

GMSB 204

[00:00:00] **Antony W:** Welcome to the Grow My Salon Business podcast, where we focus on the business side of hairdressing. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and I'll be talking to thought leaders in the hairdressing industry, discussing insightful, provocative, and inspiring ideas that matter. So get ready to learn, get ready to be challenged, get ready to be inspired, and most importantly, get ready to grow your salon business.

[00:00:28] **Antony W:** Hello and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business Podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker. And as always, it's great to have you here with us today. Artificial intelligence, whether you like it or not, is changing the world that we live in right in front of our eyes. And the impact of it really can't be overestimated. I'm not sure whether to say overestimated or underestimated, but either way you get what I mean. And whether you like it or not, you can't put the genie back in the bottle. It is here to stay. So we need to learn all about it. We need to understand it. And more importantly, How to use it to improve our lives and our businesses. A few weeks ago, I did a podcast with Gordon Miller, which was episode 196 called the AI revolution in the salon industry. And then episode 199 was with Richard Kavanagh, where we talked about AI and creativity. So my guest today is someone that I've known for pretty much my entire career, longtime friend and returning guest, Vivian Mackinder. And Vivian and I recently spoke very briefly about the idea of what AI. Can't do. And amongst other things, she said, hairdressers care and they help and they trust. And we talked about all these emotional things to do with AI and hairdressers. And so today we're going to come at AI and hairdressing from a slightly different angle.

[00:01:57] **Antony W:** So in today's podcast, we're going to discuss emotions, the human touch, the soul, creativity and artificial intelligence and a whole lot more. So, without further ado, welcome to the show, Vivian Mackinder.

[00:02:12] **Vivienne M:** Thank you so much, Antony. And I also want to say thank you for all the amazing guests you have brought to us. I listen to you so often, and I thoroughly enjoy every single interview. You've become the Oprah of the industry.

[00:02:27] **Antony W:** Ha ha ha ha! The Oprah of the industry. Okay, I'll take that. I'll take that all day, every day. All right. Okay, I didn't know where you were going to go with that. But thank you, Vivian. That's very kind of you. Right, um, where do we start? Well, I sort of touched on in the intro already. Uh, a couple of months ago, we had a conversation about AI, and we, Both agree that it'd be good to do a podcast. So before we get into it, I know that AI is about. A lot more than just chat GPT, but unashamedly, that's how, uh, I've been using and interacting with AI on a daily basis, sort of more as a research assistant. And to be really honest, it's been very, very good. So I want to start off by asking you, aside from all the things like Alexa and Google Maps and social media, et cetera, to what degree have you been using AI since? Chat GPT exploded into the market.

[00:03:23] **Vivienne M:** Well, like yourself, it's an incredible resource to be able to take an idea and see where GPT takes you. And it's mind blowing how quickly it can spit something out. And the more it gets to know you, it's extraordinary how it almost becomes your friend and intuitive. But what's fascinating is it can't speak to emotion. It can't speak to the creative process. and it can't speak to the journey of emotion that we go through with our guests behind the chair. So there's a lot of things they cannot do. So I celebrate what they can do. I've been researching and looking at all the different apps that are out there where you can try on your colour, you can try on different hairstyles, et cetera. And they're fun. They're a great game. And while they're, they are brilliant, there are problems with them. So, I'm going to show you how you can use these technologies because a client can look at, Oh my gosh, like I'll take me for example, I could have platinum blonde hair in an AI experience. Right? Now I come to you, Antony, and I say, well, I want platinum blonde hair. Well, if you want to take it home in a bag, Viv, sure. So there's the, there's the gap between the fantasy. And this painted picture and the reality of what's really possible. And that human touch is something that we have to hold on to so dearly. And, and it's not doing great consultations, it's being. We've got to be it every single day.

[00:04:55] **Vivienne M:** And the gatekeeper to everything we do. is that consultation. It is that human touch. And so while we can play around with all the wonderful things and you, you, you know, the, the smart mirrors, which are brilliant, the information is only as good as what you put in. And if you're not putting in, if you don't know to ask the right questions, you may not get the right answer. So I think we have to be open minded and look at everything that's going on, but we can't negate the importance of the soul connection. And. When I think about that new guest experience, I'm going to be really honest with you, Antony. I still, to this day, have a little bit of anxiety.

