

GMSB 333

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[00:00:05] Hello, and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and today we're doing something that I've not done before, and that is I'm re-recording an episode. Now back in March, 2022, I recorded episode 131 about hairdressers and the role that they have in recommending professional retail products.

[00:00:28] And here's what's really interesting. Nearly four years later, salon owners are still asking me the same questions about salon. In fact, in the last month alone, I've had this conversation four separate times and I've referred people each time to go back to the original podcast. So why would I rerecord it?

[00:00:47] Well, because while the fundamentals haven't changed, the landscape that we're in certainly has. Now, what I mean by that is that since 2022. We have been through or are still going through arguably high rates of inflationary increases on the cost of living. That has changed how some clients think about purchases.

[00:01:08] We've also seen the creator economy explode with some stylists becoming influencers, and e-commerce has gone from an emerging trend to almost becoming the default behaviour for many people. So the objections that stylists have about recommending retail have evolved even if the core psychology has remained the same.

[00:01:32] So this is version 2.0. If you heard the original, you'll recognize some of the foundational thinking, but I promise you that you'll get some fresh perspectives on what's stopping your team from doing this, meaning retail well, and more importantly, exactly what you can do about it as a business owner.

[00:01:52] Okay, so here we go. Here's what I see happening in salons everywhere.

[00:01:58] You've got one stylist who sees 25 clients a week and achieves \$0 in retail sales. Right next to them, there's another stylist, essentially seeing the same clients using the same products, and 50% of their clients are purchasing take home products. Same salon, same products, same clients, same economy, same internet.

[00:02:20] So. What's the difference? The difference is the person standing behind the chair and what they choose to believe about retail, and more importantly, their role as a professional. And that's what we're going to dig into today. Not just what stylists should do, but why they don't, and how to actually change that.

[00:02:43] Because I'll tell you right now, you won't get hairdressers to recommend retail just by teaching them some product knowledge or giving them scripts to follow. Or by paying them a commission, they'll only start doing it when they genuinely believe it's part of their job and understand why it matters. So before we dig into the objections that some stylists have about retail and how to overcome them, let me start with why you should, because when I ask salon owners and stylists, why should hairdressers recommend professional take home products after we strip away all the negative objections that they sometimes come up with?

[00:03:22] It comes down to three reasons why hairstylists should recommend take home hair care to the clients in their chair.

[00:03:31] The first reason is that it's a service to your clients. Hairdressing is this sort of weird mix between the service industry, the hospitality industry, and the fashion industry. Educating clients about what you are using and how to use it is simply good service. It simply shows that you really care about them, meaning the clients and their hair.

[00:03:56] Now, if you, as a stylist need to use specific professional products to create results on their hair, then logically the client needs access to those same products to maintain those results at home.

[00:04:09] So choosing not to recommend a product that you know works and that you need would be like a doctor having an ointment that clears up your dermatitis, but not telling you about it. Or a waiter not mentioning the day's special, or an accountant knowing an easier way to track your expenses, but keeping it to themselves.

[00:04:32] Advising clients on home hair care is just part of providing professional service. And when you talk to hairdressers, they love referring to themselves as professionals, so act like a professional. Not selectively when it suits you, but all the time because recommending retail is part of delivering professional service to your clients.

[00:04:55] The second reason is it's part of your job. Just think about it. If it's not your job, you, the professional hairdresser standing behind the chair with the product knowledge and the expertise and the years of experience. If it's not your job, then whose job is it?

[00:05:12] Is it the job of the person at the pharmacy counter or the shelf stacker at the supermarket or the checkout operator at the local store? Of course it's not. They don't have your training, your expertise, or your relationship with this client that is in your chair. The reality is simply that if it's not your job, then please tell me whose job is it.

[00:05:37] And the third reason is that it's a profit centre for the business. Like it or not, there's typically more profit margin in relation to the time invested in selling a product than in cutting or colouring hair. And if businesses don't make a profit, they don't survive and then nobody has a job. Now, I once heard a young stylist say, I'm not going to talk about retail so that they can make a profit referring to the owner of the salon.

