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[00:00:00] **Antony Whitaker:** Hey, it's Antony here and welcome to today's podcast. This is the weekly podcast for ambitious stylists and salon owners. Every week, I either bring a guest on the show or I'll dive into a new idea or revisit the foundations of what it takes to succeed in the salon industry today. We'll feature new startups, new ideas and initiatives from established people and brands.

[00:00:31] **Antony Whitaker:** Some of them might at first sound a little bit too niche, but we'll explore why they're worth keeping an eye on how they will reshape client expectations and how they'll be central to the future of the salon industry and perhaps even become the new normal. So with that said, on with today's episode, in today's episode, I'm going to focus on salon management software, and I'll be talking with Lori Obiedzinski, who is a hairdresser, but now works in the salon management software side of the industry.

[00:01:03] **Antony Whitaker:** And so today we will discuss what to look for in salon management systems. The role of AI in salon management software and how and why salon owners can and should use AI. Get more out of their salon management software systems and so much more.

[00:01:21] **Antony Whitaker:** So without further ado, welcome to the show, Lori Obiedzinski.

[00:01:27] **Lori:** Hi, Antony. Thank you so much for having me on today. I'm excited to be here.

[00:01:31] **Antony Whitaker:** I'm excited to have you here. I'm even more excited that I pronounced your name correctly, straight off the bat, it's amazing what a few rehearsals can do. Okay. Well, um, Lori, it's really good to have you here. I have had, uh, um, you know, over the years, I've had a couple of different software manufacturers on before, and, uh, it's a very interesting area to talk about, and I think that there's a lot of, you know, great knowledge that you've got to, um, you know, to share with our audience.

[00:02:00] **Antony Whitaker:** today. And so I'm looking forward to digging into all of that. So I want to start off with a really simple one because, you know, sometimes you get asked stuff in the industry and you think, gosh, don't

people realize that? Don't they understand some of those differences? So first thing I want to ask you about was it You know, sometimes terminology is misused or things are grouped together or spoken about in a different way, depending on who the, you know, the manufacturer is in this case.

[00:02:27] **Antony Whitaker:** So I want to ask you a simple question. Can you define for the listener what the differences are between a salon management system, a point of sale system, a booking system, or the term that you use, which is salon management software.

[00:02:45] **Lori:** So the salon management software that we use for both Aura Salonware and Rosie Salon Software is a salon management software with a point of sale. So we have point of sale embedded into our program. So the point of sale is your checkout. It's Your finance. Finance, it's your money. It's the, your ticket sales.

[00:03:04] **Lori:** Um, and so when that is embedded with your salon management software, um, you're gonna be able to run your entire process. Start to finish with your customers and your guests that come in.

[00:03:15] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. And so the booking system is a separate entity in itself, or it is integrated into, I mean, you just mentioned both of the brands that you represent, Aura and Rosie, is the booking system integrated into both of them?

[00:03:30] **Lori:** Yeah. Your booking system is where you're booking and scheduling your client's appointments. So that is our most important piece, right? So you're going to be scheduling your appointments for your booking system, which is, this is all one program you're booking. Then your management system is everything from your inventory, your payroll, your coaching, your reporting, and then your point of sale is your transactions.

[00:03:51] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, okay. Got it. All right. Now, um, I hear a figure these days and it's, it's really difficult to get a lot of accurate data in this industry about anything. Um, even when you talk to, to, you know, software manufacturers and you say, how many software? You know, systems, management systems are there in the industry, and no one can give you an exact number, but I keep hearing a figure these days that it's probably about 200.

[00:04:16] **Antony Whitaker:** Does that sound about right to you? Because it is a very competitive space, and it's growing rapidly. So it's 200 different systems that sound like it would be in the ballpark.

[00:04:29] **Lori:** 200 is pretty high. Um, but if you just do a Google search or salon software, right? Your, your first page is going to give you what's, what's out there and probably what is most relevant. Um, and there's a lot of software that is out there that is not specific to a salon industry. There's some that, that can work for your salon business, but it is not designed specifically for your, for the salon business.

[00:04:56] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Okay. What, what percentage of salons out there again, this is one of those things that's difficult to get an accurate number, but what would you say the percentage of salons are that are not computerized that are still running a paper appointment book and, you know, in many cases, you know, there's sort of sticking the cash in the drawer, you know, and checks and whatever, it's just sort of seems like they're, they're living in a, in another period of time, you know, like the eighties or seventies or something when I first started in the Any idea what that number would be?

[00:05:26] **Lori:** That number is also a little tricky to find unless all of our software companies come together and figure out how many customers we all have together. Um, but the last time we did some research on this, we, we did determine that it was around 40 percent of businesses that are still using paper and pen for scheduling and booking appointments.

[00:05:44] **Antony Whitaker:** Wow. Okay. So yeah, 40%. Right. Okay. Yeah, yeah. That's it. That's hard. And I thought it would be okay now as a, um, a coach in the industry, I will often have salon owners asking me about salon software systems and what should they get, you know, what should they look for? What system is the best? Or, you know, what system should I get?

[00:06:07] **Antony Whitaker:** And my answer is always the same where I say to them, it depends. It depends on what the functions are. That you need it to do, and that you will actually use, because a lot of people get a lot of functions that they never actually end up using. So, so that's important. The other thing I say is, and it depends on your budget, because like everything else, it varies.