[00:05:38] **Antony W:** Yeah, definitely. Okay, um, I had a question which I have written down in front of me, which I wanted to Sort of prompt you with because I was thinking about you as a person and I think because I've known you for over 40 years So you were very very young when I first met you You know that I've, I've earned the right to say certain things that this is not offensive at all. But what I wanted to say was that I don't really know a better way to put this, but you're very human. You're very feminine. You're very also flirtatious as a person with how you interact with people and how you approach hair and beauty. And that's a compliment. So the question I want to ask you is got nothing to do with as a hairdresser. It's as a woman, not as a hairdresser. How do you feel about the role of AI and the role that it has in a salon, from a creative, from a beauty perspective, not, not from a, how it can retail and how it can do, you know, collect all sorts of data, but from that angle. What are your thoughts?

[00:06:45] **Vivienne M:** Well, I've sat in the chair of, I've had some of the most famous hairdressers in the world do my hair. And I've had some great haircuts. And I went undercover twice in London to a very famous hairdresser to have my hair cut. And it was a horrible experience. And when I came out, I went to see Stephen McKenzie, who was at that time at Sassoon's. He said, Vivian, you look like a tulip. And I thought, well, I just paid 500 pounds to look like a tulip. And I felt. I felt horrible, and another time I thought, right, I'm going to go undercover, and it was just about two years ago, actually, just before COVID. And, um, I went to this really high-profile salon and I thought, well, I'm just going to have a consultation. So I went in there and I thought,

no, I just can't do a consultation. I better have a blow dry. And my hair was a little longer. And so I went in and I was immediately escorted to the backwash. And I thought, Oh. I want a consultation. Where's that going to happen? And so the gentleman starts to want to shampoo my hair. I went, Oh, no, no, no, no. May I please have a consultation? I think, Oh no, he's going to figure out I'm a hairdresser. I don't want him to know that. Right. And so, um, he said, Oh, he said, well, I'm thinking he said, you're just having a blow dry. Aren't you? I went, yes, but I'm maybe would like to have my hair cut.

[00:08:02] **Vivienne M:** He says, well, come to the mirror. So we're now in front of the mirror. And I'm thinking, I'm now putting the words in his mouth and I don't want that. I know I'm going to be paying 150 for my blow dry. And so he says, well, we could just make it go to the shoulders. And I said, well, what would that look like? He said, it would be an inch shorter. Okay. Didn't ask me about my occupation. Didn't ask me about fashion. Didn't talk to me about my face shape. Didn't talk to me about any challenges I may have with my hair. Didn't stand me up to see if I'm a banana, pear, or the fruit bowl. Didn't do any of that. Um, didn't say, like, you know, didn't ask me about my age. Like, do you want a sweetie look younger or older? You know, what's on the menu? None of that. And so then I said, Because at one point, I had a very short haircut before this one. And, um, I said, well, how about having a pixie? And he went, oh, no, never a pixie. And so he said, but I can do it right now for you. And I thought, I don't even know what you're offering me other than an inch shorter, and that's not a consultation. I said, I'm happy with the blow dry. I have a wonderful shampoo. I then have my blow dry. And so he says to me, I'm looking at him now thinking, what's he going to do? And why would a woman with this length hair be paying this kind of money for a blow dry?

[00:09:19] **Vivienne M:** Is she going to a red-carpet event? Why is she doing that? Or a hot date? And I was going to a red carpet event. And he said, so do you want it straight or curly? And I thought. Well, what does that look like? And I said, well, what does that mean? Like, where will my parting be? Will it be behind my face? How will that be? Like, vogue around the face and show me how am I going to look, right? Nothing. So I said, Do whatever you want, because you can't go wrong with a blow dry. So he yanks on my hair, he makes it poker straight, my hair's naturally curly, doesn't talk to me about the product, doesn't even say, listen, it's humid today, we're in London, how long has this got to last? So I go back to my flat, and by the time I get to the flat, my hair's already starting to bounce up and curl. By the time I got to the red carpet event, that blow-dry didn't even exist anymore. He thinks he gave me a consultation. He did not. But the thing that I felt the saddest of, I didn't feel he cared about me. He wasn't really interested. He was just, I'm doing a blow dry. So if we go to the AI world and we spit in, Vivian's got red hair, Vivian's got an oval face shape, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it spits out something, right? Um, how do you interpret that? How do you then show that you care about me? And so that to me was like, wow, you can either elevate me and it can be the most wonderful transformation or I can feel so disappointed.

[00:10:53] **Antony W:** Okay. Um, what questions, you sort of just went there then that made me think of this. What questions do you think women will ask AI about their hair? What they asking, do you think, are they putting into chat GPT or whatever other AI

they're using? Cause I know there's, you know, lots of others. What questions do you think they're putting in there?

