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Gordon Miller
Social Media Evangelist & Beauty Industry Leader

Gordon Miller is the publisher and vice president of integrated media for *American Salon* magazine and AmericanSalon.com. With 30-plus years in the professional beauty world and four years as an independent social media and digital consultant for beauty brands, media, and event companies, Gordon passionately shares his knowledge about the quickly evolving world of social and digital media.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh,** Gordon delivers his brilliant insights in what will surely be a sought-after "how to" message for anyone wanting to build and market their brand and their business.

WC: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to this issue of MASTERS. I love the choices that I made 30 years ago in my career: that I would always, always build wonderful, successful, healthy, constructive relationships and that I would never burn bridges. Course, I could give that advice. You and I were just talking about somebody who should have learned that lesson the day that he graduated from beauty school and yet he didn't. And already, you know, things aren't going well. But, you know, thankfully somebody taught me that so many years ago and I'm grateful for that lesson because—because of that lesson, I'm sitting here with a very dear friend who, you know, back in the day—I won't speak for you—but I wasn't anybody, *[laughs]* but I knew the importance of relationships and today we get to honor those relationships and it serves us well. And I'm sitting with a dear friend. Please welcome to MASTERS, Gordon Miller.

GM: Thank you, Winn. Thank you. And we go *waaaay* back. We don't—I don't think we want to say how far we go back.

WC: Oh, I'll say. It's literally the beginning of my career, which was 33 years ago. So, we're—long, long, long time.

GM: Right and I was clearly at the beginning as well, in Salt Lake, Utah, where we were both in the school business.

WC: Yeah. Yeah. I've only heard you tell this story one time and it's when you introduced me several years ago. I mean, can you quickly tell that story 'cause I just think it's a funny story that I want to get down on tape here.

GM: For posterity.

WC: Yes.

GM: So I was a young school director in Salt Lake City, Utah, and we're talking, as you said, 30-some years ago. And the school industry was quite different back then. And we kind of grew up in the school industry when the—the shampoo set time, right?

WC: Yeah.

GM: They were still doing shampoo sets on the little old ladies. And you—I learned that you had—someone I didn't know of, as you said, beginning of your career—you'd opened Von Curtis Academy.

WC: Right.

GM: And in Provo, Orem?

WC: Provo, Utah.

GM: Provo, Utah. And you were opening—if I remember correctly—you were near the university. You were not in a place that was easy to find a lot of parking. You were up on the second floor. I was called to an emergency meeting of the School Owners Association 'cause some guy was opening this new school and it was a competitive time and—but the conventional wisdom was, "Ah, nothing to worry about because he's doing everything wrong." And listening to that, I was like, *I think I need to go meet this guy.* And I called you up and you agreed, without even hesitating, to have me in and give me a tour. And I remember walking up these kind of rickety stairs. And I get up to the top of the stairs—and I shared some of that with you, you know? And I'm like, "Why are you up here?" You know? And you told me, you know, flat out, that it was kind of strategic: that you didn't want those little old ladies who were coming into our schools to get up into the clinic because you opened near a university 'cause you wanted a younger clientele, the same people that those students would soon be working on as graduates, and it was a whole new way of thinking about schools. And I walked out of there going, *I do think we have something to be worried about. You know, this guy is changing up the game*, and in a way that I was excited about and jealous of. And I said at—I think it was CEA, maybe, where I introduced you but it was—to me it was a game-changing moment. I think more than anybody during my career, you've changed the school game. And I think you've led the way in saying to people there was a different way to do schools; that maybe we need to be focused on building schools where you've got the best opportunity to bring in clients who students will learn from and be inspired by. And that you, you know, offered an opportunity to do retail sales. It was a game changer. You bring in young clientele and they're going to buy different stuff. I mean, you changed the game.

WC: Wow, thanks Gordon. I really wasn't looking for an accolade. I just thought it was a funny story and I'm sure that was the reason that I gave to you of why we were on the second floor. But probably it was cheaper rent. *[laughs]*

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: To be up there.

GM: I like my version of the story better.

WC: Okay, that's—yeah. Well, and actually we ended up honoring the elderly. We always—have always—for over 30 years, offered discounts to the elderly and, I mean, I love old people, so. But, you know, thanks for that. And what I said earlier, I love the fact that we built a relationship way back then. We've never worked for the same company. We've kind of hung around in the same circles or everything but I don't know that there was really a reason for our friendship to pay off for either of us and yet we knew the importance of friendship. So, thank you for that, Gordon.

GM: No, thank you for all these years.

WC: So I'm going to read this. So Gordon Miller is the publisher and vice president of integrated media for *American Salon* magazine and AmericanSalon.com. You have a 30-year-plus experience in the professional beauty industry. I mean, we could go on and on with all of your positions here. You can't keep a job, can you?

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: But *[laughs]* executive positions with Pivot Point, Milady Publishing, National Cosmetology Association. I know that you were also working for many, many years with other very prominent industry-related organizations and companies. Prior to joining American Salon, Gordon spent four years as an independent social media and digital consultant for beauty brands, media, and event companies, which we're going to talk about. Gordon has a passion for sharing what some of the world's leading names in beauty have taught him about how to best create a successful, long-lasting career and business and for putting these big ideas into the context of the quickly evolving world of social and digital media. Did you write that?

GM: I did. *[laughs]* I'm the king of the run-on sentence.

WC: *[laughs]* Well, we create and write our own media.

GM: *[laughs]* Yes, exactly.

WC: You know?

GM: Nowadays especially.

WC: We're brilliant and if you don't believe me, ask me. *[laughs]*

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: Again, I'm going to ask you questions about all of these things but I kind of want to start off in eight years in the weeds of beauty schools in Colorado and Utah.

GM: Yeah.

WC: So that's where you started off your career? Now, you're not a hairdresser. I'm not a hairdresser.

GM: No. I'm not. I had a—I got a degree in investment finance and I had a minor in economics. And I graduated college and I only really knew one thing and that's that I did not want to do investment finance or economics. And I moved back home with my folks and I was a closeted gay kid. And I went out and got a part-time job by accident at a company called Lavonne's Incorporated in the World Bank building and I had no idea what it was. And it was temporary and two weeks in, I kind of figured out that I was working for a chain of schools and beauty salons. And I went to my first school staff meeting and I realized that this was just the nicest group of people and most welcoming people—group of people to people like me. I mean, there—we had a drag queen at the front desk.

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: And I said to myself, *Okay, I think I might be home*. And 30-some years later, I'm still here.

WC: Wow. And this was in Chicago.

GM: No, this was actually in Denver, Colorado.

WC: Okay.

GM: Denver—started in Denver. My folks—I grew up in Florida, went to school in Florida, graduated and moved back with my folks in Denver and started off there and then about five years later, moved to Utah.

WC: You're going to be so excited about all the different topics that we're going to address during this interview including: I consider you to be one of the experts in—well, not just me but many people consider you to be an expert in the world of social media. And I have a whole list of questions that you're going to, you know, guide us through that. You recently spoke at the Redken Symposium.

GM: I did. Yeah, we did a panel with three of the big social influencers there. We jammed them in, standing-room only. We had about 400 hairdressers and salon owners there and the interest in the topic right now is just off the scale. You know, we pack them in everywhere. We're here at ISSE. We'll have a packed room today. It's a game changer for the industry. It's a new way of marketing careers and salons.

WC: Wow. Okay, so—'cause I've stood on stages and said, "You know what? It's going to take some time." You know, "You might need to be out there for 10, 20 years before you build your brand, before you build your reputation." And maybe that's not true anymore.

GM: You know, I was just at Redken Symposium. I spent some time with our mutual friend, Michael Cole.

WC: Uh-huh.

GM: And, you know, Michael's been around for a long time, you know, been coaching salons. He, you know, he—I think he understands the best practices as well as anybody does, got a vast experience in watching what you've just referenced, you know, how long it takes to build a book, how long it takes to build a career, build a salon. And, you know, he shared that he's seeing a complete transformation.

WC: Yeah.

GM: He's seeing Future Professionals become professionals, regardless of their age, come out of school and they're ramping up in 12 to 24 months—

WC: Right.

GM: —instead of, you know, 24 months to five years.

WC: Right.

GM: And so, course you've got to learn how to play the game and you've got to learn how to be good at it like—just like you have to learn how to do the practices behind the chair.

WC: Well, you have many years of experience with lots of different companies and organizations. And I want our listeners to learn and grow from that. So, after your beauty schools for eight years in Colorado and Utah, you then went on to your second career: 10 years with Pivot Point. Which, you know, we love Leo Passage and the legacy that he left and the impact that he had on the beauty industry. So talk to us about your experience there at Pivot Point.

