

MASTERS Audio Club, March 2020
Sam Villa
Influencer of the Year



Sam Villa is changing the beauty industry, one hairdresser at a time. He is cofounder of the Sam Villa brand and a true messenger, sharing his knowledge with stylists in hopes that they will share with others and upgrade the industry by supporting one another. In this interview by **Winn Claybaugh**, you'll quickly see why Sam was the first recipient of the International Hair Influencer of the Year Award. His genuine humility and passion for education form the heart of his message for anyone who feels stuck or burned out.

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to— *[laughs]* oh my gosh, how long have we been trying to do this, Sam?

Sam: Years, Winn. For years we've been trying to figure this out and I'm so glad that we now have the opportunity.

Winn: I'm sitting with Sam Villa. I haven't even said your name yet.

Sam: *[Laughs]*

Winn: We're going to jump into this so quick. It has been a long time because you're a man on a mission. You're a man—you're riding this wave right now. Everybody wants to give you an award. Everybody wants to have you on their stage. Every show needs to have you as a headliner. Every nonprofit needs to have the influence that you have, and so congratulations on that because you've worked very, very hard to have all of that.

Sam: Winn, it's been a great journey; let me just say that. I think my focus has been—you know, I'm not a rock star, I'm not a genius, not an inventor, I'm not a visionary. I really have been proud to be a hairdresser who says, "I'm a teacher," and that's what I want to be: just make hairdressers better hairdressers.

Winn: Well, let me just read some of these accolades that you have received. So just sit back and get yourself a cup of coffee while I go through all of this. In 2017—I like this one—you received the NAHA Lifetime Achievement Award. You were a judge on *The Look All Stars*, emcee for Leading Ladies, which we're going to get into. I want you to know that I've been in touch with Tracey Hughes so she knows that you and I are sitting down even as we speak. She knows that—

Sam: Love. Yeah. Love Tracey.

Winn: I just got an email from her, like in the middle of the night. Wait for the last minute, Tracey. Thanks but, uh—

Sam: *[Laughs]*

Winn: So she had some things that she wants me to ask you and share with you. Intercoiffure America Canada member, Behindthechair.com, Favorite Overall Educator of the Year in 2015 and Favorite New Company Under Seven Years Old in 2014. Get this: Favorite Platform Artist and Educator in 2007, 2011, and 2012. Favorite Top Five Finalist 2001, 2002, goes on, oh my gosh, up until I think every single year. Redken Platform Artist of the Year 1998; I wasn't born yet. 2014, American Salon Professional's Choice Award, Master of the Craft Award from the Art and Fashion Group in 1992; finalist in North American Hairdressing Awards. I mean it just goes on and on and on. I love our industry because our industry really is great at giving out the accolades and I've always felt that it wasn't so much that you, the man Sam Villa, needs the accolade, you don't have any room on your shelf for any more of these statues, but what it does is just sends out the message to the industry at large that ours is a professional, incredible industry that we need to acknowledge, that we need to celebrate. I mean, how long has it been since awards for hair and makeup have been shown during the Tony Awards?

Sam: Well, I think that's what's great about the North American Hairdressing Awards. It's an evening to celebrate the talent out there in the industry. And Winn, there's so much talent going on, there are so many great hairdressers out there that we don't even know of. Yet now what social media has done, it's huge in terms of changing the industry.

Winn: One more award, and then we are going to jump into this, and this is more new. You are receiving on, February 16, so by the time we air this podcast this will have already happened and it's happening in Madrid. Dang! You're receiving the International Hairdressing Awards in giving Sam Villa the first International Hair Influencer of the Year Award. Sam!

Sam: Incredible. I've gotta tell you, Winn, I don't consider myself as an influencer and when I received the phone call they said, "Sam, what are you doing February 16?" I said, "Well, I'll probably be booked. If it's a weekend, I'll be somewhere." "Can you come to Madrid to the International Hairdressing Awards?" I said, "Well, do you want me to do a presentation?" They go, "No. Have a seat. Sit down if you're not sitting down." They said, "We want to give you the first Influencer of the Year Award, our National Influencer of the Year." I go, "But I'm not an influencer." And they kind of started laughing on the phone. They said, "Sam, you need to know that we, the industry, looks at you as an influencer. You may not consider yourself an influencer but you were one of the first, about 10 or 11 years ago, that started to do these educational soundbites that really started to affect the industry; not these DVDs." And that was the thing but I don't consider myself an influencer. I

hope that people consider me that I've been influential in the industry; something about the *influencer* word. But, you know, what I want to do is influence the industry in terms of helping hairdressers be better hairdressers.

