[00:05:29] **Antony W.:** yes, very much Yeah. There's nothing wrong with that, is it?

[00:05:31] **Sharon B.:** No.

[00:05:31] **Antony W.:** I think you realize the world doesn't know you were living. Yeah. and you have to, you know, get on and, you know, chart your own destiny, so to speak, that you are responsible for whether you succeed or not. So

tell me about, you know, when you first started then. so you got sacked, you were 14 when you got sacked?

[00:05:45] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. Yeah. I was 14 and then I was fortunate enough to through the wheels and my mom and her friends managed to get me a job somewhere else eventually.

[00:05:52] **Antony W.:** But still in Bathurst

[00:05:53] **Sharon B.:** Still in Bathurst.

[00:05:53] **Antony W.:** I think one of the significant things for me in those days was there was actually no colleges. You could do hairdressing by correspondence. Yeah. Could you imagine? It occurred to me very quickly that I didn't really know how to describe how to create a pinhole by writing it on paper. Yeah. Yeah. And I realized that this wasn't ever going to be for me. So, it was a choice of whether you did correspondence hairdressing. Yeah. Or whether you chose not to do a college course at all. So, everything I've learnt was on the job. Yeah. And You would say at the school of hard knocks. Yeah. Because at the end of the day you, if you got into a salon that had some great training, that was fine, but there was no such thing as training in those days.

[00:06:30] **Antony W.:** Sure.

[00:06:30] **Sharon B.:** All you did was really stand next to a great hairdresser that was senior in the head. In the salon and hand up bobbie pins or rollers and hope from just watching You could learn something.

[00:06:38] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Some process of osmosis. I always call that you. Yeah.

[00:06:42] **Sharon B.:** Hope some of that. Good. You know, flow onto you. Yeah.

[00:06:44] **Antony W.:** You learn or not.

[00:06:45] **Sharon B.:** Yeah, that's right. And then the other option was that, you know, if you didn't stand there, you were handed a toothbrush and you could do the skirting board. So Sure. Yeah. You have very different times. Yeah. But great, you know, good solid training in that respect that, you know. Yeah. It makes you realize as a boss what you would never do. Yeah. What you, how you, that was one thing for me when I started in my own business. I took those key things from

that original boss. Well, there's two original bosses that I knew straight away that I would never treat people the way I was treated. yeah. So that was good.

[00:07:13] **Antony W.:** so, when did you move to, to Sydney? So, you did move from there to Sydney?

[00:07:17] **Sharon B.:** You know, it's a bit of a journey to get to Sydney because we went to, I actually got married very young. So, I think I was just turning 19. So, in this day and age, I mean, people are still in school. Yeah. But I was 19 and the, my husband at the time was transferred around to various country locations because he was with the Department of Agriculture. Yeah. And eventually he was transferred through to Windsor, so I thought that was Sydney. Yeah. And Windsor is, As we, anyone who knows Sydney, who knows about 45 Ks or even 50 Ks from the city centre, but I thought that was Sydney to me.

[00:07:48] **Antony W.:** Yeah, sure.

[00:07:48] **Sharon B.:** And so when we got to Sydney, I was fortunate enough to get a position in a salon nearby, and they had some great hairdressers. One named in Norman, who was a wonderful competition, hairdresser. Yeah. So, he and I connected very much and he taught me how to do competition hairdressing. So yeah, I was enthralled with that. Side of the hairdressing. Yeah. I always wanted to compete; you know? Yeah. And when he started to teach me how to dress hair for competitions, I took that and ran with it. Yeah. And, you know, I did it really well in, in that side of the.

[00:08:19] **Antony W.:** So, who else were your sort of hairdressing heroes at this point in time? So, are we still talking, are we talking seventies now? Early seventies? Yes, very much Okay. So, who were you influenced by?

[00:08:28] **Sharon B.:** So, I was always going to be influenced by, Vidal Sassoon. Yeah. And it was always my goal, come hill or high water to be able to. At Sassoon'. So, prior to coming to Sydney, believe it or not, I had a massively successful salon in Griffith, in the Riverina area. Okay. So, we had something like 21 staff. Now, at that stage, I was the only Australian hairdresser, or I think I was probably the only Australian business person in the whole city because they are, it was very Italian down there. Yeah. It's a beautiful country and some of my dearest and nearest friends still live there. Yeah. So, I actually got a salon. I bought a salon. My dad loaned me \$3,000 and promised I promised him. I wouldn't sort of do his shirt on it, and it was a really bad buy because it was upstairs. And when I went into view what I was buying, when I finally got the keys delivered to me and I opened the door for the first time on this Monday, I

walked in everything was gone so there was no stock, there was no perm rollers. Everything had been policed on the weekend. And I don't know what I got from my 3000, but it was just a couple of chairs and a wash basin with a little heater hanging off the wall. Yeah. and you know, there were Saturdays where we never saw a client and I started to realize that I needed to be better skilled.

[00:09:41] **Sharon B.:** And the reason why I bought the salon was because I actually couldn't get a job in that town. Yeah, I just couldn't get a job. So dad loan me the money for a salon you know, I bought myself a job, so to speak. Yeah. So, I very quickly realized that I needed to skill. Yeah. I needed to have great skills, and I needed to be the best I could be if I wanted to make this fire. So that's when I started going to London. Yeah. So, I would book in January at Sassoon And it was so cold. I remember my first trip, I thought, are they all floating us onto some freezer? I had never been to London. It's my first trip out of the country. Yeah. And I thought maybe they put you in some process, like a decontamination process so when you get off the plane that they put you through this cold system and then you're, you know, you're all the bugs are off you, but it wasn't, it was just cold and I put myself into this hideous little hotel on half Moon Street. Yeah. And it was just one bed and a little warming oven where they threw you a croissant in a paper bag and you put that in each morning and the toilet was like. Nearly a floor away. And it was like the worst thing. I was freezing cold. I was so alone, and I booked myself for a month.

[00:10:46] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. And I did that for quite a few years. okay. because I was so obsessed by Sassoon and their cutting. Yeah. And when I went back to the country and back to Griffith, it was phenomenal. Yeah. You have no idea that business grew to like 21 staff. Yeah. In this little country town. And I taught all the team to cut Sassoon and then I sent them here into Sydney to Yeah. follow on that sort of learning. Carolyn Taylor, she had a cutting school and she bought a couple of Yeah, of course. Yeah. Claire Matthews in. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And you know, Claire and I got to be great mates and she trained all my staff. Yeah. And we were like iconic down there. Yeah. Even to the point that we even, I even had my own TV show.

[00:11:23] **Antony W.:** Fantastic.

[00:11:24] **Sharon B.:** So, every week I had my little, TV show where we show before just

[00:11:28] **Antony W.:** Regional tv or just

[00:11:30] **Sharon B.:** Regional TV. I was actually helped them keep their license. Because apparently you had to have local content. Yeah. So, I was classed as their local content.