GM: Well, you know, that was a transformational time for me. (A) You know, I was coming out of the kind of day-to-day, kind of local career of being in a chain of

beauty schools and kind of went into the big leagues, from the educational side of the beauty industry. And Leo had a tremendous passion for education. He had a tremendous belief in the hairdresser and the power of learning that transformed their lives. And, you know, I kind of saw a little bit of that when I was in the schools. And you're so close to it, sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees. And, you know, they saw the big picture and, you know, he was a gift, you know? He really helped me to find my passion for hairdressers and for what they stand for and the lives they live. And over the course of those 10 years, I saw people's lives be transformed by having deep understanding of the craft and the art and all the—you know, Leo had a passion for really understanding what you do: the whys behind what you do, the concepts. And not just doing, but why stuff works, you know? And that was, again, it was transformative.

WC: You say that he taught you to have a passion for hairdressers. What do you mean by that?

GM: I think it's—I think what—we're a misunderstood, you know, industry. And I think, you know, people know hairdressers sometimes because of portrayals in the media, sometimes just because of their one-on-one relationship with them. You know, you and I have friends who have made gazillions of dollars, you know, behind the chair. And we know people who have come out of, you know, despair and poverty and had amazing lives and changed not only their lives but their family's lives and their extended family's lives. And, you know, this is a career, you know, that's honorable. It's a career that can have a huge impact on people and fulfill dreams. And I never thought of this career in that way and I also never saw it as an art form. And I think that's something that Leo really allowed me to see and see that, kind of, the fine art portion of hair, which is a really unique space.

WC: Well, you know, I also know people who have multiple salons, if not quite a few salons, and they think hairdressers are idiots. You know, Sydell Miller taught me that you have to love what you do, love who you do it with, and love who you do it for. To be truly successful, you need all three of those.

GM: Absolutely.

WC: And there's people who love hairdressing or they love the business of hairdressing 'cause they make money at it.

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: They love the guests, the clients that come into the salon and spend money but they think the hairdressers are, again, idiots. So.

GM: You know, and that's interesting to me. You know, one of the things I think I learned during my time with Pivot Point was that one of the biggest challenges the industry has—and I think you deal with this so well, I've heard

you speak so many times on this topic—and that is low self-esteem. You know, the really—and I think it's something that—it's everywhere in our industry and I think the people you're speaking about potentially are those with the lowest self-esteem. You know, it's kind of—you know, I mean, you and I are a couple of old-school gay guys, you know? And I think we're real proud of our community and our movement but I think we all know, you know, those, you know, who don't feel good about themselves. And sometimes they put that on the rest of the community. And I think some of those owners who are hairdressers themselves, who look down upon hairdressers, are kind of like the self-hating hairdressers.

WC: Right.

GM: I mean, I don't want to play pop psychologist but that's my belief.

WC: Hm. Well, low self-esteem—I wonder if it's as prominent in other industries as it is ours. I'm sure other industries have to deal with that as well. It's just part of human nature.

GM: Yep.

WC: Which is why I love beauty school students because I think that they're so hungry.

GM: Yep.

WC: In other industries, or if you choose other career paths, you tell mom and dad you're signing up for college, they're happy for you. Maybe when they say, "I want to go to beauty school," maybe that's not good news for mom and dad. But, you know, four-year college, you can change your mind a hundred times of what your career path is going to be and mom and dad are still behind you.

GM: Yep.

WC: You can screw up the first couple of years of college, you know, drinking and partying, and mom and dad are still behind you.

GM: Yep.

WC: But in beauty school, you've got a year to prove everybody wrong, to get it right, and to launch a brilliant career. And so I love beauty school students as students because they're hungry and available for that information and for that growth experience, so.

GM: No, you're so right. I mean, that was my favorite part of my career was spending time—it's still my favorite time. It's, you know, to be in a school for a day and to hang 'cause the energy is just so brilliant. And, you know, it's interesting, you know, I was that four-year college student and I am that four-

year college student who didn't do what he was trained to do: investment finance and economics.

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: And I'm the norm, you know? And most people don't think about that. That, you know, we invest all this money in traditional education; most of us don't even do what we studied to do.

WC: Right.

GM: And nobody knocks us for it, you know? And you're right. And here's another interesting thing about me: it took me a month to tell my parents that I worked in a beauty school chain and salon because—

WC: Really?

GM: —to your point of, you know, how people feel about this industry—and that was 1978 when I started—I was one of those people. I was embarrassed to tell my family what I was doing for a living. And it wasn't until I really got to know the industry, even in that near-term, after that first month and I was like, these people, you know, understand me and appreciate me and welcome me and I started to feel the love pretty soon. It wasn't until that happened that I was able to share it with them and it took them years to believe I was doing something that mattered.

WC: Wow. I love that story.

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: I hope you tell that story a thousand times.

GM: I try.

WC: *[laughs]* Well, then you moved on to working with Milady.

GM: Yep.

WC: So talk about that—which, by the way, a $6 billion Canadian educational publishing company.

GM: There was the owner of that company, yeah, Thompson Publishing was the owner. I was president of Milady Publishing. I left Pivot Point as VP of Sales and Marketing and I spent four years kind of moving them from an old-school publishing model to something a little more current. And that was an exciting time for me. It was upstate New York, Albany. And it really, again, it kind of connected me to the entire school industry but also kind of upstream to the manufacturers. So it was a great door-opening opportunity for me. You and I

are power networkers, I would say. We love to be connected with people and it just expanded, you know, my reach in terms of, you know, the people I knew. That was really cool and powerful. But it was kind of like getting my—I don't know. I felt like I got my masters or my PhD in business at Thompson. But I—it was in Albany, New York. No offense to those from Albany but not my favorite place. And I had lived in Chicago for 10 years with Pivot Point and I was kind of wanting to move home. And one day I got a phone call offering me an opportunity for my next position, which was National Cosmetology Association. And that was a dream opportunity for me and I jumped on it and spent 10 years doing what I think was some of the best work of my career, which was building community and being involved with the charitable causes of the industry. And it was really a 10 years kind of dream-come-true job.

WC: Well, you said that your time at Milady taught you how to be a smart businessperson.

GM: Yeah.

WC: How important was that for you and how you now navigate and are successful in what you do, and what message can you send out to those listening to this about the importance of that? I mean, here we are, we're at the Long Beach hair show and I'm wondering how many classes are on business only and have nothing to do with the art, with the technical. And what's the attendance at those classes compared to the attendance of people standing around a booth watching another haircut, which I'm not downplaying.

GM: Right.

WC: I don't diminish the value of that. But this is your interview so you tell us.

GM: It was everything, you know, in the evolution of a career. You know? And I think, you know, that's such an important idea: that ideally our careers last a long time. And that our skills and our knowledge and our experience, you know, develop over time and they build upon each other, you know? And I think, you know, for me, I learned something on every job and, you know, the skills, you know, that it took to get where I needed to go, they evolved. And I think—thinking of a hairdresser's career, a young hairdresser's career: it starts with the skills. It starts with learning how to do the work but if you really want to make it over time, you have to be entrepreneurial. Whether you're working for somebody or you're on your own, to me, every hairdresser is an entrepreneur, ideally. There is a business side to that. There is a development of clientele. There is the selling of stuff. There is—there's understanding your own paycheck, you know? There's—you know, we hear those stories of, you know, people changing jobs because the commission paid and it's a percentage and what does that mean, you know, in terms of your paycheck and being able to do the math, you know? I mean, I think that's a—but I think, you know, back to your point of, you know, the

classrooms at these giant shows, which, to me, are always a mirror of the industry. You know, you look at a show and it's like the whole community comes together. Every kind of hairdresser is here. Every age, every kind of category you can think of in terms of interest and skill and level and they're all here. And to your point, the theaters, the inspiration, the art, they're packed, you know?

WC: Right.

GM: A thousand people sitting there. And then the business classroom has ten people in it.

WC: Yeah.

GM: You know, and then you kind of work your way down from that big, big classroom to your medium-sized classrooms to your smaller crowds. And God bless those ten that are sitting in that business classroom—

WC: Right.

GM: —because they're going to be the ones that you and I are talking about in five years—

WC: Yeah.

GM: —who are killing it. It's—

WC: Yeah.

GM: —essential.

WC: I think it's easy to navigate yourself to one of those artistic classes and just sit there. That's easy. I think it takes a little bit of courage and discipline to say, "You know what? I need to go sit in a classroom where I'm going to feel uncomfortable. I have no idea what they're talking about right now but I need to learn what they're talking about."

