

GMSB 334

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[00:00:05] **Antony Whitaker:** Hey, it's Antony Whitaker here, and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. And whether this is your first time or perhaps you are a regular listener, either way, it's great to have you here today. And if you're watching this on YouTube and you find this episode inspiring, then please make sure that you hit the like or thumbs up button.

[00:00:24] **Antony Whitaker:** It's a small thing that you can do. That goes a long way for me. And if you do like this type of content, then let me know in the comments below the video and make sure that you hit the like button.

[00:00:36] **Antony Whitaker:** So with that said on with today's show. Now my guest today is Gerard Scarpaci, co-founder of Hairbrained and host of the Hairbrained Conversations podcast. And in today's podcast, we're going to discuss the changes that Gerard sees happening in the industry, the changes in how today's generation of stylists learn, and the role of live events and so much more.

[00:00:59] **Antony Whitaker:** So, Gerard, it's fantastic to have you here. It's been a long time since we've, caught up and had a chat. So I'm really looking forward to, uh, the next 45 minutes or so.

[00:01:08] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah, me too. We always have great conversations and uh, have a lot of respect for what you do in our industry.

[00:01:13] **Antony Whitaker:** Oh, cool. Likewise. I mean, you and I have actually had very similar career paths. We both sort of worked at Sassoon for a considerable amount of time. We then left, we both opened up salons and then, you know, sold, then moved on, and now we're both in podcasting so very similar career paths.

[00:01:30] **Antony Whitaker:** So, uh, yeah. Right. Um, well look, let's, let's jump in here.

[00:01:35] **Antony Whitaker:** So what I want to start off with was. You get to talk to and meet a lot of people in the industry at different levels, whether they're salon owners or stylists or you know, editorial hairdressers or product manufacturers.

[00:01:48] **Antony Whitaker:** So first question I want to ask you is, what is it that you see in the industry today that really excites you?

[00:01:57] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I think possibility of what could be. I think, you know, we had a very solid and successful way of business models and how things functioned for a pretty long time, and I think a lot of that's gotten flipped on its head. In the past few years, and I think that's a good thing. I think, you know, um, it creates a possibility for things to be different and better.

[00:02:23] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, also possibility for things to be worse, you know, if, if, uh, if the right people don't make the right changes at the right times. But I think that there's more possibility now than ever. And I think, um, and you know, we've heard this probably for at least a decade, the whole world of gatekeeping. Has the gates have crumbled.

[00:02:44] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So you know, someone with the right piece of content and the right skill and savvy and message can go from, you know, technically nowhere to have a large voice in the industry almost overnight.

[00:03:02] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, we've seen that a lot. I mean, that's mainly through social media, which was good. It was a good game changer that it wasn't, you know, um. restricted to a few players at the top that had done their years, so to speak, to build up the reputation. All of a sudden you can get people, new people coming in overnight, and I think

[00:03:22] **Gerard Scarpaci:** mean even in, launching a business or, you know, I can remember, you know, I opened my salon in my first salon in, in two, the year 2000 in New York. And I mean even just to process credit cards.

[00:03:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Mm-hmm.

[00:03:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah

[00:03:37] **Gerard Scarpaci:** wasn't like I didn't just hit a button and all of a sudden I could accept credit cards. I had to go through some hoops and meet with people.

[00:03:44] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So most people were pretty shady and I didn't know I'd never processed credit cards before. Is 3%, is that a right amount? Should there be 25 cents per swipe? Is that fair? someone robbing me? Where now? I mean, or, or to, you know, you wanna sell some widgets online? You know, you can open a Shopify store tomorrow in five minutes.

[00:04:06] **Gerard Scarpaci:** think you know it, it's not just social media, it's just the ability to become an entrepreneur now is the barriers are gone.

[00:04:16] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. It's funny when you're just talking about the credit card, I instantly thought the machine that you had to get

[00:04:21] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Oh yeah.

[00:04:22] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah And then the thing to it

[00:04:25] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. All that. Yeah. I mean, people, people listening to this, younger people would go, what the hell are they talking about? Yeah. Anyway,

[00:04:32] **Gerard Scarpaci:** not that long ago. I mean, 20, 20 years is not that long in the scheme of, you know, time.

[00:04:38] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, yeah. And, and where will we be in another 20 years? Well, we're going to talk about that as well, but, um, okay. So, you know, there's no, there's no one thing that necessarily excites you. It's more just the opportunities that there are now, um, for that, that technology, I suppose in a word, is sort of opened up all these different ways of looking at the world.

[00:04:59] **Antony Whitaker:** Let, let me flip that question on its head then and say, what, what are your concerns? About the way the industry's evolving because like when you and I started in the industry, it was a lot more the employee, employer based business model. There was a lot of training responsibility within the salon. Um, there was a different relationship between manufacturers and and salons, which we'll talk more about as we go.

[00:05:23] **Antony Whitaker:** So. Now we have, you know, obviously a lot more, social media. We have a lot more, uh, independence in the industry all over the world, not just in the us. So what are your concerns about how you see the industry evolving?

[00:05:39] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I mean, it's a double-edged sword as you said. I mean, um, that not everyone necessarily has the fibre to be an entrepreneur. Um, and it sounds great to be your own boss and to, I can start a Shopify tomorrow, but I see people and I hear from people, they're spinning their wheels for years because they don't have direction.

