

MASTERS Audio Club, April 2017
David Thurston
Founder of Pulp Riot, Butterfly Circus & Ubungalows



David Thurston and Alexis Thurston founded the Pulp Riot professional hair color line, the award-winning Butterfly Loft salon, and Ubungalows salon suites. David also founded the Butterfly Circus touring education team and he teaches and offers private consulting services. Together with their businesses, David and Alexis have over 650,000 Instagram followers.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, David is a wealth of applicable ideas for building a positive culture and a social media following, and he has the salon and industry success to prove it!

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to this issue of MASTERS. I am at the Loews Hollywood Hotel, right around the corner from Grauman's Chinese Theatre, home of where they have the big Oscars party. So this is kind of exciting to be here, and I'm sitting here with Mr. Hollywood himself.

David: Hm. *[laughs]*

Winn: Do people call you that or is it just me?

David: It's probably just you but it is pretty cool scenery. I'm looking out the window now and I see the Hollywood sign, the iconic Hollywood sign. So this is really cool.

Winn: This is really cool. I'm sitting here with David Thurston. So David, first of all, welcome to MASTERS.

David: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. It's a pleasure to be here.

Winn: And I'm grateful to you 'cause when I reached out and said, "Will you do this?" and you said, "If it's you, the answer is yes." So.

David: That's absolutely right. We share a lot of friends and we share a few enemies, actually.

Winn: Okay. *[laughs]*

David: Yeah. And so when we share friends and enemies, you know that you're going to be in good company.

Winn: Yeah, so. You know, I just—I never take that for granted. I never take it for granted that we work hard to establish ourselves and have credibility and have integrity so that when you make the call, people take your call.

David: It's everything.

Winn: I remember Marianne Williamson used to say that nobody can give you the power to have your phone call returned.

David: Yeah. And it takes time.

Winn: It does take time.

David: It takes time. There's so many times that there's—especially now with social media and us all living a little bit publically—you hear—there's certain people who try to tear you down or ruin your reputation and the only thing you can do is stay consistent to who you are and your integrity. And then after a period of time, people just understand that what you've got going is not what other people may be reporting.

Winn: Right, so, well, what you just brought up—first of all that we share enemies. We're going to talk about that today.

David: Okay.

Winn: And we're going to talk about how people try to tear you down.

David: And—

Winn: Whether that's in your face or through social media and 'cause I think anybody listening to this has experienced that side of it. And MASTERS is not just to talk about how life is so rosy but sometimes there's stuff going on out there that we have to talk about, too.

David: As humans, we're not prepared to be blasted on social media. And so it's something I think we're all learning now on how to handle. And I think my journey over the past year, that's one of the things that I've learned the most that has made me a different person. So I'd be happy to talk—

Winn: Oh, I do want to talk about that. You know, growing up—like I have a young daughter, I'm thinking, *What's it going to be like for her on social media?* I never had to deal with that.

David: Hm.

Winn: Right? When growing up in high school or—never dealt with that. I can't imagine. I mean, I already felt like an outcast in many ways. I can't imagine

total strangers without a face to go with them saying things about me or whatever. Just—it's a crazy world out there.

David: It's the—there's something—there's a positive side to it and that is that, up until this past couple of years, I've wanted to be liked by everybody. And I think it's guided me a little bit and maybe has allowed me to take the risk and take the jump sometimes because I wanted to be liked by everybody. But when you start having no control over certain people who don't like you, and a lot of the times it boils down to they don't like your success, that they start tearing you apart. And when it first started happening to me, I had a couple of really bad weeks there and it was awful. And I wanted to fire back but everybody told me not to fire back. And eventually you start to learn that not everybody likes you and that's okay.

Winn: Right.

David: So possibly your daughter and the next generation won't care so much about that and it might embolden them and make them more into risk takers.

Winn: Hm.

David: So.

Winn: Well, you have two little girls, too.

David: Correct. A 9- and 14-year-old.

Winn: Right. So—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —we're dads out there forging a safer journey for *[laughs]* —

David: Right.

Winn: —our little girls.

David: And they're on cell phones very early these days. And the pressure to get—

Winn: Mine will get one at 30. At 30 she gets a cell phone.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: Yes.

David: We held off with our 14-year-old 'til about 12.

Winn: Oh my gosh.

David: And what's challenging is that all of her friends had it and you want to hold off as long as possible without making them feel like they're not part of everything that's going on.

Winn: Right.

David: So, yeah.

Winn: Very interesting. Well, let me give you some information about David and his wife, Alexis. Which—where's Alexis today?

David: Alexis is working on—we divide and conquer a lot of times these days.

Winn: Right.

David: We've just gotten too busy. But she is my business partner, my wife, and a massive reason why we've had success.

Winn: Okay.

David: So.

Winn: Is she a hairdresser, too?

David: She's a hairdresser. I'm not a hairdresser but she is a hairdresser.

Winn: I did not know that you weren't a hairdresser.

David: I'm good at faking it. I'm a chameleon. In fact, I teach classes often and somebody at the end will always say, "What salon are you at?" and that's the best compliment I could possibly get 'cause I—

Winn: Wait, what kind of classes are you teaching?

David: I teach generally inspiration class, focus class—

Winn: Oh, so you're not doing hands-on hair.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: I'm thinking, *Oh my gosh, he's applying hair color.*

David: You know what? I do my daughter's hair color and I do my wife's hair color but it extends beyond there.

Winn: I watched a video once, how hard—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —could it be, you know?

David: Right, yeah.

Winn: You can learn it on YouTube, right?

David: I—*[laughs]*

Winn: You can learn everything on YouTube.

David: I'm around it all day, so.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: Yeah.

Winn: That's funny.

David: So.

Winn: Okay, so you and your wife Alexis are the founders of Pulp Riot, which I like the name. Why you—

David: Thank you.

Winn: That's the name of your professional hair color line.

David: Yeah.

Winn: How'd you choose that name, Pulp Riot?

David: I was looking for something that smacked you in the jaw when you heard it.

Winn: Well, that does it.

David: And I think that that does it. The “pulp” is the goo that's actually in the tube. That's the product, the consistency is like pulp. Riot is what we're trying to do to the industry—and we're having success at—is being very disruptive. We're creating a riot. And it's not just our riot, it's everybody's riot. And so that's how Pulp Riot came about.

Winn: Very cool. Currently, the color line is found in over 800 professional beauty stores, part of the Luxury Brand Partners along with incredible products like Oribe and Smith & Cult.

David: Yes.

Winn: How long has the color been out?

David: We launched seven months ago. And it's been—it's interesting—

Winn: Wow. Already, in seven months you've accomplished this.

David: Yeah. And it really comes down to social media. We built our brand—

Winn: Okay.

David: —before we released the product. And so then when we released the product, people were waiting for it. We've already—we came from education. They knew what we believed in and so when you just have a product that supports that, it's crazy how quickly it can grow. In fact, I got into this industry by creating a hair product line and we all gave each other high fives—this was 14 years ago—when we went from California to Nevada. That was a big deal. And it took about a year to get that far.

Winn: Right.

David: With Pulp Riot, we launched and in three days we were in all 50 states and all seven Canadian provinces.

Winn: Wow.

David: It just shows you that we live in a different time.

Winn: Right.

David: And those who take advantage of it are going to kill it.

Winn: Okay.

David: So.

Winn: I like that you said that you were an education company first and then became a product company. And a lot of companies have done it that way and then some do it the other way around. They—they're a product company first and then they add education later on, so.