GM: I think it starts with having goals, you know? I think the biggest hole in most people's careers is a lack of understanding of where they want to be in 12 months. And, for me, it's like where do you want to be in five years? You know? And if you really know where you want to be, I think the clarity comes that you need to have business education. You need—you know, perhaps you can't sell retail. You know, perhaps it's just that one thing. I know that you take care of your body. You know, I know—usually when you and I want to connect, you tell me to call early in the morning when you're at the gym. You know, so you've got that discipline and clearly a person who's got that discipline has some goals. And I think that so many hairdressers and young

people, they don't have the goals and because they don't have the goals, they don't understand what they need to learn next.

WC: You talked about that entrepreneurial spirit. The way I've learned it—and maybe it was from our good friend, Michael Cole. We love Michael. So if you're listening, Michael, we love you—who said that we're in business for ourselves and you have one employee: you. It doesn't matter what your pay scale looks like. It doesn't matter if you're a commission stylist or, you know, a booth renter or a salaried employee working in a salon. You have one employee. You're in business for yourself with one employee and that's you. So to always look at it that way.

GM: I agree. I agree. And that makes this industry quite unique, I would say, as well. And I think it's something that hairdressers need to understand.

WC: I like what you said about having an understanding even of your own paycheck. You know, people get their paycheck, they have no idea what that means or why did it end up that way?

GM: Yep.

WC: And oftentimes they err on the wrong side. They err on the side that, "Oh, this salon owner is just making a killing off me. They're taking the majority of what I bring into this salon." And that's false. That will kill your career right then because you make the wrong decisions. I was just with a very, very, very successful man—he probably doesn't want me to say his name—successful in the salon business and he showed me—before I just went onstage at his company event—he showed me a text message from an employee who had left him five years ago to go work in a booth renter salon. You know, to rent her own booth and she totally regrets it. "Can I please come back? I made the huge mistake." And had she had the knowledge of what her paycheck meant, she would not have made that horrible decision.

GM: And I think what you just said is the key—take it in a little different direction, though. What the company is making versus what you're making. That idea that too many hairdressers have of the owner's making too much, I would argue that it's irrelevant. It's like, "Get that thought out of your head. You accepted a job at a company." You know, the rest of the world works at companies. I've never heard anybody but a hairdresser talk about how much money the company's making as it relates to why they would be happy or unhappy with their compensation. It's like, you know, it's like you've got a job, understand the potential it offers you, and go do it and make the best of it and don't be concentrating on the wrong stuff. And that's certainly, to me, one of the wrong things to be concentrating on.

WC: Okay, that's a great message. What, you'd be happier if your boss drove a disgusting car? *[laughs]*

GM: Exactly. And even if they did, again, to me, it's irrelevant, you know? Accept the job, accept the responsibilities that go with it, and work your ass off to make the best of what you have. And if you're not happy with any part of that job then be thinking about what the next job is because, you know, the average American works five years on a job today. And that's another interesting, you know, statistic that I think our industry sometimes forgets about on both sides of the equation. Owners think that hairdressers should never leave. And I don't know a career where that's true anymore, you know? And then hairdressers have a lot of angst about, you know, the progression of their own careers, you know? And I think we need to think differently on both sides.

WC: You said that the reason why you loved your time as the Executive Director at NCA—National Cosmetology Association—was because you were part of building communities. You know, I would rather have ten good salons as my competitors than ten bad salons. You know, I was in Atlanta having dinner with, you know, Candy and Fred from Jamison Shaw. I mean, I love those people. But they were talking about how, you know, Candy, she's well connected and she's, you know, second generation. Her kids are involved in the company, now third generation in the beauty industry. And she just called all of her friends in Atlanta, fellow salon owners, and said, "Let's start an organization." And they all meet together on a regular basis and they, "Here's my employee contract. Here's all my secrets. Here are all of my ideas." And they freely share that information with each other. I'm sure that they do a whole bunch of other things, too. I'm sure that they have agreements with each other, maybe not to hire each other's staff members. I don't know what it is but the fact that it's a community. It's a community. We're all in the same boat here. There's enough to go around for all of us. And you got to do that with NCA. Talk about the importance and the value of that. Because, you know, people think that *my competitor is my enemy*.

GM: Yup. Bad idea. Bad idea.

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: Bad idea. First of all, the idea of community is just so powerful. And it should be powerful in our personal lives. And I think we just have to carry that over into our professional lives. You know, the NCA was a big organization that now is part of PBA—the Professional Beauty Association—but it's an organization that really kind of helped bring the salon industry, back in the 1920s, into a professional context. But whether it's NCA, whether today it's Intercoiffure, whether it's PBA, whether it is networks of businesses—the Paul Mitchell Schools is a great example of a network that I view as a community, you know, that you help lead. These like-minded people coming together, sharing ideas freely, as you mentioned that Candy does down in Atlanta, you know, I don't think there's anything more powerful. You know, we all want to find mentors. We all want to find coaches. And ideally, you know, they're part

of a larger group of people that starts to share best practices and ideas. And you and I know some of the most successful salon owners in America and I can't think of one of them who won't say that the greatest benefit they had in their careers was the opportunity to learn from other like-minded people who had already made all the mistakes, you know, and were willing to share with them those mistakes and share the best practices, again, mostly by way of these clusters of folks in organizations like the associations.

WC: Well, I think you're already sending out a good message and maybe I'll ask you to even drive it home more: the idea of joining something. It's a basic human need—

GM: Yep.

WC: —to want to belong to something. And there are so many salon owners, whether they have a hundred salons or they have one salon with two employees and they're still struggling but they feel like they're on their own. They feel like they're all by themselves. Nobody experiences what they're going through right now. And so I always ask them, "Well, what are you a member of? What are you a part of?" And, "Oh, I don't have time for that," or "I have no idea where to look." What do you say to those people?

GM: My best analogy—and an awful lot of people understand this and this will sound kind of odd—is Weight Watchers. To me—

WC: It's a great analogy.

GM: Yeah.

WC: I totally get that one.

GM: Yeah. To me, it's about, you know—we're talking about solving people's problems.

WC: Right.

GM: Solving businesses' problems, solving individual professionals' problems. You know, they're blocked. They can't get their careers to the next level. They can't get the business to the next level. The competition's killing them. They don't know what to do. To me, it's not that different than saying, "I'm carrying a few too many pounds and I've been trying for five years to get rid of it. I've tried everything. I've tried everything to grow my retail. I've tried everything to grow my salon. What do I do?" Go join a group that has a similar problem, that's working out together how to get there, ideally under the mentorship of somebody who's already got it figured out.

WC: Well, I think we do that anyway. People join the bar. *[laughs]*

GM: Yes.

WC: I show up at the bar.

GM: Yeah. *[laughs]*

WC: These are my like-minded people.

GM: Yes.

WC: We can all sit here and commiserate about how life sucks. Or the gym.

GM: Yep.

WC: You know, there are people who I know at the gym and I don't know them anywhere else. I don't see them anyplace else. I don't care to see them. I'm not inviting them to dinner. I'm not inviting them to my home. I only know them at the gym. They probably have no idea what I do. I have no idea what they do. But that's my network at the gym. Or a coffee shop or—you know, but the idea—people understand the idea of belonging to something else and now we're telling them to be proactive and consciously make a decision to join something that is going to benefit your career, benefit your business.

GM: And be involved in the conversations in whatever that opportunity looks like. I always talk to people about being in a beauty show. You know, it's like we stand in a lot of lines at beauty shows. You know, the Starbucks line. You know, I always say to folks, take an opportunity to talk to the person in front of you and behind you in line. And, "Hey, what class are you going to? What did you see? What am I missing?" And what a great way to just find out something better to do, learn a little something in that moment and take advantage of every opportunity to connect with somebody.

WC: I love that message: connection. 'Cause, you know, usually what are people doing while they're standing in line? They're texting. They're staring down at their stupid little screen whereas the person in front of them could be their next best friend. The person behind them is their next best mentor. And they're totally missing out 'cause they're not present. They're not connected.

GM: Now I'm going to add a twist to that because you know I'm the social media guy. So what I'm going to say about that, too, is that if you're not doing the first thing that you and I would suggest that people do, which is connect in real time to people—

WC: Right.

GM: —because that is the most powerful thing you can do. The next best thing you can do when you have that moment when you're standing in line—and I'm going to use the beauty show as an example—is to take that opportunity to

market yourself. Every down moment I think hairdressers have is an opportunity to market themselves. And now, with social media, it's 24/7. I always say to folks on the show floor, take a selfie with the people that you're with and put it up on your Instagram with the message to your clients—which is who you want following you on social media: your clients, your customers, your prospective customers—and say, "I'm investing in myself for you. I came across country to go to a place where 30,000 hairdressers have come together to learn and I'm here to get the newest trends and I'm here to get the newest practices and I'm going to bring it all home and do a better job for you." So that's the other twist on—don't text, Instagram.