[00:06:01] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And I think, you know, as you pointed out, you know, for people like me and you at, at younger ages, we were able to have mentors and direction. I didn't start out at 19, I knew at 19 or 20 or 25 even that I wasn't qualified to be my own boss, so to speak. I had a lot to learn. Um, so I think it's a double-edged sword where it is easy to go into all these things, um, and doesn't necessarily make an easy path for people.

[00:06:36] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So it. It can be a huge challenge to just think, you know, Hey, I'm gonna make some, I, I see a lot of people, as I said, spinning their wheels. They have a lot of ideas and even though it's easier than ever to get them out there because they haven't seen any kind of a blueprint of how to do it, they, they kind of spinning their wheels.

[00:06:54] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So I think there's a lot of, um, failure, you know, it's a, a, lot more people taking chances because it's easier and a lot more people failing and then, you know, how do they deal with that failure? Again, having worked for organizations where things work, things don't work. When they don't work, how do they fix them?

[00:07:14] **Gerard Scarpaci:** How do they move on from them, you know, as opposed to you're by yourself and you put it all on the line and you fail, and that's it. It's the end. So I think, you know, it's a double-edged sword.

[00:07:27] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Do you, do you notice, I mean, do you have any sort of insight into any, any data, any factual data as to what the churn is in the industry these days? Because as you've just said, there's a lot of people that, uh, uh, you know, go through beauty school. They graduate, and a lot of them want to go straight into being a suite operator, a solo operator straight away, and having their own business and, and sort of, you know, I'm an entrepreneur.

[00:07:52] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, and as you say, a lot of them very quickly, you know, realize that it's not quite as simple as that. And, uh, there's a failure rate. Do you have any idea what that failure rate is, and where do they go?

[00:08:05] **Gerard Scarpaci:** don't, and I'm not, I'm not a hundred percent sure, I'm not a hundred percent sure anyone, at least that I've heard recently has an exact number on it. I think there's a lot of different, uh, industry reports. Um, I, I believe that it's fairly high, is what I've heard, and I think it's more anecdotal.

[00:08:22] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Anything. But you know, I, I still hear in the US that, you know, upwards of 50% of people that get licensed aren't practising

after five years. Um, but again, I, I don't have any hard and fast data on that one because any surveys that we send out are usually going to people who are still practising. So the ones that aren't practising anymore, you know, we don't get much response from them.

[00:08:50] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah, of course. Okay. Um, I checked out your website, uh, again, I mean, over the years. Obviously I've visited it more than once, and, uh, there'd been some changes since I was last there, and I was really interested in picking up on some of those things with you. Uh, I, I really liked the thing you had that you called the hairbrained, uh, confidence index.

[00:09:12] **Antony Whitaker:** I don't know how long that's been going, but tell us what that's all about because I was intrigued by I thought it was very interesting.

[00:09:19] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah, confidence Index has been running, it ran all of 2025. It's a quarterly survey that we send out to our database, you know, and it relates back to the Wall Street Journal confidence index of kind of small business owners. It's something that's been around for a long time and where it came from was, you know, myself attending a lot of industry events, hearing a lot of quantitative data, and.

[00:09:45] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Not really getting the message behind why, you know, we would hear the average retail has gone up or it's gone down, it's always gone down, but you know, the, the dollar per service stays here, et cetera, et cetera. And I was always just thinking, well, where's the why behind it? You know? Is it just up to everyone here?

[00:10:02] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Like, what is happening to hairdressers that's making, affecting these numbers, the, you know, kind of qualitative data. So working with someone on our team who had some history doing that in the corporate world, um, we launched this to, you know, and, and the Wall Street Journal, it, it asks the same, you know, four to six questions every quarter, you know.

[00:10:25] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, what, what's your current job satisfaction as it's staying the same, getting worse, getting better. Um, how do you predict your income will be in the, you know, in the next quarter? Do you plan to invest in your business? So it asks these simple questions. And then we also have an addendum every quarter.

[00:10:45] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, last year we did like one about, um, education, one about tariffs, which was, you know, kind of scary in a lot of ways. Scary for the whole planet, um, and a few other timely things. Um, so the idea is to kind of take the temperature on the emotional side of how our respondents are feeling, and then kind of extrapolate that into, Hey, you know, this is how hairdressers are feeling.

[00:11:14] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So that's why their performance, I, you have to take a little bit of a leap, which I'm not afraid to do that. If you understand how someone feels, it'll help you understand why their performance is either going up or down, you know?

[00:11:27] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Alright. So is it the same group of hairdressers you ask the questions to every time?

[00:11:35] **Gerard Scarpaci:** It, it varies. We, we target the same group, but you know, again, you can't guarantee a response from people every single time. Um, but we definitely, and you know, we're working on broadening that as well. I mean, we have a large database, um, but it's, it's. Surveys in general, you know, certain people answer them.

[00:11:55] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So, you know, I, again, I, I always have to say none of this is scientific, you know, and I've never felt that any of the numbers I see in this industry are scientific, you know what I mean? It's just not a scientific industry. And when even report on numbers there, it just depends on who's presenting it and what message they want to get out there. But, you know, being right off the bat saying it's not scientific, it's emotional, and you know, on our team, we have enough, um, experience in the hair world that right away I can say, oh, that doesn't sound right, or that does sound right in terms of how people feel about things. But again, not scientific, purely, it's the opposite.