[00:06:27] **Antony Whitaker:** And it also depends on the training that you do. And support that you get because, you know, different companies are able to

offer, you know, more training or support than others. And especially if it's someone who's coming from not being computerized to now embracing more technology in their salon, they need that, you know, that handholding, they need that support.

[00:06:49] **Antony Whitaker:** So that's often a, a really good thing. So. Let me ask you this question. If I was a salon owner and I was looking for salon software and I was talking to you and let's just imagine you had nothing to do with the industry. How would you answer that question? What should I look for in a salon management software system?

[00:07:11] **Lori:** First, I would want to know who's using the software, right? Because sometimes the owner who's purchasing is not the person using the program. Sometimes it's the manager, the receptionist, the service providers. So knowing and understanding who's using the program and then also how to technological savvy.

[00:07:31] **Lori:** Are they right? Are they, are they pretty savvy? Are they going to be able to understand? Do they learn quickly? Um, because there are programs that are very in depth and that are, you know, could be very hard to learn for certain people. Do you need something that's very easy, very robust, and then also knowing what you're using it for sort of what you mentioned, right?

[00:07:50] **Lori:** Are you using, um, reporting for coaching your team? Are you using payroll reports to run payroll? Are you placing your orders? to your distributors. Um, are you coaching, you know, so all of those things, if you only need to book appointments and you're not using anything else and you're, you're a cash holding business and you don't need a point of sale, um, you want to, you know, maybe look for a program that definitely fits those needs.

[00:08:14] **Lori:** And then also make sure that you narrow it down to two or three that you're considering and make sure you get demos and make sure you ask a lot of questions. Make sure that it's going to be able to solve problems for you. So, you know, identifying what are some of the challenges that maybe you have in your business and how is this going to help you.

[00:08:32] **Lori:** Solve those challenges.

[00:08:33] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Okay. Now. Regardless of how many systems there are out there, somewhere above 100 and maybe below 200, there's a lot out there. Uh, as I said, you, you represent both, uh, Rosy and Aura. So this would be a good example of answering this question. Like, what is the difference between, in your case, Rosy and aura.

[00:08:59] **Antony Whitaker:** What would one, one of them be more suitable to is one of them more suitable to an independent and another one more suitable to chains or a bigger salon or a smaller salon, like what, what are some of the, you know, differences between those two products?

[00:09:15] **Lori:** So aura is fairly new. It was developed in 2019. And so aura was developed with the idea of a commission based salon, a usually a larger business and definitely, um, works with multi locations. So if you have 2345 locations, um, or is definitely a great platform for that. Rosy's been around for 15 years.

[00:09:39] **Lori:** We're having a 15 year anniversary and their sweet spot is really in booth renter management. So can handle, um, a lot of booth renters, um, hybrid salons. So if you have employees and renters, um, and then also independence.

[00:09:54] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. All right. So there is a very clear point of difference really between the two of them. Um, which, yeah, that's important for everyone to sort of, it comes back to that thing I said about functionality. You know, what do you, what do you need it to do? And. You know, we'll actually use, um, I, I see a lot of salons that have great, you know, salon management systems.

[00:10:17] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, but unfortunately, they totally, let's just say they underutilize the capacity that the, the, the functionality that there is there. And that must be a challenge for. Every software manufacturer trying to get the client to, you know, embrace the, the, the function, the capabilities of what this thing can do.

[00:10:39] **Antony Whitaker:** And I often use, it's like, I often say, it's like using the analogy of, you know, buying a brand-new MacBook pro and then just using it to watch Netflix or something. It's like, you know what, this thing does a lot of stuff here. You don't just watch Netflix on it. Why do you think? As a

generalization that the functionality of systems and salons are underutilized by salon owners.

[00:11:04] **Lori:** Yeah. I think for a couple of reasons, I think just fear of technology. I think people are still a little fearful of just diving into it and discovering what it can do and its capabilities and then overwhelm, right? People don't want to be overwhelmed. People get overwhelmed. And they just close that laptop and they're, they're out and they're walking away and they're not coming back to it.

[00:11:27] **Lori:** So I think when there's so much, generally we see people using 25, 30 percent of software. Right. When they don't understand all of the capabilities and what it can do to help them drive revenue into their business. Um, and so we, yes, us software providers, we want them to use all of these pieces. We want to see them.

[00:11:48] **Lori:** You know, profit from the different tools and features that are within the software. Um, but we want to also make sure, you know, we provide ongoing training for them and education classes, and, um, we want them to learn it and we want them to involve their team and get their receptionist or their, um, managers in watching these and reaching out and using the health center and learning what it can do for them to make their day easier so that they can, you know, Take their time and service their guests or be with their team or what, you know, is most important.

[00:12:19] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, I often, you know, think from a salon owners point of view, how much of it is about the time aspect, because You know, I see a lot of different salon management systems and I'm like, I look at the functions, I look at the stuff that it can do, and it's, it's improving all the time, whether it is, you know, management of your, your people within the salon or the marketing.