WC: Oh my gosh. All great messages and *[laughs]* we haven't even got into the meat of what I'm really excited to talk to you about. Okay, so then after your time at NCA, you then moved on to do something on your own.

GM: I did. I—towards the end of NCA, a very good mutual friend of ours, Nina Kovner—

WC: Love Nina. Love you, Nina.

GM: Absolutely adore Nina. And Nina and I were at the Global Salon Business Awards in LA. Paula Kent Meehan's big awards program for really cool salons from all over the world. And we had a breakfast one day and she asked me about Facebook. It was the early days of Facebook and she's like, "Are you doing Facebook in your job at the National Cosmetology Association? Are you using it for business?" And I was like, "That—isn't that where they like play Scrabble and Farmville?"

WC: Oh my God.

GM: I was like, "Just say no to Facebook."

WC: What year is this?

GM: It had to be, oh gosh, maybe 2009?

WC: Okay.

GM: Two thousand eight? Something like that.

WC: Okay.

GM: And it was early. And the beauty industry was not very engaged on Facebook at that point. But Nina being Nina—powerful, smart, brilliant marketer—said, "You need to go check it out for the idea of bringing people together online." And so I did. Within six months I'd built up a Facebook community page for the National Cosmetology Association of about 7,000 users and I was like, "Okay, this is a game changer." This is bringing the community together 24/7

in ways I had never thought of. And I, again, fell in love with it and my next goal in life was to leverage these platforms and to just dive in as deep as I could. I saw it as a game changer for the industry and decided to learn everything. I spent two years learning it and then when I made my exit plan from NCA, it was to dive into the social and digital media pool in a very big, big way. And spent four and a half years consulting and working with brands and different companies and media companies and event companies on how to leverage this to bring our industry together.

WC: You said that you spent two years educating yourself. What did that education look like?

GM: I was very self-taught in the beginning: reading blogs, you know, buying books. Back then we were—it was more books. It wasn't e-books. I read everything I could. I'm a lifelong learner. Again, I think that comes from my time with my mentor, Leo Passage. And I went to conferences, digital—I live in Chicago, big city, a lot of digital stuff going on. And most important, just like learning how to be a great hairdresser, I practiced. I was on there every day, you know? I—people started to recognize me. One of the most fascinating things, for me, was I left kind of the big scene of NCA and being connected to big brands and I was able to stay connected to the entire industry by being very aggressive in how I presented myself online. I posted daily. I created big conversation threads. I used it as a way to stay connected to the industry and it worked for me. And then from there I just took every opportunity I could to start kind of spreading out, going around the country and just doing the work. So I spent, you know—dove in deep, really learned it, and was able to transform it into a business because brands were looking for answers around it.

WC: Okay.

GM: And thankfully I was able to find a lot of those answers and turn it into the next stage of my career. I worked with media and event companies including Questex, which owns *American Salon* and the International Beauty Shows. They were a big customer of mine and did a lot of work on strategy with them and towards the end of my contract, they offered me a full-time position with *American Salon.* And at this stage in my life, you know, that was very interesting. The strategy we put forward was taking a really deep dive into content as a digital and social form and I just thought, you know, I had made those suggestions to them. I thought, *Who better than me to actually take the job and run with it*.

WC: You said that your job is to kind of be the industry's storyteller. Or to help other people, other companies, tell their stories. Talk about that.

GM: I think of social and digital media—when you really understand it, you realize that what you're trying to accomplish, there's nothing new about it. Publications, trade publications, have always been the industry storytellers.

WC: Right.

GM: It was always a place where brands looked to have their stories told in print and in more recent years, in digital and print and now in social. And the ways that we can tell stories has just grown exponentially. You know, we've got video, we've got audio. You've been the master at audio for years. So it's the job of the publications to report the news, to share the stories, to share the art, and to inspire people to have better careers. And so we're just doing it in new ways.

WC: I remember somebody taught me years ago, when I was like—'cause I had a connection to the local newspaper. So we're going back 30 years.

GM: Yep.

WC: We had a connection to the local newspaper. I'm like, "Gosh, I really need press." You know, "My salon needs some help. I need press." And she was sweet, sat down with me. She said, "If I'm going to give you press, it's not 'cause you need it. It's because you're press worthy." And that was huge for me 'cause I was just desperate. She's like, "No. Bring me a story. We have a connection here, bring me a story that's press worthy and I'll absolutely help you with that." But—talk about that.

GM: I'm going to go back with my history with you because you were very unique back in the day of leveraging press as a school owner when nobody was doing it. I remember—I may not get this right—I remember a charity program that you did. I think Marie Osmond was probably involved. I think the local Salt Lake City newscaster might have been involved. I want to think it was called "Vanity" or something.

WC: How do you remember this stuff? It was exactly called Vanity and, yeah, Marie Osmond was involved. A good friend of mine who became Miss America—I mean, I was her piano player. I was Miss America's piano player.

GM: I love that.

WC: Isn't this hilarious? I know, Sharlene Wells. Yeah, so she was involved in it. You know, oh, I leveraged everything. *[laughs]*

GM: You were a master at it. And, again, it was something—I looked at you and, you know, other school owners didn't—I think—see what I saw. Maybe it was an age thing. But you understood the value of PR. You understood the value of press and used it to build your business. And you built your business really fast and it was something to see. And then fast forward to answer your

question: it's important, it's powerful. Whether you're a salon owner, you know, who's looking to build your business, your brand, you know, trying to take it to the next level, having your story shared matters.

WC: Hm.

GM: And it's still kind of the gold standard, I think, for most of us is, you know, it's like get—old-school guys, you know—get your picture in the paper. You know, it's a big deal for a magazine to publish somebody's story and you get to, you know, print it out and put it up on the wall and it inspires your clients to say something to their friends: "Hey, you know, my hairdresser was in a trade magazine. My hairdresser matters." What a great way to inspire referrals. I mean, what a great way to—it's also a great way, I think, just to feel that what you do matters, to get that validation, so.

WC: I think it's an important thing for leaders to do: be storytellers. I think the best teachers and leaders are storytellers.

GM: Absolutely.

WC: Whether it's one-on-one with a struggling employee, when an owner sits down and shares their story and sometimes just a story of failure.

GM: Yep.

WC: It's the story of, "Wow, I screwed up. I was where you are right now but guess what? I overcame that." And that's a great lesson. That's, "Wow, you did it? I can do it, too."

GM: There's nothing more powerful in life than storytelling.

WC: Mm-hm.

GM: We learn from stories. I'm doing a panel discussion today with a bunch of young influencers and I open the presentation—I think my second or third slide in the presentation is a picture of cave art. And the point of that cave art is because social media—they are storytelling platforms. And we know that from all the work that's been done, the best practices, you know, great storytelling happens on social. And those cave drawings tell us that there were people who didn't know if the planet was going to be here the next day. They didn't know they were on a planet. They just knew they were on a chunk of grass. And yet, some of them felt compelled to draw stuff—they didn't have paper and crayons, you know. They went into caves and they carved art not knowing if anybody would ever see it. It's been shown that it's part of the human condition. It's part of who we are, you know, to tell stories and to receive stories and it's the best way we learn.

WC: I love that. That's cool.

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: Okay, let's jump into social media. You say it's one of the most important trends to ever hit the beauty industry. And then you even listed them, named them.

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: You said the first one was the invention of the Marcel iron. Well, you go ahead and tell it. I won't tell your story. This is your story.

GM: Yeah, I do. I think social media is one of the biggest things to ever hit the industry. And we talked a little bit ago about our friend Michael Cole and his take on it and the transformation he's seen, which, to me, is a proof point of what we see happening all around us. I'm going to say a great form of marketing. So if I think about the entire industry, there's been four big movements. You know, the first was the invention of the Marcel iron, which if you read the history of the industry, that's kind of when people had a reason to go to salons. A lot of folks don't realize, you watch Downton Abbey, you start to understand that the hairdressers were the domestics, you know, in the early part of the last century. And we didn't have people who could go to salons. People got their hair cut at home and women wore their hair long and their sister and their daughters braided it, you know? And it was a whole different time. So the Marcel iron created a reason for businesses to emerge. And then we had the invention of hair color by a scientist, the founder of L'Oréal. And then Clairol, later in the 50s, you know, introduced the lighteners and that was a big revolution because it—again, you couldn't do—hair color was toxic back in the day. I mean, it was—you know, you could not do hair color at home. And so, you know, that was a transformational moment in the evolution of the salon. And then our friend Vidal Sassoon, the late, great Sassoon. He helped transform the industry by taking us from the weekly, you know, to a whole different way of doing business as salons. And then I think the next big movement is clearly social media. We've seen new categories of doing hair: the vivid colors, what we see happening today with braids and a reinvigoration of the barber industry. All because of social media. It wouldn't be happening otherwise. And we see again, careers being supercharged. We see salons, you know, that use these platforms as marketing tools to grow their businesses in ways that just wasn't possible. It's the democratization of marketing. It really is. And, you know, we see what's happening on the booth rental and salon-suite side. We see that exploding because, again, a smart, well-trained, great hairdresser who wants to live that solo entrepreneurial life and do it the right way, now has all the tools available to them that they can compete with the most sophisticated salon in the city, you know, if they're good at business and if they're good at their craft.