[00:11:36] **Antony W.:** Fantastic.

[00:11:37] **Sharon B.:** It cost me \$50 a week for the local content, but it was like a full.

[00:11:40] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Great advertisement.

[00:11:41] **Sharon B.:** Amazing. I did that for three solid years.

[00:11:43] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Brilliant.

[00:11:44] **Sharon B.:** And we just grew that business phenomenally. Yeah. You know, down when you live in a country town like that, a lot of the guys are on their tractors, on their harvesters with their little televisions. Yeah. And they're watching me right after the Mo Mike Walsh show, which was, you know, a pretty interesting sort of Yeah. Guy here. And he was an Australian celebrity after his show, they would, you know, the phone would ring. So, if I was sort of advertising this week, a hot brush All of a sudden you knew when I'd been on because the phone just started ringing. Yeah. I mean, we did ear piercing to. It's so funny. We did 144,000 sets of ear piecing. Yeah. We demonstrated it and we had little babies, like even two months old coming Oh my God ears. We were the only people doing ear piecing. Yeah. For that gun.

[00:12:27] **Antony W.:** Yeah. At the time. Yeah.

[00:12:29] **Sharon B.:** And that was like, we give the apprentices that job and then we were just turning them around.

[00:12:33] **Antony W.:** A license to print money?

[00:12:34] **Sharon B.:** I know. And it was down there.

[00:12:36] **Antony W.:** At this point in time, were you doing a lot of competition work?

[00:12:39] **Sharon B.:** Nothing. nothing. Not until I came to Sydney.

[00:12:40] **Antony W.:** So not until you came to Sydney? Yeah. Okay. So, the real strength in your cutting came before the finishing before came to Sydney? Yes. The finishing side effects.

[00:12:47] **Sharon B.:** Okay. I think I was always a good finisher. Yeah. Although I was, I always say to myself, I'm a great, I believed then, and up until probably 10 years ago, I was a great copier. Yeah. And then I started to tell myself you do not copy. You actually take somebody's inspiration and make it your own. Yeah. So, I've changed my head space on that. Sure. Yeah. But I could pretty much create anything I saw. Yeah. I was, I feel that I've been fairly gifted in that respect. Yeah. That I can look at something and reproduce it. Yeah. You know, reasonably well.

[00:13:18] **Antony W.:** there's very little. Original, you know, e everything is influenced by something that's come before Oh, no matter what art form or whatever you're talking about. But, you know, when I introduced you, I said that you'd just celebrated, 50 years. you know, at a time in your life when many people would be sort of thinking about slowing down, you know, the last four or five years, you seem to be ramping things up to another level. Why do you think there's such a strong demand? For what you now do and in fact explain to our audience what it is that you do. what is Sharon Blain education? What does it specialize in?

[00:13:51] **Sharon B.:** we obviously specialize in dressing long hair. I suppose for me, about six years ago I was lying, you know, on holidays in Fiji and trying to think about where my future was going. Yeah. And obviously look at me as a person getting on in age and realizing that. You know, you've got to actually make a mark when you get older and you've got to be consistently making new marks. Because you get to be old hat and you've got a lot of competitors out there. So I needed to look at it. What was it for me that I was unique, that was unique to me as a hairdresser? What did I have that most people didn't have? And I had, in my opinion, some amazing skills. So, from my very first day working in a salon where they were doing, setting and doing, you know, that type of thing. I then moved from setting and realizing, I have some great cutting skills, as a competitor and being trained by some of the best, trainers in the world, namely the Braze in America. I travel to them and work with those guys, and they train me for, international competitions.

[00:14:48] **Antony W.:** This is doing the, like the World Cup. World Cup stuff, Okay.

[00:14:52] **Sharon B.:** So, learning from them, I realized I could pull skills out of that style of hairdressing that could resonate into today. What is needed to create these looks today? Sure. So, I started to look at my, like a method. I wanted to sort of put like a box set of skills together that if everyone learned those skills and learnt them well and practice them until they perfected them, they could virtually create anything that was thrown in front of them.

[00:15:16] **Antony W.:** Yeah. what do you think the skills are that are missing in young hairdressers today or in hairdressing today? Full stop. I mean, you've been in it for 50 odd years. So, you I haven't been in for that long, but I mean, I see how, you know, things have changed dramatically in my sort of 35, 36 years or whatever it is now. what do you think the skills are that are missing in hairdressers today?

[00:15:36] **Sharon B.:** I think we've; I think we're, in an era, and I pray that we are moving out of it where we started with when the straightener coming to being, yeah. I think it made hairdressers very lazy. So, they could see that they could just blast hair dry and straighten it or curl it. So therefore, there was really not a lot of, there's not a lot of skill in that. Yeah. So, it become, I think we've got a neuro, fairly lazy hairdressers. I mean, they've done beautiful haircuts and they've probably done superb colours, but when it comes to finishing and dressing Yeah. That doesn't take much to do that. Yeah. And in fact, you know we were, Probably the prime example in our salon, we would have order hundreds and hundreds of straighteners around Christmas and then offer people a, an evening to come in and we'll teach them how to do their hair with the straightener. You know, that was part of the deal. so, we've taught all these people to do the youth straighteners at home, so we've really even lost a lot of people coming into our salon

[00:16:28] **Antony W.:** For a weekly blow dry

[00:16:29] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. So, I've lost a huge. You know, possible, client base because of that. So, hairdressers I think, have become lazy. I don't think there's a huge focus on dressing hair in college, and particularly in America. They tell me that their strongest focus is always going to be cut in colour. Because that's what the board exams are usually evolved around. So, with that in mind, then they just get, they brush. The dressing skills. Yeah. But like yourself, you know, you are a fantastic cutter. if you don' have an all-rounded skill, and I don't think it necessarily always means to be a colourist, but I do think finishing skills are really vital. Even if you're a great cutter.

[00:17:07] **Antony W.:** You are lucky because you are of that generation where you started in the sixties and you know, I can remember my mom telling me that

when she used to go to the salon in the fifties and 60. That it wasn't about the haircut, it was about the dressing and the back combing. And the setting and the pushing it into place. That's exactly right. and it wasn't like you had a haircut every six weeks. so you were the last of that generation that really learnt how to mould and finish hair. and that's a real art, isn't it? And then the next generation learn how to cut here. Yeah. and maybe at the expense of finishing. That's right. And then after that generation, I think came the product generation, didn't it? That's where everyone learned to fill it up with moose and God knows what. and then now you're talking about the straightening iron generation. And so there, there's sort of generations that have skills in particular areas, but, and I'm, I feel fortunate that I've got all those skills.

[00:17:56] **Antony W:** Yeah, definitely. Definitely.

[00:17:58] **Sharon B.:** You know, I'm even down to being fortunate enough to have a week with Annie Humphrey's doing colour. Yeah. So, I cover the whole gamut.