[00:12:34] **Gerard Scarpaci:** It's, it's emotional.

[00:12:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. No, I think I thought it was good. I really thought it was good.

[00:12:39] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah. I mean, it gets compiled in a very scientific way because of Tony D'Avino on our team. Um, you know, so it's presented and compiled in a way, but I think the root of it is just about, you know, when you ask someone how you're, how they're feeling, it's,

[00:12:53] **Gerard Scarpaci:** it's qualitative, not quantitative.

[00:12:56] **Antony Whitaker:** No, it's good. And I think it's very, uh, related to how hairdressers are, they're a lot more about the feeling side of it than the, than what the numbers are telling them necessarily. So, uh, I thought that was a really good sort of meeting of the two. But I understand what you mean about trying to get good data in this industry has always been difficult.

[00:13:15] **Antony Whitaker:** I think. I'd like to think it's getting. Better and easier. Now, I know particularly in the US there's been, a lot of great, data being put together with, uh, the Kim report. Um, and different people have been working on stuff to, to try and get some, some real numbers to substantiate things because, you know, it's the old thing.

[00:13:35] **Antony Whitaker:** Numbers are facts not feeling so to speak. And, um. But as the industry constantly is evolving and shifting so quickly, it's hard to get, like you say, reliable data I know you've got a big, uh, database. I saw somewhere, I think it was on your website, that you've got something like 3 million people,

[00:13:51] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Across social media

[00:13:53] **Gerard Scarpaci:** you know, in terms of followers and fans. Yeah. mean, we don't net, you know, with stuff like the, um, confidence index, we send that out to our mailing list, which is not millions. you know, it's in the hundreds of thousands. and then we have certain partners, that we collaborate with and they, they send it out to their mailing list as well.

[00:14:14] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And then we also do, you know, we will put it on social, like in a story on Instagram where people can click through. so it, it's got a big, a big enough reach. But again, you know, typically, you're not getting hundreds of thousands of responses to something You know, you're getting over the course of a year, more like thousands of responses.

[00:14:34] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. well, it's, that's enough to get a, you know, to take the temperature

[00:14:37] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I, think, think it is, I mean, I'll be honest and, you know, people will get angry the data people out there. I think, you know, if you find one right person who really has their finger on the pulse of the industry, they could answer all these questions, the, the, the emotional ones anyway. And if you found just a couple of salon owners, you could probably answer all the questions too.

[00:14:56] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I don't necessarily know. That hundreds of thousands of answers are better than, and I, that just comes from my experience working with certain brands that would pay these real companies, um, that do surveys and, and report data to do things. And I could look at it as a hairdresser and go, well, that's not right, because they don't know the difference between an academy and a hair show.

[00:15:18] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You I can, I specifically, one company I worked for did some, wanted to do some, Surveys and get some data about advanced education. And you know, having spent my whole life in it, I was like, I could have answered this better. You know, like, so having more answers wasn't better than having, um, you know, someone who knew the answers.

[00:15:37] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah I, get that. But one of the challenges as always, I think with any of the research that goes on from the hairdressing industry it starts with. Will define a hairdresser. Do you know what I mean? Like, so, is it, oh, the, the barber in, uh, Arkansas is a hairdresser. The big salon with 50 staff in, you know, fifth Avenue or whatever, is a hairdresser, but they're very different beasts.

[00:16:06] **Antony Whitaker:** So trying to compare, you know, a colour salon, an extension specialist, uh a spa there's so many different things, regional, metropolitan, you know, um, and they're all hairdressers, but often the research is sort of focused on a, a specific sort of group of them that very clearly applies to that group.

[00:16:26] **Antony Whitaker:** But if you look at the industry as a whole, and sometimes it gives you a very sort of skewed message. Um, but yeah. Yeah. Okay. So. Like me, you're lucky in that you get to see a lot of great salons. You get to meet a lot of, you know, very successful people in the industry. What do you see that the most successful salons are doing today?

[00:16:47] **Antony Whitaker:** How have they adapted to the changes that, that, you know, weren't there 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago when we started?

[00:16:55] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, I think based on, you know, personal observation plus what was called out in the confidence index, um, and I'll kind of go back a little bit here. I think there's this assumption that creative people or artists we're so lucky because we get to do a job that we love and I've heard that my whole life.

[00:17:14] **Gerard Scarpaci:** But anyone that does it will tell you sometimes you don't feel so lucky, your body hurts. Um, you have constant challenges to income because just because someone you know, just 'cause she had a busy week, doesn't mean the next week's gonna be busy. People aren't guaranteed to come in when you need them to come in.

[00:17:33] **Gerard Scarpaci:** There's a lot of stress, stress and pressure that happens for hairdressers. So just because you love being creative, working with your hands, being a hairdresser, does not guarantee job satisfaction. So that's one of the questions that we ask on the confidence index is, you know, rate your job satisfaction and, over the course of 2025, if you were to combine people who say their job satisfaction has stayed the same or gone down over the course of the year, it's about 65% of the people that we surveyed.

[00:18:08] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, now I don't think anything stays the same. So I think if someone says it stays the same, that means it's gone down. So, you know, the way I look at it is that it's 65% of the people we surveyed, and we can extrapolate that to our whole community of hairdressers. Um, is not satisfied with their job. So what I'm getting at here is I think that.