WC: I don't think there's anybody listening to this that would debate as to whether or not social media is important and why it matters, but how do you go about

getting really good at it? I'll be—I've got a nice following between Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and everything. But somebody does it for me.

GM: Yeah.

WC: *[laughs]* I'm involved in the process. I send content and ideas and everything but I don't even know how to log on, to tell you the truth. 'Cause I got—one weekend somebody said, "Winn, you have to go on and check that one posting." I went on there. I could never find the posting that she wanted me to see but what I found was about a hundred cat videos and four hours later, I'm like, "I'm never logging on again." *[laughs]*

GM: I can share some great cat videos with you, by the way.

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: So, I think you may be missing, you know—

WC: Oh, I—

GM: —some of the good ones.

WC: I got sucked into it. I was like, "Oh my gosh. How did this happen?"

GM: The—I think the most important message around that question is that, again—I like to think about social media, kind of the metaphor of everything else we know about the business of doing hair and just think of it a little bit differently. I think it's really important to note here that you're smart enough, as a businessperson, to know that you can't and should not be doing everything. I would bet you money that not too often do you sweep the floors at the Paul Mitchell School here in Costa Mesa.

WC: Right.

GM: You've made that decision. I know salon owners who are sweeping floors. You know, who are struggling to grow their businesses and are putting time into things that maybe are not the best way to move their business forward. So I think, depending on where you are in your career and where you are in your business, you have to make choices. And depending on, again, where you are, social media may not be the thing that you need to be learning. Maybe somebody else who's working in your business—you may want to hire somebody to do it. If you're a student or you're a young professional behind the chair, we have always encouraged people to let people know what they do, to encourage referrals, to encourage recommendations. You know, all that stuff can also be done on social media. So I think it's just about making choices how you use your time. Most important is the idea that marketing matters and the big idea is that these are marketing tools. People get confused about social because most of us start with doing it personally. But

we also have conversations personally before we join this profession. And we teach them—you guys do a brilliant job of this at Paul Mitchell The School—of teaching them how to do what they already know to do pretty well, which is talk to people. Well, how do you put that into business context? How do you know what kind of things are appropriate to talk about behind the chair that maybe are different than what you would talk about in your personal life and make those choices? It's the same with social media. It's just starting to understand, how do you transform what you know about social from a personal perspective into a professional context.

WC: I mean, thanks for the accolade that I was smart enough to know that I—my time is better spent doing things other than sweeping the hair or doing my own social media. I think maybe I learned that from Henry Ford, where he was on trial and they asked him a question. He said, "I don't know the answer to that but I know who knows."

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: I don't know how to log onto my social media sites but I know who knows and I'm trusting in that person. So what do you say to that salon owner or that brand-new stylist who says, "I don't really have the time for this," or "I don't have the knowledge for this." What's the answer? What's the solution?

GM: First and foremost, I would say that, you know, to a salon owner, "Do you understand the importance of marketing?" And to a professional I would say, "Do you understand the importance of promoting yourself and your work?" And if the answer is yes, then I think the follow-up is then, you know, "What are the best ways, what are the best tools, how do you go about accomplishing that?" And then I think, if you're not using social in your mix of marketing tools, then I think that's an interesting conversation to happen. It's not for everybody. In the old-school way, a salon newsletter wasn't for everybody. A billboard—going back, way back when, you know, a billboard wasn't for everybody. It's figuring out what's a right marketing mix for you. What are the needs of your business? What are your goals? If you have a full book and you're killing it, do I think you need to be putting a lot of time into social media? Not necessarily. Perhaps not at all. I also think, however, you need to be thinking forward. Just because you have a full book and you have a business that's killing it doesn't mean you're going to be killing it in five years.

WC: Right.

GM: So you've got to be thinking ahead as well. So, you know, it's just another tool. Should every salon be offering barber services? Everybody wants to jump on that trend today. There's no simple answer to that. You know, do you have the people who can execute on it? Are you willing to invest in the training? Are you willing to invest maybe in a barber chair? You know, there's

lots of choices to make and there should not be a simple answer to the question.

WC: Okay. For somebody listening to this that's thinking, *I really don't have the time to do this. I realize the importance of it. I need to have a good presence or a huge presence in social media. I don't have the time to educate myself how. How about if I hire somebody?* And if they go that route, like who do they look for? What could they pay somebody to really do a good job with it?

GM: It's not the ideal. I'll start with that. Because there's a key kind of a concept in social media success is that of authenticity.

WC: Okay.

GM: But that's true of marketing. I mean, if you're going to have someone do your marketing for you, they better understand your brand and they better understand how to speak in the voice, you know, of your culture as a salon. And the same is true of social. I would always recommend that you first take a step back and really take a look at your time. I don't know a salon owner who doesn't say that hairdressers have time to build their referrals in real time, to go pass business cards out at Starbucks. And if you're doing that, I would say maybe you need to think about, you know, is social media more efficient? If you're looking for services or people who can help you with that, you know, Google's a great resource. You know, you can look—you know, just go online and look for local resources. PBA—Professional Beauty Association—I think they have a lot of members who work in this area. Our dear friend Nina Kovner, I think, is one of the greatest coaches in this particular space in marketing general. She's very connected and knows some other resources. She doesn't do social media work, per se, but I think she's an amazing resource. PassionSqaured.net, to give her a little plug. So that'd be my answer.

WC: If you were to categorize or prioritize the different social media platforms of what's the most important in terms of marketing yourself or building your books, as you say, what's number one, what's number two, what's number three? 'Cause I've had people say, "It's Twitter and Twitter only."

GM: Yeah.

WC: You know, "If you really want to build your business, it's Twitter."

GM: Yup. The question of platforms is always a fascinating one and it starts with, you know, where are your clients? Again, going back old school, you know? I knew salons way back in the day that used billboards. Well, you know, if you lived in the middle of the city and your clientele were neighborhood, you wouldn't want a billboard. If you lived out in the middle of Iowa, a billboard could serve you well. So on platforms, it's first and foremost understanding, well, who's on those platforms and who—what's your target audience? If your

target audience is my mom, my sweet, little 81-year-old mom, who looks gorgeous and goes to a great salon, you would want to be on Facebook 'cause mom's on Facebook. Much to my *[laughs]* confusion on some days.

WC: *[laughs]* Right.

GM: You know? So, but seriously, it's where your clientele—if you have a younger 20-something, 30-something clientele, I would say Instagram without question. It's the most engaging platform. It's where we're seeing most of the action happening these days. And I think that audience, unlike my—my mom is not an easy person to get to change. She's been going to the same hairdresser for a long time. So Facebook, it's a little more work to get someone to move over. But again, if your audience is more mature, you're going to find them probably on Facebook. Instagram next. If your audience is, you know, the 18- to 25-year old, you need to be thinking about Snapchat because they're killing it on Snapchat. It's a whole different kind of platform. It's a little more difficult to master. So know where your audience is and how do you find that out? Well, you ask them. You have a clientele, talk about it. You know, it's one of the more fun things to talk about with your clients. Whether—you can bring up the cat story, you know? It's like, "I don't know about you but social media is driving me crazy. All those cats."

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: "What do you think, Mary?" And then she'll tell you what she's doing on social media. You do that enough, you get a sense of where your clientele is and where, perhaps, you should be.

WC: Okay. And how did you learn all this?

GM: I'm a student, you know? I, again, I think as soon as I knew that this mattered to hairdressers and this, to me, I saw early on. I believed that this was going to be a game changer. I saw it as a marketing platform because there were so many smart people outside of our industry positioning it as such. And so I'm a student. I listen to podcasts literally every day. My little rescue dog, Cody, I take her on a walk. I work in a home office in Chicago and so four times a day we do a 20-minute walk and four times a day I'm listening to podcasts on social media and digital media and what's happening in the world around me. So, you know, it's—but how do you become a great hairdresser? You know, you come to these shows and you, you know—we know people who've been doing this 40 years who—

WC: And they're still signing up for haircutting class.

GM: They are and—

WC: Yeah.

GM: —it's what helps make them great.

WC: Yeah.

GM: You know? So, you know, we've got to keep learning.

WC: What kind of podcasts are you listening to while you're on your little walks?

