

GMSB 215

[00:00:00] **Antony Whitaker:** 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 Whitaker:** Hello and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business Podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and it's great to have you here with us today. When I scroll through my podcast page and I look at the array of guests that I've featured over the years, there's a lot of very well-known people that are well established in the industry and hopefully they bring a lot of wisdom and experience to the podcast.

[00:00:53] **Antony Whitaker:** But one of the things that I genuinely enjoy the most is getting to connect with real salon owners that are active behind the chair and they're dealing with whatever challenges and opportunities that may come their way. My guest today is Ashley Renee. She's a hairstylist and owner of the Salon Venice in Venice Beach, California.

[00:01:15] **Antony Whitaker:** Now, I've never met Ashley face to face, but she is a salon owner with a small team. She works behind the chair and she has a young son and a partner and she represents most of the people that listen to this podcast. And actually, she represents who the average salon owner is, no matter where in the world they are.

[00:01:34] **Antony Whitaker:** So it's great to have this opportunity to share our conversation with you today. So in today's podcast, we're going to discuss the challenges and opportunities that small business owners everywhere face. We're going to talk about creating salon culture. We're going to talk about the changing expectations of team members today and finding a work life balance and lots more.

[00:02:00] **Antony Whitaker:** So welcome to the show, Ashley.

[00:02:03] **Ashley Renee:** Hey, good morning. Thank you so much, Antony, for having me here today. I feel very honored and very excited to share my experience and give out any advice I can out there too.

[00:02:18] **Antony Whitaker:** Good. Well, no, I'm really looking forward. I mean, we had a chat, um, the other week on a, on a different call, coaching call. and I thought, I've really got to get Ashley on the podcast. Cause I just knew how relatable that you were to, you know, all of the audience, like I say, no matter where they are in the world.

[00:02:34] **Antony Whitaker:** So, uh, let's just start with, an overview. So Give us your sort of two minute back story. Who is Ashley Renee?

[00:02:42] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah, all right. Well, my name is Ashley Renee. Um, I was born here in Ventura County, California, Southern California, baby. Um, I got into hair when I was about 17. I found out that, uh, I could go to Vidal Sassoon here in Santa Monica, needed to be 17 with a high school diploma. So I made that happen. I showed up with a lot of heart and ambition, uh, not knowing what I was getting myself into, but I was very excited.

[00:03:10] **Ashley Renee:** And once I finished school, that was really when the journey began for me. Um, through my journey, I've worked at multiple different salons. and through that, I've learned a lot about our business. And a lot about our industry and, gosh, 18 years later have opened up my own salon in Venice Beach, which is very exciting.

[00:03:35] **Ashley Renee:** And this has brought in a whole another set of challenges for me too. And in fact, that's how I found you was through wanting to grow my salon and to learn as much as I can on being a salon owner. I feel that through my journey as a hairstylist, I met some amazing mentors. And when I made the jump to become a salon owner, I was searching for a new mentor.

[00:04:03] **Ashley Renee:** and so I feel really excited to be here. I listened to your podcast. They're very inspiring. And I hope that I can inspire somebody out there too, um, to continue this path also, because I know it's not an easy industry and not an easy path to go through. Um, so if any words of wisdom is out there, I'm trying to listen and hopefully I can pass that on too.

[00:04:28] **Antony Whitaker:** Good, good. Okay. Fantastic. Well, let me jump in straight away. We're on a really positive note and ask you as a comparatively new salon owner, you're not a new salon owner, but as a comparatively new salon owner, what is the biggest joy that you get from having a salon, because It can be really tough.

[00:04:46] **Antony Whitaker:** It can be really challenging. And we're going to talk about that as well. But I wanted to focus on that at the beginning. What's, what's the buzz that you get? The biggest joy you get from being a salon owner.

[00:04:54] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah, that's a good question. I would say when I first opened up the salon, the biggest joy that I got was watching my coworkers become successful. I think when you know, when you're a hairstylist, you get so excited when you get a new client in your chair and you, you know, you grow with that client.

[00:05:12] **Ashley Renee:** And then as a salon owner, being able to give another hairstylist, um, a client and watch them grow their business that's the biggest joy that I have to be able to see them succeed in all areas of business. Also, um, when I first opened up, I had a lot of people, a lot of stylists that started off, commission base and they didn't really understand

[00:05:39] **Ashley Renee:** the whole part of being able to run their own business. And so, when I came in, I wanted to give them the tools to be able to help grow their own business so they can have a successful business. And I keep saying that their success brings me success. And so that's the biggest joy that I have to see people, um, be able to, you know, carry on and, you know, and feel confident also with their own business.

[00:06:05] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. So before you open the salon, um, you know, you're obviously working with someone else. What, what was the trigger that, that made you think I want to open, I want to do my own thing when I opened my own salon and now's the right time. What was that like?