[00:18:04] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Not when did you do that? When did you?

[00:18:06] **Sharon B.:** Sassoon, when they first introduced their colour class. I was, okay,

[00:18:08] **Antony W:** So, you we're talking years ago now?

[00:18:10] **Sharon B.:** Yeah, a long time. But I was there, her first student.

[00:18:12] **Antony W.:** Fantastic.

[00:18:13] **Sharon B.:** That, and there wasn't that many in the class, so how lucky was I? Yeah, definitely. yes, I, and for me, you know, it's all about education. Yeah. I've got this whole mindset. The minute, the last course you attended, that's where you're learning stopped. Yeah. And that's where you stay,

[00:18:30] **Antony W:** because that's what I was just going to say to you. How do you, what is the secret to your continual evolvment. I mean, you don't have to be a mathematician to work out that you are on the other side of 60 and here you are as passionate and dynamic.

[00:18:42] **Sharon B.:** Absolutely.

[00:18:42] **Antony W.:** As ever and you, so you keep on evolving. And so the secret to it is education. You're always looking to learn.

[00:18:50] **Sharon B.:** I embrace YouTube. You know, I joke so much about that, you know, the little Japanese hairdresser, the little Japanese nine-year-old that teaches me to braid. Yeah. But at the end of the day, if you sit there long enough, you can find any answer to anything you want.

[00:19:05] **Antony W.:** Oh, exactly. Yeah.

[00:19:06] **Sharon B.:** You know, so if you're struggling, about how to do a bald cap or how to do this or how to do that, there's always going to be an answer for you. yeah. and that's only more of.

[00:19:14] **Antony W.:** Very recently. Yeah. Yeah. Very recent. Yeah.

[00:19:16] **Sharon B.:** And prior to that it was me going in and buying masses of magazines and tearing out tests. Yeah. And doing all of that. Now, you know, Pinterest is something I'm just crazy about. And yeah. you know, I'm not looking for them to copy, but I'm definitely looking for them to inspire me. Yeah. And to keep current. And so if I can't see what's just happened on the runway for the couture in Paris, you know, I've got to check out all the hair. I'm going to take a screengrab. I'm going to think, oh, I like the front of that. Oh, I like the angle that's going on. Yeah. So you know that it can be little tiny minuet things. Yeah. But I'm thinking, oh, that's something for me to think about. So I put that in my little sort of Pinterest pages and Yeah. File them away for that's, that comes under that heading and that comes under that. Sure. So then when I am now thinking, okay, I've got to do a show in America. You know, where am I going to go with that? Yeah. So I'm always I would spend probably an hour every single day. Researching what's going on around the world.

[00:20:11] **Antony W.:** Yeah. So, your focus has always been very much, industry centred. Has it, like, have you ever done a period of time where you've done, like editorial work for magazines where we've done session work? Oh, yeah. Yeah. you've done that as well?

[00:20:22] **Sharon B.:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Look, you know, one of the things I always joke about whenever I do this sort of work, I've never been paid for it. Yeah. So it's definitely all about the credits in the magazine. Yeah. And, and so on. I think the best, the greatest experience I've ever had was for a period of time I was doing all the, imagery for the Goldwell International campaigns. Okay. So I was going into Germany, I think it, over about three years. I was going into

Germany and doing the product launch images, you know, all different things that they had fantastic. Been doing Fantastic. And that was phenomenal, and I learnt so much from that, not only because. You know, I was working with a new team. I learned, you know, how critical it was to have a fantastic brief. I would get a brief with 80 pages. And I would learn about the product, I'd learn about the market demographics, you know, I'd learn about all of this. and looking at trends, research and things like this. So I, from my end, I've been very focused on that sort of department now. Yeah. Always trying to sort of come up with a new next thing. Yeah. Yeah. Because I think as a hairdresser at this age, People don't want you to see the same thing. Yeah. You have to change, you have to be delivering something that's they haven't seen before and that's what is there not to have been seen. Yeah. you know, I'm always driving myself with that new. Little thing that might just get someone excited.

[00:21:37] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Be Before we were, before we started recording, we were just having a chat. And you mentioned, Alexandre de Paris. when I was talking to you then about your background and people that have in, you know, influenced you over the years, you know, tell me about that side of your influence. People like him. Yeah. how, how they moulded you?

[00:21:52] **Sharon B.:** I just, you, I remember seeing him in Paris at an event. I can still see myself sitting on the end of the chair. Absolutely. Spellbound and I, he was working, the one thing I remember, he was working with long hairnets and I've been struggling to find long hairnets. I finally found a friend in America that sent me some long hairnets. Yeah, but he was doing all these, you know, funnily enough, if you looked at his work today, it could be definitely transferred. Mine is a bit of glit. To what we are doing again. Sure. So it's this whole evolution, but the polish of his work Yeah. Was always what got me going. Phenomenal? Yeah. The hair just looked like it was just absolutely Satin, you know? Yeah. It was just beautiful, finished beautiful shapes. It just had a romance and a and I think it's haute couture hair. I think that's what really does definitely do it for me. Yeah. I struggle sometimes when I see the runway pictures with, you know, this bit of wet hair stuck on the skin and hanging around their face and crazy stuff. I think, you know, I could, I can't get the revelation, I can't get the relationship. Sure. Yeah. with that. But I definitely relate to beautiful, elegant. Chic polished hair. Yeah. Yeah. But that's not for everybody. So I've had to realize that I could go on being chic and polished, but that's not going to keep my business growing. Yeah. So, I have to constantly change that up and now I'm very textured and you don't see that much of me doing that anymore.

[00:23:06] **Antony W.:** Yeah. so when you do, your boot camps, you are doing, you know, all around the world these days, who is, who's in your audience? what's the typical sort of profile of the people you've got?

[00:23:15] **Sharon B.:** My God, I've had some of the most renowned people in my classes. You. Even down to my dear friend Gerard I'm from, hairbraided In the Oh, yeah. yeah. So he's an ex-Sassoon cutter. Yeah. And all of a sudden, he decided that, you know what, I need to actually dress hair. And he's actually teaching a little bit of dressed hair now. Fantastic. So, I invited him into my class and, he was just so wonderful. But how challenging is it when that's all you've done? Like you've just the best colorist or the best colorist and all of a sudden you have to really. Start learning some virtually from scratch. Yeah. Some of these skills, so you know, I have some amazing educators, some very renowned educators in America that are out there on the platforms. I have people from movies. we had the, we had, three people from Sydney who were fabulous, movie hairdressers. Great. And, you know, they've done the Gatsby and all Baz Luhrmann, yeah. But they came along to my class. I felt so flattered and overwhelmed and sometimes a little bit.