GM: My favorites are—there's a podcast—well, there's several. Gary Vee, Gary Vaynerchuk, I think for entrepreneurs, is one of the best. And it's Gary and V-E-E is his handle and he's got a podcast that's, I think, daily. And he's got a YouTube channel, the Gary Vee Show. So he's amazing. He's brilliant on entrepreneurialship and also on social media. I listen to something called Recode, which is really kind of on trends in social. And then Digiday is a great, great social media and digital platform that talks about trends and where things are going. Amy Porterfield. A great resource for your audience is Amy Porterfield, P-O-R-T-E-R-F-I-E-L-D. She has a podcast and she has a Facebook presence. Mari Smith, M-A-R-I Smith, she's the queen of Facebook.

WC: Huh.

GM: She's got a blog. She's got a great Facebook page. She talks about what's happening, best practices, trends. I'm kind of fanatical about it.

WC: Wow, good for you. You are a good student. *[laughs]* Good for your dog. *[laughs]*

GM: *[laughs]* Actually, my dog's not happy about this.

WC: Okay.

GM: When I—you know, I've had her now for five years and I think about two years in was when I really started doing the ear buds and listening to various podcasts and she actually realized that I was not present with her.

WC: *[laughs]* You weren't paying attention on the walks.

GM: Right.

WC: Okay. Oh gosh. Okay. You do that with your dog. I won't do that with my daughter. I got my daughter at about the same time that you got your dog so, okay.

GM: True, true.

WC: All right. So, you know, talk about Instagram. You know, what are some of the most important things that you do to grow your following with Instagram?

GM: Again, first and foremost, you know, is to understand the platform and practicing, being present, having a plan. You know, it's very, very important you have a plan and you have a focus. And another great lesson for Instagram is to find role models. To look at hairdressers who are doing it well. There's all kinds of ways to do that. I—one great way to find great hairdressers doing good work is to go to the media pages. American_Salon is how you'll find us on Instagram and we do nothing but share other people's work. So you'll see good work, go to that page, start following them, kind of look at how they're doing their Instagram. How often do they post? What kind of work do they post? Go to a class at one of the big trade shows and learn like we're going to do here today and talk about best practices. It's marketing. It's business. So, you know, it has to look professional. I mean, you have to understand your brand and how you're going to represent your brand visually. You have to understand how to use hashtags; another part of kind of the science. Hashtags are about discoverability.

WC: We'll talk about that, too.

GM: Again, like anything in business, it's just kind of learning the basics and then learning how to apply the basics to your own situation. What problems are you looking to solve? Setting goals for yourself. I think one of the biggest blocks people have in social media is things don't happen fast enough. But you and I know that one of the biggest blocks in building a career is the same situation.

WC: Right.

GM: Not growing that clientele fast enough. And how many young people have we seen over the years who we thought were brilliant and who were kind of beauty roadkill, you know? Twelve months in, they're gone. What happened to them? They weren't patient.

WC: Right. You said that good advice is to follow people who are doing it well.

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: On Instagram or on any social media platform. What do you mean by, "They're doing it well"? And maybe the flip side of that question is what are people doing wrong? Like meaning the quality of the photo isn't good or—

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: A good friend of mine that I interviewed on this, he has quite the Instagram followship and so people will often ask him, "Hey, look at my Instagram. What am I doing right? What am I doing wrong?"

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: And sometimes he'll say, you know, "With all due respect, are you a stripper?" *[laughs]* "'Cause that's all I see. I see a bunch of selfies of you in your underwear."

GM: Right, right.

WC: You know, "This is your brand. I don't see any hair here."

GM: Yup.

WC: "I don't see you promoting yourself as a professional."

GM: Yep.

WC: "I see that you're a professional party girl." So.

GM: Well, we talked a little bit ago, I think people—most people's social experience starts with the personal and so they have a personal page. They have a personal presence. They're connected with their friends. They're connected with their family. And maybe there's a little bit of business thought there but perhaps not. And then they hear a show like this. They come to a beauty show and someone says, "You need to do this professionally," and they just think they can turn a switch on. First and foremost, know that when we look at people's pages, we scroll. So if I've been the party hairdresser on Instagram who now wants to start to promote my business, remember that that's stuff's all sitting there. And so first piece of advice is clean up your page, delete the photos that don't belong there, or create a new page that's purely professional. We try to teach hairdressers—

WC: Does that really work though? I mean, 'cause if people are searching for you, they're going to find your personal page as much as they're going to find your business page, right?

GM: It—

WC: Like can you really do that? Can you really have a presence on a personal side and post all of that stuff that maybe is not appropriate? Doesn't that bleed over to your professional side, too?

GM: It depends on who you are and what kind of following you have and kind of what your strategy is, I think, for the professional part of your life. So not as hard as you would think. It's about prioritization. You know, it's like, you know, how do you want to use this tool? So if you struggle with it and you can't, then if making more money is important to you and if this is a great tool and you're seeing other people be successful with it, you have to make some decisions. My recommendation would be that you start to unfollow people who are not related to your business, that you start to delete old photos that don't represent you professionally. And, again, we're here at a big beauty show, I

think a perfect example is if you're out here partying—which we know one of the best things about a beauty show is the parties that come at the end of the day—that maybe you don't necessarily post a selfie from the party but you focus on posting a selfie from the classroom or for the art that you're seeing or for something that would inspire a client to want to do something more with you. So it's about choices. And—but it's—to me, it's like the same choices you make every day behind the chair. Do I talk about politics with a client? Do I talk about religion with a client? Do I talk about my party time with a client or not? And we know the answer to those questions. And so we know that there's a separation that has to occur and you have to apply the same idea to social.

WC: Give us two must-do tips for those looking to up their game and growing clientele by way of Instagram.

GM: I would say that the first—maybe one of the most important is to think about your social media presence as your lookbook. I think we, you know, we're trying to get clients to follow us and prospective clients to follow us. And if you think about how you use Instagram yourself—and we'll focus on Instagram—is that we typically, when we have an idea that we might want to follow something, we go to that page and we do a little scroll. We drag our finger down, look at some pictures. You know, what do people see when they look at your page and would they hit the follow button? You know, are they seeing work that's inspiring? Are they seeing themselves in your work? "There's somebody who looks like me and maybe they can transform me to look like that person." And that's the old-school lookbook. You know—

WC: Okay.

GM: —we grew up in a time where people tore things out of a magazine and put pictures in it. And that's really important, too. People get hung up on like, "What happens if I'm not good at photography? What if I'm not good—what if my clients aren't that pretty?" *[laughs]*

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: I mean, to be—I mean, seriously. You know, we take care of the world, you know? So to take, you know—in the old-school way, you know, people would send magazines pictures of their clients and do photo shoots and I know editors who would say, "Oh boy, you should see some of the stuff we get in."

WC: Right.

GM: Because not everybody's a fashion model. It's okay to share work of looks that are the kind of looks that you can execute. Big idea there is always give credit.

WC: Right.

GM: Always give credit. So if you post a picture that came from somebody else, say where you got it.

WC: Okay.

GM: And give some context: “Love this beautiful color from Lucie Doughty at Paul Mitchell. You know, we carry Paul Mitchell at our salon. We learn everything we do from Paul Mitchell as a brand. We kill it over here. Come do this.”

WC: So even though it was Lucie’s work, you turned it into your own story.

GM: Absolutely.

WC: “Lucie’s work inspired me,” and that’s what you’re sending out.

GM: Yep. Exactly.

WC: Wow.

GM: Again, it’s like hanging a poster in the window. It’s very, very similar. So think of that Instagram feed, if you will, the thing that people scroll through, as a canvas to create an image for your brand as a stylist. And it could be nothing but curated work. It could be your work. It could—you know, if you’re into photography, if you want to put the time in to learn how to be a good photographer, all kinds of great online resources, books you can read, classes you can take. Again, it’s like anything else. You want to be a great haircutter, you educate yourself. If you want to be a great Instagrammer, educate yourself.

WC: I don’t want to diminish the gifts and talents and knowledge of a photographer but to be somebody using your iPhone to take pictures does not take a lot of knowledge. I mean, it’s very simple lighting. I remember, you know, Marie Osmond, you know, taking pictures with Marie Osmond. She’s like, “No, no, no, sweetheart. We have to turn over here, that’s the light. That can’t be behind us.” You know, “Hold the phone way up here.”

GM: Mm-hm.

WC: “Don’t get my feet because I don’t have my heels on right now.” Like it just—like simple things to really get the best picture.

GM: That you learned from Marie Osmond. *[laughs]*

WC: *[laughs]* Sorry.

GM: So let’s—let’s—

WC: I was a namedropper there, wasn’t I?

GM: No, no. But—no. But you said something really important, you know, because someone had to coach you.