[00:11:18] **Vivienne M:** well, I think face shape is always an interesting thing, um, what's going to make me look younger? Uh, what's going to make me look maybe more feminine? Will this hairstyle suit me? Because so many times now, when we have a client bring in a photo that she's curated, she's curated the best of what she could find. That may not be the best for her. So while I don't mind someone curating images and showing me, that person's not sitting in my chair. So I can say, I love your references, I can see the aesthetic, I can see that they're either romantic, I can see that they're either, you know, kind of tomboyish, whatever that genre may be. I can see it's very boho. I want to let her know what I recognize about that look. It's I don't look at a hairstyle as short or long. And I think if you get into the narrative, or short or long, blonde or brown, straight or curly, you are taking an order. You are not diving into your expertise or your wealth of knowledge to understand that while you may have seen that cute hairstyle, or it may be your face with a hairstyle around it, I now have to discern, right, that the balance is off. It's making you look older, or it's making you look younger. There needs to be an interpreter.

[00:12:34] **Antony W:** Okay, that all makes good sense. I was thinking about you sent me an email and I haven't told you I was going to talk about this, but you sent me an email two or three days ago, and it was very interesting because you wrote in the email, Hey, listen, this is what I asked Chat GPT. How should I prepare for a podcast? And you sent me what Chat GPT had said, and it was very good. Okay. And. It sort of got me thinking. I've got a friend of mine who's a fantastic hairdresser, uh, but his weak spot is on stage. He, he doesn't feel comfortable, you know, talking on stage. And he used to say to me, usually just before he went on stage, he would say, You know, what should I say? And I used to have great delight in saying to him, don't, don't worry about it. Just relax. I'd say to him, you've been preparing for 20 years. Like, you know, you just go out there, and everything you need to talk about is inside you. It will just come out. And he used to hate that, but I genuinely meant it. And I sort of said that back to you when I replied to your email, I said, Viv, you didn't need to ask chat GPT. You've been preparing for the last 40 years, meaning that. All this knowledge is inside you. Now, I'm not saying that you did that, uh, ask Chat GPT that question because you were freaking out about the podcast.

[00:13:58] **Antony W:** You're the last one that would be freaking out about that. But it made me think about, is Chat GPT and AI going to make people lazy? Because pre chat GPT, you might've sat down and thought, now, how am I going to handle this podcast with Antony? What am I going to talk about? What topics do you think I should cover? Do you know what I mean? You would have, you would have exercised your imagination and your imagination, creativity. And if you don't use it, you lose it. And so, you know, that was sort of, you know, a loop I was asking you about. What questions do I think that, that women will ask chat GPT? And you were talking about this consultation with this guy, et cetera. And I like chat GPT and I use it already to do stuff, to help with all sorts of stuff as a, as a research assistant and, and it's really good, but is it making me lazy because without it. It certainly speeds up my processes, but without it, I exercise this more in terms of thinking and writing and making notes and planning and sort of strategizing. So I'm a bit, you know, maybe I'm a bit perplexed

about that and how I see that, you know, uh, impacting, uh, on the creative process, not just in hairdressing, but the creative process full stop. I mentioned to you before we started recording how. Um, I have my sister-in-law staying with me at the moment, and she's a school teacher, uh, secondary school.

[00:15:33] **Antony W:** And we were having a conversation the other day, and she was saying that kids today can't communicate their social skills are terrible. They're good with, you know, IT, they're good with their phones, they're good with social media. But she said, you know, the difference in kids today to when, you know, 20 years ago is, is dramatic. And so I suppose I'm drawing a parallel there. I'm thinking about, okay. What's AI going to do for us as creatives in 20 years' time? Is it going to stop us thinking and, and, you know, getting excited and planning things and, and looking at nature and looking at photography and going to galleries and getting inspiration that way? Is it going to make the creative process lazy? What are your, what are your thoughts about that?

[00:16:23] **Vivienne M:** I think there's a huge danger of that because, um, You're right. Creativity is a muscle. You flex it. And whenever I'm working with a more experienced hairdresser, sometimes they'll worry, saying, well, I'm getting older. Am I losing my creativity? No, no, no. Some of the greatest artists that we know of increase their creativity through its use and its experience. So I think it's flexing it. I think it's the curiosity. It's trusting in your intuition. My intuition has been such a teacher to me when I'm looking at someone and saying, should I push it or should I pull back? Like I look at fashion as a wheel. I can either go in extreme or I can bring it down look at personality as big or as small. I look at femininity as very soft and sensual or going back into androgyny. And so intuition, and of course the questions I ask, and how I read that person, is observation, is a curiosity, I am problem-solving. Because at the end of the day, I am the one with the tools in my hand. So, you know, sometimes we have that client that will be, um, our puppeteer and she's pulling our string.