[00:12:46] **Antony Whitaker:** side of things is seems to be exploding, especially with AI, et cetera, you know? And so it could literally become like a full, a full time job concert, like utilizing what the capacity of what a really good point of sale system, salon management software, you know, uh, what, what, what it can actually do, because it can do so much in terms of marketing, in terms of the financials, in terms of the people management and the productivity management of your team.

[00:13:15] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, What are some things that you would sort of, I know you've really just touched on that then when you talked about getting their managers and their receptionists, et cetera, involved in it, but, but, but what are some bits of advice you'd give to someone around that?

[00:13:31] **Lori:** Your software should not be on the top of your mind every day. We don't want you to be thinking about your salon software every day, right? We want you to get it set up and get it trained and get it going the way that it is going to best fit your business. It should really be your best invisible employee, meaning that it should keep all of your clients secrets.

[00:13:52] **Lori:** Store tight for you so that you know what to talk about the next time they come in. It's going to store all of your client's formulas. So you remember what those formulas are the next time that they come in. It's going to help you do all of the math for your payroll without the calculators. It's going to help prevent you from running out of products when you need to sell a product to your client.

[00:14:11] **Lori:** It's going to help you communicate with your customers so that you don't have somebody just stuck on the phone all the time. So that's what I mean by it should really be your best employee. It should be your best receptionist. It should be your best manager. But it's not something that you want to be thinking about all day long when you're servicing your clients and you're making people look and feel great.

[00:14:29] **Lori:** And you have a team that you're trying to keep motivated. Um, and you're worried about. Rent or the economy or things like we would we don't want you thinking about your salon software We want it to work for you. Um without you having to work so hard at it

[00:14:44] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, it's a balance, isn't it? Before we jumped on this call, I was thinking about the questions I was going to ask you, and I was thinking about the view of the world that's out on. Management system manufacturers must have, because like anything, your product is constantly evolving. So it's constantly getting better.

[00:15:04] **Antony Whitaker:** As we said, very competitive industry. It has to get better. So you keep adding on more functions. So the challenges. And it's a challenge for the industry as well, is how do you continually add more functions in as, as tech evolves and improves and consumer demands change?

And how do you do all that? Keep adding more to it, but at the same time make it easier to use?

[00:15:31] **Antony Whitaker:** Simpler to use so that it, it doesn't, you know, it doesn't require a computer genius to be able to utilize it because I know you told me you are originally a hairdresser and that gives you a really good insight into how people have got time or not to use these things when they're checking out that client at the front desk.

[00:15:52] **Antony Whitaker:** Yes, you might be able to do this, this, and this with it, but you're checking someone out. The phone's ringing, someone else is trying to get in your next client. So over there looking at a watch, do you know what I mean? It's like, I look at the, I look at the, the problem of there's all this capacity, there's all this stuff it could do, but you've got to put the time aside to, uh, you know, to, to, to make it do it.

[00:16:14] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, I think it's a matter of listening to our customers and the business is changing and so When business changes, we have to change and we have to be able to provide those tools and simplicity that they're looking for, because if we put something really great out there, but nobody can use it because it just takes too much time, or they just don't know how to learn it, or it's too complicated.

[00:16:40] **Lori:** What's the point, right? So we want to make sure that we are listening to the industry and listening to the things that are changing in business and then taking that back to our programs and saying, you know, how can we make this simpler or how can we solve a problem for them, or this is something consistent that keeps coming up, how do we resolve this for them and then show them how to use it and teach them how to set it up and make sure that it's beneficial for our customers.

[00:17:06] **Antony Whitaker:** Before we started recording. We were having a little bit of a conversation and you were talking about, sometimes hairdressers get obsessed with the cost of salon management software. And I, I, I stopped you talking about it because I said, do you know what, what you're talking about now would be really good, uh, when we're recording.

[00:17:29] **Antony Whitaker:** So, um, over to you to talk about that. Cause I thought the little bit that you started off saying, I thought, well, that is so important to get across to salon owners.

[00:17:39] **Lori:** Hmm. I think it's a perspective challenge, right? There is a cost to running a business and we know that the average profit of a salon business is around 8 percent But could also be as low as 2 to 5 percent So the cost of running a business is very top of mind to salon owner and when they look at different tools And things that they're using in their salon, they look at it as an expense.

[00:18:06] **Lori:** Your towels are an expense, your employees are an expense, your product is an expense, your salon software is an expense. But if we can turn that perspective into saying, well, how is it not an expense, but how is it an investment for the business and how do we make sure that we utilize more than 25 percent of it?

[00:18:25] **Lori:** How do we make sure we utilize all of the tools and the features that are available to get the return on that investment? And and beyond that, how do we grow revenue, which is what's driving more of our profit in a successful salon. We want to make sure that we are growing revenue, decreasing cost. But if we can, you know, if your salon software is, you know, Just throwing out a number average, maybe it's 150 a month, right?

[00:18:53] **Lori:** How do we make sure that we minimally break even from that, but grow more? How are we using the tools to make sure we're driving revenue in? Because we want it to. Save time for the business. We want you to streamline things, but we also want you. We are designing these features within the software to make sure that it's helping you drive more revenue.