David: Yeah, I think most take that stance.

Winn: Right.

David: They go, "Oh great, we've got this product. Well, we now need to round it out with education."

Winn: Right.

David: We went the other way. And I actually think it's a better way to go.

Winn: Right. Good for you. You have said that Pulp Riot empowers stylists to think of themselves as artists, the hair as their canvas, and Pulp Riot as their paint. That was cool.

David: Thank you. I think people respond to our product and it makes them feel good when they buy it. And how many products have you bought in your life where you feel good where you actually buy it? Maybe your first iPhone you ever bought. We have a certain craftsmanship in our product, and thought and spirit about it. And so the product packaging is street art done by an artist that we've commissioned. It's got dripping paint on it. The tube looks like an acrylic paint tube. And we treat stylists like artists. And I think that's how they want to feel about themselves and it elevates them to a new level. And you have to understand that just a few years ago, the artists were working with blonde, brunette, and if they were lucky, redhead. And maybe once a month someone would come in and want purple hair. Well, now all the colors of the rainbow are available and it really does turn them more into an artist. They have a larger, expanded palette.

Winn: Hm. A little bit more about David and Alexis. You're also the founders of Butterfly Loft, which is an award winning, eco-friendly, upscale salon and spa in Los Angeles. Butterfly Loft occupies a 4,300-square-foot loft space on Ventura Boulevard and is home to 49 of Los Angeles' top beauty professionals. It has more five-star Yelp reviews than any other salon in Los Angeles, which we're going to talk about. Butterfly Loft was selected as the World's Eco-Friendly Model Salon by Wella, Best New Salon in North America by Salon Designers International, and Best Salon in the Valley by the readers of *Ventura Blvd* magazine. So congratulations on all of that. I'm going to come back with some questions.

David: Sure.

Winn: Obviously I'm reading this.

David: Mm-hm.

Winn: I memorized everything about you.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: This is all from my memory. David and Alexis are also the co-founders of Ubungalows, which is a 6,400-square-foot collection of individual salon suites, which is the home to 40 beauty professionals. Together, their Butterfly Loft and Ubungalows salons have been fully rented for several years and you have a waiting list.

David: Yup.

Winn: David founded Butterfly Circus, an education team that tours the United States and Canada teaching the latest cutting, coloring, and styling techniques as well as personal and business skills in an innovative, fast-paced format. Now obviously it sounds like our interview is going to be all about the beauty industry and it's not. And I'm so proud that—

David: Good.

Winn: —MASTERS has expanded to a large, large audience outside the beauty industry and I'm always, always grateful. I think that hairdressers and people who have careers within the hairdressing industry, including me and you, who are not hairdressers, I think become incredible teachers and mentors. I can be hired by a major corporation like Southwest Airlines and the best stories that they love the most are my hairdressing stories.

David: And you probably wouldn't have as much fun in that industry as you do the beauty industry.

Winn: Exactly. Which is probably why they hire me 'cause we're a little more fun.

David: *[laughs]* That's correct.

Winn: As speakers and trainers, I think, we've got a really good lesson on how to really train and educate. I think people in the beauty industry are going to educational events sometimes every single month if not more than that.

David: Yes.

Winn: In other industries it's maybe once a year that the company provides a conference for them or whatever. So I think that—what I'm getting at is we're good educators and good trainers and the message that we can deliver based on our experience in the beauty industry is universal and many people listening to this are going to benefit. So, thank you.

David: I think so and I feel like the other industries could really—they really like to work with people like you and I because we come from a right-brain perspective, a creative, artistic perspective. And so often we use different words. We say, "We feel this," instead of "We think this."

Winn: Right.

David: And it's diametrically opposed to those other industries so I think they have something to learn from us.

Winn: We should just hug it out right now—

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: —because we really like each other right now. We like ourselves right now, so—

David: It's works, yes. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* Okay. So, a couple of questions: so eco-friendly salon. Tell me about that.

David: It's important to me that I brought to my stylists and our clients values that are important to my wife and I. And so we decided to create an eco-friendly salon. And with that, the majority of the certification process, the reason we're considered a green salon, is mostly because of our air quality. We came up right around the time that some of those straightening treatments were just starting to proliferate the beauty industry and people were breathing in formaldehyde. And we looked at it and the—our stylists in our salon were covering up their face with masks while they were doing hair, clients were wearing goggles so their eyes wouldn't burn. Eventually I looked around one day and said, "Why are we doing this?"

Winn: Hm.

David: How did we get here? And so we banned some of those products—well, all those products—from our salon and we built in a filtration system where stylists can just turn a knob and it takes all the air out from right above them with an industrial restaurant-grade exhaust system; makes their air quality really great. We also upgraded our faucets so they use half the amount of water but give twice the amount of water pressure. You know, for me, a lot of times in the beauty industry, when you think of green you think of compromises. You think the shampoo may not lather as much if it's more of a green product. Or the packaging may not look as good or—and in my salon and in our lives, we're not fanatical about it but when the choice could be made where there's not a big loss in quality, we try to make that choice.

Winn: Did you move buildings or you retrofitted the building that you were already in?

David: Retrofitted the building—

Winn: Was it expensive?

David: —we were already in. Everything we do *[laughs]* seems to be expensive. But the payoff's always there.

Winn: Okay.

David: Yeah.

Winn: How long have you been in that location? And—

David: For six years.

Winn: Okay.

David: We came in and the space was vacant for seven years before we went in there.

Winn: Okay.

David: We completely renovated it from ground up and built Butterfly Loft, a 25-station salon.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And we looked at it at the time and thought, *How on earth are we ever going to fill this salon?*

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And here we are six years later and we've expanded four times, including our Ubungalows project.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And now we have over 70 stations occupying over 10,000 square feet of space.

Winn: Hm.

David: And I don't know how it happened but it happened fast.

Winn: Hm.

David: So.

Winn: Alexis must be really pretty and smart and amazing.

David: Alexis is all those things.

Winn: Okay.

David: And more. Yes.

Winn: *[laughs]* All right. So Butterfly Circus was responsible for an independent education movement that has disrupted the traditional industry salon education model. That's a quote from you.

David: Yes.

Winn: What'd you mean by that?

David: Well, with Butterfly Loft Salon, I started to find something really interesting. All of a sudden because of our Instagram following, we were becoming a global brand yet we only had one location. And I found that fascinating that before, some of the stylists—the salons that have wanted to be a global brand have had to open up in—or at least a national brand—had to open up in Miami, Chicago, New York. And we're able to reach people. Stylists saw our work and they started traveling out to Los Angeles and taking pictures next to our sign and hashtagging it the #GracelandofHair, like it's a place they wanted to see. I was watching this and I was also watching that there were certain influencer-stylists who started becoming the people who were creating trends and they were inspiring. And this used to be in the hands of product companies but the product companies didn't seem to have as much influence as these individuals did. And so I looked at this and thought, *Why don't we create a team of these people and try doing a class together?* Because up until then, they weren't educators—they were not classically trained educators, at least. And so I decided to call a couple of them and just pitch them and say, "Hey, we want to do the Coachella music festival of hair." Or if you're from a different generation, the Woodstock of hair or the Lollapalooza of hair and, "Are you interested?" And every single one of them said yes. And I thought, *They're not classically trained educators. We can't have them teach for three hours. So how can we set them up for success?* And so I started thinking about YouTube and the habits on YouTube. If you and I wanted to watch a tutorial on YouTube and it was an hour long, there's no way we watch the full hour. We watch 15 minutes of it, we say, "Oh, we got it," and we move on. We assimilate and figure out information so quickly these days. And so rather than hearing one instructor drone on and on for three hours, I thought, *Let's innovate this and have each instructor teach for 30 minutes each. Let's set them up for success.* So we use social media to promote the event. So on our phones, all at the exact same time, the six instructors posted a flyer that said, "At Butterfly Loft Salon, we are doing this class called Butterfly Circus. Tickets on sale now online." I couldn't believe it: three seconds later *[snaps fingers]* those tickets were gone.