[00:17:34] **Vivienne M:** And so we are yes ma'am, no ma'am, and she's pulling our string. And so we're not even engaged in a thought process, but like, what do you want? Okay, I'll do it. I just want to. You know, it's that people-pleasing thing, which is good, but not when it's out of balance, not when you're out of integrity with the work that you do. You know, then we've got the hairdresser out there who's the entertainer, and they entertain their client. And, you know, that is something that AI cannot do. The entertaining experience. The client loved how she felt. felt while you were doing the service and then you've got the technician who is like laser focused. They're looking at every detail of the shape and maybe they don't have a narrative. They're so focused on the craft. I remember going into John's Hog Salon in New York and he wanted me to work with him and I went in and it was almost like a spa. It was silent and I said, John, how come no one's speaking to anybody?

[00:18:29] **Vivienne M:** He said, we don't hear. We're talking to the hare. And I thought, that's pretty cool, right? He's talking to the hare. And so you've got, you know, you've got the person who's the puppet, their strings are being pulled, you've got the entertainer, you've got the technician, and then you've got the artist who's flamboyant, right? And they go on emotion. But if you understand how to play all four of those, You start to have a very dynamic experience where the client is getting that human touch

and she's getting something that really is couture and designed for her. And it could be just how the parting is shifted. It could be just a simple tuck behind the ear. It could be the difference between the length sitting at the shoulders or the jawline. I remember, again, this is, um, uh, Frederick Mackay, uh, he wanted me to work with him when I was in New York. And I spent, I spent some time watching him work and he was at that time, I think the first hairdresser in New York to charge. I think back then it was about \$500 for a haircut. It was high. So I thought this can be really interesting to watch how he works, the emotion, that French charm, he's a handsome man, and he's got all these fabulous ladies there. He's doing haircuts on the 15-minute appointment. He's got three assistants blow drying.

[00:19:43] **Vivienne M:** He stands that lady up, and he looks at her face, and he kind of vogues around her face, which I love to do. I like, kind of rehearse, where's that line going to live? Why is it living here versus here? I'm really like thinking about how am I going to make that face oval? So I'm looking at that and he did that and he played around and he just said. That's it. It would be beautiful. So within the hour, I saw him do a haircut that varied from inch to inch around the shoulders and the jaw. They were pretty much similar haircuts. They were all lovely. But he had that subtlety to know this is the perfect length. One inch longer would be wrong. A square angle would have been wrong. An elevated angle could have been right. So he didn't just look at their face, he looked at their body, he looked at their profile, and he had an aesthetic, a sensibility that was emotional intelligence. It was the science of beauty, which he understood. He had an incredible aesthetic. And when I think to some of the great hairdressers I've worked with, so think about I assisted and I was the assistant to Christopher Brooker he had an incredible aesthetic. I stood by Trevor Sorbie's side for how many years he had an exceptional aesthetic. I've stood in the presence of so many incredible editorial stylists who have learned through the eye of the camera. This works. This doesn't work. This balance. This doesn't balance. Um, that emotional response and the playing and the manipulation is what makes hairdressing so joyful is the creative process is the imagination. It's anyone in any business when you have a sense of progress. you feel alive. When you're standing still, technically you're moving backwards. So I think the creativity, you can be in the business burnt out, bored, unmotivated. Because I believe you haven't tapped into your artistry and your creativity, and maybe you don't trust you.

[00:21:48] **Antony W:** Okay, so one of the things we were talking about before we started recording and I said, stop, I said, stop, we've got to talk about this when we're recording. So I was hoping you were sort of going to go there, but you're not. I'm going to go there because it's very opposite to what you're talking about. Okay. Um, you were talking about a photographer that you've been working with and how he was talking about AI and the impact will have on fashion and beauty and the editorial world and all that sort of stuff. So, uh, share with our audience what that was all about.

