

Episode 320

[00:00:00] Hello and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and as I always say, it's great to have you here with us today. Thank you for the reviews for the podcast. I really do appreciate it. And if you haven't yet left us a review, then I would be really grateful if you did either on the Apple Podcast or Spotify app.

[00:00:24] The ratings and reviews are extremely helpful and they're greatly appreciated. They do matter in the rankings of the show and they help other people to find the podcast. And I also genuinely love to hear what's been helpful to you. So all you need to do is go to the Apple or Spotify app and search for Grow My Salon business.

[00:00:45] Scroll to the bottom of the page and there should be a link that will enable you to leave a review and I would be eternally grateful. So with that said on with today's show. The end of the year means different things to different people, and I know we're not at the end of the year yet, but we're hurtling towards Christmas, and the end of the year at a rate of knots.

[00:01:07] Now for some, the end of the year is all about Christmas and the religious celebration. For others, it's simply the closing of one chapter and the start of another. As we move into a new year, it's a chance to hit pause and take a deep breath and reset, and it's a happy time for many. And inevitably it's a sad time for others.

[00:01:28] It's a time when emotions are heightened and everything feels a little more significant, I suppose. And it's also a time of gratitude and reflection, as well as reckoning and celebration of what's been achieved over the last year and a chance to start setting goals for the year ahead. But what I wanna talk about today is the celebration component, specifically celebrating the achievements of you and your team and what that might look like. [

[00:02:00] When I had my salons, we always had a staff Christmas party, and over the years it took on many different forms. Sometimes it was a sit down dinner at my place for all 25 to 30 plus staff, and we had a big long table and music and entertainment and great food and gifts for everybody. Other years, it was in a private room at a restaurant, or as the business grew, sometimes we'd just take over an entire restaurant and one year we even hosted the party in the salon itself and invited both staff and clients.

[00:02:32] We had it fully catered. We had a open bar with cocktails all night and aDJ, and we all celebrated together. It was chaos, but it was a very good kind of chaos and a lot of fun. Once we'd done it a few times though, these parties started to take on more meaning.

[00:02:50] They became more than just a fun night out. They became a celebration of the year that had been a moment to pause and look back at what the salon and the individuals within it had achieved, and I'd make a very short speech and we'd talk about the plans for the year ahead so that there was excitement and anticipation about what was next.

[00:03:13] And sure, there was plenty of what I usually refer to as Let Your Hair Down Behaviour. It is a salon party after all. But we also made it this in-house awards night, and that's what I want to talk about and I wanna talk about why that is so important because like everything else in business planning is required.

[00:03:32] And so, although you might think it's a bit early to be talking about Christmas, I think that you should have been planning this already weeks ago. But nonetheless, better late than never. You see every second conversation I hear in the industry these days is about the rise of the independent, the freelancers, the suite renters, the self-employed stylists, and in true hairdresser fashion that's often spoken about as if everyone wants to go that way.

[00:03:57] But it isn't everyone, like everything, it's a percentage of people. And that percentage varies from country to country, from city to city and from salon to salon. And that's okay. But there's also a percentage of people who don't want that. They don't wanna deal with the tax returns, the bookkeeping, the marketing, the budgeting, or worrying about how they're gonna be able to afford to take time off.

[00:04:21] They don't wanna spend half their week juggling admin instead of doing what they love, which is doing hair. The lure of being self-employed is strong. I get it. It's shiny, it's new, and for some, it's absolutely the right move. But for others it's not because some people genuinely want to be part of a team.

[00:04:42] They wanna be part of something bigger than themselves. They wanna belong to a culture that excites them. They want to grow and learn and be part of something bigger than just a chair and a client list. They wanna work in a salon where they don't have to think about ordering stock or whether the marketing got done this week.

[00:05:02] They want their wages to be paid on time. They want their holidays booked. They want the clients to just magically show up in their chair and they wanna do great hair, earn good money, and be part of an environment where people support each other and have a great time and a laugh along the way. There's plenty of stylists who want that, but we need to make working in a team exciting.

[00:05:27] Again, we need to reinvent what it means to work in a salon, and more importantly, we need to sell the vision of what being part of a great salon looks like. Because a great salon is where you can grow, learn, and be part of something bigger than just yourself. And one small part of celebrating that kind of culture is celebration.

[00:05:49] Reflection helps you learn. Celebration helps you anchor what worked, and that's what builds great cultures. Many salon owners skip the celebration part. They just collapse in a heap on Christmas Eve and jump straight into planning for January. But celebrating isn't frivolous. It's strategy. Think of it as strategy, disguised as fun.

[00:06:13] It's what anchors your culture and reminds everyone, including you, why you do what you do. At our Christmas parties, everyone got a gift, but we also had awards both the obvious and perhaps the more creative ones. We'd have things like the highest revenue producer for the year and highest retail sales because numbers and achievement matter, and people should be recognised for exceptional achievement.

[00:06:42] But we'd also celebrate things like most improved service sales, and most improved retail sales because improvement deserves just as much recognition as being the best. And those winners were all easily identified because it was based on results, not emotion or favouritism, or who'd been there the longest.