[00:19:16] **Lori:** And there's a lot of things within salon software that will help do that. But it's a matter of, you know, diving in and taking that time and making sure that you are learning those things to do that. For an example, like I said, if, if you're slow and software costing 150 a month, look at what is your average ticket, right?

[00:19:37] **Lori:** And if you're using software, that's in your reporting, make sure, just look at it, that's something that everybody should know, what is your average ticket? If it's 120, then you need, you know, one and a quarter guest to come in from your software, your software to drive in that guest in order to pay for your software each month.

[00:19:55] **Lori:** Um, and how does, how does that work? Right? So like, what are you doing to make that happen? There's a lot of different things that it can

be doing. Um, and we talk about automations and AI and things like that all the time. One thing, one example, set up a text message that goes out to your clients. After they leave their last service, if they don't have a future appointment scheduled, make them an offer.

[00:20:19] **Lori:** So if they came in today and they don't have a future appointment booked in six weeks, in six weeks, make sure that text message goes out to them with an offer to come back in. They come back in and maybe they weren't otherwise going to come in because you can look at that and a perspective and say, well, they already are here.

[00:20:34] **Lori:** They're already a customer. Sure. But they didn't book a future appointment and you don't know when they were going to come back or if they were going to come back. So using some of those things to help you drive that revenue in and driving a higher ticket or driving more client visits is going to help you increase your revenue.

[00:20:51] **Lori:** So there's so many things, when you're talking about an investment versus an expense in your business. I remember

[00:20:58] **Antony Whitaker:** I just can't get my head around that objection because any Salon software system should easily pay for itself just in the amount of time that it saves you as an owner. Like it, because what is the option that you, cause you're back in the dark ages with a pen and paper appointment book and your marketing capacity is.

[00:21:26] **Antony Whitaker:** Limited to the location that you're in, literally, you know, walk by traffic. But if you're, if you're not, uh, if you don't have a solid management system and can't collect people's email addresses and, you know, do, do, you know, text message broadcasting, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, it should easily pay for itself if it's embraced and used properly.

[00:21:47] **Antony Whitaker:** Um,

[00:21:50] **Lori:** when I did here and I've been licensed for 20 years and we did use a paper appointment book and pen. And I remember the time around 2008 that we switched to a software and the difference that it made. When I could easily find out when a client was in last where before I'd have to flip through pages and pages and pages and try to find that client and and I did it.

[00:22:14] **Lori:** I never remember what product they bought. I didn't remember the formula as it was too blurry on the card that I was writing it down on. So the things that it can do to help simplify your day to day. Is isn't is, you know, so much

[00:22:30] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, definitely. Definitely. Um, you threw a percentage out before I wrote it down. I don't know if it was just an off the cuff thing. You said using 25 percent of the functions in a point-of-sale system, uh, point of sale. So that's the terminology that I sometimes use. So I keep using that and I mean, I mean to say salon management system.

[00:22:49] **Antony Whitaker:** Was that just a figure you threw out there or are you saying that, you know, on average people are really only using 25 percent of the capacity of their salon management software.

[00:22:59] **Lori:** that's what we find is that in it might not be in the same thing Um, so somebody may not be using their inventory features Um, or maybe they started it, but they're not using it properly or they're not continuing it. Um, Maybe they're not coaching with it Maybe they look at one report, but there's hundreds of reports that could give you so much information on your business that when you take the time to What?

[00:23:25] **Lori:** You know, I always think you have to know to grow. You can't grow your business if you don't know where your business is at today. So utilizing those reports where before you have to calculate everything by hand, you have to look at, you know what you took to the bank. And now that information is literally right at your fingertips.

[00:23:42] **Lori:** And knowing What you're bringing in in revenue, knowing what your service providers are doing, knowing those key KPIs, what's your average ticket, what is your retail to service dollar, what's your productivity, what's your, you know, what's your dollar per square foot in your business. I think all of that information is, is very available to you.

[00:24:01] **Lori:** So knowing. What your business is doing and using more than 25 percent like set it up and actually follow back up on it. Like use your inventory and then follow up and say, okay, you know, am I running low on any products? Um, what are my best or worst selling products? Maybe I need to consider taking something off my shelf.

[00:24:21] **Lori:** Maybe I need to replace it with something that, you know, if I have products that I've been sitting here for a decade. Two years and not sold at all. That might be something to consider, but it's so easy to overlook. If we don't keep our eye on it, like you, you just don't look at it. It's like going to your own house every day.

[00:24:38] **Lori:** You don't notice some of the dust in the corners. Um, as a business owner, you don't always notice that product that's sitting on the bottom shelf that hasn't moved unless you're really looking at those reports. Yeah,

[00:24:50] **Antony Whitaker:** make decisions based on facts, not feelings. That's the whole thing, isn't it?

[00:24:56] **Lori:** All right. Um, the independent thing. Uh, I often talk about it on the podcast. It's happening for different reasons in different countries. I think one of the things that underpins it everywhere, uh, as to why it's happening is Gen Z.

[00:25:10] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, uh, you know, that's a big driver of it. And. The fact that with technology now you can be independent, whereas, you know, 25 years ago, you really couldn't be. It was just so much harder. So what I want to ask you about was, what is the impact being on salon software because of the increase in independence in the industry all over the world?