[00:24:13] **Sharon B.:** Intimidated. Sure. But I actually realize that when people come to my class, there's a big investment because it isn't a cheap class, but real realistically is there's obviously something that they feel I can share with them. Sure. Yeah. And they've, people don't come blind. Yeah. they obviously look at pictures and look at what's going on, and they can see something in them that might inspire them. We had one lady who was interesting. She was working on a character Serious in the US and she was very much characterized for that hair and she wasn't getting any more work because she was sort of locked into this genre of this style of hairdressing and she was struggling to get work because that's what they expected, that was all she could do. Sure. So people do get typecast as well. Yeah. So they're looking for, to be able to broaden these skills. Yeah. And then we get makeup artists who wouldn't even know how to hold a comb. Okay. So we take them from one all the way through.

[00:25:03] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Do you still stand behind the chair and do clients in the salon?

[00:25:06] **Sharon B.:** I have three clients. And they only fit in around me. Yeah. Yeah. but no, I don't, I have been on the floor for about six years now.

[00:25:13] **Antony W.:** Yeah. But you still have the successful salon in Sydney?

[00:25:16] **Sharon B.:** I still have the salon. I actually have two. Yeah. Okay. I have the second one over at Breakfast Point, so it's, you know, away from here. Yeah. A smaller location, but very good salon.

[00:25:24] **Antony W.:** Yeah. One of the things that I've been very interested to ask you about is your marketing, because I know that you have really embraced the sort of digital age. And I quoted some statistics about your YouTube views and your Facebook followers and all this sort of stuff. Tell me a little bit about that. Tell me about your approach to digital marketing and, you know, why you've done that.

[00:25:42] **Sharon B.:** You know, it just came by default, I suppose, when, the guy who does a lot of my videoing, Ian Golding, suggested we should open up a YouTube channel. Yeah. So, I suspect that was about five, maybe it could be six years ago now. And at that stage I had some books, that I had published, but they were never done as videos. They were only ever done as stills with words. So we decided we would actually upload them because the books had been around for a while. So, we thought, let's just put some books up there and sort of start growing a channel. Yeah. And I know today that people say to me that they first saw me on YouTube, it's quite remarkable. And I think we've got something like about eighties. Seven different videos of different Okay. Different types there now. Yeah. So, every single time we do something, we load it up to there. Yeah.

[00:26:25] **Antony W.:** But do you do that or do you have like a digital department of people?

[00:26:28] **Sharon B.:** I have a girl who's very focused on that. Yeah. Vanessa has been with me for probably 10 years. Yeah. And that is her sole aim. And even those three hundred, And 20,000 likes. We have not paid for one. Yeah. So, a lot of people go out and pay for those. Yeah. We haven't paid for any of them. So have just, it's a natural growth Yeah. That we've had with that.

[00:26:49] **Antony W.:** and I read 3 million views on Yes. On YouTube. Is that right? That's right. Plus 3 million plus views. Yes. Absolutely. Must be quite a buzz, to know that you're getting better.

[00:26:58] **Sharon B.:** and I realized you. I don't think anyone would've ever known Sharon Blain from Sydney. Yeah. Had it not been for the YouTube channel. Because that was the original one. That's where we started and we eventually evolved from there. Yeah. So, from there now I've actually spent, invested a lot of money in an app. So, we have both the Android and the apple version. Yeah. And that's going to be my strong focus for now on, I'm probably

going to shift out of videos But still do, footage. Channel it all in. Yeah, feed it into that. Yeah, because I don't think, I was, I heard something the other day that they were saying that we probably wouldn't even be able to buy a video player in 18 months time. Yeah. Exactly. So I'm working towards that now. yeah. To make that happen. And like yourself, I'm very, I'm working really hard on a platform for subscription as well. yeah. Because I want to be able to do new work every month to continue to deliver to those people that I don't, I can't touch because I'm only really one person.

[00:27:50] **Antony W.:** Yeah. it is amazing how quick the technology changes. I mean, I have, these audio broadcasts go out as either an MP3 download or CD. And, the MP3 downloads far exceed the CDs. And a lot of people say to me that I don't even have a CD player anywhere. Yes. In the house or car or whatever. They just, you know, everything is about, MP3 downloads. yeah. I mean, you know, video, CDs, it's all going to be online streaming. Yes. Mp3, all that sort of stuff.

[00:28:16] **Sharon B.:** And you have to really embrace it. Now, Vanessa is such. An animal. Yeah. Through the want of a better word.

[00:28:23] **Antony W.:** Is she a 20 something? Is she?

[00:28:24] **Sharon B.:** she's a 30 ish woman. okay. And she works remotely from home. Yeah. So we set her up at home. Yeah. but she's always, we're always signing up for some sort of online education around how to market and how to do things with the, to get that all going. So yeah, we are really focused on it. It's our strongest focus at the moment.

[00:28:41] **Antony W.:** I know you have won a phenomenal amount of awards, during your competition days and, and you and I used to compete against each other, business awards and all sorts of things. is winning awards important to you?

[00:28:54] **Sharon B.:** You know, I set myself goals every year. Yeah. When I wake up on January one, there's a set of goals for me. Yeah. And I'm not a person to shark on a goal. Yeah. So, if I commit to a goal and put on a piece of paper, I'm going to do whatever it takes to make that happen by the end of the year. And I think that's what keeps the longevity of my 50 years as well is Yeah. Setting goals. Yeah. so it's. Probably well beyond winning. Yeah. But it's me setting myself certain tasks that I must achieve.

[00:29:20] **Antony W.:** Winning what, is there something in particular that you,

[00:29:22] **Sharon B.:** oh, I would love to win Hairdressers of the Year. Everyone thinks I've won it. Yeah. Yeah. It's the elusive one. But I think I'm a bit out of that now, and I'm not even trying to win this.

[00:29:32] **Antony W.:** We are pretty well won. Every other thing,

[00:29:33] **Sharon B.:** there's nothing that I haven't won. That's, there's nothing that I haven't set my goals on except that one. Yeah. Yeah. And it doesn't worry me, but what I want to do every year is create the most beautiful photographic collection, so at least it gets some air play. Yeah. And it forces me to shoot Yeah. And use my head creatively to do that. Yeah. Now, if I did, if I, for one minute, I don't want to win hairdresser of the year. That probably wouldn't be on my goal list anymore. So, would I be as inspired? Would I be continually creating? Yeah. So, it gives you a goal, it gives you a time, it gives you a date where it has to be done. So, you drive yourself to it.

[00:30:06] **Antony W.:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I agree with that. I agree with that. what does a typical day look like for you now, or a typical week? Is there such a thing? There's a typical day, a week anyway.