[00:06:20] **Ashley Renee:** So as I said, I've worked at multiple salons and the reason why multiple salons is because a lot of my salons I've worked at have closed. And so I've been, I've worked at maybe about four salons in my career where they completely shut down. And the last time that happened, I said, okay, all right. I want to want, I want to be the one that's steering the ship this time.

[00:06:46] **Ashley Renee:** I want to see, I want to have some control. Um, I was, it was also just an amazing opportunity. So the salon that I used to work on was on Abbot Kenney and it's a really popular street here in Venice. It was one of the most fun places I'd ever worked in my career. And when we got the

30 day notice that she had to shut the doors down, I looked around and we had such a beautiful team.

[00:07:10] **Ashley Renee:** It was, you know, amazing artists. There was, an array of, you know, talent too. And I just couldn't let that just go away. And so I looked at it as an opportunity to take the team and just shift them over to another spot. And that was the moment where, I call it like the high speed bullet train, where it's coming by and you better jump on that and uh, and just go.

[00:07:37] **Ashley Renee:** And it was one of those moments where I, I really just did it. And, It was January 2020, and I ended up having a business partner, um, and we got into business together. We signed the lease February 2020. We did a full remodel to this place. It was beautiful. We had, you know, this vision of what we wanted to look like and, you know, how we were going to run it.

[00:08:06] **Ashley Renee:** And we were so excited. We got the keys, we opened up the door March 1st and we, you know, got the stylist to come over. It was, it was kind of perfect timing because the other shop was closing March 1st and so it was just supposed to be an easy transition. Um, and then 14 days later COVID hit and that was a big surprise for us.

[00:08:29] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so You know, it was one of those things we obviously nobody was expecting it at all. Um, but then that was the next challenge too. So, I think the ambition of wanting to open a space that was a safe place, uh, for stylists to be able to come and work and grow was my... you know, the beginning thought of everything and having, especially from my experience of salons closing down, it's really tough on your business to have to, you know, move locations and restart.

[00:09:01] **Ashley Renee:** And so when I opened up this place, I said, okay, I want somewhere where everyone can feel, you know, a safe place they can grow and, um, and expand their business too. Um, So we figured it out, you know, we, we stuck through it for the next, a couple of years and did everything that we had to do to be able to survive.

[00:09:20] **Ashley Renee:** And, um, but now it's really nice because I feel that we're at a place where, um, I can actually focus on more of the growing the business part rather than the surviving of business part.

[00:09:32] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, I didn't realize you had a partner, so, um, do you still have a partner? A business partner?

[00:09:38] **Ashley Renee:** I do not have a partner anymore. Um, so that was an unexpected health problem that happened. And so that is also a big learning lesson in business too. Um, I do believe that we were meant to be together to create. I don't believe that we were meant to continue to grow the space. Um, and then unfortunately due to a health issue, it took him out of the business.

[00:10:04] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so with that though, you always have to look at the positives and you have to keep growing. And so that's also kind of why I'm here too, is to be able to really expand my business. Um, On my own also, which is, you know, very powerful too. And, um, but yeah, I learned a lot with that and, uh, and it's, it's not easy having a partner, um, but it's also a big learning lesson for sure on so many things too.

[00:10:35] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah. so, you know, so many people, they go into partnerships and it's on a handshake and you know, oh, we'll save a bit of money on legal fees. We don't need to do all that. You know, and I always say to people that, look, the partnership is going to end. It's just a matter of when it ends.

[00:10:52] **Antony Whitaker:** Is it going to end in a year, 10 years, 20 years, 30, it's going to end. And if you set up at the beginning of the partnership, what that looks like, you know, if one person wants out, you know, what is the process by how the business is valued, et cetera, et cetera. Like, what do we do? It's better to have that conversation at the beginning.

[00:11:16] **Antony Whitaker:** So that when that time comes, I mean it sounds for you like it came very quickly. Um, oftentimes you see so many acrimonious business relationships because there was nothing on paper. It was all just a, you know, a handshake sort of thing. So, uh, yeah, that's interesting. I mean, a real baptism of fire for you.

[00:11:36] **Antony Whitaker:** I mean, opening a business two weeks before COVID. I mean, wow. You know, um, uh, because I was going to ask you, what do you wish you'd known before you opened? And probably what you wish you'd known before you signed the lease was that there's going to be this thing called COVID come along and, uh, it's going to absolutely wreak havoc on things.

[00:11:54] **Antony Whitaker:** But, uh, aside from that, what do you wish you'd known? Uh, before you became a business owner, because some people, you know, they're planning their business for a long time and they go to school or whatever and they learn a bit about business or, you know, whatever for other people, it's a little bit like you at some level, you were thinking one day, but then all of a sudden. you know, the place you were in had to close and you just, you know, you had to make that decision. You were sort of pushed into it, which is often a good thing because maybe otherwise you wouldn't have done it. But, um, yeah. What do you, what do you wish you'd known before you'd made that leap?