[00:25:34] **Lori:** Well, the thing for, for us, especially Rosie, because we do have. We are set to help support an independent very strongly. Um, they still need a lot of the same things that a bigger business doesn't need. They still have retail. Um, if they don't have retail on their shelves, they want an e commerce store, right?

[00:25:53] **Lori:** So we provide them free e commerce store where they can sell online. They still have reports. They still need to grow. They still need to know what their numbers are because they need to survive on their own. They need to know what they're doing. Uh, they still need to do their taxes. So they still need that information.

[00:26:08] **Lori:** They still need to book their appointments. They still need to do all of the things that most of the things that a bigger salon would need to do.

[00:26:16] **Antony Whitaker:** We do have a lot of independent providers that use Rosie today. We have a lot and as an independent. You are all of the things that a commission baseline is. You are the manager. You are the provider. You are the owner. You are the inventory manager. You're all of the things and they do use those things.

[00:26:35] **Lori:** So maybe you're saying like, Oh, I'm not doing marketing, but they're going to, your software is going to communicate with your clients when you are the only person in your business and you are with a customer. So if you don't, if they're not relying on their software to do that, yeah. It's slipping through the cracks and and they do use those those features within the software.

[00:26:53] **Lori:** So they use it for their notifications. It's their reminders to their clients of an upcoming appointment. So it helps reduce no shows or last minute cancellations. Um, they're using it for itinerary. So after I book online booking huge. 40 percent of, this is something we did a study on, 40 percent of customers will book outside of your business hours.

[00:27:15] **Lori:** And if you're an independent, you're not open the full hours that a full commission-based salon is. So who's taking, who's booking those appointments? A lot of times, online booking, your customers are booking their own appointments. If you're not utilizing online booking, you're missing out on a lot of revenue that could potentially be coming in.

[00:27:32] **Lori:** And as an independent, they need that revenue. They are the only sole provider. So they need to make sure that their books stay filled.

[00:27:41] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Okay. Um, I totally agree with all that.

[00:27:44] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, artificial intelligence. You, you, you dropped the phrase and I wanted to talk about that. Um, and over the last 18 months, it's gone absolutely mad.

[00:27:55] **Antony Whitaker:** And I, you know, follow a lot of stuff on, on AI. I just can't [00:28:00] believe how quick AI is evolving. It's like, know, what you read a month ago is completely out of date today already. It's just changing so fast. And I think a lot of people are not aware of just how fast it is changing. Uh, what I want to ask you about is, is how are you integrating, because I know you are, uh, AI into your Salon software?

[00:28:24] **Lori:** we hear the phrase or the words AI all the time. I think some of our in. In the salon or a business owner, they don't necessarily know or understand like where it's being placed or how, how to use it or what to do with it. And so in salon software, in our situation, we use it a lot around reputation. So building the reputation of your business and getting reviews from your customers and utilizing it for your social media and.

[00:28:53] **Lori:** You can use it in so many different ways. Like one, for example, if you were posting on Facebook and you don't really know what to say, but you know, you're having a promotion for blonding specials for the spring. You can literally just type blonding special spring salon and let it generate and it will come up with some captions for you.

[00:29:11] **Lori:** So when you're having, you know, you had a long day service, all your guests, you're emotionally drained. You don't know what to do, but you know, you have pictures you need to post for the day. Like, what do I put? Yeah. And you can use the AI generator, right? So you can say, you know, this is what I did for the day, or this is my promotion for tomorrow, last minute opening, and it will help you generate that, which is always editable.

[00:29:32] **Lori:** So you can customize that if you didn't like exactly what it said, but it helped generate the idea for you. Um, another one is around, um, the reputation of your business. So. We have a reputation management program, and so that will help you understand what your customers are saying. If you are that commission baseline, you have a lot of employees.

[00:29:55] **Lori:** It's really important to keep the pulse of your reputation, because that's where people are going to find out about, you know, new customers are going to find out about your business, they're reading your reviews, and so you want to source those reviews and you want to hear what, and see what people are saying, and you want to respond to them.

[00:30:13] **Lori:** And if you are a salon owner, everybody's had at least one bad review in their life. Like, it's out there on Google, right? How do you respond to that without the emotion and the heat that you're feeling of like, why did you say that about my business? You know, you can use AI generator to say, write a response to this.

[00:30:33] **Lori:** And then it's professional. It's without the emotion behind it. Um, but it's so important to respond like the new customers seen that you

want to use that, but I can help you generate those things when you either just don't have it emotionally, or you need it to sound a certain tone. You want to take that heat off of your voice a little bit, and it can, it can be a really great assistance for you

[00:30:59] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah. I'm, I'm sort of caught in the middle sometimes with this. I was doing something the other day. I was just trying to think what it was. Uh, making an appointment and it was obviously an AI that I was doing this through and yes, it was really efficient, but I, you know, it's like, I was talking to a guy on the podcast, probably best part of a year ago now, uh, Sam Brocato, I don't know if you know, Sam, he's got a salon in, uh, in Manhattan and we were talking about doing away with, uh, The front desk and how many salons are doing away with the front desk and how, you know, technology is sort of impacting on the, you know, the client journey, the client experience, you know, yada, yada.