[00:22:21] **Vivienne M:** Yeah, I was on a photo shoot, and my makeup artist showed me some front covers that he had been working on. And I've worked with this photographer a lot over the years, and he said, Oh, look at this Viv, he said, he said, it's all AI, and I said, what does that mean? He said, it's not even the real model. And I said, well, who is it then? He said she was built through AI. I said, well, is that your makeup? He said, no, I art directed the makeup, but I didn't do the makeup. And I said,

well, what about the hair? He said, the hair was put on. I said, so you mean everything I'm looking at was, was... It's created in it. It's way beyond Photoshop, clearly. And he said, yes. He says, sometimes we'll use the model and then we'll start to shift parts around, which I understand. You see that I'm retouching, but this is one notch beyond. So I've heard from quite a few photographers, right? Will we need models? Uh, will makeup artists exist? Will hairdressers? And I, and I said, Oh, well, hairdressers, you'll still need hairdressers. He said, Viv, think of it as a paper doll. And what you're doing is you're putting the layers of the clothing, the layers of the makeup, the layers of the hair on. I said, but someone's got to conceptualize it. Someone's got to still art direct it. And he said yes. He said, it's very controversial and people are nervous. And he said, we're years away. But this particular photographer is nailing it right now, and he's kind of having to go a little under the cover because the models, the makeup artists, the hair, the fashion, the photographers are all starting to freak out because that's a livelihood.

[00:23:54] **Vivienne M:** But at the salon level, they are people that have to walk out of the door. They are, they are real. So while I do think it could impact down the road, the editorial world, yes. And I, the biggest worry too, is the, the falseness of how a woman should show up because The faces are so perfect that I don't care how many facelifts, Botox, all the fillers and everything that you do, you can still not get to that doll like mannequin face. And there are some women who are so obsessed with that and it becomes unhealthy because I still believe the most beautiful woman I've ever met are those who are beautiful inside. Compassion. Caring. And if they're pretty on the outside, that certainly does help. But I think we're going to get out of balance. So we should never be cavalier. And we should celebrate the wonderful gift of our hands and the human touch, the fact that we touch a head, that we work in the soul realm, which is our mind, our will, and our emotions, that we are artists. And if we act like a machine, then the machine will take our job to some degree. We can't be that machine. We've got to put. We've got to put some emotion into it. We've got to put care and passion and I, I said in the beginning, why I, you know, I sometimes, and I often do, have anxiety over a new guest experience. It's because I care. And I don't want to misread them or misjudge them, and I don't want to assume, and I don't want to put what's comfortable for me on them. And many times in my career, I have done what felt right for me. I was comfortable with that, but it wasn't right for the guest.

[00:25:46] **Antony W:** Okay, um, I'm going to keep pulling everything back to the AI thing all the time because AI is really powerful, and people are going to put a lot of, they're going to give it a lot of credence. You know, the AI, whatever it was, has said this. And then they go into a salon, and they go, I want this. Because. I said, this is what's going to be best on you, your face shape, your skin tone, your eye colour, whatever. How do you ensure that those sort of recommendations from a salon perspective from a hairdresser's perspective? How do you ensure that those recommendations align with the creative vision? And the individuality of every client, because of all those things you're talking about that, you know, the, the, the, the human connection, the, you know, the personality, the AI doesn't deal with that, does it? It doesn't see that, so talk to us about that.

[00:26:43] **Vivienne M:** Well, if you ask a question to AI about any of that, it will tell you I am ai. I, I do not have human emotions, so it cannot currently do that. I think it's

about our responsibility to be very well-trained. We have to understand, uh, there's one thing to talk to a client, but there's another thing to connect. We have to understand the landscape where that client lives. We have to take into consideration age. We have to consider, take into consideration personality type. How loud or quiet is that client? We have to take into consideration where does she live in fashion. So, we have loads of layered hairstyles that are long right now. It could be rock and roll. It could be bohemian. It could be glamorous. Those are three totally different personalities, totally different genres. Now what if your client's proportions of her face are not the classic? Because the ideal, the science of beauty says oval is the classic. So any AI out there can recognize an oval face. And then it can say, oh, you're a pear or you're a triangle. And it can look at where the volume is in the face and where it should be reduced down. But it's going to take the hairdresser to say, OK, so AI has said to you that you've got a pear face shape. Well, that means I've got to give volume where your skull is narrow because the top of your head is small. The bottom of your face is wide. So now, either through colour, I'm going to create shadows or through styling or cutting, I'm going to give more volume on the top. But can your hair do it? Do you need to have hair extensions? Do you need to have a permanent wave? What else do you need that AI can't tell you?

