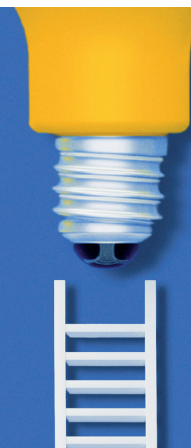


Ready to GROW?

We speak to sector professionals for advice on how to successfully scale up your hair or beauty business.

WORDS EMMA BENNETT



After growing up working for their dad, a barber, Darran and Leigh Gould decided to strike out on their own in 2013, opening their first barbershop in King's Lynn. Since then, Gould Barbers has grown to be the UK's largest barbering brand, with 46 more shops in Tesco stores up and down the country. 'Our first barbers did 100 haircuts in the first week,' says Darran. 'When we opened our first Tesco shop in 2016, we did 147 haircuts on the first day.' It wasn't long before Tesco offered the brothers a partnership.

The key to their success is focusing on what the client wants, says Darran. 'If you open a cool, quirky shop in a small West Midlands town, people can feel too intimidated to go in. Our shops have a distinct look but they're inviting to all demographics, including senior citizens and mums with their children. It's the same reason we're open until 7pm and our busiest trading day is Sunday, because that's when our clients want to get their hair cut.'

It's crucial to build up a client base before thinking of expanding, and to

wait at least five years to become established, he adds. And when it comes to choosing the location of your next shop, research is everything.

'I look at how many barbershops there are nearby, how busy they are and what they're charging,' he says. 'Then I'll look at the population and the demographic. It could be a cracking location, but if the competition is too fierce you're flogging a dead horse.'

Creating a clear career path is also important for retaining talent while growing your own workforce, Darran continues. 'We opened our academy in 2021 to train our apprentices to become

OUR PROFESSIONAL PANEL



Debbie Digby: NHBF Board member and founder of Feathers Collective, a group of six salons in Essex, and distribution and education company Passion4hair



Jasmine Griffin: Business expert and founder of London-based beauty marketing agency The Beauty of Marketing



Barrie Stephen: Owner of award-winning Leicestershire salon group Barrie Stephen

OUR SHOPS HAVE A DISTINCT LOOK BUT ARE INVITING TO EVERYONE

THE BUSINESS SCALING UP

barbers. They can then become senior barbers and, if they show real growth potential, we'll look for a shop for them to manage. We have 300 barbers, 47 senior barbers and 100 apprentices, as well as four area managers – and they all started as barbers.'

To the next level

We speak to more business specialists to find out what to consider when scaling up.

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S THE RIGHT TIME TO EXPAND?

You have the capacity

Measure how much time, brain-space and energy you have before branching out, says Debbie. 'If you can't take a four-week holiday without a disaster happening, your business is not ready. Focus on building the team in the current

business so it works when you're busy in the new location.'

You're making a profit

Ensure your business has healthy finances before sinking more money into expansion. 'Make sure your first salon is profitable,' says Barrie. 'One of the main reasons businesses fail is poor cashflow, so know your numbers and have a strong business plan, because you'll need to break even quickly.'

WHAT DO I NEED TO SCALE UP?

Effective systems

With more than one salon to run, you must have good systems and processes in place to keep your business running economically. 'There are so many tools and platforms that can make your workload more efficient,' says Jasmine. 'Automated booking systems and finance software can make a big difference – do your research to find the best one for your business.'

Investment

'More businesses fail because they run out of cash rather than ideas,' says Debbie. 'Focus on financial forecasting and ensure you have some working capital to finance your new business. That doesn't have to be a bank loan – you can consider peer-to-peer lending or crowd-funding, and some charities and local authorities offer business grants.'

FRANCHISE VS INDEPENDENT EXPANSION

When scaling your business, there are two models open to you: independent expansion or becoming a franchise.

While an independent business will be fully owned and operated by you, a franchise allows other people to pay you fees to run a business under your trading name and brand. The franchisee will usually buy a licence from you to do this, with a contract in place that sets strict rules for how the business will run. (We'll have more on franchises in a future issue of *salonfocus*.)



SCALING UP DOS AND DON'TS

✓ DO

✓ **Focus on marketing:** Keep your online and social media presence up to date with engaging content that reflects your brand. Offering discounts and rewards can help to retain old clients as well as attract new ones.

✓ **Communicate:** Scaling up will put pressure on your time and energy. Keep your team and your clients on board with regular, clear communication.

✓ **Invest in your team:** Giving people education and training will help to build a positive working culture while maintaining high standards.

X DON'T

X **Avoid tough decisions:** Closely monitor your business's financial performance and client feedback, and be prepared to make tough decisions quickly.

X **Neglect your first salon:** It's easy to become distracted by your latest venture. Ensure you split your time and focus equally, so all sites can thrive.

X **Overstretch yourself:** If it feels like you're taking on too much, you probably are. Build a strong, collaborative team and monitor your cashflow to stay on track.

IF YOU CAN'T TAKE A FOUR-WEEK HOLIDAY WITHOUT A DISASTER HAPPENING, YOUR BUSINESS IS NOT READY