[00:31:43] **Antony Whitaker:** And yes, I know that you can sort of like, you know, the receptionist has pretty much been done away with. I mean, they still exist big time in a lot of salons, uh, but, but they can be done away with. Uh, because of the technology that is now available, clients really don't need them from that transaction point of view of making appointments, booking appointments, and even taking payment, you know, it can all be fully automated.

[00:32:09] **Antony Whitaker:** I totally get that, but it was interesting what Sam was saying. He was saying, you know, as a salon owner, he's saying, I don't want there to be less. Engagement with a human. I want there to be more engagement with a human. Um, and, and not to delete that because that's what people are missing more and more in their lives.

[00:32:30] **Antony Whitaker:** They're missing more and more of that human interaction. And so You know, like I know we touched on this before we were recording. And I was saying, you know, if you've got Mary, the receptionist who's been with you for 10 years, Mary's great, you know, everyone knows Mary, everyone loves Mary. Mary remembers everybody.

[00:32:49] **Antony Whitaker:** Mary's this life and soul of the salon. And she's got this great personality and remembers, you know, who's divorced and who's married and what your kids are doing and yada, yada, yada. You just

can't replace that stuff. And I think. In the world that we're living in, I think that if anything, that's becoming more valuable, not less valuable.

[00:33:11] **Antony Whitaker:** So I, I just wonder how all that fits into the picture. What are your, what are your thoughts about that?

[00:33:18] **Lori:** when you bring up. Removing the front desk. You Britain, people are so passionate about this topic. People either love it or they hate it. It's like 50 50. Um, you know, we, we do support a lot of salons that have removed their front desk. But removing the front desk doesn't mean removing the people necessarily Right, you can repurpose these people for different positions because yes There is that person that always remembers they know everything people love her they bring her Christmas gifts or whatever Um, and that that's great.

[00:33:49] **Lori:** We want those people because your clients Feel great when they see that person, but repurpose them for something else, right? Teach them how to sell the products to these people, teach them how to do your inventory counts, teach them how to, you know, change the experience for the guests. So maybe they don't walk in and they check in right here.

[00:34:09] **Lori:** Maybe this person walks around with an iPad and is rebooking their gas, you know, from the chair while the color is processing, because they know that they're leaving and they're busy because they're on their lunch break or what have you. That they need to leave as soon as they're done because that is another thing is our time Our time is valued so much that as soon as our hair is done.

[00:34:31] **Lori:** We want to get out We don't want to spend because i'm a customer Somewhere too. I don't want to spend a lot of time at the front desk when i'm done with my service I'm ready to go. Um, and so using that receptionist if you chose to remove your front desk You know, general position to enhance the customer experience, still making it personable and still giving that warm welcome.

[00:34:53] **Lori:** Maybe they're greeting them at the door, hanging their jacket, giving them a beverage. If you offer it, you know, showing them what's new, what new products you brought in, whatever it happens to be, teach them to do sales for you, generate more business.

[00:35:09] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Okay. Yeah. No, I get it. Mary's still got a job. Okay,

[00:35:20] **Lori:** She can still answer the phone. She can do those things. Maybe it's not at a physical front desk because that is, that is reality of a lot of people literally moving their front desk and they put a station there. So a revenue generating station instead of a phone station or a computer station, and they have their computers in the back room instead of up front.

[00:35:39] **Lori:** And they, they literally have iPads, you know, that float around the salon and people are able to use that instead of having the desk. Because I don't think it's about the people. I think it's the desk that people are like, you could ever know.

[00:35:53] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, so that obviously thinking about the client journey like that obviously impacts you guys as to how you think about software And how you design software and what it's going to be used on. Cause it's not going to be used on a big Mac, you know, and at the front desk, is it, it's, it's going to be on iPads or phones or whatever other device that we have, um, you know, uh, so, so how do you, so, so, so what does that look like in your, in your world, your people sitting around discussing how that impacts on what the software looks like, does it?

[00:36:33] **Antony Whitaker:** Talk to me about that. Yeah.

[00:36:36] **Lori:** It's just as you mentioned, you can't have a big iMac that you're walking around the slum with. You can't have a terminal for payments, like a giant iPad size that you're walking around the slum with either. You need something mobile that would plug into your phone or plug into your iPad. Um, so that is compatible and you can walk around the slum or the capability to store credit cards on file because a lot of people don't don't carry cash with them anymore.

[00:36:59] **Lori:** They don't want to carry, you know, a credit card with them. So you keep a card on file and then you're able to process that transaction without even having a card present. Um, and you just, you just remember it for the next time. I do that with my stylist. I love it. She's like, this number is so good. Yes.

[00:37:15] **Lori:** It's great. Perfect. And I'm out. Um, so it's ease of, It's convenience for the salon, as well as creating a better customer experience for your guests and making sure that their experience is quick, easy, seamless, and enjoyable also. But yeah, same thing. The, the, the iPad capability, because we are web version, um, iPad capability, their terminals that they're checking out with, and then the features in it.

[00:37:38] **Lori:** So storing credit cards on file, collecting deposits before they come in, um, the online booking, making sure that, you know, customers could rebook their appointment online while they're sitting in the chair. They could be talking about that with their, with their provider of, you know, when should I be coming back in?