WC: Yeah.

GM: Someone who kind of had those little tricks and tips. Again, as someone who watches the space and watches what stylists and salons are doing, I watch every day, you'd be amazed at how much bad work there are—is out there.

WC: Right.

GM: It's pretty horrific some of the stuff that we see that people don't realize that they're harming themselves by putting out good—bad stuff.

WC: Right. Put out bad stuff.

GM: And, you know, it's a problem. Years ago I was on a panel at Intercoiffure. Many, many years ago. I think it was 1998. It was Richard Calcasola, Sam Brocato, Gene Juarez, and me.

WC: Oh my gosh.

GM: Young me.

WC: Wow, wow.

GM: I don't know how the hell I got on that panel.

WC: That's quite the panel.

GM: It was quite the panel. We were talking about the image of the industry and Intercoiffure, one of the best groups in the industry and, you know, truly artists. And they were talking about, you know, it's like how people view us and what are we going to do about that? And I was like, *What am I going to say with these guys, you know, these icons on the stage?* And I flew in and I'll never forget it, I was racking my brain. I was totally intimidated. And Intercoiffure, some of the best salons in America.

WC: Yeah.

GM: And I'd never been on that stage before. And so I'm on an airplane and I've got my notepad 'cause that's what we did back then, right? And I'm trying to figure out what am I going to say? And I got up to use the restroom and I had this moment where I stared out at 200 heads in front of me and then my brain just went, *Who did all that bad hair?*

WC: Oh wow. *[laughs]*

GM: And I just went, *I think I know what I'm going to talk about*. Because we did. The collective beauty industry did much of that hair. And to your point of taking a selfie, a good selfie or a bad selfie, it takes a level of skill to do good work.

WC: Yeah.

GM: And I would argue that the majority of work that our industry does isn't at the level it should be because that's the nature of every industry. You know, all food cooked by restaurants is not great.

WC: Right.

GM: You know, all hair is not being done this great. And certainly all selfies are not great. And the greatness comes out of being educated, being coached, finding mentors.

WC: Did you see that picture that I posted on Facebook and Instagram of me with all the other room moms?

GM: No.

WC: Yeah, 'cause I'm a room parent—

GM: Of course you're a room mom.

WC: —which I call myself a room mom—

GM: You are a room mom.

WC: —because that's what they were called, room moms.

GM: Yep.

WC: Like to this day I go to their meetings, they're like, "Okay, room moms," and I'm the only dad, you know, with 60 other room moms.

GM: Room moms.

WC: And so we had a big meeting, we took a big picture. And they were all like scrambling, "Oh, who's taking the picture? Where do we stand?" And I'm like, "All right." I just took control, "You stand there. Row of chairs. Stand here. Get on your knees." You know, "Here's the lighting." And then they're like, "That's the best photo we've ever taken." *[laughs]*

GM: Thank you, Marie Osmond.

WC: Thank you, thank you.

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: Yeah, I remember we talked about our good friend Ruth Roche, where she talks about one of her first—and she's won NAHA how many times? And you win NAHA or you win all these other accolades and everything because the work is brilliant but also the photography is brilliant.

GM: Yep.

WC: And she says that her first photoshoot was in the back of a Chinese restaurant in Santa Barbara, California. And I said to her, I said, you know, "Ruth, can I see those photos?" She said, "No, you can't." And that—people think that, you know, her first photoshoot was NAHA worthy.

GM: Right.

WC: Meaning, you know, you're going to do bad work or you're going to do work that's maybe not worthy to post, doesn't mean you have to post it. So—

GM: Exactly.

WC: So just be very, very selective of what you're putting out there.

GM: Absolutely. And your first photoshoot wasn't great. Your first haircut wasn't great.

WC: Yeah.

GM: And your first selfie is not going to be great, you know, so. So much of it is having an eye and being objective about your own work, taking a step backwards and looking at what you're going to post before you post it. Is the lighting good, you know? Is—lighting is everything. How many hairdressers do we know, you know, who take clients outside for clients to understand the hair color?

WC: Right.

GM: Because the fluorescent lighting doesn't show it well. And they know enough to get—"Let's go outside and look at this." We get good lighting in the real world, you know. We need to get it in social.

WC: You speak better than most hairdressers. *[laughs]* You could totally pull it off that you're a hairdresser. You have the language better than 90 percent of hairdressers, so.

GM: Well, you and I have been hanging with them for a long time.

WC: Thank goodness for them.

GM: Yeah.

WC: Joy of my life.

GM: Same.

WC: I interviewed a guy on MASTERS about a year ago named Phil Pallen and I invite all of you to go back and listen to his MASTERS interview. But he's a big fan of Twitter and he's very, very specific. That's his platform.

GM: Yep.

WC: He doesn't train people on Facebook or any other platform. He really loves Twitter and he has quite the clientele, like judges from *The X Factor* are his clientele and—but he was very specific about how many tweets you need to do per week or per day and exactly the difference between the types of tweets. Do you have the same type of advice for Instagram? Like how often should people be posting? Is that a daily thing? Multiple times in a day or—?

GM: Yes, would be the answer. Maybe not quite as specific a formula 'cause, again, I think everybody is a little different. It starts with goals. You know, again, what are you trying to accomplish? And so if you're really trying to make something happen big and faster, you're going to want to do more. Posting regularly, posting consistently, is really important. The tools exist now for us to know when our clients are online. It's important to transform your presence into a business. You know, so first and foremost, Instagram allows you to have a business profile and it's a very simple process for you to switch over your personal into business. And when you have a business profile, there's a button you can hit and your phone number is there. They can literally call and make an appointment from Instagram. But more importantly, to answer your question, the analytics are there. You can look and see when your clients—those who are following you—you can see when they're responding, when they're reacting, when they're seeing what you post. So I think you have to learn a little bit about the specific nature of the audience that you have. And younger clients are going to be there more often. The type of clientele you're looking to have may—they may have different lifestyles that impact the time of day that they're there. Michael Cole suggests that you spend a dollar a day boosting your posts, which is another whole conversation but it's a way for you to push out your content to those who are following you. Michael also says that it's really, really important that you get 90 percent of your clientele to follow you on Instagram so that you can promote them to come in more often. 'Cause we know one of the biggest challenges salons face today now is the frequency issue: that our clients are stretching their appointments more, out farther.

WC: Right.

GM: And, you know, you take someone down from eight visits a year to six visits a year and you've got a problem.

WC: Yeah.

GM: And Instagram can help address that problem.

WC: Wow.

GM: So all kinds of best practice stuff.

WC: Let's talk about hashtags.

GM: Love hashtags.

WC: So they really matter?

GM: They matter *tremendously*. So hashtags are about discoverability. So hashtags are a search tool and people use them. You know, you go onto Instagram and you're looking at a feed, you know, you can look and look at people, you can look at activities, and you could look at tags. So when you search things on Instagram, it's the hashtags that allow you to find things. So you should have a hashtag that identifies where you are geographically. You should have a hashtag that talks about, you know, you as a brand thematically, you know, whether it's hair color or style. You should have a hashtag that's specific to your brand. And you just use those repetitively, post after post after post and people will soon be able to find you easier by way of hashtags.

WC: Okay. 'Cause sometimes you see one photo and there's ten different hashtags.

GM: Yeah.

WC: Educate me.

GM: Yeah, yeah. And it's not a bad thing. So the current best practice is you move your hashtags into the second comment. So you post a picture, you say something about that picture. Words matter, right? They're important. Maybe you throw some emojis in, which is shorthand for words, you know, that again, represent your brand. And then you use an assortment of hashtags and you've got to kind of—that's a bigger conversation we don't have time for today but you use an assortment of hashtags to make you more discoverable. The best practice is now is you put them not in the first—your comment, where you talk about your post, but you put it in the second. Because people won't see that comment, it goes down below. It's a discoverability tool that you don't want to clutter your post with because it's just too many words and people won't be inclined to read it. So you want to keep your posts short and

crisp and focused on what you want someone to do or what you feel from a brand perspective about it and then the hashtags you want to kind of bury.

WC: Okay. Do you have any kind of like go-to apps or equipment that helps you create your content for Instagram?