Winn: *What?*

David: Just *[snaps fingers]* boom, gone. Actually I shouldn't say three seconds. I made the post, I walked to my computer, I opened up my computer, I logged on, and the ticket website I thought was broken because no tickets were available. I looked and 80 tickets have sold for \$300 each. So, unlike a lot of product companies where you have to think about things, *What do we do next?* we were like a cruise ship—or like a speed boat, not like a cruise ship. And I quickly texted everybody and said, "Do you want to do another show the night after?" It was, "Yes, yes, yes." I did a little coding online: next class tomorrow night. Everybody did a post, it was gone *[snaps fingers]* like that.

Winn: Wow.

David: And so I knew we were onto something and it was almost delightful that I knew something and some of these big distributors and product companies weren't aware that it was going on. So the next thing, we said, "Well, let's try it out. Let's see what happens if we all travel to New York. We'll rent out the W hotel, 250-seat ballroom." We put tickets on sale and it sold out that night. And so ever since then—it's been about two years—we've been crisscrossing the country with a team that's evolved over the years and teaching these cool little classes. And we've been inspiring and educating. And we're teaching hair coloring, haircutting. I teach at a lot of these also, where I teach how to grow your social media following. I've taught about overcoming fear and it's just been an enjoyable ride. And, you know, life is interesting. It's like a spiral staircase to me: you can only see two steps ahead, you don't know where it's going. And the salon led to the Ubungalows project. Without that, I couldn't have gotten the Butterfly Circus. Without Butterfly Circus, I couldn't have got to Pulp Riot. It seems like a linear line—

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: —but I didn't know where it was going. And I think all—everybody's life is like that. And it is about overcoming fear and taking risks and trusting that things are going to lead to something bigger if you take the step.

Winn: Hm. Not that it's the same thing but it is sort of the same thing: I've asked people—I'm always inspired by people who have had something tragic happen to them that resulted in something physical.

David: Mm-hm.

Winn: So they lost limbs, they lost eyesight, they lost something and yet they overcame that. And I think I'm fascinated by it or inspired by it because I'm not sure how I would handle that. And so I'm—you know, we all overcome something but that's just something that I just relate to.

David: Absolutely.

Winn: And every single time, whether it's somebody who became a quadriplegic or whatever happened, I always ask, "Would you go back and change it? The moment that this happened to you, would you go back and change it?" They always, always say no. They would not go back and change what happened to them. That what happened to them, as tragic as we all see that it is, was the best thing that ever happened to them.

David: I think it starts to shape who you are.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And it becomes unfathomable to backtrack on that.

Winn: Hm.

David: Because who you are—if you’re doing it right—is a collection of growth and experiences that shape you into a better person, hopefully.

Winn: Hopefully people listening to this have done this where they can go back to something that happened to them and then they can—like you just said—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —draw a linear line: “Well, that led to this, which led to this, which led to this.” I was blinded in my—this is a fake eye.

David: Oh.

Winn: So this is a prosthetic—when I was 14 years old. So I was laid up. I didn’t go to school for a while. My parents bought a piano for me so I can entertain myself. I taught myself how to play the piano. Long story short, I became this piano player for a good friend of mine, who many years later married Larry King—

David: Hm.

Winn: —and then Larry King wrote the foreword for my book. So that’s my little story of being blinded led to Larry King doing the foreword for my book.

David: It’s interesting—you’re an author and sometimes I think it’s good for people to look back and just see how they got there, connect the dots. And you can start thinking of it as chapters in the book.

Winn: Hm.

David: That you can’t go to chapter three without going through chapter one. So it’s a long view and sometimes we’re all a little bit more shortsighted but it’s good to look back and reflect and see how you got there.

Winn: And it’s also good to remind ourselves when we’re going through that stuff, “This really sucks right now but there’s a reason.” *[laughs]*

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: You know, everything happens for a reason. There’s a reason—what do they say? “One day we’ll laugh about this,” and then people say, “Well, how about we start laughing now?”

David: Yeah.

Winn: If we're going to laugh one day, how about now?

David: And I think that that—with experience, those sucky times, you understand because you've been through them before, you've overcome them over and over again. So it's experience, it's age that makes it a lot easier to swallow. And I think that people like yourself and I, it's our mission to—our duty to help younger people understand that.

Winn: So back to this traveling education thing that you do.

David: Mm-hm.

Winn: So you're still doing these.

David: We are. It's kind of—what's happened is that the Butterfly Circus has morphed into my product line, Pulp Riot.

Winn: Okay.

David: And that's what I talked about, about building our brand before we had actually released a product. The people who are part of my team—the key core people of my education team—are the people that I approached to create Pulp Riot together with.

Winn: So are they—do they all work in Butterfly—

David: They don't.

Winn: —Loft? No.

David: They're scattered all across the country.

Winn: Okay.

David: With technology, though, it's amazing.

Winn: Right.

David: We don't have to be close. We do webinars and web meetings and talk back and forth and texting and stuff. And so when we created Pulp Riot, it was going to them and saying, "Hey, we're creating this color line and we want you guys to be involved."

Winn: Okay. I apologize if I'm going to jump all over the place here.

David: Let's jump around.

Winn: But I want to go back to—

David: Let's time travel.

Winn: Okay, there you go. You have more five-star Yelp reviews than any other salon in the Los Angeles area. How'd you make that happen?

David: A lot of people think of Yelp as passive. What I mean by that is they think, *Let's just do really good work and let's just wait for all of our customers to recognize it and then they're going to post positive reviews.* And sometimes that happens. But unfortunately, when you work with the public, you deal with your fair share of people who you're just not going to please, or they're absolutely crazy people. And they're going to write bad reviews for you. And so I always recommend to salon owners or anybody who owns a small business or any size business to take action and decide that it's in your control. And so to make that happen, we teach our stylists how to make it more possible—we teach them about Yelp: that it's got an algorithm, that it filters out certain reviews and how to overcome that. And how to gracefully get your clients to want to write a review for you as opposed to talking to them in the chair and trying to convince them to write a review for you. And so taking that effort and multiplying it over 70 stylists that are in our salon, and coaching them and teaching them how to do that, it really boosts our reviews. But it really is a win-win. Social media is one of the only ways left where a salon owner and stylist can create this win-win relationship because what they do for the salon online boosts the salon and as the salon boosts up, they're able to give exposure and help to their stylists online.

Winn: So the lesson here is: ask. Ask people to review.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Ask people to post. Ask people.

David: With tact and with grace and reading—being a master of reading people's body language, I think is really a helpful tool. And I think stylists have that.

Winn: Hm.

David: It just needs to be brought out in them. And the salon owner role: to make them more successful is to give them the words to use.

Winn: Well, as long as we're talking about social media, let's continue on that.

David: Mm-hm.

Winn: And then we can come back to some of this other stuff. You said that you have over 650,000 Instagram followers. Is that correct, outdated, or has it increased?

David: It always is increasing.

Winn: Of course.