[00:12:35] **Ashley Renee:** That's a good question. Um, I feel the through my experiences and seeing a lot of different ways businesses are ran, I feel that it gave me a lot of confidence to be able to open up a salon to, um, I feel that working in the field and, you know, experiencing places that closed down, experiencing places that were also highly successful too, gave me really good, um, A really good idea of what it takes to run a salon.

[00:13:07] **Ashley Renee:** Um, I don't know if there's anything that I would say I wish I would have known more because I think sometimes ignorance is bliss a little bit when it comes to stuff like that too.

[00:13:20] **Ashley Renee:** I feel that, um, You know, obviously, yeah. If I would've known Covid was coming, of course I would've not signed that lease and it would've gone a different way.

[00:13:28] **Ashley Renee:** But I don't think I would be who I am today if that didn't happen either. Um, 'cause of the struggles and the challenges that it really put me through, it really showed me that this was something much bigger that I wanted too. Um, and that. It gave me even more of a drive also. Um, so yeah, I feel that thankfully through my experiences, even though there were ups and downs, it definitely gave me that confidence to say, okay, this is my time.

[00:14:01] **Ashley Renee:** Um, I would say also, I don't think. I don't think I ever really thought I would be opening up a salon one day either. Um, I don't think when I first got into this industry, that was one of my goals. Um, my goal was to be the best hairdresser that I could be and to see where that could take me. Um, and so to be here now with the salon, it actually makes me realize that this is my path.

[00:14:26] **Ashley Renee:** This is where I should be. And, uh, for now, right? Um, because life is a journey too. And, uh, and like I said, as soon as I was able to watch my, the stylists that work at the salon start building a clientele and the joy that it gave me, it completely changed my whole perspective about our industry to, um. And then when I signed up for, you know, I did your management course that gave me a whole another perspective too on how to manage people and how to, you know, successfully grow them even more and give them even more tools to grow.

[00:15:03] **Ashley Renee:** So, you know, as the days go on and the challenges go on and, you know, I, my visions are always kind of growing too. And. Becoming a mom. Also the satisfaction of, you know, watching my child grow. I'm feeling the same thing with my salon too. The salon was my first child and then I got pregnant. Um, so to add that to it too, right.

[00:15:27] **Ashley Renee:** Running a business, uh, open it up. COVID hit, trying to make that work, get pregnant, you know, leave on maternity leave. So there's a lot of jumbling going on for sure. Uh, but I, I really do feel that the satisfaction and I get this, I get more satisfaction handing another stylist, you know, uh, a potential client that they can grow with.

[00:15:51] **Ashley Renee:** Um, then now, even when a new one sits in my chair, actually, I'm trying hard not to take new clients cause I want, you know, it's to spend more time in the management side. Um, so it's a very different head shift and change also, um, which I'm really excited about too. Um, I think that now, like the, there's so many endless possibilities too.

[00:16:14] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah. What, what is, um, you know, as I said in the beginning, you, you, uh, Representative of the average person listening to this podcast, you know, they're, they're a young woman with a young family, you know, and all the, you know, business and staff members, et cetera. Um, in terms of juggling, what are some things that you would say to people?

[00:16:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Because I often get asked, you know, how do, how do other women manage their time? And a business and a life partner and a child and all the stuff that goes with that. What would be a couple of things that you would say? Well, I've learned this and this has helped me enormously.

[00:16:53] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah. Scheduling, scheduling, scheduling, scheduling. Yes. Um, I feel that living off, you know, having a very structured schedule helps me. Um, I do feel that it's very important to make balance to, uh, make balance for yourself in this industry, especially. Um, and so I always make sure I take time. Um, I'm a big Yogi and a big meditator.

[00:17:18] **Ashley Renee:** So I'm always making sure that I've got that time for myself. And I feel that when I make that time for myself, everything around me, just. Flows a little bit more smoothly, even though it might not feel that way it helps. Um, and so I really try hard. I think also too, being in this position also lets me balance it more too, because now I can spend a little bit less time behind the chair.

[00:17:44] **Ashley Renee:** You know, still earn great money and a different direction. Um, of course I feel that anytime in the beginning of something, you know, you do need to put a lot of focus and a lot of, attention and love into it.

[00:17:59] **Ashley Renee:** Like kind of always going back to that question of what brings you joy, I think is very important.

[00:18:04] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, and I, you know, I've heard people recently, and I've mentioned this on the podcast before as well, that instead of talking about work life balance, people are often now using this phrase, work life integration, and I think, yeah, that feels much better to me. It's not so much about, well, I don't know, is it just semantics, but for me it's very much about

[00:18:22] **Antony Whitaker:** how you integrate everything together. I mean, I love work and I love my family and it all just sort of turns into some sort of mashup that somehow works. There's not necessarily a lot of balance about it. It's just the two things coexist. Um, one thing that uh, obviously our American audience will know, but our non-American audience maybe aren't familiar with this.