Winn: Why? Were you thinking that an influencer is somebody who just starts clocking a bunch of followers on their social media page and if you hit that certain number then somehow you're an influencer?

Sam: There you go. That's exactly. It's about those numbers—

Winn: But I don't get that because I know, there's some of those people who have a million followers and yet I could care less what they have to say.

Sam: True.

Winn: So they've got the followers but do they really have the expertise or the experience to be a true influencer? And the fact that you have focused so much on education—

Sam: Yes.

Winn: —is what makes you an influencer. One of my favorite things to quote nowadays, is that you can Google facts but you can't Google wisdom.

Sam: Ooh, I love that; absolutely love that. Well, that's exactly what I try to do is brand myself as an educator, you know? I'm a hairdresser who has—I'm motivated by the passion to teach, Winn. And I'm really very serious when I say I just want to make hairdressers better hairdressers. And I believe, Winn, that's what's pushed me to the top is the fact that people, they get it that this guy, he makes things simple. I'm not an inventor. People say, "Where do you get all these things?" I say, "Guys I research."

Winn: *[Laughs]*

Sam: My job is for me to research.

Winn: You steal from every source—

Sam: Yeah.

Winn: — which is research, right.

Sam: That's what people—hey look at this farce, whatever you want to call it.

Winn: Right.

Sam: I'll see something, Winn, and I'll say, "You know what? I'm going to tweak it and change it and do it this way or I'm going to take that and simplify it and then share it with the masses." So I'm just the messenger.

Winn: Right.

Sam: That's all. I look at myself as a messenger.

Winn: I love telling this story of many, many years ago, I barely knew Van Council—

Sam: Yes, Van.

Winn: —but knew that I wanted to be good friends with him, which has been, I don't know, 30 years now. But I remember soon into our friendship, I was sitting at some dinner meeting and he was talking to somebody else about his company and the numbers and just—I was just sitting there thinking, *This man is so smart. I am not that smart. I'm not the smartest person sitting at this dinner table right now and I am screwed.* I really believed that, *That's it. I'm done. I'm done because I'm not the smartest person.*

Sam: Well, I don't think nowadays you need to be the smartest—

Winn: You don't have to be—

Sam: —that's absolutely right.

Winn: —because what you're talking about right now. You do a lot of research.

Sam: I do a lot of research and it's out there, Winn, and it really stimulates me, it motivates me, it kind of inspires me when I research, to really say, "Okay, how can I make this simple?" I really believe, Winn, simplicity is today's brilliance and that's what people are looking for. Just give me simple things. There's a lot of talk out there in terms of salons upset with Amazon. They're upset with Ulta. I love Ulta. I love what they're doing. They're keeping it professional. They're just a big boy in the game now, and everybody out there, you gotta get over it. They can afford to buy a truckload of liters; we can't. Don't knock them down because they are able to do that. So, no, I can't sell liters at the price they can but I can still learn from them and I can create an experience. I believe the economy has moved to an experience economy and a convenience economy and what I mean by that is when I stand in these salons and in these classes, "Sam, Amazon, Amazon." I go, "I love Amazon." "Well, what about what it's doing to retail?" I go, "Look, guys, let me ask you this. You may not like Amazon but how many of you in this room right now have an Amazon box in your home?"

Winn: Exactly, exactly

Sam: Winn, three-quarters of the hands go up. I go, "So now let me ask you, why do you have that box?" And they go, "Well, it's a matter of convenience." Alright. Then let's learn from that. I go, "I'm going to give you a hot tip right now." I said, "Look, what's the number one complaint about clients when they return?" What I always used to hear was, "Sam, I can't get my hair to look like

you get it to look.” So now what I teach them, Winn, is create an experience. So imagine this: client sits in the chair, she’s at your station and on your station is a monkey tripod. On that tripod is a card that says: FOR FREE TUTORIAL, PLACE YOUR PHONE HERE. As a client I would read that and I would say, “So Sam, what do I need to do?” “Louise, it’s the first time I meet you. It’s important to me you know how to work with your hair. When it comes time for me to blow dry it, let’s take your phone, put it here, and we’ll videotape me coaching you how to blow dry it. So I’m going to hand you the blow dryer, the brush, help you with the mechanics, here’s the product I’m using, here’s how much I’m using it.” Now, Winn, can you imagine: when I’m done with that appointment I’m handing that phone back to her and I’m saying to her, “Hey Louise, you now have your own YouTube tutorial; you’re the star.” And remember I started that video by saying, “Good morning, Louise.” You place this phone—

Winn: Oh my gosh.