David: It's—yeah.

Winn: Okay.

David: Tens of thousands a month.

Winn: Okay.

David: It increases, yeah.

Winn: So congratulations. Is that primarily where you live, is on Instagram? Or are you—

David: Yes. The beauty industry lives on Instagram therefore I live on Instagram.

Winn: What about other platforms? Are you using Twitter or Facebook or any of these other ones?

David: We do with Facebook. I think Facebook reaches clients and Instagram reaches the beauty community. And as far as Twitter goes, I haven't figured out how to use that for the beauty industry. So I kind of avoid that one.

Winn: I have a good friend that I need to hook you up with then.

David: Yeah?

Winn: I did a MASTERS interview with him, Phil Pallen. Have you heard of this guy?

David: No.

Winn: He's incredible. This guy's incredible. And—but Twitter's his only expertise.

David: He's a Twitter God.

Winn: Yeah.

David: Yeah.

Winn: He's a, "Don't ask me about the other ones. I'm a Twitter guy." And he's like specific as to how many tweets you should send out—

David: Right.

Winn: —per week, what types of tweets. He breaks it down. There's four types of tweets that you need to focus on. Not that I've done what he told me to do.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: But I'm planning to one day. He's incredible.

David: Well, he and I obviously have something to learn from each other. That's—

Winn: Oh, he's phenomenal.

David: Yeah.

Winn: This guy—he's great. He doesn't work for companies. Like he works for individuals.

David: Mm-hm.

Winn: So like he does the personal tweet accounts for the judges on *The X Factor*.

David: Right.

Winn: He doesn't do *The X Factor* show. Or a couple of the guys on *Shark Tank*.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Doesn't do for the show *Shark Tank* but he does for the judges. Anyway.

David: So he's the guru.

Winn: He's the guru. There, I did a little plug for Phil. There you go.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: So talk about, you know, more about social media, how Instagram has affected your business and how you build up that many followers.

David: A lot of people—they're starting to come around but when Instagram started to take off, a lot of people thought of it as a fake world. It's not. It's a reflection of our world. It's just—

Winn: What do you mean a—

David: Like—

Winn: —fake world?

David: Like it's like this alternative reality where you act like somebody else and you show off who you are and you make online acquaintances. But what they don't realize is that that's where transactions are happening and where friendships are being made. The majority of my friends are not people I went to college with or I grew up with. The majority of friends I've actually met in the past four or five years and they're people that I've met online.

Winn: Okay.

David: And in the beauty industry more than ever, it's a way of connecting people. So if you're in a salon in Oklahoma and you don't like the people around you that have stations next to yours, you truly are connected to all these other stylists who are working in salons across the country. And the beauty shows now become this place where they all congregate and are able to meet the people that they met online physically and get to know them. So social media has had a massive impact and I think the unfortunate thing is, is that it's been this perfect storm. And it's swallowed up a lot of salons and a lot of stylists who are a little bit older because these young stylists get it. These millennials get it and they're taking all the clients. These young salons are coming up and they're taking all of the clients. And what we've done—my wife and I have figured out social media and rather than get swallowed up by this storm, we pivot, we adjust, we change, and we ride that wave instead of getting crushed on it. And I think that that's the state of the industry right now. Those who pivot and change and don't continue following the wrong roadmap will survive. I always say there's people in our industry—and this affects all industries—there are people who choose to be Blockbuster in a Netflix world.

Winn: Right.

David: Yeah.

Winn: *[laughs]* How old are you?

David: I'm 45, I believe. I'm old enough to have to think about it.

Winn: Okay.

David: I'm 45.

Winn: Okay. My daughter, she's, you know, four and a half, you know.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Four and three quarters. Yeah.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Yeah.

David: She's going to grow up in an entirely different world.

Winn: Right, right, right.

David: And to be honest with you, the thing that I think about often is death. And it's not in any reason except that I want to see where this whole thing's going with technology.

Winn: Huh.

David: And with the shift of our culture. What's happened in the past five years, where are we going to be 50 years from now?

Winn: Right.

David: And I'm hopefully around to see at least a little bit of it.

Winn: So how have you and your wife educated yourselves? 'Cause you say you have to be—what you said, pivot and change.

David: Yeah. Let's take my wife, for example. I think a lot of people could learn from her story. Here she is, 40 years old, hot as hell, of course.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And she's got a full clientele. And they're full of people who are probably in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, middle-aged people who are coming in and getting root touchups. And she's content. She's happy. She's got a successful career as a hairdresser. But she decides she wants more. She starts seeing on Instagram people that are doing more bright-colored, fun hair and she's realizing that in her own salon there's 20-year-olds, 25-year-olds who are just killing it. They occupy two chairs, they have their own assistant, they're doing fun, creative projects. She wants to change. And so most people her age just complain about the change, about these young stylists, these millennials, and about Instagram, that it's not real.

Winn: I had to walk ten miles in the snow—

David: Right.

Winn: —to do a haircut.

David: And they did.

Winn: Right. *[laughs]*

David: What I taught my stylists five years ago on how to build a clientele is archaic now.

Winn: Right, right, right.

David: So what does my wife do? She decides she's going to make a change and decides to start doing clients for free. And they're creative color projects. And

she starts doing a couple of them and what starts happening? More and more creative color projects start calling her and wanting to get done by her. It's literally—it's an overused word—it's the law of attraction. Whatever you put out you're going to attract back to you. So if you want your clientele to be young 20-somethings getting purple and green hair, you better post photos of people with purple and green hair. So the moral of the story is that when these changes come—like social media changes—you have to look at what's happening; you have to pivot, change, and commit to learning how to do it and to sacrificing in order to make it happen. I think 20 years from now my wife's going to continue to pivot and change and while still people get swallowed up by that giant wave.

Winn: So, I mean, finish her story. So how long did she have to do this for free and—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —then at what point was she able to start charging for it and what was the financial impact?

David: Yes. Well, she—I think the biggest impact is she went from just being a stylist, a random stylist, to being known as one of the very best colorists in the world. And because of that, more opportunity came, more education opportunities. She's going to be on the main stage at ABS Chicago. We're on the main stage at Premiere Orlando. All these fun, cool opportunities where she's able to live an extraordinary life as a stylist as opposed to just an ordinary life as a stylist.

Winn: Right.

David: Her compensation has gone up, the amount of money she makes. But still to this day, from time to time, she does a creative color client or a client that she feels like she can put out there and it's going to attract more people.

Winn: Right.

David: She's never too big to do something like that.

Winn: I hope none of us are too big to still put it out there for free.

David: That's right.

Winn: I speak a lot for free. Mainly because I want the opportunity or somebody asked me to and I just say yes or it's an industry that I've never done a seminar for and I just want to feel what is that like to stand in front of that type of an audience? And so we should all still be willing to do stuff for free.

David: If you're looking at your success, I guarantee you, with that attitude you can find a lot of places where that's what led you to your success.

Winn: Yeah.

David: Yeah.

Winn: So how much or how do you control what's posted on your Instagram? 'Cause I know that's really important, too.

David: Yeah.

Winn: You know, people—with all due respect—they're posting stuff that has nothing to do with their careers and could actually do the opposite. Meaning, it could damage their reputation and their brand 'cause they're posting party pictures of themselves or your—

David: It's a major problem.

Winn: It's—okay, so how do you control that?

David: Well, fortunately with everything—with all of my businesses I actually am the one that posts through social media. You would think that by now I would have outsourced that to somebody but I feel like it's one of the reasons we're having success.