[00:18:45] **Antony Whitaker:** And that is that the employment laws in California were another thing that you had to deal with, actually, because you had, major changes in employment laws. Uh, I'm not sure what year they were. Was that, was that 2019, 2020? I can't remember, but it wasn't that long ago that, you know, things definitely got upended there.

[00:19:06] **Antony Whitaker:** And so, You know, I often say to people that like in America, it's state to state. Things can be very, very different. And California is probably the most different, uh, in terms of employment laws and stuff. Um, how would you, you know, talking to, to non Americans or people who aren't in California, how would you describe what the, Employment law is there in terms of the business model, and you mentioned that word commission before, et cetera.

[00:19:36] **Antony Whitaker:** How would you describe, just to give us a sort of a, a brief overview of, of what it's like in California? What is the law?

[00:19:44] **Ashley Renee:** a brief overview. I would say it is very tricky. So I find that I'm constantly trying to look up and, keep updated with everything you write about a few years ago. They changed a lot of the laws, um, and I think it was due actually because of Uber drivers and, um, all that. And so it affected our business too, um, which is definitely, you know, challenging to keep, up to date with it.

[00:20:12] **Ashley Renee:** Uh, when I opened up the salon, I had the vision of having a pure rental. Um, so my past, I always worked at rental based salon, so I was very used to, running your own business, having your own sole proprietor, creating your own within another salon. And when I moved down here to Venice, it was very different on how they ran business here.

[00:20:39] **Ashley Renee:** Um, it was more commission based and, in fact, one of the salons we worked at, that was, it was the first time I was in a commission salon, which was a little different for me. Um, it definitely showed me the different sides, uh, between the commission and rental base. Um, I feel that when I decided to open up the salon, I said, okay, what's the easiest way, right?

[00:21:04] **Ashley Renee:** And rental, I felt was just... So much easier. It was less hands on with the stylist, you know, they could, come and go as they want, here's a key, we have our, set standards and, um, but through that, obviously, I don't have any control over when they want to take a client or anything like that.

[00:21:22] **Ashley Renee:** And that worked out really well in the beginning since we were just growing and, everyone kind of you know, it helps because everyone would create their own, right? Instagram and they would create their

own Yelp page. and the way I was looking at it was okay. The more, uh, more individual, kind of popped up on the map too.

[00:21:40] **Ashley Renee:** Right. And you would see us like as a cluster of, uh, individuals in this one spot. And then as the business started growing and I realized. How different it is here on the West side, because on the West side, there's not a salon on every corner. There's, you know, a salon here, a salon there, it's a little bit more like real estate here.

[00:22:00] **Ashley Renee:** So, you know, if you get the spot, it attracts a lot of energy to it where, where I grew up, there would be a salon on every corner. So it was very competitive and very different. And so you know how you being treated by a salon owner was very different to, I think if people know that there's a salon right next door, you know, if you're not treating me right, I'm just going to go right next door.

[00:22:22] **Ashley Renee:** And so where I came from, it was a little bit more of that, you kind of, people kind of just pop right next door and, they, they'd find something that, you know, make them feel good or, and then when I came to the West side and everyone was, doing a little bit more commission and the owner had, more control.

[00:22:37] **Ashley Renee:** Um, it was interesting to see how that, you know, how they would take control too, and how they would, you know, treat their business. Um, and so that was also a big inspiration to wanting to open up my shop because I felt that there needed to be more independence there too.

[00:22:56] **Ashley Renee:** so when I opened up the shop, I wanted people to be more independent because of these new laws that they've been putting out. It's, you know, there's, um, it makes it very difficult for our industry. I feel here to run a commission-based salon, you know, now you have to have employees and you have to pay them hourly.

[00:23:17] **Ashley Renee:** So I feel like if you think in the beginning of a salon, right, when you don't have that much clientele coming in yet, and you know, you have to pay somebody to sit there, it makes it difficult. And so in the past, um, I do feel it kind of made it easier though, for salon owners to take advantage of some people also and take advantage of their time.

[00:23:38] **Ashley Renee:** So I can understand both sides of why, they created these laws too. Um, you know, for protection. So people, are not, getting abused also, but as a salon owner, you know, now I can see why other salon owners liked it the other way too, because, they'd probably make more money that way.

[00:23:57] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so it's been a big learning curve. I have at my salon, I do have kind of like a mixture now going on. Um, so mainly, uh, rental based and then I, hired an assistant a few years ago and she became my first employee. And so that's been a big learning curve on learning, uh, how to have an employee, which is very different, from when I even grew up with too.

[00:24:26] **Ashley Renee:** I never was, uh, considered an employee for anybody. Um, so it's been really interesting, but. Uh, it is, I feel, the best situation for her, too. You know, she's young, it gives her a steady paycheck. Um, you know, she knows how many hours she's working, too. I feel that it gives her a really good idea about money, also.