[00:37:53] **Lori:** Or the provider should tell them when to rebook and here, get on your phone and rebook it right now so that we make sure that it's aligned. And they can do that while they're. In service

[00:38:03] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

[00:38:05] **Antony Whitaker:** So before we start to wrap up, I want to ask you a couple of things. First of all, about COVID because it was a time that sort of happened, you know, it's an under understatement saying it without any warning, it just happened. And businesses everywhere had to adapt and, um, software was a part of.

[00:38:25] **Antony Whitaker:** Uh, adapting to make it work for salons. And I'm just sort of wondering that maybe some of those things were very helpful and worked really well, but now we're not doing them anymore and other things maybe were really helpful, worked really well, and oh my gosh, we've really embraced them. Um, what have you found?

[00:38:47] **Antony Whitaker:** Has sort of stuck with us in terms of the upgrades to tech, because, you know, a lot of things happening, uh, you know, during, uh, COVID that, that sort of, you know, tech made it bearable and made it more helpful to run a business. Uh, what are your thoughts about that?

[00:39:06] **Lori:** there's a few things that come to mind that are still very helpful for businesses today. And 1 of them was text message check ins. Because when you think about that time. People weren't letting everybody walk into their salon. They actually were locking their doors so that people

didn't just come walking in and they were taking, you know, their appointments only.

[00:39:27] **Lori:** So a text message check in was something that we created during that time and people still use it now where the client will simply send a text message. Saying I'm here. I'm 5 minutes away. What have you and then notifies the salon or the provider to let them know their guest is here and have arrived and people still definitely use that today. They still use it today. And that also has created a tool for the independence because there are people that work in suites and maybe that front door is locked. Right? So that allows them to know when their customers are there. To come in where they can go and greet greet their customers. So that was 1 thing.

[00:40:04] **Lori:** Um, another 1 is virtual consultations. So aura has a really great virtual consultation feature in there. And that was 1 thing. Salon owners are looking to how do they reduce the time of the visit? And how do they ensure that the guest is booking the right service so that they're not wasting the time or the appointment that was booked if they booked one thing and they could not do it for the day or the time didn't allow.

[00:40:26] **Lori:** So a virtual consultation is where the customer can do that consultation virtually, share pictures and things like that of inspiration. What does the hair look like currently? And they can book the right services because when we talk about online booking with. Salons. That's another fear. They're like, Oh, no, customers don't know how to book.

[00:40:43] **Lori:** They book their own services. Well, this is a way around that where you know exactly what your customer is coming in with, you know exactly what they're looking for, and you can help them to book the correct appointment. Therefore, you have the right amount of time for them. You know exactly what you're going to be doing as far as the service.

[00:41:00] **Lori:** The client has a better expectation of what they're getting. And it also helps that, um, conversation around price. So you can tell them ahead of time, this service is going to cost you around this amount and there's no sticker shock at the end. And everybody has clear expectations. And so that's something else that has carried forward that people utilize very, very much.

[00:41:20] **Antony Whitaker:** Hmm. I'm, I'm curious, maybe I've missed something here. Um, because I get the whole virtual consultation thing.

WhatsApp or, you know, FaceTime or whatever, how, how integrated is that into salon management systems? Like, are you able to do that within the app? Is that what you're saying? You can do that within, within Rosie or whatever.

[00:41:46] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. Okay. I've, I've definitely missed. I didn't get that memo. Okay.

[00:41:51] **Lori:** in Aura, and it is a feature that Aura has built into the program for salons to use. So when they need to use a virtual consultation, they don't, maybe they don't need to use it for everybody. If you're doing a, you're doing a short clip or haircut, you probably don't need a virtual consultation.

[00:42:07] **Lori:** You're doing a child's haircut. You probably don't need that. But when you get into color services, Um, you know, what I might consider something you might consider a corrective color, right? And so it helps be on the same page about what's, what's reality and what's the expectation.

[00:42:25] **Antony Whitaker:** So are you saying that within the salon management software. There is video conferencing capability to talk to a client directly.

[00:42:36] **Lori:** It's not a video. It would be the pictures and it would be that message. So they could send pictures of what their looks like. They can send inspiration pictures. Describe what they're looking to have done. And that communication is done from the software itself to the customer.

[00:42:53] **Antony Whitaker:** Right. Okay. That's interesting. All right. Um, right. Uh, I have a little pet peeve as a, as a business coach, Um, I'll talk to salon owners, you know, in many different countries and we'll be using, we'll be talking about the same thing, but using different words and it's no one's fault.

[00:43:17] **Antony Whitaker:** This is just a reality is that, you know, there's all these different, um, uh, salon management softwares. You know, sometimes the, the terminology that they use to describe something is different terminology to describe the same thing.

[00:43:32] **Antony Whitaker:** And so that gets confusing. The best example I can give you is, uh, Around the term rebooking or prebooking. So I know for example, that some software manufacturers have a clear distinction around

that. A lot of salon owners, including me, used to think it was the only difference between prebooking and rebooking was the spelling.

[00:43:53] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. And, and, but because there is a definition for each, you know, uh, the, at least one salon software manufacturer uses, which is prebooking. is when the client makes their next appointment before they walk out the door. And rebooking is when their client just makes another appointment with you. It might have been in two weeks or a month or whatever ago.