[00:07:04] Then we had a second set of awards, the ones voted for by the team themselves, anonymously. And these were things like best team player for the year, or best dressed person consistently for the year, or outstanding customer service, or most improved. And we had one for acts of leadership. We'd put out secret ballots a few weeks before the party and everyone voted for their peers.

[00:07:30] The winners were announced on the night, and honestly, you'd think that they'd just won an Oscar. People loved it because it wasn't about hierarchy or titles. It was about being seen by the people that they worked with every day.

As a salon owner, it's your job to create moments that make people feel seen and proud.

[00:07:52] People crave three things at work, purpose, progress, and praise. And that last one, praise is free. Yet, it's so often forgotten when you take time to celebrate your team. You're saying, I see you. I appreciate you and you matter. That's leadership. When I hear people talk about the move towards self-employed, so much of it is about freedom, but they forget about connection, and connection is what keeps people in salons.

[00:08:25] You can't build culture on KPIs alone. You build it on moments, moments of connection, laughter, recognition, and belonging. When you laugh together, when you celebrate, when you share that round of applause, a, a hug, a pat on the back for someone's effort, that's the culture that's being created. And if you're serious about competing with the lure of independents, build a culture that people don't want to leave because recognition leads to retention.

[00:08:58] People don't leave jobs, they leave leaders. And more often than not, they don't leave because of money. They leave because they don't feel valued. They don't feel seen. They don't feel connected. Culture, not always pay is what keeps great people in your business. Now, some people will say, but Antony, I can't afford to throw a big event, and my response is that you can't afford not to because it doesn't have to be extravagant.

[00:09:28] It just has to be intentional.

[00:09:31] You could always host a dinner like I did, or a lunch or a picnic or a barbecue at the local park. You could do a team day out or simply give everyone a handwritten note and a small gift, something that says you are valued, you matter. I appreciate you. The format doesn't matter. What matters is that you make space to celebrate what's been achieved and to cast a vision for the year ahead.

[00:09:58] If you want your team to grow their retail, then celebrate their achievements. If you want them to rebook more, then reward it. If you want them to step up as leaders, then acknowledge it. When they do, people will always rise to the standard you recognise. So here's my challenge for you as we head towards the end of the year.

[00:10:18] First of all, plan your celebration. Make it matter. Use it as a tool to strengthen your team and to set the tone for the year ahead. Here's a simple framework to think about. First point on it is plan early, so don't leave it until

the last week of December when everyone's too tired to care. I'd plan to do it in the first week or 2nd of December.

[00:10:42] Make it personal. Acknowledge every individual for something specific. Mix business with fun. Make sure you have a laugh, but also reflect on achievements and talk about next year's goals and keep it consistent.

[00:10:57] Make it a yearly tradition that people really look forward to, because that consistency builds meaning over time. Use it as a launchpad. Plant the seeds for the year ahead, get people excited about what's coming, and if you wanna take it up a notch, then consider creating your own salon awards.

[00:11:17] You don't need to over complicate it. You could add the things that I had, or you could come up with some other names for them that suit your culture.

[00:11:25] For example, I know someone that has awards in their salon and they have things like, I know one of them is called the Ray of Sunshine Award for positivity, and another one they have is the Silent Hero for Behind the Scenes effort. Another one for Rookie of the Year, or I think they have one called The Client Whisperer for someone who always gets amazing feedback.

[00:11:47] You see, it's amazing how a small gift or a round of applause can completely shift someone's energy and sense of belonging.

[00:11:56] You don't have to spend a fortune on gifts or for the awards that you give people. What I used to do was buy things that people probably wouldn't buy for themselves, even though I knew that they would like it. So, for example, a favourite of mine was that I often would give coffee table books from fashion designers or famous photographers, or other times it might be their favourite fragrance.

[00:12:19] Another favourite of mine was to get something from Tiffany's, like a key ring or a money clip, or a heart shaped paperweight. They weren't ridiculously expensive, but who doesn't love getting a gift in a Tiffany bag? And other times it might be a bottle of champagne. Anyway, I'm sure you get the idea of where I'm going with this.

[00:12:39] So listen, I'm gonna finish up with this. If you want to compete with the lure of independents, then build a culture that people don't want to leave, because a Christmas party isn't just a party, it's your culture wrapped up in a bow.

[00:12:54] So whatever your celebration looks like this year, whether it's big or small, fancy or simple, make it meaningful. Celebrate your people. Thank them. Reflect on how far you've come. And then get ready to start again. Stronger, smarter, and more connected than before. Because at the end of the day, it's not just about running a business, it's about building a community.

[00:13:20] And that's always worth celebrating. So with that said, we need to start wrapping up this week's episode. So for further information visit growmysalonbusiness.com to find out about our free resources as well as our grow books, our online courses and coaching programs.

[00:13:38] So have a great week and don't forget to tune in next Tuesday for another episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. I'm an Antony Whitaker, and that's it for this week. Bye for now.