[00:30:13] **Sharon B.:** Ah. this week for example, has been super crazy. I think we kicked off on Tuesday was a full day of marketing meetings. And planning for next year. So, I had the whole team in, I think we started at nine in the morning and we're still going about eight o'clock that night. After they'd left, I'm making notes and making, doing my jobs that I committed to do. Then Wednesday, Thursday this week, I did some training for, Conair, the Tong company. I love, always use the tongs, et cetera. So, I went in and showed them what I do with their tongs. Yeah. Because I work their tongs in a completely different way to them. You know, I'm obviously have used them so much. Yeah. I can create things that they never thought they could create with them. So, I shared my knowledge with them. And obviously today I've had meetings with people. one of the biggest things that we're working at the moment is we're flying off to Canada next week. To start working with bootcamp in Toronto. Fantastic. Yeah. So, it's packing. Is that your first time Toronto? First time for Toronto. Okay. We did Vancouver last year. Yeah. And we're Toronto this year. So, the packing, you know, to pack, to do bootcamp Yeah. Is phenomenal. You know, we have, I think we got 20 plus students coming in, we have to get dolls, tripods products. Yeah, lunches. We've got to pack all the kits; we've got to make sure everything goes with us. Yeah. We've got to work out how much we can take on the flights. So, all of that just comes a nightmare. Yeah.

[00:31:30] **Antony W.:** you'll love it. They're very much like, Australians, Toronto is like Melbourne. yes. A lot of people go to Toronto, say it's like Melbourne. Yeah. So it is too.

[00:31:36] **Sharon B.:** I'm looking forward to that.

[00:31:37] **Antony W.:** And you'll have a great time. A little bit colder though. Yeah.

[00:31:39] **Sharon B.:** And that's a five year, that's a five-week trip we've got, so we go straight on from them to two. Two gigs. In New York? Yeah. Into Atlanta. Yeah. And then to Atlanta and then home. Okay. So, everything's got to be packed for all these different events that we are doing as well. So, we're a lot of planning. Sure. Yeah. Goes. When you get on the plane, it's like a sense of relief cause you Exactly. Stop, you know?

[00:31:59] **Antony W.:** Yeah. I mean, obviously you don't do that all yourself. You have a team of people. And you've always had, salons and they've been very successful salons and big salons. And I know when I had my salons, I was, you know, very, much an admirer of your businesses. you know, and I, so I know the importance of developing a team. So, what I want to ask you about is what are the key things that you need to do that develop. A team of people.

[00:32:20] **Sharon B.:** Look, I think the biggest thing for a team is they want someone to inspire them. So, I think the owner has to be an inspiration in some way, and I think that was why I've always driven myself to be inspirational to my team, so they would want to be with me.

[00:32:35] **Antony W.:** Inspirational in terms of Creatively? Creatively or in terms of your work ethic or both?

[00:32:39] **Sharon B.:** I think work ethic creatively. Yeah. And creating a, a workplace that they want to come to. Yeah. If they don't want to show up to work. Yeah. I don't, I blame myself. Yeah. If I haven't created a great environment for them to want to come to, then I look at myself and think, what have I done? That I could have done differently Yeah. To make this better. And in my, as I shared at the very beginning, you know, the couple of the places that I originally worked at, they were virtually, I mean, these people could be taken to task today by work cover, and all of these people because of the way we were treated with bullying and all of that.

[00:33:11] **Antony W.:** but that's how it was then.

[00:33:12] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. But that's, yeah. And it was just gave you a sense of supposedly acceptable but not understand it. But it made me realize I would never treat anyone like that, and I think Got it. I think it's always about, respect for each individual and their personal needs. And I think more ever more now than ever that, you know, if you want to keep people coming back to work, you have to meet their needs. I mean, one of the things that I always did was be able to offer my staff that had babies free childcare.

[00:33:36] **Antony W.:** Yeah. I remember coming to your salon, which was a huge salon, not far from where we sited at the moment. And, you had, a childcare facility. Yeah. And full-time child minders and staff. We have a couple; I've never seen that before. It was amazing.

[00:33:49] **Sharon B.:** No. And we were able to designate a certain part of the salon on space to that.

[00:33:52] **Antony W.:** So that was for staff.

[00:33:53] **Sharon B.:** That was for staff and clients.

[00:33:55] **Antony W.:** And clients, yeah. Fantastic.

[00:33:56] **Sharon B.:** So, the staff could bring their children and we at one stage that we had to seven new babies. Wow. Now, in this day and age. Yeah. Hairdressers in Australia, if they didn't have free childcare because of the cost of childcare, yeah. They would not come back to work. They would probably just rip their clients off and take them to their kitchen. Sure. Yeah. So I felt this was always a way to bring my staff back to work and get them back on board. Good. And they were incredibly grateful for that. We would even, you know, put a little bit of time there for child, for breastfeeding and stuff like that. Yeah. But they were. So grateful to have this free childcare, so I embraced that.

[00:34:29] **Antony W.:** So, it was even free for the staff.

[00:34:30] **Sharon B.:** Oh, always free. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Always free for everybody. Fantastic. It's a very cheap service. Yeah, sure. If you really look into it, it was, it's a very cheap service. Yeah. And it was a real win for my, I remember you had, for my business,

[00:34:40] **Antony W.:** It was a huge space you had, wasn't it?

[00:34:42] **Sharon B.:** I can remember even husbands giving their wives a treat. Yeah. And booking a chauffeur to bring them to the salon on for an appointment, and the child booked in. for them to have their hair done. Fantastic so it was definitely a point of difference from someone. Yeah. It was a massive, amazing marketing thing for my business.

[00:34:58] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. Oh,

[00:34:58] **Antony W.:** definitely. I actually used to talk about it in my marketing seminars, I probably still do. Yeah. Usually as an example. so, with your salons, if I could just go back to them for a minute, you know, there's a lot of young salon owners that listened to this, you know, when you opened your salons and now you still have salons, you know, was it ever a financial struggle for you? Getting things started? Was business tough?

[00:35:18] **Sharon B.:** Look, I always say if you can pay yourself a wage before three years, you're doing well. Literally, if you can pay yourself a wage. Yeah. So, you were literally working and because I think most of the time, you know, I think we think as young hairdressers, oh my God, I'm doing all this money for this hairdresser. I'm going to open up my own salon but they totally forget how much it costs to run a business. Yeah, of course it does. And I would always say pay the staff before me. yes, there have been times, and I've been really too generous I think, over the years in one respect, where I have always given ah paid amazing wages, but never asked for huge amount in return. So things are, you know, as far as setting targets, so people never got their targets. They still got their pay. You know, I think a lot differently now. Yeah. And I realize that you know, the wage percentage is absolutely important. And I can remember at times my wages percentages were so disgustingly high, I couldn't nearly have walked out the door.

[00:36:09] **Antony W.:** I think we've all experienced that at some point. what's your biggest lesson been about money?