[00:24:50] **Ashley Renee:** Um, but it does get tricky. And so I think this is kind of actually a conversation that I'm constantly talking with other salon owners about too, or other stylists that work at other salons. You know, my first question is how do they pay you? Yeah, that's a, I'm always so curious because, uh, everyone, it seems kind of does it in their own way too.

[00:25:11] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so it, uh,

[00:25:13] **Ashley Renee:** it is, that is a very interesting conversation.

[00:25:18] **Ashley Renee:** How do you find the challenge running a hybrid business where you've got employees and you've got renters? Because I know the IRS, you know, your tax department or the equivalent of the IRS in any other country. You know, the thing they generally all have in common is there's a, there's the one word is control that if you are deemed to be controlling someone in any way, then they are an employee.

[00:25:50] **Antony Whitaker:** They're not a renter. And I know the IRS, for example, I think it's a 19-point checklist, or it might be a 21-point checklist that they go through. A lot of those, a lot of those things are really. In some level about control. So in other words, control means if you tell people what time they've got to be at work, that's control.

[00:26:09] **Antony Whitaker:** If you tell them what products they have to use, that's control. If you tell them what prices they have to charge, that's control. If you tell them how long their appointments are going to be, that's control. So as soon as you start to put any control on them, then the IRS will deem them as an employee.

[00:26:27] **Antony Whitaker:** And it's pretty much like that. Whether you're talking about, the UK, Canada, Australia, whatever, that that's really where the distinction between are they an employee or are they not really an employee, but that you're trying to, you know, make them self-employed for tax advantage for yourself, et cetera.

[00:26:48] **Antony Whitaker:** I suppose what I'm what I'm really leading to here is how do you run a business when you've got both? When you can obviously control employees in terms of prices they charge, opening hours, products they use, etc. But you can't control those people that are renters without blurring that line.

[00:27:14] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah, I think that's why I like, doing it right now too. I like having, you know, the independent contractors that come in, they run their own business. I don't tell them when to come in. Like I said, they have a key, you know, they can, they can use whatever products they like to, I offer products and obviously, you know, they love using them.

[00:27:33] **Ashley Renee:** Um, but I don't have any control over them. Um, And that's why I love having, some employees now because those ones I can control. And so the ones that are employees are still growing, they're still building their business. And so I do have a lot of hand in, you know, what's going on with them too.

[00:27:53] **Ashley Renee:** And so that helps a lot when it comes to, you know, the employment, right? So they are my employee. Um, you know, I tell them when to get there, I do have that control, um, and I do give them clients. And so. I noticed once the salon was starting to build and we started getting, clientele in here, I actually benefited a lot more from having employees rather than independent contractors, you know, because for the employees, obviously, you can pay them a set rates for the day, you know, you get the hourly and, you know, how much they're going to make.

[00:28:28] **Ashley Renee:** Right. And then, You're hoping that they pull in more, uh, you know, on the daily basis with the clients. And so I feel that now that I've actually shifted my business model to have some employees, it's actually been, financially a lot better too. Um, but at this point, you know, I feel that when I first opened the salon, it would have been very difficult to have done that.

[00:28:50] **Ashley Renee:** But now that we've got, you know, Uh, you know, reviews out there. We've got, you know, people that call constantly and we're getting clientele coming in, it's actually more beneficial for me to have an employee and, you know, be able to funnel the new clients and to, you know, the, the employees, uh, now, obviously as a hairdresser, right, it's more beneficial.

[00:29:15] **Ashley Renee:** I feel to be, uh, independent. So I, you know, I see both sides of it too. Um, And, I know one day once, you know, these employees make a great clientele, they're not going to want to be employees anymore. And so that's when they'll go on to being renters and I'll get the next, round of employees to come in.

[00:29:35] **Ashley Renee:** Um, and so that's been really actually, um, I feel, And really I've changed this business model too, since I started the management course, um, and having more confidence with management going into it too. And, you know, it's big learning curves, you know, like you're saying, like, you know, I have to constantly look up, I've got an amazing accountant.

[00:29:54] **Ashley Renee:** So I'm always calling him and, you know, asking him questions. And, you know, thankfully they've got amazing apps out there to [00:30:00] help with payroll too. So it makes it very, you know, um, seamless just to, you know, have that third party help. I feel that, you know, anytime. You can get extra help is definitely, uh, beneficial too.

[00:30:13] **Ashley Renee:** So I don't, I don't stress about payroll. I've gotten an app that takes care of it all for me. Um, it's actually really easy. And you know, when I do my numbers at the end of the week, um, definitely having that employee and being able to control, I feel is really smart right now for my business.

[00:30:30] **Antony Whitaker:** Right. Okay. All right. Um, another thing I wanted to ask you about was, As someone who's employing young people, so you've

got some young staff members and stuff. How do you find, I mean, I know you're a lot younger than me, but how do you, like, like, what do young people like today as employees? You know, I mean, I've got kids that are, you know, in their early twenties or whatever.