[00:28:23] **Vivienne M:** Because now you're going through the creative process of problem solving in the real time. You're touching, you're sealing the face shape. If you as a hairdresser don't understand face shape and AI has told your client, well, you have a pear face shape and you go, okay. Well, what hairstyle do you want then? Well, I want this hairstyle. Oh, okay. I'll do it. And then the client looks at herself. She does a selfie, because most clients know their faces better than us today through selfies. And then she goes, Oh, my face looks really fat. I can't believe you did that to me. Well, you asked for it. Well, you should have known it wouldn't suit me. Well, I don't know how to recognize a face shape. And I told you it. Now you've got this whole narrative going on because the hairdresser, number one, doesn't know how to read a face shape and hasn't gone through the protocol. And a system that's foolproof to make sure that that's all, all checks and balances. Now, when I used to work with Trevor and watch him, and, you know, Daryl Benson when we were at Sassoon's, and I'd watch these geniuses work, Trevor and I used to watch him and I'd watch him create something for the very first time, and I'd say to him, how'd you come up with that idea? I don't know. Just did. Yeah, but how did you know it was going to work? I just knew. Yeah, but how did you know to be creative and not make it look ridiculous? Yeah. I just knew. Yeah, but how did you know that fine line between creativity and beauty, not creativity and bad taste? I just knew. Every time he used to say that to me, which drove me nuts, because I would say, I want to get inside your head to see how you see shapes, balance, proportion, because I want to, like a little AI machine, get inside your head, process it, and be able to think like Trevor Sorbie.

[00:30:11] **Vivienne M:** So I used to watch him and watch him and watch him. And then I used to play this game when I stood by his side as a human sectioning clip. And I would say. To myself, I think he's going to do such and such, right? And I think, well, what would I do? And I would usually be boring and playing it safe. And I would see him create genius. I think I would never have thought of that. That was absolutely brilliant. So I went on this path to understand the creative process. On this path of, of fashion and understanding taste levels and how do I. Teach it, right? And so it's been

my journey. So yes, I love AI. I think it is brilliant. But at the end of the day, it's only as smart as the information you put in. And you've got to know what to do with that information. And it's got to fit the landscape of where your client lives.

[00:30:58] **Antony W:** How do you define suitability?

[00:31:02] **Vivienne M:** I always and it never fails me. I always look for the oval when it comes to the balance of a hairstyle. When I look at suitability, Okay. If she's quiet, I'm going to give her a hairstyle that fits quietness. If she's loud and crazy, I'm going to give her something that fits tattooed and pierced. I'm going to, I'm going to make sure, you know, great style, it completes, it doesn't compete. So it's getting into the character and the story, whether you call it status, it's what you stand for. And I think how I've helped hairdressers grow creatively, technically, and financially is, I say, go into the landscape where that person lives. What's their story? Every woman has a story. And I've taken what I've learned from being on photo shoots. You know, you're working with a collective. The storyline grunge. Okay, so don't go off and do pretty hair. It won't suit the story.

[00:32:02] **Antony W:** Yeah, I've got a definition of suitability, and you've sort of said it without saying it, and the reason I like it is it's so succinct, and I don't know who said it, but there's variations of a theme of it around, but what I've got written down is that suitability is to look on the outside, The way you feel on the inside, and I did a podcast episode, uh, I think it was the beginning of this year, uh, with Kristen Rankin from the dress code project and, uh, uh, their mission statement at the dress code project is our mission is to empower. And help educate hairstylists and barbers to give people haircuts that help them look the way they feel. And I love that as a definition of suit. That's what suitability is all about. I mean, I, I spend a lot of time sort of as a hairdresser trying to figure out suitability in terms of face shapes and all that. Never really got it. On a piece of paper, how do you make an oval look more square? How do you make an oval look more, you know, or a triangle look more oval or whatever it is?

[00:33:07] **Vivienne M:** Yeah.

[00:33:07] **Antony W:** I sort of could understand that on a piece of paper, but with Doreen sat in front of you with three hairs and a knit or whatever, it just sort of goes out the window, doesn't it? Because it's what, what the people, how do they feel? Do you know what I mean? They're like, uh, and if they feel they look good like that, then who am I to say they don't look good like that because they feel it's them? it's, it's interesting. And I, I know that. That one of, um, you know, that I, I always went for that, the oval thing as well, and I probably still do, uh, But I'm often as soon as you said it, I think, yeah. But what about Marilyn Monroe? She didn't have a hopeful face and she was stunningly beautiful, you know? So there are, there are strange sort of, um, things about as soon as you try and pigeonhole what beauty is, then someone will show you something and you go, well, she's beautiful, but it's not the archetypal sort of definition of what beauty is all about.