Winn: 'Cause it's authentic? It's you.

David: It's authentic, it's me. The connections I'm making online are connections with people. So when they run up to me at a hair show or at some kind of event and say something to me about a connection we had online, I don't have to fake it like, "Oh yeah, of course I remember you," kind of a thing.

Winn: Right.

David: It's genuine. It's there. But I do advise people to really be careful about what they post online. For us, early on for my salon, I decided that my goal with social media was not to bring more clients into my salon. It was actually to reach the beauty community and have more influence in the beauty community. So I would actually do posts on how to raise prices on your clients, which a lot of people thought was crazy that I would do that because what—

Winn: 'Cause your clients are reading it.

David: —if my clients are reading it?

Winn: Right.

David: But I think a lot of our clients found it really fascinating. But I've always run my salon that way. My salon, my social media, it's all focused on artists, stylists. And I feel like if we attract them, their clients will follow.

Winn: You said that you're careful of what you post. So give us some examples of what not to post and give us some good examples of what to post.

David: Yeah, well first of all, posting a lot of pictures of your cat, if you're a hairstylist or anywhere, is not going to bring you any clients. I'm sorry.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: So ease off on the cat pictures. Any partying pictures.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: What's happening with some of these live—Instagram now has live stuff—you're at a party and people have their phone on you, you've got to be careful about how you handle yourself, particularly as you get up in more and more in a power of influence. There's people looking to possibly take you down.

Winn: Right.

David: I was just at an event and I feel like I had a camera phone on me for the majority of the time. My conversations had to reflect that. They had to change a little bit.

Winn: Wait, wait, wait, back up. You actually did have a camera—like somebody had a camera on you—

David: Yes.

Winn: —the whole time or you just acted as though somebody had a camera?

David: No, somebody did have a camera on almost the entire time just this last weekend.

Winn: Can I ask for your autograph right now? Who are you?

David: *[laughs]* And it wasn't just even for me. A lot of the people that I hang out with are also successful people.

Winn: Right.

David: And so when you're at a bar, like we were—we were at a bar, it was an industry event. There's lots of people there, people always had their cameras on. And they're either on you—and even my team, they're excited to show off what they're doing so they're doing a live feed somewhere. And you just have to be really careful—

Winn: Right.

David: —this day on how you present yourself.

Winn: Oh, I—

David: And stylists have to realize their clients are looking.

Winn: Yeah.

David: And how are you branding yourself? How are you marketing yourself?

Winn: Not just clients. We're all looking.

David: We're all looking.

Winn: Everybody's looking.

David: Yeah.

Winn: I mean, I'm always looking. When somebody wants a favor, an opportunity, or—

David: Oh yeah.

Winn: I go check them out on social media. What are you putting out there?

David: Yeah, absolutely.

Winn: Yeah.

David: It's my impression of who you are and so when I meet you for the first time and I've already been following you on social media, I have a perception on who you are.

Winn: Right.

David: And often, because of the position I'm in, somebody will ask me, "How do you feel about me working with this person?" I'm much more likely to give an enthusiastic thumbs-up that this is a fantastic person if the content they're posting up indicates that that's who they are.

Winn: Right. Have you ever read that book, *How to Be CEO*?

David: No.

Winn: Or *How to Become CEO*.

David: I probably should. *[laughs]*

Winn: It's really, really good. You can read it in like an hour—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —but it's like one of the things is office parties are not for partying. You know?
[laughs]

David: I learned that the hard way in my 20s.

Winn: Oh okay.

David: Yeah, I've got stories.

Winn: So that's what not to post.

David: Yeah. And then, of course, what to post is—

Winn: So no cats and no partying.

David: No cats—

Winn: Nothing—that's it, just the two rules: no cats, no partying?

David: No partying and if you're a business page, I'd say 75 percent of what you post needs to be toward what your business is and not yourself.

Winn: What about selfies? I mean, should people be posting that many selfies?

David: Not that many selfies but I feel like, even though you're running a business, I feel like it's also important to have the person behind the business that you can relate to. And so I do think it's important to put some personal things on there so people understand who you are. I run my salon page, Butterfly Loft. We have, I believe, the second most Instagram followers in the world for a salon and if I were just posting pictures that my stylists were doing, it becomes this soulless—like a business could be really soulless. It doesn't have a personality, it doesn't have a heartbeat. And so I think it is important to inject personality and who you are behind that. And I think that's really the secret to our success.

Winn: Which means what? So what are you posting? Of you—

David: I've posted—

Winn: Of you and your family?

David: I post pictures—

Winn: With your girls?

David: Yep. Every Christmas—

Winn: Your cat.

David: Not my cat. I don't have a cat.

Winn: Okay, good. *[laughs]*

David: But around Christmas time I post pictures of my family.

Winn: Right.

David: But I also post pictures of myself and usually some kind of a message associated with it so people know who I am. I used to be—it's interesting—I used to be a little bit more brazen and a little more controversial. I would post things about certain product companies and the way they'd handled things, or distributors, or it might be something about the industry that's more on the dark side.

Winn: Okay.

David: And—but it's the things, I think, that people think but they were always afraid to say.

Winn: Okay but why'd you stop doing that? Or why'd you change that?

David: *[laughs]* It's interesting. As—

Winn: You just grew up? Or you—or—

David: No, I still have kind of a certain view about things but I—it's interesting how when you start getting noticed and the stakes get higher and higher, you have to be more and more careful. It's a paradox. And I'm still trying to navigate through that a little bit.

Winn: Right.

David: Because all of a sudden you've got a product company and you are wanting to relate to everybody. Well, if you throw half the industry under the bus or I used to talk about—I would never do that but I would talk about salon owners and about how some of them handle certain situations that was more archaic: controlling artists as opposed to finding ways to make them more successful. That's something that was a common theme in my life.

Winn: Hm.

David: Or a common theme in what I post. As you grow, all of a sudden you're going to need salon owners to be interested in your product company and so you

start being a little bit more tame on what you say. It's an interesting dilemma and I think I'm not the first to have gone through that.

Winn: Right.

David: Yeah.

Winn: So how did you educate yourself on Instagram? On how to build such a large Instagram following and what to post and what not to post? Obviously a lot of it is just trial and error, correct?

David: Yeah. I think—

Winn: And also, how much time are you spending? 'Cause you said that you're the one who's basically doing it.

David: Yeah.

Winn: How many hours a day or hours a week is it?

David: It's probably—I'm probably on my phone doing something on social media an hour and a half to two hours a day. It's that important to me. It's my way of reaching the world and it's—

Winn: And are you doing that just bits and pieces throughout the day or—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —it's you sitting down in one sitting and doing it all then?

David: It's bits and pieces throughout the day. If I'm waiting at somewhere, I'm on my phone taking care of that. And a lot of people think of it as, "Oh, I'm wasting time." The truth is that I'm working smart.

Winn: Right.

David: And it's helping me achieve my goals.

Winn: Right.

David: And that's where I think a lot of the millennials—what millennials do understand, they can work smarter, faster that way.

Winn: Right.

David: There's still salon owners who won't let their stylists have their cell phone out on the floor of their salon.

Winn: Right.

David: And I always say that that's the exact opposite of what you want to do.

Winn: Right.

David: You want to encourage them to do it 'cause they're building their business and the reputation of your salon.

Winn: I absolutely believe that we need better boundaries. You don't want to be working on a client and at the same time—

David: Of course.

Winn: —texting your friend about, “Where we going tonight?”