[00:36:12] **Sharon B.:** I am always very, mindful that what's in the bank isn't mine. Yeah. And I always make sure I put money away for a rainy day. So I always have two bank accounts and my working bank account. And every tax, every gst, every week, I always have a percentage that goes over for holidays. I put everything in this bank account. Yeah. Because when this all has to be paid, all of a sudden what you thought you had, which was fantastic. Sure. You don't actually have anymore. Yeah, exactly. So I always plan. I have a lot of planning around all of that. Yeah. But I think the learning for me is, I think you've got to have a good relationship with your bank, but you just have to learn to just don't

do the deals. So, you find a lot of reps come in and they've got a special deal for you. You can be left high and dry when you've got too much stock. always been emphatic about stock control. Yeah. We've, this is the book. This is how many we're allowed No more. Even if it's a fantastic deal, we're not buying anymore.

[00:37:06] **Antony W.:** Yeah. Has there ever been any one thing that, that someone said to you, business. You know, as a business person that really impacted on you, like just a statement, a lesson, something that you thought that is going to be the, you know, point of difference. My point of reference that I'm.

[00:37:21] **Sharon B.:** point of difference. Always offer a point of difference. Yeah. And don't discount. Yeah, don't discount. Yeah. always offer a gift with purchase. But don't discount.

[00:37:33] **Antony W.:** Okay. So, value added stuff?

[00:37:34] **Sharon B.:** Value always value added,

[00:37:36] **Antony W.:** yeah. Okay. and what about slightly different tact with both business and I suppose creatively it's, you know, the same answer potentially. when things don't work for you. So, like for example, you said, about winning awards, et cetera. and business-wise, in any area of your life when things don't work for you, I hesitate to use the word failure, but when things don't work out, how do you handle that?

[00:37:56] **Sharon B.:** I think you have to sort of really look at it as a whole, and look at what, why it didn't work and then what you need to do to move on. And, I think you and I were both Antony Robbins, doers in our earlier years, if I recall. Yeah. Yes. Yeah. And I never forgot him saying that, you know, if it's not working change. And if you keep doing the same thing, you will always get the same result.

[00:38:20] **Antony W.:** That's if you're lucky. Yeah.

[00:38:22] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. So, if it's bad yeah. You're, if you don't change it, nothing will change. Sure. So, for me, I've always been about change. Yeah. I will always embrace change. Yeah. and that's to me really important. But get back on your bike.

[00:38:34] **Antony W.:** You know, just get back on your bike.

[00:38:35] **Sharon B.:** Yeah, just get going. I mean, some people will bury themselves, they'll take a bottle, they'll do whatever they need to sort of console themselves. Yeah. You can do that for so long, but no one's going to listen after a while. Sure. Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. I think I have a prime example of a woman who was divorced and she's still 20 years after, she's one of our clients every time still is regurgitating that. I'm thinking, how long will people want to listen to your story of, woe. They don't, they might console you for just a couple of months. Yeah. But then it's, yeah. They don't want to hear that anymore.

[00:39:07] **Antony W.:** They pretend they haven't seen you.

[00:39:08] **Sharon B.:** They won't see you getting Sure up and going. Yeah, exactly. So whatever your case is, where, whatever the problem is, you got to get up and Yeah. make your life a great life and not have that burden.

[00:39:17] **Antony W.:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:39:18] **Sharon B.:** Burden your friends with it either.

[00:39:19] **Antony W.:** So, what does success mean to. You know, you've had lots of triumphs and lots of different areas of business over a 50 year plus period. What does success mean?

[00:39:31] **Sharon B.:** Do you know? Everyone sees me as successful, but I just see myself as a mum of three with three grandkids. Yeah. You know, even, this wonderful event that they had for me at her expo celebrating my 50 years. Yeah. And it was wonderful to see all my friends from worldwide sending congratulations, this lovely video footage and stuff like that. I still didn't, I probably really seen myself as successful. Yeah. Like other people maybe do, I don't see that. I just see myself as just a regular person doing a job. Yeah. I hope that I've never appeared to be a diva in any way. I mean, I'll be divaish if, I don't believe people are being treated well and I'll stand up for that. And if I don't think our industry's moving in the right direction, I want to make a stand and be a diva over that. And use that, influence that I had. Yeah. That, influence that I have to make a stand. But for me, I don't see that. I just see me achieving my goals and I just love seeing the success of people that have learned from me. Yeah. Go on. I get a lot of kick out of that.

[00:40:32] **Antony W.:** What's your greatest, you know, lesson been in life? It doesn't have to be hairdressing orientated, but. I've got a funny feeling, you might have just touched on it. As someone who's in the people business, been dealing with people for a very long time. You know, creatively had ups and downs, like

everybody, you know, health issues, business issues, you know, what's the lesson that you got?

[00:40:53] **Sharon B.:** Ah, look, I think the lesson, I have this one line of the lesson keeps coming back till you learned it. Yep. Yeah. so I'm always going. Think to myself if I'm, if this is still happening, I haven't learned a lesson and what I, why I haven't, I changed to Sure. Stop this from happening. Okay. I think last year was a massive learning curve for me. Yeah. Because as we joke about being run over by a truck, I actually literally was right. Okay. Sitting in hospital for 23 days. You know, wondering whether my foot was going to stay in the end of my foot, or whether we were go, it was going to be chopped off or.

[00:41:22] **Antony W.:** So, you literally got run over the truck? Yeah, I was Whereabouts in Sydney?

[00:41:25] **Sharon B.:** Here in Sydney. I was doing a photo shoot with a friend and we were going to a location and I was going back to my car and this truck just run over me.

[00:41:32] **Antony W.:** So what were you doing? You were thinking about something else. You were just,

[00:41:34] **Antony W.:** I was on a mission to get to the car because we were going to the location, the models you know. Prepared the models and off we were going. And then I was just crossing and this young fellow never saw me, so he just bowled me up and fortunately threw me back to the side of the road. And then the cart, his back wheel all ran completely over my foot. Oh my God. So I broke my hand and I've damaged my shoulder and the foot. But you know, I was in hospital for 23 days. I was really quite ill. I had lots of surgery. Skin grafts, the whole thing. And then I'm up and running probably three or four months later, and then all of a sudden I'm diagnosed with stage two cancer, and then it's like, oh my God, you know, is. Can't this year just end. Unfortunately that ended up fine. It was, you know, when they chopped this thing off my face, it was all good. So I'm well now. So, I decide now these are my lessons in life that I need to act upon. Yeah. So, I need to make sure every day moving forward from these moments, I've been given a bit of a. stay of execution that there got to be great days every single day. So what is it going to mean for me to make a great day every day? Yeah. And I realized that I probably needed to change what I was doing with my salons, probably pull back a little bit on things and actually do things that I really enjoy. And to be honest, the education is nothing that I get more pleasure out of than that.

[00:42:48] **Antony W.:** Yeah. but you're doing more and more of that?

[00:42:50] **Sharon B.:** I'm doing more of that.

[00:42:51] **Antony W.:** So you've been run over by a truck, you've been diagnosed with stage two cancer and you are in your, sixties if you hope, I hope you don't mind me saying, you know, pluses, plus you've got two salons, plus you've got this education company that you're ramping up. I mean, you know, didn't it ever occur to you when you were lying in hospital, you know, being told that maybe you want to calm down. did it occur to you that maybe you might want to calm down and sort of go into some sort of.