[00:06:04] That would be like a flight attendant refusing to mention duty free, because I don't want the airline making a profit. It or the barista at a Starbucks saying, I'm not going to ask if they want any pastries so that Starbucks could make more of a profit. Or a hotel receptionist not mentioning where the bar and the restaurants are because, well, I'm not going to help them to make a profit.

[00:06:24] See, that would just be absurd, wouldn't it? They're the three reasons. It's part of the service. It's your responsibility, it's part of your job, and it's unashamedly a profit centre for the business. So keep those in mind as we work through the objections, because every objection that we're about to discuss contradicts one or more of those fundamental truths.

[00:06:49] So why don't all stylists recommend professional retail to their clients? Well, I've identified 13 main objections that come up repeatedly, and here's what I notice. These objections fall into one of four categories. The first one is skill issues. The second one is mindset issues. The third is fear issues.

[00:07:11] And finally the fourth is system-based issues. Understanding which category objections fall into is perhaps the first step to solving it because a skill problem needs a different solution than a fair problem. Let's work through all 13 objections by category. First of all, the skill issues. These are the easiest to solve because they're just about knowledge and practice.

[00:07:39] So objection number one. I don't know how. Fair enough. Nobody picks up scissors and instantly becomes a great stylist. You had to be taught. It's the same with recommending products. Effectively, the solution is that you need to learn how, just like you learned how to cut and colour hair, you can learn to talk about products in a way that feels comfortable and works for you but everyone can develop the skill.

[00:08:05] You'll probably make some mistakes. You'll feel awkward at first. You'll probably stumble over your words. That's just all part of learning. But with practice, your knowledge improves, your skill improves, and your confidence grows. The difference between this and other objections is simple. If you genuinely don't know how and you are coachable, well that's totally fixable.

[00:08:29] Objection number two is I don't have enough product knowledge. Again, this is easily solved if you actually want to solve it. Every product manufacturer there is has a website with detailed product information. Most offer training classes. YouTube has thousands of tutorials and failing all that, try this revolutionary approach.

[00:08:52] Read what it says on the back of the bottle. Better yet, ask other stylists on your team what they use, why they use it, how much they use, what hair types it works best on, or try products out on your own hair. Lack of product knowledge is only a problem if you choose not to solve it. If you're genuinely motivated to improve your product knowledge, you can do that in the weekend.

[00:09:16] the real question with skill issues. Is this, are you actually willing to learn or are you using, I don't know, how as an excuse for something else? Because if it's genuinely just skill, great. Go and learn. But if you've had access to training for months or years and still aren't doing it, then we're not really talking about skill issues anymore.

[00:09:40] We're talking about something else, which takes us to the second category, which is mindset issues. Changing someone's mindset is harder because their mindset is all about their beliefs, not knowledge. So objection number three is when someone says, I don't believe that it's my job. You see, some stylists will say things like, I'm an artist, or I do hair, not sales.

[00:10:07] Look, I'm really proud to be a hairdresser. It's a wonderful craft. Over a long career, I've met some extraordinarily creative and artistic hairdressers, and developing that creativity and skill should be a never ending

ongoing process. But first and foremost, hairdressing is a craft, and it's in the service industry, whether you like that or not.

[00:10:29] The majority of people who walk through your door expect a great haircut, great colour, and great service to accompany it. Anyone who thinks that advising clients on home hair care is beneath them or not, their job is completely out of touch with business reality, client expectations, and the actual role that a professional hairdresser rarely plays.

[00:10:55] If you don't believe that this is part of your job in 2026, you're going to struggle in this industry. Client expectations have evolved. Business models have evolved. You need to evolve with them. So that takes us to objection number four, which is when a stylist says, but these are my friends, they're not clients.