[00:18:31] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Both hairdressers, even independent hairdressers, hairdressers, uh, people like Van Council who I think are one of the best salon owners I've ever met.

[00:18:40] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. definitely

[00:18:41] **Gerard Scarpaci:** one of the things that they all do is they, they are conscious of job satisfaction.

[00:18:47] **Antony Whitaker:** Mm.

[00:18:47] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, and they look at what it's going to take on both the individual level and the team level to foster job satisfaction. Um, within those hairdressers and when they do the things that it takes to create job satisfaction, they see performance increase. So I would say, you know, if you want to sell more retail, what are we doing, you know, job satisfaction wise for that person's? Um, 'cause to me, one of the things that having worked behind the chair and done 50 clients a week for many years back to back to back at a high level, charging a lot of money. One of the things that would go out the window right away would be retail, because I didn't have the time, the pressure was there. So, you know, I took a little extra time on a haircut because I wanted it to sit a certain way. What's the first thing I'm going to get rid of? Well, I don't have

time to walk up front and say, you know, Antony, here's the, uh, the wax that I used on you, you can remember, put it in your fingertip.

[00:19:49] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, the things that we, we know. Increase retail. We know it still works. If you do that with every client and then say, Hey Antony, you know this haircut's going to grow in well, but in, you know, four to six weeks you're going to need another one. It's the holidays. I'm super busy, let's get you rescheduled right now.

[00:20:04] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah.Yeah.

[00:20:05] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Those are the first two things that I don't do, and again, so what I'm getting at is, you know, pressure. So great salon owners and even great independents for themselves, they think about how do I release the pressure so I can perform? Um, and have job satisfaction at the same time. And I just find ultimately that leads to better retail sales, better rebooking, asking, you know, having time to say, Hey, you know, if you love this haircut, please, you know, tell your friends, like all these things that we know work.

[00:20:36] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I mean, three things I just said there, if you did that with every client, you know, walked them to the front, talked about retail, asked them to reschedule and reminded them that you're taking new clients. You, you'll make more money and so will the salon, you know? But those go out the window because of time and pressure, like immediately,

[00:20:55] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Or sometimes I'll defend that because you're very much on my turf when you talk about all that stuff, which, which I know, you know, it's about what you do with your time. It's like I'm cutting your hair. I've got two choices. I can tell you what I'm using or, and why I'm using it now to use it sort of thing as just part of the conversation.

[00:21:16] **Antony Whitaker:** Or I can talk about the football and a lot of times people will go, I'm going to talk about the football. And then the bit that doesn't get done is actually an important bit. So it's, it's all that, it's finding that balance all the time, isn't it? Between, it's like, you know, when we, I weren't going to talk about this, but when you talk about retail, I just did a podcast about retail last week. You know, it's, it's, it's forever. All of my entire career, it's been a sort of bone of contention about, you know, about clients and hairdressers, and I'm not a salesman, I'm an artist and all that stuff does my head in, because, you know, ultimately when you talk about retail, it's just so simple to me. I should recommend retail to you because I care about you and I care about your hair.

[00:22:01] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Mm-hmm

[00:22:02] **Antony Whitaker:** Not because I'm getting a commission or, or because I've got a target. It's like, I like Gerard and I've made his hair look great, and I want him to make it look great next week. So because I, because you care about someone, you should talk about it. It doesn't make it some, I mean, the words you use were perfect.

[00:22:20] **Antony Whitaker:** They're the sort of words I use it, it's not some big sales pitch, is it? You know what I mean? It's just, just, I, I always use the expression, be who you are, just better like. Just talk to Gerard about this product, like you'd talk to your brother or whatever. Do you know what I mean? It's like they, they often put this pressure on themselves to, to become someone that they're not.

[00:22:43] **Antony Whitaker:** And it's, it's not about selling, it's about educating and stuff. You know what I mean?

[00:22:48] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah, I mean, right there you mentioned, so when we look at job satisfaction and we kind of break it down and we look at the things that go into it, we found that there's three areas as an. Leader of yourself or others that you can work on to increase job satisfaction, number one, as we all we know in our industry is learning.

[00:23:08] **Antony Whitaker:** mm

[00:23:08] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know, do people have the skills that they need and have they been exposed to the things they need to be like what you just said? Now, again, back to what we said earlier, if someone never had a mentor like Antony or whatever and heard what you just said, cause there are people who've never heard that.

[00:23:24] **Gerard Scarpaci:** They, they've never even heard that. You know, don't, don't talk about the football, talk about this. It's never been exposed to it. So like the learning. Piece, um, that some of the times we take for granted that could be eroding a little bit because there isn't that mentorship, especially on

[00:23:41] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[00:23:42] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know?

[00:23:42] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, there are people that are going more independent that maybe they are still taking technical classes. They might not be the ones that we used to think that they should take, but they're still putting their dollars into. Technical education, but you know, so that soft skill stuff, as you said, it can be hard to fill those classes for a lot of reasons.

[00:24:02] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And you know what we found, we also had a lot of, um, open-ended questions. So a lot of what we heard about learning was, um, that's changed is the people want it to be relevant and timely. These were words that kept coming up. Um, and I think. You know, it's interesting, you know, we, we especially, we're always going to go back to this Sassoon thing.