[00:43:12] **Antony W.:** all I could think about was what would I do if I did? Yeah, that's true. You know, do I, am I gonna do lunch and tennis and go to the gym every day? Yeah. And worry about whether that foils right in the right spot on my head. Yeah. Because that's sadly enough when people retire, they Sure. A little bit soft absorbed.

[00:43:27] **Antony W:** Yeah. do you think you'll ever.

[00:43:28] **Sharon B.:** I always joke and say, when the undertaker arrives with a box, yeah. That'll be my time for my holiday. And my retirement will start then. Okay. but you know, I joke and I'm planning 2016 with lots of gusto. Good. And I'm praying that my health will support me on that. Yeah. And obviously I do everything that I can to make that right. Yeah. but after that, we'll see,

[00:43:48] **Antony W.:** If you were talking to, you know, some young kid who just arrived in here and you were interviewing them for a a job in hairdressing and I don't know, they're 18 or something, and if they said to you, what one-bit advice would you give me? What would it be?

[00:44:02] **Sharon B.:** I had to answer that question the other day in a written interview, and I said, you just have to practice. You can't just think it's going to come to you naturally. Even today, I have a doll. I actually had to put it out of the lounge room today. So, the cleaners could clean

[00:44:18] **Antony W:** A doll's head.

[00:44:18] **Sharon B.:** A doll's head on a tripod. Okay. And I was practicing this idea, so I never, ever not have a doll sitting somewhere nearby. Yeah. When I've got five minutes, even if the jugs boiling, waiting for a cup of tea, I'm having a play. So, you have to be absorbed into, you've got to give it a hundred percent.

[00:44:34] **Antony W.:** Are you practicing things you already know or are you trying new things? I'm trying new things.

[00:44:39] **Antony W.:** I'm trying to perfect. And come up with another way of doing something to get a better result. Yeah. so I'm always challenging myself with my bootcamp, for example. I deliver it this way, but sometimes if I'm seeing the audience out all getting it, then maybe it's my delivery. Or maybe it's my technique isn't quite right, what do I need to do? Yeah. More people get what I've just asked them to do. Yeah. But for young people, I think that it's not just a, it's not easy. It's a tough industry and it's tougher now, but at the end of the day, the outcome can be so exciting. It is an amazing industry to be in. Yeah. There's just so many options out there. The world is just opening up to anyone that embraces it and takes it on board and Yeah. And allows themselves the time to learn. sure. Don't think it's going to happen overnight.

[00:45:23] **Antony W.:** Is there anyone in particular who you look to now for creative inspiration in terms of here? Is there anyone that you think, oh my, You know, I love seeing what does.

[00:45:32] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. I'm always looking at Angelo. I think Angelo's seminara is pretty cool. Yeah. I can't live without my Italian Vogue magazine. Yeah. Still getting delivered. Even though I could probably view it online somewhere. I still have to have that. I think Angelo, I think some of the UK guys are fantastic. I think Vivian Mc Kinder does a great job. She's got some, she has a great range of. You know, various things that she does as well. Her skills are fantastic. obviously I'm always going to love Sassoon. And you know, the people that inspire me the most when I go to sell on international, I can't leave the FAME team or those young inspirational teams because even though they're young, they've got such a whole different view and vision on hair Yeah. That there's always something that I can pull from that and think, wow, I hadn't seen that, or, that's really cool, or what can I do with that idea? To sort of work it into something. Yeah, so young people really inspire me as well.

[00:46:23] **Antony W.:** What frustrates you about the industry?

[00:46:26] **Sharon B.:** I think, I think sometimes it's a little bit political. Yeah. And I do think, sadly enough, the government have forced us to try and train our kids a little bit too fast. Yeah. Here in Australia particularly. Yeah. And I don't think they're getting enough training anymore. And they've made it so hard for us to train. We have to pay to train our staff. you know, I think that's not how it should be. I just feel it's just, it's not balanced anymore.

[00:46:49] **Antony W.:** So the apprenticeship thing isn't what it used to be? No. No. Okay.

[00:46:52] **Sharon B.:** No. We are doing three years instead of four. Yeah. And if we bring our staff into training the salon, so if I brought you to come and teach them Cutting. Yeah. I would pay you to cut. Yeah. And I would pay them to attend.

[00:47:02] **Antony W.:** Yeah. and you have to do that. Yeah. you have to pay them now for the training.

[00:47:04] **Sharon B.:** And even I bought them a ticket to go to her expo. Yeah. On a Sunday. I'd still have to pay them to go to her expo. Sure. As well. Yeah. So as a result, not balance.

[00:47:12] **Antony W.:** People don't bother to do that.

[00:47:13] **Sharon B.:** So, we've all, a lot, we've changed a lot. I will never have changed, but I know the industry's perception of how that should be has changed a lot based on their fear of being fined for not doing the right thing by the staff.

[00:47:24] **Antony W.:** Sure. What do you see in the world of hairdressing, anywhere in the world, that really inspires you, day, these days? Anything? I mean, changing business models, different products, you know, new technologies. What is it that you see out there that you go, wow, this is exciting.

[00:47:39] **Sharon B.:** Well, I can't say I've seen a lot of new things, to be honest. I mean, I got very excited by Alexander McQueen's exhibition. So, I, did you see it? Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. Fantastic. My head is just in another world with that. Yeah. The industry, gosh, you know, we haven't done a, we haven't seen a lot of. New changes, I think for a while. Yeah. Nothing that I think, has that comes to mind.

[00:48:00] **Antony W.:** There's no products.

[00:48:01] **Sharon B.:** or, I know there's Olaplex Oh yeah. That type of thing we're about that.

[00:48:05] **Antony W.:** There's a lot of those now there. Market's being, you know, flooded,

[00:48:07] **Sharon B.:** it's going crazy with that. so I see that as probably something new. Yeah. Yeah. There's a few new styling products, but you know, they've got to be, they're there for a reason. Sure. Maybe there's a few new creative tongs out there that are starting to get a little bit excited, some

[00:48:20] **Antony W.:** Different tools and stuff.

[00:48:21] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. But I wouldn't say any one that. Yeah. Really jumped up and said hello.

[00:48:25] **Antony W.:** Okay. what would you say the biggest change was in the industry that you've seen in the last 50 years that you've been in it? I mean, you know, from sixties, Bathurst hairdresser, country town to 2015. you know, what's the single biggest change you've seen in that time?

[00:48:38] **Sharon B.:** It might sound really corny, but the one thing that I always remember was the day they bought a blow dryer into our salon.

[00:48:43] **Antony W.:** You remember that though, do you?