David: Absolutely. That's the thing—

Winn: There has to be great boundaries but—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —I'm sure you do, too, with your family. There's very, very strict boundaries. I'm not talking on the phone while I'm driving my daughter to school or—

David: Right.

Winn: —in the morning. That's—you know, I'm not texting while I'm feeding her.

David: Yeah.

Winn: So we have those kind of boundaries, which lots of people need to learn.

David: Absolutely. I also feel like a reason that I know social media so well is because I started teaching it. And there's something about the process of teaching. It's, I think, similar to the process of writing. You start to analyze why something's working. Why? You start asking the whys. And if anybody else—whether they're teaching, writing, or just thinking about it—really start thinking about why something goes viral, why this person has more followers than that person, and trying to connect the dots in your head, I think everybody could benefit from that exercise.

Winn: So when you teach a class on building your Instagram or any platform, how long is the class and what's the content for an hour-long class or however long?

David: It's so interesting, right? I just unintentionally brought up it's like writing a book. My class, I break it out into chapters just as if it were a book. And it's a presentation that talks about first, the why. Why is it important that we even do it? And what could come from it? And then it becomes—and I usually do this for salon owners, by the way. These classes, generally I do for salon

owners. And then it becomes how do you use social media to make your stylists more successful? And I think that the salon owners who are successful now understand that more than anybody. It's that technology is the ultimate disruptor. Stylists can now book their own appointments. They can market themselves. They can run their own credit card. They can do everything from their cell phone.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: So I always ask a room full of salon owners, "Why the eff do they need you?"

Winn: Right.

David: They don't need you anymore. And so now that you're obsolete, your way to continue to have meaning is to now find ways to make those stylists feel more successful working with you than they would be at the salon down the street or on their own. And—

Winn: Or, combatting you every day.

David: Right.

Winn: So again, you mentioned earlier these salon owners that don't allow their staff to have a cell phone on the floor—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —so now the stylists are fighting the salon owner—

David: Right.

Winn: —let alone feeling like the salon owner is there to help them and provide something for them.

David: That's correct. And so I teach in these classes that if you find ways to make them more successful, then they'll have no reason to leave you. Now, we know why the eff they're with you. And the best way to do that is through social media. It's promoting them. And it is that last little resort of a win-win. You know, there's a movement going on in the beauty industry right now that are these salon suites. And I have news for everybody: they're not going anywhere. In fact, there's going to be more and more of them. And I had, at one point about two years ago, my salon was cranking, it was a nice busy day, and all of a sudden, in the middle of the day this full salon, I had seven stylists walk in to me and tell me that they're leaving me. And it's the first time that had ever happened to me. And they said they loved me. They were my friends. They gave me hugs. And they said, "I'm sorry but there's an opportunity available to me. And there's a new salon suite down the street. It gives me an opportunity to own my own salon. I just can't pass it up. It's too

good of an opportunity.” Well, I went home. I felt physically sick to my stomach when this took place. But my complaining lasted 24 hours before I called my landlord and said, “I’m expanding. I’m going to build my own salon suites. I’m going to beat them at their own game.” And so my wife and I developed a business plan and it was one page long. And it said this: “Build salon suites that don’t suck.” That was it.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: So we set out to discover what’s wrong with salon suites. We decided we were going to try to innovate and figure out what we can do right. And so we built Ubungalows. That’s how we got to our Ubungalows project. Ubungalows, it’s called that: “U” because it’s all about you. You run the show. And bungalows because bungalows sounds a lot more sexy than suites.

Winn: Right.

David: I’d rather work in a bungalow than a suite.

Winn: Right, right.

David: So with those, what we do differently is we find ways to make stylists more successful. And whereas a lot of salon suites are run by people who aren’t even there—they are on the golf course most of the time, they’re not connected to the beauty industry, they don’t know what the word *backbar* means—and we run it with heart. So we think of Butterfly Loft Salon as New York. You’re surrounded by the best. There’s this buzz, there’s this energy, there’s lots of interaction. And we consider most salon suites to be more like living in a rural town. There’s not a lot of inspiration. You shut your door and you’re closed out.

Winn: Right.

David: Our bungalows are like Brooklyn. You have easy access to New York but you can run your own show. So there’s all the education, all the inspiration, all the events, the parties, the camaraderie, the friendships, all those things but you also get to take advantage of doing your own show. And that’s an example of pivoting and changing but also finding ways to innovate and make stylists more successful. And I think the industry is going to eventually go there where there’s going to be young entrepreneurs that come around and find ways to build salon suites that don’t suck.

Winn: Are you planning to expand that and open up other—?

David: That was the initial plan. I feel like we could probably drop one in any city and have success but it doesn’t excite me. I don’t like the idea of some stylists working in my salon that I don’t know in St. Louis. So instead of doing that, we

actually started thinking of our salon as being a hub in which to build better, bigger things. And that's, for example, Pulp Riot.

Winn: Right.

David: And so we're actually building. We're into the process of building Pulp Riot headquarters and it's perfect for our brand. It's directly next door and connected to my salon.

Winn: What did you do before the beauty industry, by the way?

David: *[laughs]* I've come a long way. I graduated with a degree in economics from UCLA. I went to an international consulting firm in San Francisco and I worked in environmental law. So if there was an environmental catastrophe, like an oil spill or asbestos contamination, I would be one of the people who prepares the case. I grew up in a left-brain family. My father is an attorney. My brother was an accountant. And I never really understood that there was a path to being successful outside of the safe route, is what I thought of. I quickly, after several years of working at this large firm, understood that it probably wasn't the best path for me and I was looking for a way out. And I got a call from an old family friend named Ted Nelson, who before had owned Opal Concepts, which was the second-most hair salons in the world.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And he was talking about creating a new product company and he says—he's an entrepreneur at heart—and he said, "I want somebody to run my company." And I was—moved out to Los Angeles and I learned how to run a product company.

Winn: Were you married by then?

David: Yes, I was.

Winn: Okay.

David: Yeah. I was married to somebody else.

Winn: Okay.

David: Not Alexis. So, what it taught me is how to raise money, how to work with manufacturers, how to be a sales rep, how to educate, how to talk the language. All these things that prepared me for what I'm doing today. Again, that spiral staircase.

Winn: Right.

David: It was a step along there and I'm grateful for him. I'm grateful for every mentor I've had to give me that freedom and now I'm a CEO of a company that's growing rapidly, hiring lots of people and I hope I'm teaching them also how to be successful like that.

Winn: Hm. Again, jumping around here a little bit. You've been very vocal about gender equality in the beauty industry. Why?

David: I grew up in a religious family that doesn't allow my mom to reach the top of the church. And I believe that my mom would be better at doing that than anybody in that church. She's one of the most accomplished people that I know and one of the most capable people I know. And she's still a member of that church. What I see in the beauty industry, it's getting better, but when I walk the show floor of one of the big hair shows, I see the people representing the product companies on stage and they're men. And then I look—picked up a catalog for one of the hair shows and looked at all the headshots of the people who were going to be on their main stage and 95 percent of them are men. The fact is, our industry is 85 percent female and 15 percent male. And that always sat with me wrong. And this is one of those Instagram posts that I made, putting the industry on blast, and it went viral. It was run in a couple of salon magazines and I think it's important. And so with my Butterfly Circus education team, we have never had a show where we have had more than 50 percent male on the stage. And I never will.

Winn: Hm.

David: And when we just did our first trade show with Pulp Riot, we had 25 educators on stage by the end of the three-day event and 20 of them were female.