[00:30:54] **Antony Whitaker:** And I hate grouping any generation to, well, Gen Z are like this and Millennials are like that. And, you know, Gen X are like the other. Um. Obviously, there are some similarities with every generation, but talk to me about what you see in Gen Z as employees, uh, compared to previous generations in the workforce.

[00:31:16] **Antony Whitaker:** What are some of the challenges? What's some of the upside? What's some of the downside? Well, you know, what are some of the, you know, the good points and, and opposite that you find?

[00:31:25] **Ashley Renee:** So I don't know if I have too much experience in that right now. Um, right now I've got my employee who's been with me for a few years. She came to me. Actually, right before she was finishing school and, um, I think she's a very, you know, unique, uh, snowflake. Um, I got really lucky with her, definitely.

[00:31:49] **Ashley Renee:** Um, and I don't know if I would consider her, uh, a Gen Z sometimes. you know, she, she's not on TikTok. Um, you know, She's got an old soul like me, um, so I will say though as she's been growing, right? She, um, and mainly also to of putting her on an employee was giving her some stability, some structure.

[00:32:14] **Ashley Renee:** Um, I feel that when I was a assistant, that wasn't an option. You know, I don't think they were giving us employee, it was just, you know, here's your set pay for the day. And there you go. Um, so with, with her, uh, you know, I, I love it. you know, she wanted to buy a car, right.

[00:32:32] **Ashley Renee:** And so, um, that's like her motivation and I don't know many 20 year olds that are rolling around with that nice car that she has too. And, but I love it. I love that, that she went for it, too. Um, I was not like that when I was 20 years old,

[00:32:49] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, yeah. Okay.

[00:32:51] **Ashley Renee:** and so

[00:32:51] **Antony Whitaker:** So very, very driven then.

[00:32:53] **Ashley Renee:** Very driven. Yeah, I see, uh, like a real big future with her in this industry and, um, and it's great because she's been watching me grow the salon too.

[00:33:04] **Ashley Renee:** Um, and so she's, I mean, if that's one thing I could say to anyone that's getting into this industry is just find a really good mentor that, that is, uh, really helpful for sure. Um, I don't like, I wish I had someone like me when I was her age. That's,

[00:33:17] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah.

[00:33:18] **Ashley Renee:** I feel.

[00:33:19] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, got it. Okay. Um, getting back to your business for a minute, uh, retail, what's retail doing at the moment? You know, over the last, I mean, I know we've gone through a upheaval over the last few years, but are you finding that retail is stagnant? Is it growing? Uh, is it going down? Are you, you know, putting that down to internet sales or Amazon or is like, just give me a feel for what you see happening in your business.

[00:33:48] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah. Um, so I feel that with retail, I, I personally as a hairstylist, I have used Kevin Murphy products, um, I think now 10 years. Um, I love it. I'm obsessed with it. I've stuck with it. And so when I opened up the salon, I brought that brand into it because I was very comfortable with it. And it does really well here too.

[00:34:14] **Ashley Renee:** Um, I feel like we're constantly selling things off the shelf. Um, you know, when something works too and, it's like you don't even have to sell it. It's just, it is part of what, you know, what we do. Um, so I'm constantly always placing in orders, um, and making sure that we have everything. Uh, for the stylist and also offering as many education classes as we can for retail.

[00:34:39] **Ashley Renee:** I feel that that helps a lot. You know, once they feel confident about it, then they can, just naturally sell it to their client too. Um, I've thought about bringing in a second product line, uh, and maybe in the future I might, but as for now, I feel. Um, that this, this line has been really stable too, and they're growing also, which is great too.

[00:35:05] **Ashley Renee:** Cause I don't feel like they get stagnant. they're always,

[00:35:07] **Ashley Renee:** you know, updating and

[00:35:09] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. So retail is not going down.

[00:35:12] **Ashley Renee:** I wouldn't say it, but you know, also to, going off of right, like I opened up right before COVID. So you know,

[00:35:20] **Antony Whitaker:** Hard to say.

[00:35:20] **Ashley Renee:** exactly. I feel that, you know, I'm like, Oh, talk to me in 10 years from now. All right, let's see. And I'll tell you how the journey of retail has

[00:35:26] **Antony Whitaker:** Sure.

[00:35:28] **Ashley Renee:** During COVID, you know, I try to find something that people could just buy at home.

[00:35:32] **Ashley Renee:** Right. You know? And, um, so, and now I think a lot of product companies to make it very easy to, purchase online. Um, obviously I don't trust anything that comes from, you know, Amazon. So I always tell clients, just whatever you do is like buy it through a salon. Cause that's more guaranteed.

[00:35:51] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so that helps too, is just educating clients on, you know, how important it is to know that, you know, the difference of where you do buy it actually matters.