[00:48:45] **Antony W.:** Absolutely. Okay. That's a long time. We wondered what the hell to do with it, because all these ladies were sitting around with dryers on and what, how do you make this work? You know? Yeah. you know, blow dries are pretty exciting. Yeah. you know, I was a perm queen many years ago. Yeah. So there's so many eras. There's so many changes. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. I think the free colouring, the Ballard, you know, the, you know, that type of new pear painting Done appropriately and tastefully, I think has been a nice, fresh way of moving out of foiling and that, you know sort of , Hard work. Yeah. Type job. Yeah. I think we, being able to get people in and out of the salon, it's a lot better have to.

[00:49:21] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. I think one of the changes would have to be YouTube because really what it's done is, created a situation for our clients that know more Than what we know now. Yeah. So we are dealing with some, supposedly some very informed clients, which makes Job as a hairdresser, I think, a little bit hard. You know, because they sort of come in with a perception. They sort of, they're talking about stuff that they've read or learnt, so they, internet has influenced them so strongly that now they, it makes it hard for the young hairdresser to please them. There's a, an upside and a downside to everything, isn't

[00:49:51] **Antony W.:** My, I've got two daughters, as you know, teenage daughters. I always thought when they were little, When they're teenagers, I'm gonna be called on a very regular basis to do their hair. I don't think they've ever asked me once. You know, and they do their hair beautifully. Yes. And it's all self-taught. Yes. From YouTube. That's right. and they do a far better job than I would anyway.

[00:50:08] **Sharon B.:** I'm still thrill that my 35 year old daughter still only wants me to cut her hair. Good on. And my son booked in for one on Sunday night and an a lamb roast as well. Yeah. Okay. So I've got to cook and cut his hair.

[00:50:23] **Antony W.:** Are you a good businesswoman?

[00:50:24] **Sharon B.:** I think I am.

[00:50:25] **Antony W.:** Yeah, so there's not someone in the background that is the financial advisor?

[00:50:28] **Sharon B.:** I'm a bit of the director. Okay. I'm the director and I just, I can come up with the ideas and then I. Filter them down for everybody to action them. Okay. So I think I'm a bit of an ideas person.

[00:50:37] **Antony W.:** What one skill do you have? Maybe that's the answer, you know? is there one skill that you have that has an impact on the bottom line?

[00:50:45] **Sharon B.:** I think being able to empower and trust people. Trust the people around you. Yeah. To do the right thing and empower them to do it.

[00:50:51] **Sharon B.:** Has there ever been in your career a defining moment where you've thought I've made it?

[00:50:57] **Sharon B.:** I don't know about made it. I think the recognition when I was given the Hall of Fame Yeah. Was. Impacting for me. Okay. Because that was an industry vote. Yeah. Yeah. But I was the one person recognized that year. Yeah. So that was very important. Sure. I think when my team in Japan won the Oceanic Region of the world in the World Cup. Okay. Yeah. That was pretty damn. So when was this? This is, oh, that was like 90, 1990, something like that.

[00:51:23] **Antony W.:** So that's that full on competition.

[00:51:24] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. When I was coaching Australia. That was pretty cool.

[00:51:27] **Antony W.:** what did the next 10 years look like for you?

[00:51:28] **Sharon B.:** I'm going to have to keep the Pilates going, to keep the arthritis from sinking in. I have to book the wax jobs more often and the colour jobs every two weeks cause of the grey hair. Yeah. I'll always stay red. Yeah. true to the brand. but look, I can see, definitely there's a subscription-based online learning becoming a very strong focus for me. Okay. I want to see the app really ramp up. Yeah. I want to see people using it as their go-to education. I'm so excited about that cause I want to see people remotely be able to learn at a touch of a button and they can do that with the app, which is very exciting. And also, with the online.

[00:52:04] **Antony W.:** And you don't have to travel quite so

[00:52:05] **Sharon B.:** That's what it is. It's building that whole brand of, that education where people can sit at home and learn.

[00:52:11] **Antony W.:** Yeah. What would. Like to be remembered for when the day comes in a very long time in the future when you are, you know, retired. Yeah. Sit on your rocking chair sort of reminiscing. What would you like to be remembered for?

[00:52:22] **Sharon B.:** I want to be remembered a person who motivated someone Yeah. That shared, that was willing to share everything they could share and not hold back. I never hold back. I never think what's the point in holding back? You know, if there's that one little thing that they need to know to get this over the line. Yeah. What is it in owning that? That's not what it's all about. So, the more you give out, the more you are going to get back anyhow. Yeah. Yes. So definitely being known for sharing. Yeah. And being willing to put my hand up. Right, whenever. For the cause. Yeah. For the industry, obviously.

[00:52:52] **Antony W.:** Do you have any regrets? Anything you'd do differently?

[00:52:55] **Sharon B.:** Probably I wouldn't have minded being a florist.

[00:52:58] **Antony W.:** A florist. Okay. I didn't see that one coming.

[00:53:00] **Sharon B.:** Yeah. I thought I wouldn't mind being a florist, but. I figured after I did 12 months of commercial floristry at TAFE, that it had to be up at four in the morning to get the flowers right. Okay. So, I thought, I can't do them early morning. Sure. Yeah. So that had to go out. Yeah. But I love being a

florist because I think that learning and those skills, just even in the design elements, has really enhanced my Hairdressing as well.

[00:53:22] **Antony W.:** There's a lot in there about balance, massive and texture and shape and stuff as That's right. Yeah.

[00:53:27] **Sharon B.:** In fact, some, I think it's in Japan, they actually have a degree that hairdressing, they do a little element of floristry within it.

[00:53:34] **Antony W.:** Okay. That's interesting

[00:53:34] **Sharon B.:** That's what I've been told. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Because of the design principles that's attached to it.

[00:53:39] **Antony W.:** you were a 14 year old. In the sixties in, a little town, country town and in Outback Australia, if that's the right term to use. if you could magically go back and, have a word to that young lady, what bit of advice would you give her? What would you say to her?

[00:53:55] **Sharon B.:** I think she should just keep doing what she's doing and look out for the trucks. And watch out for the trucks. Yeah. Yeah. Love. Yeah, definitely. I don't think there's anything that I would've done differently. And as I have a young niece now venturing into hairdressing, I'm giving her the same advice. Yeah. You know, I'll nurture her through. And I think she's a country girl. That's great. Be nurtured through hairdressing, so you know. I don't think there's anything I would ever change. Fantastic. Just get on that bike and just keep pedalling.

[00:54:24] **Antony W.:** I know that, a lot of people would've listened to this in many different places. A lot of youngsters and, a lot of,older people that are looking for inspiration and everything in between, from many different countries. And I know that your message and your life story. Inspired a lot of people. So Sharon Blain, thank you very much for being a guest on Unplugged Today.

[00:54:45] **Sharon B.:** Thank you so much for having me. Really honoured. Thank you.

[00:54:48] **Antony W.:** My pleasure.