[00:34:11] **Vivienne M:** But there's a ratio. The golden rule, even for Marilyn Monroe, she fits the golden rule. And when you do the ratios, she fits it. And also, when you

take, because there can be beauty in a pear, and there can be beauty in an apple. Face shape and all these different face shapes, there can be beauty in them, but if you balance them, it will probably be the best photograph that Marilyn ever had when it was more balanced than not.

[00:34:37] **Antony W:** Yeah. Okay.

[00:34:38] **Vivienne M:** It's a science

[00:34:39] **Antony W:** Yeah. One thing I would ask you about is what you've seen in salons so far, um, as to how AI is influencing the hairdressing industry in a really positive way. What are some some of the impacts that you've witnessed?

[00:34:58] **Vivienne M:** at salon level. I think, you know, aspects of admin and efficiency, you know, you've got those aspects in terms of, um, the ship running more smoothly, uh, in the creative, I haven't seen that. Um, I think that obviously, if you're going to use AI for your posts on social and to be able to captivating stories, if anyone's going to read it, um, that's very, very helpful. Uh, if you are wanting to get a blog going, then I can see it with very, very, very helpful. Uh, I think it's very good when you're thinking about a post of say, for example, like, in my training, we do, uh, and one of my courses, we do seven bobs. So, wouldn't that be wonderful to tell through a carousel or a reel the story from the longest bob to the shortest bob, the curly bob, and tell a story. So, if you're stuck for how do I tell my storyline of this, pop it into AI. I've done seven bobs from strong to soft, and it's going to spit something out that you could either read, And then you've got a narrative around the story of the Bob, the journey of the Bob, which Bob is right for you. Uh, so you could be really creative in posting and in social to up that game of creativity.

[00:36:17] **Vivienne M:** Um, and then of course, when you're just looking at the, the ability to research today and, you know, put in that you're looking for. Long pixies, short pixies, or whatever, um, that aspect of researching and finding looks that appeal to you, that's obviously become a lot quicker. And I think it's really important we find our signature looks. It's because in developing those signature looks, they're part of the branding. And then you can then start to use AI to get, strengthen the message and the language going out there. Cause you know, some people will read, some people are very visual. Some people need to hear, some people need to see moving images. So you've got clients that are responding to different things. So I think, you know, you've got to find what's going to work for your style. And how much you want to put into this, right? But I'm waving the flag for I'm always about progression. As you know, I built my website 20 years ago, so I'm not a stranger to technology. And I, I feel that this time that we're in right now is almost like when electricity came in and everyone went, my gosh, what do we do with candles? What's going to happen to the candlestick maker? And now we have electricity, what's going to happen to the workplace? And we haven't learned in this period of time. Like our ancestors, a little bit of water will keep you alive, or it will drown you. A little bit of heat by the fire will keep you warm, or it will burn you. We haven't learned the discernment to know a little bit of technology is going to help you. Too much could destroy the human touch, and as you said, the ability to communicate and connect.

[00:37:57] **Vivienne M:** The ability to look in your eyes long enough to say, Oh, and he's got blue eyes to connect, right? And when you think of people as incredible as Vidal, and I spent enough time with him in person to see his grace, and his charm, and his charisma, I always knew, and he told me to do this one time, he said, Viv, when you meet someone, shake their hand, and look at them with a tender eye, not a judging eye, and long enough to recognize the color of their eyes. And I promise, for all of you listening, try this. With your loved one. Try this on like some clients and just see how somebody feels noticed. It's magic.

[00:38:44] **Antony W:** yeah, yeah, that's good. So, I suppose, as we need to start wrapping up, really, no matter how I come at this with you, you really defend the human element, the emotion element, that that is not even nearly replaceable. Um, through AI. So in a salon sense, you see AI as being very much, you know, a tool that's going to help more on the business side of things rather than the creative side of things. Am I putting words into your mouth or would you agree with that?

[00:39:14] **Vivienne M:** I think there's definitely a place there where you can take it and go, Hmm, that's pretty cool. Absolutely. So I'm not not negating that. But at the end of the day, your hands still have to work. You're the longest distance in hairdressings from your head to your hands. How you think about yourself, because I always say that when we're working with our client, there's actually three relationships. There's the relationship I have with me, how I see fashion, how I see my work, how I see my creativity, my taste level. What's Viv's taste level? So that's one relationship. Now, there's the client sitting in my chair. That's her relationship with herself. And the third relationship is a combined relationship. How we interact, how we connect. So where, wherever you got your information from, at the end of the day, I am the one with the tools in my hand. And that client's sitting in my chair. She chose to sit in my chair. My responsibility, my duty, duty is to serve before I ever sell. I have to serve, and I have to be sure that I fully understand her needs and wants. I have to be fully able to say, I love that idea, but it's something I wouldn't recommend for you right now. AI can't do that. I love your ideas that you show me there, but actually I think it's going to make your face look a little fuller. I love that you've shown me with, through AI, that you've got this color hair or this hairstyle.