[00:36:01] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, what about social media in, in your business? I mean, you're, you know, of an age group and a younger team and stuff where social media and, and where you're located. I'm assuming it's a big part of your business. Have I got that right? Is it a big part of your business? Is that your Mm

[00:36:24] **Antony Whitaker:** hmm.

[00:36:24] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah. Well, I would say new clients, we get, uh, a lot from Yelp, a lot from Google. Uh, so we get a lot of online searches for us. I feel that social media helps give us. Um, I feel helps gives us a presence and allows the clients to really know what they're getting into. Um, I personally have a challenge with social media.

[00:36:49] **Ashley Renee:** Um, and so I've learned that I've needed to hire that out. And to get help and have somebody else have control over that too. And so I have, uh, I have a social media lady who helps us. Um, and that's something that I'm still really learning about right now. And that's something that I'm putting more focus into.

[00:37:11] **Ashley Renee:** Um, you know, I think. We sometimes get so busy behind the chair. Um, it's like, ah, add another thing to it, add another thing to it. So I'm trying to make it very, you know, just integrated into, the everyday. Um, and so I'll have her come at least once a month and take lifestyle photos and, you know, take pictures, of clients, of hair.

[00:37:33] **Ashley Renee:** And so we'll get as much content as we can in that time. Um, and it's really exciting, you know, the silos get dressed up for it. The clients like it, you know, we'll bring some champagne and, you know, some pastries and we'll have a day out of it also, and, you know, try to enjoy it. But I do think it is a very important part in our industry and that it does need, you know, attention into it.

[00:37:55] **Ashley Renee:** Um, and it is.

[00:37:57] **Antony Whitaker:** You surprised me though, because I thought that you were going to say, Oh yeah, we get all our new clients from Instagram. We're all on it every day. And you know, we're very proactive because you know, you're young. Um, and so yeah, you've surprised me with your answer to that. Okay. If you were 10 years older than you were, than you are, then I might've not been surprised, but, um, yeah, you've, you've surprised me a little bit by that. Right. Okay. Uh, where do your new clients come from? That's another thing. You've mentioned Yelp. Yelp is obviously it's a global thing, but it's not that big outside of America. Uh, Google was a much bigger. source of new clients, you know, Google reviews, uh, than, than Yelp for whatever reason. Uh, what, where do you find most of your new clients are coming from?

[00:38:47] **Antony Whitaker:** Is it through social media? Is it through Yelp, Google, or is it referrals? Walk of Matt? Well, you know, word of mouth or people just walking past the front door.

[00:38:56] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah, I would say, you know, bottom of the list would probably be the social media, uh, top of the list would be Google Yelp. Um, that was also what inspired me, you know, from the name, right? The Salon Venice. Um, so I figured if anybody goes into their search engine, right, and they just type in Salon Venice, right where they are.

[00:39:16] **Ashley Renee:** Right. And then, boom, we'll pop up.

[00:39:18] **Antony Whitaker:** hmm. Either that or they'll be on a plane going to Italy.

[00:39:21] **Ashley Renee:** Exactly. Yeah. That'd be a nice cheap haircut, right? Uh, no, I, um, so I did, I was thinking anything that would be easy for people to find us. Um, and you know, we really, we, we try hard to, you know, create good Yelp reviews and, um, and Google reviews, but usually when I ask clients, you know, how did you find us?

[00:39:44] **Ashley Renee:** It usually is. Google or Yelp. Um, and we are in a neighborhood area too. So we've got lots of people that are walking by, uh, that live in the area that would, you know, stop by now that things are starting to pick back up in the community to, um, in our. We're considered the arts district of Venice. So in our little area, we've got, um, you know, a theater and we've got art residents.

[00:40:10] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so there's constantly just, events happening too right now. And. So I'm looking at also as, okay, what can I do to, you know, when people are walking by and if the doors, you know, if we are closed at night, what can bring their attention to come in during the day too. Um, so I feel pretty lucky about that, and like I was saying during COVID, a lot of salons did close down and now some are just starting to open up again.

[00:40:36] **Ashley Renee:** And so. And this was just wild. So when we first opened up, you know, we were like, okay, let's get our marketing goes. So, you know, we did, we put a bunch of money into Yelp and this was obviously before we knew COVID was going to happen. And, we did all this marketing advertising out there, COVID hits.

[00:40:55] **Ashley Renee:** And they didn't just stop the advertising. Um, in fact, nobody else wanted to advertise because COVID, but here I already threw out my marketing. And so we kind of were really the only ones online for a bit in our area. And I knew that was a moment that was going to be very helpful too. Um, and it did, it really, it.

[00:41:15] **Ashley Renee:** Gave us some kind of attention and, um, and I think helps that since there aren't too many salons in the area and because we do have such a, talented team and, um. And I, like I said, Venice is changing also, I feel when I, you know, gosh, the first time I went to Venice when I was, you know, 12 years old, it was, it was not the same.