[00:11:18] It feels wrong to sell to them. Now look, I understand that you are friendly with clients and I'm sure that they're friendly with you, but let's be clear, 95% of them conservatively are not your friends, they're your clients and you have a professional relationship with them. And if you really cared about them as friends, wouldn't you want them to have the benefit of all your knowledge, including product recommendations?

[00:11:46] You see real friends in any context give each other good advice. Withholding that advice or your expertise in this case, because you are worried about the relationship, is actually the opposite of friendship. And that takes us to objection number five. And that is, but I don't want to be pushy. Great. I don't want you to be pushy either.

[00:12:09] Being pushy is a sure way to lose repeat business. But here's where mindset matters. Consulting, educating, inspiring, and recommending is not being pushy. It's good service, it's caring, it's having genuine empathy for your clients' needs. Now, the role of what I call the Super stylist isn't to manipulate clients into buying something that they don't want or need.

[00:12:36] It's to understand that this is a marathon. It's not a sprint. You want clients coming back for years not leaving because they felt oversold, so stop trying to sell. Clients don't want to be sold to what they want is your knowledge, your enthusiasm, your pride in what you do and the solutions to their problems.

[00:12:59] Be caring, be genuine, educate your clients, and then simply ask if they'd like to take any products home that you've used on their hair today. Now, if you approach it this way, I promise you the sales will come. And that takes us

to objection number six, which is I don't want to be seen as transactional. I want to maintain the luxury experience.

[00:13:23] Look, this is a sort of an evolved version of the, I'm an artist and it's particularly common in high-end salons. But here's what's interesting. Think about actual luxury brands like Dior or Chanel or Hermes or Louis Vuitton. Do they avoid recommending products? No. Of course they don't. When a Chanel consultant suggests a particular lipstick shade, nobody thinks how transactional they're trying to sell me something.

[00:13:53] Of course not. They think I'm receiving expert advice. The difference is how you think about what your role is. You're not selling products. You are advising the client about solutions specifically for their hair based on your professional assessment. That's not transactional, that's luxury service. The next category is all about fear.

[00:14:20] The fear issues that hold people back.

[00:14:24] Now we get to the psychological barriers. These are the real reasons that most stylists don't recommend retail, even when they have the skills and the right mindset. And that takes us to objection number seven. I've had a bad experience. Someone said no, or they accused me of being pushy.

[00:14:44] Okay, I need to be really blunt here. Get over it. Okay. Seriously, you need to get over it. You'll never have control over how other people respond, but you have absolute control over the meaning that you give to their response. Think of that bad experience, if that's what you really want to call it, as feedback about what didn't work, not as evidence that retail doesn't work, or that clients don't want it, or that it's too expensive.

[00:15:13] That's your stuff, not theirs.

[00:15:15] So a client said, no, or maybe a client felt uncomfortable with how you approached it. So what that tells you? Nothing except that the particular approach with that particular client at that particular moment didn't work. Learn from it, adjust your approach and move forward.

[00:15:34] objection. Number eight is I'm afraid they'll say no, and I don't want to experience rejection. Let me be direct. Again, most people are going to say no. That's just reality, and that's okay. When I'm working with clients, obviously I adapt my approach depending on the client.

[00:15:52] But I essentially follow the same process with everyone. Some people buy, some people don't. I don't need to know why they didn't buy it. It's none of my business. Maybe they bought some last time and haven't run out yet. Maybe their partner just bought them some. Maybe their bathroom cabinet is already full of stuff.

[00:16:08] Maybe they need to pay the rent tomorrow and their can't afford to buy that product as well as the haircut and colour they've just had. Who knows? I don't, and I don't need to, and neither do you. I've done my job at that point. I'll do it again next time. No, just means not today, but next time they might say yes.

[00:16:26] Here's what you really need to understand. You're not experiencing real rejection. You see, if you really want to experience rejection, spend a couple of days collecting donations for charity on the High Street, and you'll then know what rejection really is. What you are really getting is just a polite, no thank you.