Winn: Hm.

David: It's important to me that there's that kind of equality in our industry. It's resonating with a lot of people because I feel like, after banging that drum, there's a lot of other people who are also banging that drum.

Winn: Hm.

David: And all of a sudden I think it's considered a little uncool to have that middle-aged man on that stage, talking in the British accent. I mean, it's just cliché, right?

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: What you see that product companies thought moved product. And it's nice to empower the female artists of this industry.

Winn: So when you did get some negative responses, what kind of responses?

David: It was kind of the idea—

Winn: “You suck. I hate your hair.”

David: *[laughs]* That’s—it boils down to that but also—

Winn: “You’re fat.”

David: —a lot of people equating it to affirmative action: the idea that you’re trying to force something that isn’t happening naturally. I think that some of the male artists felt threatened by it. And I think some product companies felt the sting when they evaluated who their platform artists were. And so there was some negativity but that’s okay because 85 percent of the industry is female. I had 85 percent of the people—

Winn: Yeah, right.

David: —on my side, at least.

Winn: Right, there you go.

David: If not more, so.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: *[laughs]* I pick my battles wisely.

Winn: Good for you.

David: *[laughs]*

Winn: Good for you. Your wife and your mother trained you well.

David: Yes.

Winn: Okay.

David: And my daughters—

Winn: And you have two daughters. You’re surrounded by great women.

David: And I’d have it no other way.

Winn: Yeah. So where do you think the industry is going?

David: I think there’s disruptive things happening that’s going to topple a lot of what’s happening in the industry. From a distributor standpoint—and the distributors—a lot of people in the industry who are on the ground level don’t understand the power that they have. And it’s okay. It’s perfectly fine. In fact,

we have a fantastic relationship with the people distributing our product; I think the world of them. But I think there's some things coming along with Amazon Prime and Uber and these delivery mechanisms that's going to link product companies to stylists. And that might be a really good thing. And I think that salons will continue to go the slow and sweet movement but I think that a lot of the stylists that were really great at creating amazing salons over the past two decades, who are complaining about that change, will finally see the light and they will create those salon suites that don't suck. They'll innovate them to continue to inspire them. I feel like the education movement will continue to be run by independent people through phones. I just see all these disruptive technologies happening and they've disrupted other industries and it's just starting to happen in our industry. Overall, I'm bullishly optimistic about the beauty industry. I like the direction it's headed and I couldn't be more proud to be in this industry. I love it. I can't be more proud to be in Los Angeles, which is the hotbed of this industry. And running a product company that's the coolest category within the beauty industry, I feel extremely blessed.

Winn: You know, you—it's common—in the beauty industry we see it a lot; in other industries it's kind of a little bit taboo to work with your spouse.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Or to work with friends, even, to work with family. I mean, I'm doing it. You're doing it.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Many of us are doing it. What's it like working with your wife as your business partner?

David: Can't imagine that we would accomplish a quarter of what we accomplish without the two of us working together. You know, there's the common phrase called *synergy*: the idea that one plus one might equal three. It truly is the case with my wife and I. And it's not a case of that she's the right-brained artist and I'm the left-brained businessperson. In fact, the opposite may be true. She's very analytical and I'm very creative. It's that we work so well together. There's not an ego thing. We establish who's in charge of certain projects from the get-go and so there's not a bad cop/good cop thing going on. And there's not a feeling of, *Oh, that person's getting more attention than me or is making the most important decisions*. We talk about business a lot and I wonder sometimes what other spouses talk about and maybe they don't talk as much. But we're often in the car together and we're talking about business, but business to me may be different than other people. It's part of my life.

Winn: Right.

David: There's no separation. And I'm okay with that 'cause I love doing what I do. It becomes who you are and it becomes who we are as a couple. There's still the fireworks, there's still the romance, but there's also, on top of that, a level of respect for what they can accomplish with their brain, with their intelligence, their IQ and their heart that a lot of other spouses I don't think have.

Winn: Hm. I heard it put that working together as spouses or partners in the beauty industry is a really good thing because you get to see each other at your best. A lot of married couples, they come home at the end of the day especially if it's a job that they don't like—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —they're exhausted. "How was your day?" "I don't want to talk about it."

David: Right.

Winn: So you just spent 10 hours that you don't even want to discuss with your spouse. So—

David: *[laughs]* See, I can't imagine going home and all the things that happened in my life, not—and telling a spouse who either didn't want to hear it or can't relate to it.

Winn: Right.

David: How tragic that would be because there is so much that I think only we get. What do you think? What do you think is the downside to working with a spouse? Do you have them?

Winn: Boundaries.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Of, "Okay, when do we stop talking about this?" Especially having kids. So what boundaries have you guys set up? Like I remember asking Melissa and Billy Yamaguchi about this and I said, "So have you guys said that, you know, past a certain hour you won't talk about this?" And she was the one that said, "Right, we never discuss this at the dinner table. We don't—". But then somebody else said, "Oh yeah, we discuss it all the time." Oh, it was Frank and Jana—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —from Tucson. "Oh yeah, we talk about it all the time." *[laughs]* There's—

David: You know—

Winn: Have you guys set up boundaries to navigate through that?

David: What we're referring to is balance. And I truly believe a balance is different for me than it is you. And that balance isn't a goal, it's a life pursuit and it changes.

Winn: It's a journey.

David: It's a journey.

Winn: You're never going to graduate.

David: Yeah, finding—

Winn: The second that you—

David: —the guy who's got balance—

Winn: Yeah.

David: Yeah. I—

Winn: The second that you think that you've swung the pendulum towards physical—

David: Right.

Winn: —now your marriage is falling apart. You swing it towards your marriage to fix your marriage and now—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —now your business is falling apart. So it's—

David: I think we're doing pretty good on the balance thing. One thing we do is that our kids are pretty excited about what we're doing and we involve them in it. Sometimes they're up at the salon and there's no place they'd rather be. They're both interested in hair color. Our oldest follows us on social media and will often come back home and comment on something she sees. We're always doing some kind of weird photo shoot or something like that. I also feel like the exposure that they're getting is good for them. And I think as a parent that's something that's important. They're being exposed to all kinds of different people. They're being exposed to people with funky hair. They're being exposed to gay people, straight people, different cultures and ethnicities, people who are well off and not well off. And I think that a lot of other people aren't—I know when I grew up, I don't think I was exposed to that many things. And the openness, the openness of expressing how you feel—

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: I think whether they're in the industry later on or they're in a different industry, I hope it serves them well. At the very least, I feel like it's going to make them unique.

Winn: Hm.

David: And I love that.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: So it's okay.

Winn: Huh. Do they tell you to turn it off? My daughter already is saying, "Daddy, put your phone down." *[laughs]*

David: They say that—okay, they say that to my wife.

Winn: Okay.

David: And I think it's because she does what all moms do and she'll be on her phone and they'll ask her a question or they'll talk to her and she pretends like she's listening or talking to them—

Winn: Okay, right, right, right.

David: —and eventually they figure it out and they get frustrated.

Winn: Got it, got it.

David: But my mom was the same way. It just wasn't on a cell phone—

Winn: It was—

David: —it was on the actual phone.

Winn: Right, got it.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Got it. So you're a salon owner, product line owner. You're a dad, you're a husband, you're—you know, lots of things. How do you—the word we're using is balance—

David: Yeah.

Winn: — so juggle it all?