[00:41:38] **Ashley Renee:** I kind of laugh about it actually, because, you know, I went to Vidal Sassoon in Santa Monica. And, you know, amazing school. Right. And, uh, when you're done with your course, you know, they're like, okay, let's go show you some salons that you could potentially work at one day, you know, they're taking us to the Vidal Sassoon and Rodeo and, you know, they're showing us these, you know, really high-end salons.

[00:41:58] **Ashley Renee:** And I always joke, I'm like, no one ever once was like. Let me show you a salon in Venice, right? And so it's really magical to be here now and kind of create more of a higher end, luxurious salon, in Venice too. also, um, like I said, with the new energy coming in and, uh, And, and the New York money also coming in.

[00:42:21] **Ashley Renee:** Um, so, you know, I think it's very important to, you know, just be aware of what's happening in your community. Um, and, and also too, that's also why I'm trying my hardest to, you know, not be behind the chair as much so I can be more with the community.

[00:42:35] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, Yeah, Okay, Okay, Listen we're going to have to wrap up in a minute, but um, a couple of things I wanted to ask you about is, is, first of all, what's the most important thing that you've learnt as a, as a salon manager, as an owner?

[00:42:49] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah,

[00:42:50] **Antony Whitaker:** What would it be?

[00:42:51] **Ashley Renee:** um, yeah, to listen, really, yeah, to listen, yeah. Um, I feel that, you know, the more you can listen and uh, and to be able to adjust and to accept. I feel, you know, I think the most. The most common word I use in my life is acceptance, um, and to just know that, gosh, it, you know, it's, it is a struggle, but it's so rewarding in the end too.

[00:43:25] **Ashley Renee:** Um, yeah, I think that, uh, if you really listen, like, you know, any answers out there.

[00:43:35] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, yeah. What do you wish that you were better at?

[00:43:38] **Ashley Renee:** So, well, that's actually why I found you. Uh, you know, the, the marketing. I think that, um, you know, When I decided to finally throw our grand opening party three years later, it actually was more of a celebration party for all of us surviving and just to kind of do a head shift change into, like, let the past be the past and let's go on, you know, uh, and be in the present.

[00:44:03] **Ashley Renee:** And, um, I felt that when I threw the party, I realized, okay, there's some things I'm just really, missing here. I need to be more confident with, and, you know, the marketing was definitely one of them. And so even be on this podcast right now is so empowering to myself because I made the step, I did it.

[00:44:24] **Ashley Renee:** I, you know, I searched, I searched for, you know, and you came up and. To be able to go through this program and to be here now, that's exactly the path that I really wanted to go. Um, and so, yeah, I'm really, I'm actually really proud that I took that first step and, uh, it's always the hardest, you know,

[00:44:44] **Antony Whitaker:** good. Yeah, exactly, exactly. it's all about, you know, I love the expression, you've got to get comfortable being uncomfortable. Uh, because it's just all about growth, isn't it? And if you're not prepared to get uncomfortable, you're not going to grow because everything's changing, the world's changing.

[00:45:00] **Antony Whitaker:** It always has, it always will. And it's so easy to get sort of stuck in, in your point in time and not be evolving. So yeah, they're, they're, they're good words. Um, we're going to need to wrap up, but

whereabouts can people connect with you on Instagram, website, or any other social media channels?

[00:45:20] **Ashley Renee:** Yeah. So for the salon, we are at the salon Venice for Instagram. The website is, um, the salonvenice.com and me personally, I'm hair by Ashley. And, um, that's where you can find me. I will say my social media is more of just a reference of, um, I call it a resume. You know, I just put some specific things on there that I feel confident with and want to attract also for colors and cuts.

[00:45:49] **Ashley Renee:** Um, but the salon that is Instagram is where, we put more focus and, um, yeah. And if ever, anyone is in Venice and wants to come check out the salon, we've got, you know, an open door and, uh, it's very comfortable. We've got, you know, lots of plants in there. It's a beautiful space and, uh, and it feels really nice too.

[00:46:11] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. No, it's a, it's a beautiful part of the world. I always like it when I'm there. Okay. Well, listen, I will put those links, uh, on our website, growmysalonbusiness.com, uh, and in the show notes for today's podcast. Uh, So to wrap up, Ashley, thank you so much for being so open and honest and, uh, and sharing, you know, where you're at with your business and what it's like being a young business owner today. It's, um, it's, it's great for you to be able to share that for other people to be able to relate to exactly where you're at and sort of feel that, okay, I can do this too.

[00:46:46] **Antony Whitaker:** So, uh, thank you.

[00:46:48] **Ashley Renee:** thank you. I think it's a, it's a great honor to be able to capture this moment in my life. Also, um, I can't wait 5 years from now to reflect back on this moment and to see where I am at that time too. So I really do appreciate it.

[00:47:04] **Antony Whitaker:** 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 or on Facebook and Instagram at [Grow My Salon business](https://www.facebook.com/GrowMySalonBusiness) 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