[00:16:44] That's just the client making a choice. It's not personal. If they don't want it right now, perhaps write the product name on their file or on a business card and let them know that you've recorded it in case they want it later on, and then just move on. Don't let the fear of no stop you from doing your job because next time they might say yes.

[00:17:06] Objection. Number nine is I think it's too expensive. Clients can't afford it. All I'll say is don't be so rude as to assume that you know what clients can or can't afford. You have no idea how much money they have. More importantly, you have no idea what value they attach to solving their hair problems.

[00:17:28] Do all your clients drive the same car as you? Do they eat in the same restaurants as you? Do they holiday at the same resorts? Do they buy the same clothes? Do they earn the same income? No, they don't. Do they. See, you are not the client, so don't you decide what the client can and can't afford. What's expensive to one person might be a bargain to another, and it's not always about wealth.

[00:17:51] It's about the value that they attach to the benefits that they might gain from that product. And value is far more important than price. Some of your clients are price sensitive because they genuinely have tight budgets. Others aren't price shopping at all. They're solution shopping.

[00:18:10] You don't know which is which until you offer it.

[00:18:14] So here's the reality. If you think that professional products are expensive and you let that belief stop you from recommending them, then you are imposing your financial situation and your value system onto your clients. That's not service that's projecting your beliefs and values onto someone else, and that's just rude.

[00:18:36] Your job is to recommend what's best for their hair. Their job is to decide whether that fits their budget and priorities. Let them make the choice. Don't make it for them.

[00:18:48] That takes us to objection number 10, which is what if I recommend something and it doesn't work for them? This fear is actually revealing something important, meaning that you care about getting it right and that's a really good thing. But here's the thing, you are already making professional recommendations every single day.

[00:19:10] You are recommending haircuts and colours and treatments, and sometimes those don't turn out exactly as expected either. And what do you do when that happens? Well, you figure it out. You make an adjustment, you make it right. Product recommendations are no different. If you've recommended a product based on your professional assessment and it doesn't work perfectly for them, well, what do you do?

[00:19:33] Will you troubleshoot? Maybe they're using too much of it. Maybe they need a different application technique. Maybe they need a different product. That's just called professional relationship building. It's not failure. It's an opportunity to demonstrate your expertise and your commitment to getting them the right solution.

[00:19:53] The clients who become your most loyal clients are often the ones who you've worked through are challenged together. And that brings us to the last category, and that is what I refer to as systems issues.

[00:20:06] Now these objections are about the work environment and the structure around you, not about you personally as an individual. So objection number 11 is there's no retail culture in my salon. I get it. Culture is powerful and some salons, everyone is actively recommending and achieving great results and others, nobody does it.

[00:20:29] If you go to work in a salon and everyone is recommending retail, then you will start to do it too. But the opposite is also true, where you go to work in a salon and nobody is recommending retail, then it's likely that you won't either. But here's the thing, culture is created one person at a time. It's a habit that becomes contagious.

[00:20:50] Now, not recommending products is a habit, and recommending products is also a habit. Both become part of salon culture. Both are infectious. So you have two choices. Wait for the culture to change around you or become the person who starts to change it. Start being the stylist who consistently recommends other people will notice, some will follow.

[00:21:13] The culture starts to shift. And if you are the salon owner, listening to this culture is your responsibility. Think about your merchandising, your display units, your lighting, your point of sale materials, the training you provide, and whether you are creating a buying environment or just a selling environment, that's a big difference and it's really important and you need both.

[00:21:36] Objection. Number 12 is I don't get paid commission, so why should I bother? If the only reason you want to advise clients on what to use is because you get commission, please, you're in the wrong career. Seriously. That's like a doctor only prescribing medicine when there's a kickback or a personal trainer only recommending a supplement when there's a commission for him or a waiter only offering dessert when there's a bonus.