[00:24:25] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Like I was on a path or a track that was determined when I needed to learn what I needed to learn. And you're in week six of your training, or year two or whatever it might be, a path, a career path where that's changed a bit now where. A lot of the individual wants to determine when they want to learn something, so it's relevant and timely to them.

[00:24:48] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And you know, they've been trained that way since they've been in grade school. You know, here's a device, go find the video on YouTube that will teach you what you want to learn when you want to learn it. So finding the balance between, you know, we have to have a structured education path that you are on. To make the learner feel like it's timely and relevant for them.

[00:25:12] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, otherwise they, they have, you know, they, what was it? Um, one of the other panelists, something recently said, we went from seeing like 700 ads a day to 7,000 ads a day. You know, so people are so distracted that if something's not timely and relevant, how are they gonna focus on it? So there's the learning piece, like how do we create that?

[00:25:36] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Then there's the pressure piece. And pressure comes in a lot of different ways, and it's an individual thing. Like I said, all my, all my clients are late. I don't know how to handle that. Um, I have financial challenges. I don't know how to balance my chequebook. So even though I'm busy, you know, um, and then there's the energy piece that, you know, the physical wellbeing of, you know, doing a physical job.

[00:25:58] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, one of the things that I noticed, um, early in my career after I left Sassoon for the first time, I worked in a salon that had a spa. I'd never seen that. It wasn't part of our culture. And the, um, massage

therapist there, I always noticed after a client, they would be like in the break room, having some chamomile tea and like, like unwinding and I would be like, you know, trying to drink a coffee really quick to get enough energy to do my next client. I started to think, you know, and I remember talking to them and said, it's very physical what we do. And I thought to myself, it's pretty physical what I do too. You know? Uh, plus I have to have a conversation, which most massage therapists don't, you know? cause it's kind of quiet. Um, so the energy, the physical energy level, you know, so I know the, the original question, so I find the salon owners and the individuals who manage themselves that are, you know.

[00:26:55] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Succeeding or looking at these things in terms of job satisfaction and saying, you know, Hey, I'm supposed to love what I do. Let's make sure I love what I do and I can perform at the highest level in terms of what's my learning? How do I deal with the pressures and how do I channel and control my energy?

[00:27:13] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah.

[00:27:13] **Antony Whitaker:** I was really interested in what you just were saying then, because, you know, again, it goes back to sort of learning anything, whether it's. I don't know, doing jujitsu or, you know, Tai chi or, or, or doing a haircut or, you know, taking a photograph or whatever it is. There's a degree of, Hey, you start here.

[00:27:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Like, this is how you start. This is, this is the, the fundamentals, this is the, the principles of what this is based on. No matter what you're then talking about, you know, cooking, hairdressing, photography, jujitsu, and. That thing you were talking about, you know, timeliness that people go, well, hang on, you know, I want to start there.

[00:27:58] **Antony Whitaker:** It's like, well, hang on, you, you can't start there yet because you're not ready. You know, it's like, it's like, I always remember a, a friend of mine, she went to a, cordon bleu cookery school in, uh, in France years ago. This would be 25, 30 years ago. I remember her telling me that they spent three days learning how to boil an egg. I thought, oh my God, I could teach you how to boil and egg. It's going to take me three minutes tops. I wouldn't be able to talk about it for longer than three minutes. But, and then we, if we bring that back into hairdressing, I mean, I can, we can have this conversation. 'cause we know both know exactly what we're talking about with the, the training that we went through, albeit I was in London, you were in, New York.

[00:28:42] **Antony Whitaker:** The, the success of Sassoon as an organization. Here we are 70 years later. It is all about having really strong fundamentals because when you've got those fundamentals, again, let's just segue off into cooking or [j]ujitsu or playing the guitar. When you've mastered the scales, when you've mastered the fundamentals, then hey, break all the rules you want.

[00:29:07] **Antony Whitaker:** Go and do whatever you want because you have this. Understanding of what's going on at a deeper level. Whereas if we talk about the hairdressing component and someone goes, I don't want to do all that, I want to go straight there. It's like, okay, listen, that's, you know, like this is not going to, this is not going to end well because you need to learn certain things to get you to that point so that you can do it properly.

[00:29:34] **Antony Whitaker:** What are your thoughts about what I've just said?

[00:29:36] **Gerard Scarpaci:** well, I, I think a hundred percent agree, but I think the challenge that we have to address is how we market that, how we package it, because. I'll again, I'll give an example. Like, uh, I keep referring, I was at Serious business. I was one of the panellists, and I had made a pact with Edwin Neil, uh, from the Neil Corporation that we both wear ties on the panel,

[00:30:02] **Gerard Scarpaci:** right Um, but I don't wear ties very often.

[00:30:05] **Antony Whitaker:** Hmm.

[00:30:06] **Gerard Scarpaci:** But I knew about this for weeks and I thought, oh, I really should remember how to, cause I wanted like a double Windsor. I wanted it to look really nice. And you know here I am. I've had weeks to review and practice, and I knew I needed to get my fundamentals down.

[00:30:20] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Uh, but I didn't do anything about it because of. Just human nature. So, you know, timely and relevant. I'm getting dressed an hour before the presentation. What do I do? I go, well, I better jump on YouTube to find a timely and relevant, you know, video.

[00:30:36] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah.