David: You know, I enjoy all those facets of my life. And so I don't think that one suffers. I won't let my relationship with my children suffer from work because I like them so much. If I didn't like them so much, I could see that happening. And I certainly won't let my relationship with my wife suffer. I enjoy being around her way too much. It's—in fact, the thing I enjoy the very most is being around her. And of course the business is really important to me. And then the people who work in my businesses. I mean, it's crazy to think that I'm an employer of over a hundred people that rely on me. And they're really important to me, too. It's an amazing amount of responsibility but I enjoy it a lot.

Winn: Hm. What responsibility and pressure—and I don't mean pressure in a bad way, so maybe responsibility is the better word—do you feel personally to keep yourself learning and growing and fit and happy and then helping other people—other employees—inspiring them to have that kind of a life, too?

David: It's interesting how there's certain periods in your life which you feel more pressure than others, and you've caught me at a time when the pressure is at an all-time high.

Winn: Is that because the product is—

David: Yeah. It's—

Winn: —new and out?

David: If you've ever seen a movie about a startup company, we're living that right now.

Winn: Right.

David: And so you feel this tremendous amount of pressure from a—there's people that are counting on you. There's more money at stake. But probably the biggest pressure of all is my own. In fact, I know it is. It's that I want to kill it and succeed and want to achieve my goals. I do always feel a lot of pressure to teach people, though. And it's a good pressure if they want to be taught. And I don't think I impose myself on people and I'm grateful that I'm surrounded by people who I feel like can learn from me. I also am a student, though. I spend free time—if I'm in an airplane, which I seem to be in all the time—listening to podcasts and learning from people. I do reading. So I think a lot of what I teach, I read. So it's not all my ideas.

Winn: What are some of your favorite podcasts that you—?

David: There's one called—

Winn: When I ask that question, usually it has nothing to do with the industry that you're in, you know?

David: *[laughs]* No. There's one that I—I'm more interested in self-improvement and business, what I'm going through. So there's a podcast called *Self-Made Man*. I don't really care for the title. I don't know why it's *Man* but I guess it's a saying. And basically it's somebody who's interviewing people that are interesting people and their journey. I just listened to one with the gentleman who started that Method cleaning products, those hand soaps and stuff by Method out of San Francisco. And it's just such an inspiring story about how he grew and how you realize maybe you're not the right person to run your own company and putting someone in charge of that. I found that just fascinating.

Winn: Hm.

David: And so I learned from that. So that's a really good one. I know that Gordon Miller from *American Salon* has just started a—

Winn: We love Gordon.

David: Yeah. He's just started a podcast, which I'm really excited to be able to relate to certain things within the industry. And then there's *Entreleadership* by Dave Ramsey, where they bring on some amazing people, the top people, the top thinkers in our world that you can really learn from. Both good and bad. So.

Winn: Hm. That's a great lesson. Again, the same as you are working throughout the day, when you get five minutes while you're standing in line at Starbucks you can post things to Instagram and check some email and take care of some things.

David: Yeah. I do—

Winn: That's also the opportunity where we can be smarter—

David: Yeah.

Winn: —so learning from a book or a podcast doesn't have to be, "Well, it's going to happen at nine o'clock to ten o'clock."

David: Right.

Winn: It could be, "I've got some extra time right now. I'm sitting in the airport, nothing else is going on. I'm going to put on this podcast."

David: That's what I do. And, you know, I'm not all work. It's interesting, I feel like the busier I am, I'll go home and it's after dinner and I'll put on something on the television.

Winn: *Golden Girls?*

David: It's actually interesting.

Winn: *[laughs]*

David: Not the *Golden Girls* but the more—

Winn: Oh, that's my life. That's my world. Sorry, sorry.

David: The more busy I get, the more I watch something for its entertainment value. And if I'm not very busy, then I start thinking or I'm more attracted to things like independent film and documentary. And so lately, I've actually surprised myself coming home and putting on a television show that has no protein to it. It's almost a way to turn your mind off—

Winn: It's mindless.

David: —for a little bit.

Winn: Yeah. Got it.

David: Yeah. That's—yeah.

Winn: Got it. I hear you. I've been kind of saving this for last because—

David: Sure.

Winn: —you said that you teach classes on how to overcome fear. Give us an idea of what that content is all about.

David: There are people who are in relationships that suck. And they're in them for 18 years.

Winn: Mm-hm.

David: And how tragic is it? Not that they have to spend those 18 years with that person but that it could have been amazing for that 18 years if they just overcame their fear and made a change in their life. Instead they hang on to that toxic relationship for a long period of time. I was married to somebody else. My wife was married to somebody else. And at this one point in our lives, we decided that we were going to make a jump. And we were going to change everything. And we were going to take all this risk. If it didn't work out, what would happen to our business? If it didn't work out, all these things could possibly go wrong. But we decided at some point what are we not going to stop at to get to where we want to be and live an extraordinary life? The tragedy would have been all those people, places, circumstances, events, things that have come into my life in the past six years if I had not made that decision to overcome my fear. There's people right now that work in salons that suck. It's toxic. They're unhappy. But they stay in it for 18 years and they

complain about it for those 18 years. And the tragedy is what if they worked in a salon that brought them satisfaction? And the thing that's holding them back is fear. And it—because there's some uncomfortableness whenever you make a change. It's out of your comfort zone, is the saying. But I've got news for anybody in that situation. When you jump out of the comfort zone, it might last for two months. It might last for three months that you have this uncomfortableness but your body adapts. You adapt and you can start living an extraordinary life. So you're trading. Here's the tradeoff: 18 years in toxic relationships or two months of feeling uncomfortable. And some people choose the 18 years of toxic relationships. And that's what I hope to inspire people to do and I have. And it's to make that radical change in your life. My wife went through, in high school, moved down to Brazil. In high school. Do you know how hard that is for a high school girl? You know, it shows you how to adapt. There's so many times in my life I've had to adapt to a new industry, to all kinds of personal turmoil in my life. And I hope that I can help people strive for the extraordinary. If there's a theme to my life, if there's that book subtitle, it's taking a risk, it's pivoting, it's changing, it's being open to change.

Winn: Hm.

David: Yeah.

Winn: How often do you have to remind yourself of that?

David: At this point, I think I'm pretty wired for it. But we'll see.

Winn: Part of your DNA.

David: Part of my DNA.

Winn: Hm.

David: Yeah.

Winn: Good for you. David, do you have a final message for our listeners?

David: I can't think of a better thing to leave that on except just to say how grateful I am for this opportunity, Winn. I have tremendous respect for you. This is the first time we've met. And I have tremendous respect for the companies you're involved with and the way that they run their companies. And I—through Butterfly Circus, through Butterfly Loft, I've found that the people you surround yourself is so critical. And the people—and just as critical is the people you choose not to surround yourself with, no matter how famous they are or how many Instagram followers they have or what they—how attractive they are. And so I've accumulated these people into my life and now I've accumulated you. People that I trust and it makes life better.

Winn: Hm.

David: And if I continue to do that the rest of my life I think it's going to be really rewarding. So, at this time more than ever, who you associate with is really important.

Winn: I agree.

David: And I appreciate this opportunity to get to know you.

Winn: I feel the same way and it was meant to be because you're off doing your thing, doing the right thing and trying to avoid people who are doing it the wrong way.

David: Right.

Winn: Which we really never got into but you and I have personally.

David: Yeah. We circled back to where we started.

Winn: Exactly.

David: Yep.

Winn: Yeah. Congratulations.

David: Thank you.

Winn: Good for you.

David: Thank you, Winn.