[00:22:05] That's not how professionals operate. If you work in a salon that pays commission for retail, great, because not every salon does, that's a bonus. But you should be giving clients a hundred percent of your knowledge and ability regardless of whether or not you get a commission on the sale. You do it because you love what you do.

[00:22:24] You do it because you believe in the products. You do it because you genuinely care about those clients and your work and what your work looks like, not just today, but tomorrow and next week and the week after. And if you happen to work somewhere that also pays your commission, well that's icing on the cake now.

[00:22:44] Objection number 13 is a big one, and that is. Clients just buy it online anyway. Yes, of course. Some clients buy online. You do? I do. Everyone does. We all shop online. That's the world we live in. And will more people buy online in five years than today? Absolutely. But is that a valid excuse to not offer recommendations?

[00:23:10] Of course it's not.

[00:23:11] Here's a reality check. Have all the shopping malls closed where you live? Have all the high street shops disappeared? Of course, the answer is no, because while e-commerce is huge in growing, brick and mortar still serves a purpose. Some clients will always want to buy in a salon for convenience, for personal recommendations, for impulse purchases, for the relationship that they have with you, and because they want to support you and your business.

[00:23:44] the internet is really just another competitor, and like all competitors, you need to offer something that they can't get online. And that is the experience that you give them, the relationship that you have with them, the personalized recommendations based on you having actually done their hair and the years of training that you have behind you.

[00:24:04] You're not just selling a product, you're selling the confidence that comes from a professional who knows their hair, recommending the right solution for them. If you don't recommend anything, you've made the choice for them. They'll default to online because you give them no reason not to. So that's it.

[00:24:25] We've covered 13 objections across four different categories. Now you probably recognize yourself and at least one of those, maybe several.

[00:24:34] But here's what's important. Understanding why you don't do something is the beginning of change, but real change only happens when you take action and you start implementing, and that's as simple as educating every client about what you're using on their hair. It isn't some big sales pitch. It's simply telling them what you are using.

[00:24:56] Why you are using it, when to use it, and how to apply it. And then at the end of the service, offering them the opportunity to take some home with them. So here's my challenge to you. Whether you are a stylist listening to this or a salon owner who's going to share it with your team, six months from now, some of you will still be having the same internal conversation about why you don't recommend retail.

[00:25:20] You'll still have all those same BS objections. You'll still be achieving the same results, which is to say none. And some of you will look back and realize that you've built stronger client relationships, you've increased your professional value, you've contributed to the salon's profitability, and yes, you've probably increased your own income as well.

[00:25:41] The difference between those two groups won't be talent. It won't be the products you carry or the clients that you see, or the economy or the internet.

[00:25:50] The difference will be the decision that you make this week, today, right now, about whether this is actually part of your job. Everything else, the skills, the systems, overcoming the fair flows from one decision. So decide. Are you a professional hairdresser who provides complete service, including product recommendations?

[00:26:12] Or are you someone who cuts and colours hair and hopes that clients just figure out the rest on their own? There's no judgment here in that question, but there are consequences either way. So make sure you choose deliberately. So that's a wrap for this week's episode.

[00:26:30] I'm sure it's gone and pushed some buttons and triggered some people. So if this has resonated with you or challenged your thinking, I'd love to hear about it. Jump into my Instagram at Grow My Salon Business. Share your thoughts. And remember, many of these podcast episodes are like today's where I pick a topic based on what you've asked me to talk about.

[00:26:51] So if you have a question or a topic that you think would be a valuable contribution to hairdressers all over the world, then DM me on Instagram at Grow My Salon Business or email. At Antony at grow my salon business.com, and that's anthony without the H. So A-N-T-O-N-Y. And if you're a salon owner, share this episode with your team.

[00:27:14] If you're a sales rep for one of the great product brands that are out there, then share it with your various accounts. There's a lot of value here for everyone, whether we're talking about the client, the stylist, the salon owner, and the manufacturer. So until next week, this is Antony Whitaker on the Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[00:27:32] Wishing you continued success. See you next week.