[00:30:37] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, and then which video do I select? The one that's got the most views,

[00:30:42] **Gerard Scarpaci:** you

[00:30:42] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know, so that again, there's the human nature problem, which we're always going to have, and we used to be able to, because people were different. They were exposed in different ways. We'd say, no, no, no, you're wrong. And this was my generation cause I wanted to, you know, do all kinds of crazy stuff. When I was an assistant at Sassoon in the early nineties, and I was, but I had enough respect for traditional authority, um, that someone could tell me, no, no, no, you're wrong.

[00:31:09] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You have to do this. Where I just don't think that works the same way anymore. Um, so it's not that it's the wrong answer, it's still the right answer, but it's how do we repackage it? Like how do we put it there so that when they're like, I want to hit the button now and I'm about to, you know, do my first true one-length bob and I want to make sure I get no graduation on my line.

[00:31:31] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, it, it's a complicated one, but how, what timely and relevant means like they've learned the younger generations. Even older generations like myself, they've learned I need the information when I need it. I don't need it. When you say I need it, I mean, that's the, that's the hard balance. It doesn't mean the information should change.

[00:31:53] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know? I mean, learning a one like Bob without any graduation. Cut on the skin with a scissor to me, should come way before you ever try to texturize or work with a razor or anything like that, because it just turns into a cluster fuck. But like, how do we present that? It's the marketing, the packaging of the message.

[00:32:12] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. I, I, I really like that timely and relevant thing, so thanks for that. Okay. Um, let's switch it up a little bit. I know that on your podcast, which I, regularly listen to that. You often will talk to people in product companies, um, which is great. and I've brought this up with different people over the last, I don't know, over the last year,

[00:32:32] **Antony Whitaker:** As the industry's evolved in terms of a lot more independents, et cetera, the relationship that existed or exists between the salon owner and the manufacturer. Has started to change as well. And that's for lots of different reasons, the internet, Amazon, different channels to market. There's so many different things that are, are playing into that.

[00:32:53] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, and so I'm interested to find out, when you talk to, people that are, are running major companies, particularly in the US,

what does that look like to you? What do, what, how is that shift? In that relationship between the salon owner and the manufacturer, what do you see?

[00:33:12] **Antony Whitaker:** Like where's that going?

[00:33:15] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Uh, it's a, it's a huge question and, you know,

[00:33:19] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I will say genuinely that the majority of the dozens, if not, you know, hundreds of brand people that I've dealt with in the past decade plus are, are genuinely in awe of hairdressers and our industry and the potential, and most of them come to it thinking, wow. We've got a great product. Let's just put that aside.

[00:33:41] **Gerard Scarpaci:** We've put all this research into it and it's an amazing product. We put it on the shelves somewhere and hope people discover it. Okay. That's one way of doing business. Or we have a trusted expert who, as we said, spends time with someone who respects them and wow, what a great, this sounds like the perfect way to sell things and to build, you know, I, I really do find that they still.

[00:34:07] **Gerard Scarpaci:** For the most part, believe that and see that. Then because of the things that I was saying earlier, as an industry, we've underperformed on our end and I, you know, some people will get mad at me. I'm not judging, I'm just saying what I've seen historically, you know, and then these people have to go, wow, we put a lot of our, I don't know, pennies or whatever you want to call it in this barrel.

[00:34:30] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And you know, then whatever happens in the business world, they sell, they have stock. You know, what are we going to do? We have to keep driving up profitability. We genuinely were in awe over here, but it didn't pay off the way that we hoped. So that was like the traditional thing I, that I saw, you know?

[00:34:50] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Then things came along where, okay, you could kind of still do this. Maybe do it using social media, so you know, now you could find the era of the influencer, you know? Um, and, you know, to be honest, I don't know that there were any hairdresser influencers, or at least pro hairdresser influencers that blew the doors off selling product.

[00:35:12] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I mean, compared to like a Kim Kardashian or something like know? Um, so that it kind of, it worked, but it wasn't. Tremendously successful, where, you know, let's find a bunch of people that

have a couple hundred thousand followers and see if we can make more profit. It, you know, didn't always work.

[00:35:33] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So you've got these, people whose job it is to sell and drive profit, and they're always looking for something new, so it just kind of goes like in a circle. I mean, I think what I've discovered. And what most of the people that I work with discover is this omnichannel concept it, it's, um, very difficult now to just be, we're going to be pro only,

[00:35:57] **Antony Whitaker:** Hmm.

[00:35:57] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know?

[00:35:58] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, and it's very difficult to just be launched on social media and it's very difficult to just be in retail outlets. So it seems like everything's going to that omnichannel and it kind of feeds everything in a, in a circle or a cycle. Um, so I guess that would be the biggest conclusion I've found is that, you know, we have to figure out as an industry where we fit into that.

[00:36:22] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I don't think it's going away. I mean, I think that, you know, listen, there are smaller brands that pop up and they don't have the resources to be omnichannel, so it just makes sense to be pro, you know what I mean?

[00:36:33] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah Yeah.

[00:36:35] **Gerard Scarpaci:** It costs less for them to be completely honest with you. And then usually they kind of try to use some of those pros to have some of the social and digital.

[00:36:43] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And then maybe if they have enough success, then they go omnichannel, you Um.

[00:36:48] **Antony Whitaker:** There, there's a direct sort of link to that question. Uh, and the next question I wanted to ask you about, which was the education component, because the manufacturers have always been, they've sunk a lot of money into the education side of the industry. And, I have different figures about, you know, how much that has now gone in reverse, since COVID, that there's a lot less of that.