[00:40:40] **Vivienne M:** It looks adorable. You don't have the hair texture for it. We can get you a wig. We could do it with a wig for sure. We, we, are the ones that have the tools in our hands. And right now, because AI can't. Have intuition, and that inspiration, and that creativity, and that artistry, and know how to read a person. Reading what they're saying and what they're not saying. We have a duty to elevate our game. We better elevate our game, not only in technical skills, creative skills, but in our communication, connection skills, to the highest, highest level. And in all the training that I do. The training that has been most transformative has been that, that human touch part of my training. And that's where I've helped hairdressers increase their profitability and put the fun back into what they're doing. And therefore, we must never be cavalier. And it's an honour when someone allows us to touch them. And we, it's a sacred thing and we've got to treat it that way.

[00:41:44] **Antony W:** Yeah, that was great. Uh, one last question I want to ask you about is AI and education, uh, as an educator, as a tutor, because a lot of people are

saying that, that AI will dramatically change the education side of our industry. And I think it has a lot of potential to do that and a lot of very positive things. It could come out of that. What, what are your, what are your thoughts about that? How do you see it being used in a, in a really positive way? As someone who's using a lot of technology and has for years now, as you've said.

[00:42:17] **Vivienne M:** Yes, um, uh, in the creative, uh, I, I think that the, the efficiency to find ideas and to sort of streamline it down into, um, so say, for example, I'm working on a photo collection and I want to research, I just did a collection which was called, Glamour Grunge. So I research. Glamour, I researched grunge. I looked at all the different genres. I looked at it in lighting. I looked at in fashion makeup I pulled all that information very rapidly into a movie

[00:42:48]] **Antony W:** from where did you get it from?

[00:42:50]] **Vivienne M:** Just from either Pinterest, Google, um, I went, I went everywhere searching, searching, searching. So I just used different platforms to do that. So then I could harvest that. I have tons of books in my studio, incredible books. Paging through those books to find something, then taking a picture of it, then putting it into a mood board is so laborious, right? So, to have that access to be able to create a story, uh, a collection and new ideas, it can be done so quickly, and then I can share it with my collective team. So, the efficiency of all of that is extraordinary. And, you know, when I lived in London, I went to the Hairdressers Journal archives. I went to Vogue's archives and I spent weeks there researching because I wanted to understand the journey of fashion. I wanted to be able to teach fashion. And so it was literally, here's the magazine, paging it through. So today, I mean, it's just this, this is incredible what you can do. And I think the other thing, this may not be in the AI category, but what you can do with it afterwards, the fact that you can take a photograph of what you just created. And if you know how to take a really good photo, and you know how to manipulate it, and you can turn it into a little piece of art. That is extraordinary. Years ago, we'd have to hire a photographer and go through all of that stuff. The fact that if you put the time and energy in and research and really learn how to use the AI tools that are in Photoshop and all of that world, you can go way beyond what you and I could have ever done. So, you know, it lies in your hands, but I think we have to remember we're in the people business. We sell happiness. we want to give our guests the most beautiful experience. we should be like the massage, the spa of hair. You come out feeling fabulous. And as you said, the inside matches the outside and all of those qualities. I'm sorry, AI cannot do that.

[00:44:54] **Antony W:** Good. Okay. Well, that's a, that's a good point to start wrapping up. Uh, Vivian, where can people connect with you on Instagram or other social channels?

[00:45:03] **Vivienne M:** Uh, my website's my name, Vivian Mackinder, and Instagram's the same and so is Facebook.

[00:45:08] **Antony W:** Great. Well, I'll put those links on our website, GrowMySalonBusiness.com and in the show notes for today's podcast. So if you're

listening to this episode with Vivian Mackinder today and you've enjoyed it, then do me a favor, take a screenshot on your phone, share it to your Instagram stories. And don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple podcast app.

[00:45:28] **Antony W:** So, Vivian. To wrap up, thank you ever so much for being a returning guest. Um, on the grow my salon business podcast. It's always good to have you back.

[00:45:40] **Vivienne M:** Lovely to be with you, thank you so much.

[00:45:42] **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