[00:44:17] **Antony Whitaker:** And they're both very interesting metrics. And from a salon owner's point of view, and I dare say from a stylist point of view, they're very important metrics to separate and to track. But oftentimes most sell on point of sale system, sell on management system, sell on software systems. Don't make that distinction.

[00:44:40] **Antony Whitaker:** I don't even know what I'm asking you here. I'm certainly not blaming you. I'm just saying, how can we, Get some standardization in that sort of thing, or is it just not possible?

[00:44:56] **Lori:** it's a really great question. We need a conference for just all salon software companies to come together and standardize some things. Right.

[00:45:02] **Antony Whitaker:** it would, it would help, wouldn't it? You know, it's not, it's not the end of the world, but it would certainly help because when that, when the two things are muddled together, those two examples, pre booking rebooking, it becomes a very different metric and it almost becomes a bit. Meaningless in some ways, but when they're separated, those two metrics are very powerful that, you know, Johnny prebooked 65 percent of his clients before they walked out the door.

[00:45:31] **Antony Whitaker:** That's a very powerful metric to know. Um, uh, you know, when you know those numbers, it's, it's important. And I, I often, it's a, it's a conversation that I have with other people and I'm just curious on what your uptake on that was. Um,

[00:45:46] **Lori:** I do. I think from a coaching perspective like yourself or someone who's coaching salons and they're all using a different tool, it can be very hard to keep straight from the salon perspective or from the owner.

Hopefully. They're not using multiple different tools, right? Or software. So I think the best thing I would say for the salon owner is to make sure that they understand the difference between Rebook and Prebook according to the software that they're using.

[00:46:19] **Lori:** So make sure that they're very clear on those definitions. Reach out to the support person or the support team. Look at the help center. There's everybody's got a help center or, you know, knowledge-based articles. Make sure that they're very clear and then they can help communicate that to their coach and make sure that they know what they're looking for.

[00:46:35] **Lori:** Cause you're right. There are very important numbers and something that they should definitely know and be monitoring. Um, But I think that it's up to the salon and generally a salon is not switching software once a year, you know, or every two years, like they're generally staying, they're a partner with that salon software, and they're generally going to be using it for many, many years.

[00:46:56] **Lori:** So once they know it and learn it and understand it. They're fine, and they know and understand it, and they can relay that back to the coach. It's the coach, from your perspective, I can see why this would be bothering for you, because everybody has a different definition, or it means something different in every program.

[00:47:11] **Lori:** I think really for the salon to understand it is where it needs to start.

[00:47:16] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, yeah, okay. Alright, very last thing, just a quick answer to this one. What will salon management systems look like in the future? What do you think five- or 10-years' time that they might be doing? They don't do now, you know,

[00:47:32] **Lori:** I think when you said in the very beginning that there's like 200, I think we're going to see that number drop drastically. I think the competitive space of them is You know, within Aura and Rosie today, we offer so many things, you know, your reporting, your point of sale, your reputation, like everything is together.

[00:47:52] **Lori:** So you have one central hub. You don't have to go to five different programs to do all of these different tools. So as we [00:48:00] keep

evolving and put. All of the features and functionality that the business needs to run their business in one place helps to manage your business. So they don't need to go to all these places.

[00:48:12] **Lori:** So I think as we evolve, the, the ones that are gonna be standing are the ones that are gonna be able to provide the most to the businesses and the businesses will be evolving with them. Yeah.

[00:48:23] **Antony Whitaker:** got it. Okay. Right. So look, we need to wrap up. It's been a really fascinating conversation. Thank you for all your wisdom and input there. Uh, whereabouts can people connect with you, um, or find out more about Rosie or aura and then what, what's next? What social media channels or, uh, website addresses, uh, can you point them towards?

[00:48:45] **Lori:** Very easy. So the website for both of them is Get rosie.com or Aura is Aura salon wear.com. And then same names for social media. So you can look on Instagram or Facebook and it's Aura Salonware or Rosie Salon Software. You can find us there.

[00:49:03] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. All right. Well, listen, I'll put those links, uh, on our website and in the show notes for today's podcast. So if you listen to this podcast with Lori from Rosie and Aura Salon Software, and have enjoyed it, then do me a favor, share it with people that you know who would also enjoy it. And don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple podcast app.

[00:49:27] **Antony Whitaker:** So to wrap up, Lori, thank you for being on this week's episode of The Grow My Salon Business Podcast.

[00:49:34] **Lori:** Thank you, Antony.

[00:49:35] **Antony Whitaker:** Well, I hope you enjoyed that conversation with Lori as much as I did. And if you're a regular listener, you will probably already know that I have a free masterclass coming up shortly titled the four essential lessons in salon management to set you up for success. You'll see the dates and times and a link to register in the show notes of today's podcast.

[00:49:57] **Antony Whitaker:** And if you'd like to download a free salon management checklist, then visit growmysalonbusiness.com Forward slash management hyphen checklist. And I'll also put that link in the show notes

below wherever you're listening to this. So to wrap up, thank you for listening to this week's episode of the Grow My Salon Business Podcast.

[00:50:18] **Antony Whitaker:** Until next week, be safe and take care of yourself.