[00:37:15] **Antony Whitaker:** and I, I always think that, that's a shame because that's a detriment to the industry, you know, to, to the hairdressers out there to

not have that support. But then having said that, it's interesting that it's opened up other channels. So again. Other educators, IE hair-brained, IE me, who, you know, we both sort of stepped into sort of filling a gap that maybe was always provided by, by manufacturers before, but in this day and age was social media and the internet.

[00:37:44] **Antony Whitaker:** To some degree. I mean, it's good if you've got manufacturers because they, uh, you know, can leverage the size of their audience. Uh, but to some degree you, you maybe don't need them as much. Now, you are interesting because you've got both, um, live education and you've got the online space and you've got your own retail stuff that you do.

[00:38:08] **Antony Whitaker:** How do you. Sort of see that playing out. Is, is online growing? Has online education sort of peaked in some areas? I know you're doing a lot of live stuff around the US on a regular basis. You know what's the feeling that you're getting as to the direction that's going in nowadays?

[00:38:27] **Gerard Scarpaci:** so you know, just going back five years to COVID, which seems like, you know, decades ago, to be completely with you, but you know, the move was towards subscription based education. It just seemed like the way everything was going to go, people had automatically had to start learning online.

[00:38:45] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Because they couldn't get together and you know, everyone started creating libraries, brands, independents, people like hair-brained, and you know, for a very scalable cost. You know, I think ours comes in at like something like \$9 a month. You know, you could sell subscriptions to people. It, it had its moment and it kind of seemed to be going up, and then it just kind of seemed to be going down.

[00:39:11] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And I, I, you know, I don't have enough data, but I could see the industry, I could see that, you know, independents, brands, whatever. They're not all out there promoting, Hey, sign up for my subscription anymore. So I could, I, I'll extrapolate. I use that word a lot, I guess, and hopefully I use it properly. I don't know, I should check a dictionary.

[00:39:30] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Yeah, it sounds good. Um

[00:39:33] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I could conclude that, you know, everyone had the same experience that we had at Hairbrained. It kind of went up, it plateaued, it went down. And now it's just kind of where it is in

[00:39:42] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, Yeah.

[00:39:44] **Gerard Scarpaci:** online education, um, that let us, you know, quickly to think about, well, maybe people want to get, and we also heard it from people, people want to get back together

[00:39:54] **Antony Whitaker:** Mm.

[00:39:56] **Gerard Scarpaci:** So, you know, it's something, you know, doing live events, especially for hundreds of people. It's not easy and it's, uh, it takes a lot, a lot of investment, a lot of time, a lot of marketing to get them there. Um, but you know, we just one day woke up and I just said, screw it. Let's, let's throw it into the wind and see what happens.

[00:40:17] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, and of course, did the biggest thing. You could do a three day event in Palm Springs at a luxury resort. It's called HB Fest. It happens every September. This will be our third year. Um, and, you know, it's a 500 plus person attendee event over multiple days with a main stage breakout rooms, parties, all that kind of stuff.

[00:40:43] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, so thank God for a line of credit, you know, to help you kind of, manage something like that. And thank God that people responded and bought tickets so that we could pay our line of credit back in a timely way. But, you know, that helped us realize, okay. People want this, you know, they want something different.

[00:41:01] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Um, so then we started launching one day events called HB Sessions across the country and cities that we thought maybe were underserved for education. we just did one in Scottsdale, you know, in late January we had over 400 people attend the one day event, um, in Scottsdale. And these are, you know, this isn't like a giveaway.

[00:41:20] **Gerard Scarpaci:** This is a \$300 plus ticket. so. Again, I don't want anyone thinking, wow, look at all the, hopefully we broke even the, you know, we haven't calculated yet the, the amount of money that goes into doing something like that.

[00:41:34] **Antony Whitaker:** I know.

[00:41:35] **Gerard Scarpaci:** but I think back to the, the brand, you know, so what, this is stuck in my head and I don't know, maybe you remember this, you

know, somewhere in my Sassoon days, I remember reading about Vidal's first trip to America, that he was brought in by Clariol

[00:41:51] **Gerard Scarpaci:** know, there was this tour that he did for Clariol. I thought, well, you know, Vidal didn't work for Clariol I'm sure he wasn't like a, their perfect spokesperson, but they knew that Vidal had something. Whoever made that decision, I don't know, and I'm making this up, you know? But I knew that Clariol brought him here.

[00:42:09] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, they knew that he was timely and relevant. They knew that he could get the people in, and they knew that that gave them an opportunity to meet those people and hopefully get leads. And I don't know that they used that language back then and. So we went through this huge period there. As you said, the brands then own the education and you couldn't, again, with gatekeeping, whether you like it or not, you couldn't get on stage for Paul Mitchell unless you were Robert Cromeans.

[00:42:39] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And I, you know, I love Robert. He's one of my best. I have nothing but respect. I've learned so much from him. Um, but it was very much controlled in that way. This is our brand. These are our educators. This is what we do. know, where. I think we've kind of come back to now this Clariol powered by Clariol, but who's the person that people want to see?

[00:43:00] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And the brand doesn't necessarily always have those people. So what we've been able to do at a lot of these events is be powered by a group of brands that want access to A and B level hairdressers. Um, and they haven't been able to get them to turn up for their events and they're, again, they're spending all this money.