GM: Yeah, there's a bunch of them. And I'll keep the list short. So, first and foremost, you know, is to have a current device. The phone is like the most powerful computer on the planet these days. It's amazing 'cause most of us—80 percent of the use on a phone today is not talking to people or calling people, it's using it for computing. And Instagram and social media is all about computing. So you want a powerful device. You know, you want something current. If your phone is older than a year, you know, you're not staying current. As an industry, we're really good about having the latest, greatest, you know, tools and all the stuff that hairdressers love to have. You need to do the same thing, you know, have a good phone. So start with that. Then in terms of apps, you know, you want—there's various apps, you know, whether it's Photoshop apps or things like Pic Stich, you know, that allow you to do things with your pictures to add a little visual, to fine-tune the filters. There's collage filters. You just go into any of the app stores and put in the word *collage* and you'll find what you're looking for that allow you to kind of put pictures together. Yesterday I did three selfies with different hairdresser friends and rather than fill up my feed with a bunch of selfies, I put them all in one. And so I've got three different selfies in one picture and I used Pic Stitch to do it. So I think, you know, those are great, you know, little apps you can use. Get a ring light. Not an app, but a tool. So a ring light is just—they clip on your phone and they bring light, portable light, with you. You know, you turn it on and you've got all the lighting you need, no matter where you are.

WC: Now I know that you're a fan of live.

GM: Yes.

WC: So Facebook Live or Instagram Stories. Talk about that. Why do you think that's important?

GM: Well, and again, we go back to goals and what you're trying to achieve and, you know, what you're doing as a business, you know, so there's a lot of context involved. But we, we the people, the bigger community, the potential customers, we like live. We like real. We like authentic. And so it's another opportunity to engage with people, to engage with your customers and—but so much depends on where you are with your career and what you're trying to accomplish. It's—I would say it's a little bit advanced. Let me say this. We haven't talked about this at all. Social media—if you never use social media to build your business, use social media to educate yourself. Use social media as a way to be in touch with people like Winn because you can learn from you by the things that you post online. And so that's like the starting place. If

you're not comfortable, you know, marketing yourself yet with social media, follow people as a way to learn. Follow people as a way to be inspired. Guy Tang, you know? I was texting with Guy yesterday and I just think he's brilliant. He's probably the most known name in beauty in the world today.

WC: Mm-hm.

GM: Because of social media. And so look at what he's doing and learn from that. And watch what these guys are doing in terms of apps. Are they using collages or are they using lighting, you know, that matters? I just think there's a lot to learn there.

WC: Hm. You just talked about Guy Tang and several others. I've been following you. You've really created a wonderful presence of some pretty incredible mentors on AmericanSalon.com. And I'm following them. I'm like, "Hey, do you have that person's cell phone number?" Do you know, I'm interviewing David from Butterfly Circus next week?

GM: Yes.

WC: Thanks to you.

GM: And now Pulp Riot Hair. I mean, the new—

WC: Yeah.

GM: —company that David and Alexis and a group of social media influencers have started. Pulp Riot, they're blowing up the show.

WC: Yeah.

GM: I mean, in a way that people would not have thought was possible a year ago.

WC: Wow. You're good at that. You're good at finding the people who are really making a difference and so I'm just going to follow you 'cause you follow them. So that works for me. *[laughs]* I want to start to wrap this up. I can't believe that we've already been talking for this period of time and I think we could probably do another three or four issues and we probably will. By the way, how long did it take us to get this date today? *[laughs]*

GM: *[laughs]* Like about a year.

WC: I know. A very, very long time and I'm so, so grateful. I knew it would be this powerful. I knew it. A couple of things that you brought up that I really want to continue on: the whole idea of connecting with people. You know, and you even said it, "Connect in real time." We've been talking about social media, connecting in real time. What are your thoughts about that? 'Cause I have a feeling that the reason why you are so successful, the reason why you have

been hired to these major companies, not working in the mailroom, you were hired on as the director, as the president, as the leader of that major, major company was because you were really, really good over the years connecting in real time. You didn't build this name for yourself and the relationships that you have necessarily through social media. It's because in real time, you invested in these people.

GM: Yeah, and there's no doubt, you know, that real human connection are the gold standard of growing our lives. An interesting phenomenon that's happening here at the show. So we have seen this kind of explosion of social media energy and certainly all kinds of people and professional's names kind of blowing up. Again, Guy Tang, who I saw yesterday in person here. There's been just a huge number of social media–connected young people who are here at the show and they are here, had flown in from all over the country, to meet one another. Many of them have never been to a beauty show before. And they've come because they are connected online but they get that there's nothing better than meeting somebody in real time.

WC: Hm.

GM: And so they're making it happen and—

WC: So even though they have huge followings on Instagram or on whatever, they still know, "I need to connect in real time."

GM: And they learn from one another. They not only follow each other and learn online from each other, but I've sat with them the last couple days—a lot of them—and listened to their conversation and participated in their conversation and there's such a huge exchange of ideas that's happening amongst all of them.

WC: Hm.

GM: And on just about every question you've asked, you know, "Well, what are you doing with hashtags?" and, "What apps are you using?" and "What camera are you using? What phone are you using?" So, the real time matters and there's nothing better.

WC: Hm. You also talk about the importance of paying it forward.

GM: Yeah.

WC: What do you mean by that?

GM: Well, how lucky are you and I after 30-some years to be doing what we do? And I know you and I are very much on the same page as this. I would not be who I am today without the generosity of so many people who've been so good to me in teaching me and mentoring me, coaching me and just letting

me be part of their professional lives and their companies. And I feel that, you know, when I look back and think about how those people treated me, you know, I realize that I have a responsibility to do the same with other people: to do anything I can within my power to offer others opportunity to share information. How brilliant are you all these years to be doing MASTERS? To me, that is one of the many ways that you pay it forward because you—all the networking, all the people that you've come to know, to take the time to bring those people together and to put it out for the world, I mean, that's crazy cool paying it forward. And it matters, you know? People matter. And I just believe it's one of the reasons we're here.

WC: Hm. I view you as the storyteller for the beauty industry. It's been your job to help people tell their stories but a lot of these stories are your stories now. And I think that you—you're kind of the keeper of the flame, so to speak.

GM: Well, thank you.

WC: I really view you that way.

GM: Ah—

WC: So do a lot of other people, too.

GM: That's like a crazy, massive compliment and I don't know that I—I don't even know what to say, you know? *[laughs]*

WC: Well, your name is easy to bring up.

GM: Thank you.

WC: I'm friends with some people that I won't necessarily bring up their name because either people love them or hate them. *[laughs]* Which I'm totally cool with, too.

GM: *[laughs]*

WC: 'Cause I love them. But bringing up your name is always, always a homerun. Always like, "Wow, you know Gordon?" So.

GM: So my mom would say, you know, "Then my kid did okay."

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: And I will accept that.

WC: Do you have a final message for our listeners?

GM: My final message—*[pauses]* you know, we just lost a dear friend, Fabio Sementilli from Wella. Unexpected, tragic. And I was able to interview him

about a year ago and it was really something to watch a couple days ago and remember. You know, one of the first things he said was, you know, how did he want to be remembered, you know? And it really had to do with paying it forward, with being seen as a person, you know, who was good to his fellow professionals. And it reminded me that, you know, I want to be remembered as somebody who was nice. And it's a very simple idea, you know? And I think that would be my message to everybody, that there's a lot of pain in the world. There's a lot of sorrow in the world. There's a lot of struggle in the world. And I had an experience a few years ago where I lost a very dear friend and I was in a not-good place emotionally at the time. And was kind of coming out of a dark time and struggling to get out of that dark time. And it was—I'll never, ever forget that I was walking up a street by myself. The street was empty, it was in the dead of winter in Chicago and I was sad. And I came upon a woman who was older and a little bit bent over and struggling to walk up the street and as I approached her, she lifted up her head and gave me the most brilliant smile that I could ever—I still can see it. And I was transformed. And I'm going to tear up as I say it because that moment of—that little moment of niceness that kind of came into my life allowed me to kind of break out of that bad place I was in. And it reminded me the power of just being nice to our fellow human beings. And so that would be my message to everybody: be nice. And I have to say—wait. I don't know if I'll have a chance—you might cut me—you may edit this out. I may have shared this story with you a long time ago. So you wrote a book called *Be Nice*. And I just am remembering it. And I don't know if you remember this. You sent me the book. I was on a flight to London and I had—I was finishing the book and I was sitting next to a young woman who—probably 18, 19 years old and—you know when you're on an airplane and the person next to you didn't bring anything with them? And I'm on a nine-hour flight and this—she has nothing to read. And I'm reading the last couple chapters of your book and I can feel her reading the pages. She's reading what I'm reading to the point where I started to slow down so she could keep up with me.

WC: *[laughs]*

GM: Literally. And as I got to the end of your book, she kind of nudged me and she said, "I really like that." And I gave her the book. I gave her the book on that plane. And, again, such joy and she gave me this great hug. And you know on airplanes we rarely even talk to the people sitting next to us. And (a) a brilliant book; (b) it inspired me to be nice in that moment. And I think she needed that book and I always wondered who she was and what happened with her life but I know that I did a good thing and paid it forward a little bit by sharing your book and your message with her. So thank you for that.

WC: Thanks, Gordon.