[00:43:20] **Gerard Scarpaci:** People aren't buying the tickets, they're giving them away or giving points. Maybe that works on their balance sheet, maybe it doesn't. Well then they're like, wait for this low investment. You're telling me you're going to have 400 A and B level hairdressers. I don't have to foot the bill for the whole thing.

[00:43:34] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I just have to be part of it. Contributing member, you know, a sponsor and I'm going to get quality time with them. And know, your educators who are on stage, uh, can use my product if they choose to. We found a lot of brands are interested in that. You know, it's a leads generator, it's a very, it's, it pushes someone right into the warm category from being totally cold.

[00:44:00] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And then if they turn up the way, some brands do, they, and they, this is the feedback we've gotten. 'cause they're like, can we come to the next one? That's how you know it's working. They've been able to convert some of those people. They've come in warm and boom, they actually had a good salesperson there.

[00:44:16] **Gerard Scarpaci:** They had a good representation in the vendor area. Um, and I think, you know, that's been the breakdown that we've seen. You know what? The traditional trade show wasn't really doing that anymore.

[00:44:28] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah. No, very interesting. Um, look, I know we've gotta wrap up in a minute, but I just want to just ask you one thing, and that was, you know, if you were. A 25-year-old, uh, and I know you're not a 25-year-old anymore. Uh, if you were a 25-year-old today and you're just starting out in the industry, what would you see as the opportunities in the industry today?

[00:44:50] **Antony Whitaker:** Because it's a very different industry to, you know, when you started in the nineties or when I started, you know, even before that. Um, what, what would you say the opportunities are? What would excite you?

[00:45:04] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, again, I'll always say, Getting good at your craft. Let's put that aside. You know, I still believe getting good at your craft is the, the first thing you need to be excited about.

[00:45:16] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah

[00:45:17] **Gerard Scarpaci:** however, that, whatever's timely and relevant for you and whatever part of the craft you want to go into, but then, you know, if you've put enough time into that where you are good at it, it doesn't mean you're the master of all things.

[00:45:29] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I think content creation is the biggest opportunity. Um, in many ways. So being able to use a phone and edit something, whether it be, you know, predominantly video in short form that you can promote your services, grow your brand, market yourself, find people that like what you're doing.

[00:45:52] **Gerard Scarpaci:** And then eventually from there, if you get really good at it and you really have the credibility, um, of your skill and credibility as a content creator who can put something out there that gets reach and

engagement and views, you can now take that and all those brands that I was talking about, uh, that want those.

[00:46:18] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Connections will work with you. So, you know, and along those lines, I mean, again, we're putting our money where our mouth is with something called Creator Con, which is going to be happening at the end of February, beginning of March, here in California. This is an intimate event for 150 attendees. We will get to learn from some of the best, most successful creators in the industry.

[00:46:38] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Alfredo Lewis, Jacob Kahn, Lisa G, myself, Krista Bartik Uh, I can go on. We have all these other panelists, but, um, it's not a technical hair event whatsoever. It's going to be about, um, filming, editing, content creation, branding, um, the templates that you use, the choice of music panel [discussions, keynotes, you know, and again, from the level of hey.

[00:47:04] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I want to make sure that I am the most successful hairdresser in my city. A content creation, you know, again, you've got your skill. I don't think this means I'm a horrible hairdresser, but I'm good at content creation. So I'm the most successful hairdresser in my city. I, I don't even want to see that happen.

[00:47:19] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I, I want to see that fail.

[00:47:20] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I want to see someone who's good at what they do and is invested in their ability, and then can. Use content creation to become the highest paid hairdresser in their community. And then, if they choose to, can also have brand partnerships and launch their own brands if they want.

[00:47:38] **Gerard Scarpaci:** You know, think the next Al Susu and the next horse, the next Paul Mitchell, um, are going to be, is going to be a content creator that really captures the imagination of not only the pros but the consumers.

[00:47:52] **Antony Whitaker:** mm.

[00:47:53] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. That is the perfect place to start to wrap up. Um, and, and I love everything you just said there. Uh, whereabouts, GeraRd, can people connect with you on Instagram or other social channels? Where, where would you like them to send

[00:48:06] **Gerard Scarpaci:** I mean, you know, hairbrained official is obviously the hairbrained page. Um, I don't see every message that comes in there, but my personal is my name, Gerard Scarpaci on Instagram. That would be the best that I do see every message that comes in. So if you wanna hello, it's Gerard, G-E-R-A-R-D SCARPACI. I'm sure it'll be in the notes here on Instagram.

[00:48:28] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Good. Okay. Alright, well look, I'll put those links, uh, on our website, uh, grow my salon business.com and in the show notes for wherever you are listening to this podcast.

[00:48:38] **Antony Whitaker:** And if you're listening to this podcast with Gerard and you've enjoyed it as much as I have, then do me a favour and share it with people who you know would also enjoy it. And don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple Podcast app. So to wrap up, Gerard, thank you so much for being on this week's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[00:48:57] **Antony Whitaker:** We're gonna have to do this again. I've got a whole lot of stuff I didn't get to with you,

[00:49:01] **Gerard Scarpaci:** Anytime. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

[00:49:02] **Antony Whitaker:** I thought everything you were talking about was great. Yeah. Cool.