Sam: —on the vanity and you push PLAY and I will be there every morning to coach you. And guess what? Salon owners out there, if you do that, I guarantee your retail will go up because here’s the number one complaint I hear, Winn—and you’re getting me started here, bro, on this— is, “Sam, I talk about product and then they bring it up and next they go, ‘Well, I can get it down the street here or I can get it on Amazon for this,’ and what would you do?” I go, “Match it.” As a matter of fact, I go deeper. “Look Louise, I’m not only going to match that but I need you to understand the culture of the salon. Every year, we do a fashion show at the end of the year during Christmas time, for the cancer society here, local in this city. Fifty percent of our retail sales go to that. Not only that, 25% of that goes to my education. I just want you to know the culture of our salon.” Now what you just did is you just touched her heart. So now you see what I’m trying to share with you is communication builds wealth but it’s how we communicate in today’s world. So stop worrying about Amazon, stop worrying about Ulta, and focus on the person that sits in your chair and how you can make things convenient for them. Videotape the blow dry tutorial.

Winn: Again, this experience that you create of—

Sam: Exactly. Take a look at the retail shelves. When we walk in salons, guys you got to get this, stop making it look—line them up like a grocery store. And the salon owner is like, “Well, what do you mean Sam?” I’ll give you an example. If you’ve got beautiful marble floors take a marble bowl, take your—I’m going to use a Powder Grip because that’s the product I know, or Outshine, a lotion. You’re going to place this lotion, dump the whole product in the bowl, then I want you to throw elastics in that bowl, then I want you to Velcro the product to the bowl. And they’re looking at me going—then place that on the shelf. Now what you just did is you created visual disruption. When the client walks in they’re going to look at the shelf because it’s odd. They’re going to walk

over to the bowl, look in it, and go to the front support desk and go, “What’s up with all these elastics in here?” “Oh, do you use elastics on your daughter’s ponytail or your hair?” “Yes, I do.” “Well, we suggest you coat the elastic with that lotion so it buffers the cuticle.” Sold! But what you did was the visual disruption is what got the attention and the conversation started.

Winn: And these are all the things that somebody like an Amazon can’t really create.

Sam: That’s correct.

Winn: The experience—we knew a long time ago that if you’re trying to earn the client’s loyalty based on price only, it will never happen.

Sam: No.

Winn: Because the second that you aren’t competitively priced, they’re going to dump you, whether it’s for the services or the products or anything else, and they’re going to go down the street for something cheaper—

Sam: You bet.

Winn: —less expensive, but they can’t duplicate that experience.

Sam: You’re actually right and then I got salon owners, “Well, I’m not going to do that Sam. I’m not going to match it.” Okay, then guess what? What you’re saying is you’re telling your team you’re not supporting them. Now, if you’re the salon owner and you’re saying no, you’re not going to match the price then guess what? If the client is sitting there on their phone my little voice is going, “Well, I’m not going to talk about product because she’s probably going to put it on her phone and say, ‘I can get it here cheaper.’ So I’m not going to talk to this client about product.” But if I was a salon owner I would say, “Match it.” Matter of fact, I would go deeper. “Louise, it’s so important for me that you get this product.” You see what you just brought up? “I’m going to take it even a dollar cheaper than that. That’s how important it is to me that you’re using the proper product on the color that I just did.” So that’s what I mean. We’ve got to think, say, and do differently in this industry. Can you imagine if I said to a client, “Let’s vandalize your crown, Louise”? She’s probably going to look at me and go, “What do you mean, Sam?” Well, I changed the language because I got her attention. “What I mean, Louise, is I’m going to disrupt it.” “Sam, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” “I’m going to texturize it.” But I got her to have that conversation with me just by changing the language.

Winn: Right. Brilliant. Brilliant. So actually give our listeners kind of a timeline of your career. You entered in the industry—can we—

Sam: Yes.

Winn: —say how old you are? You're—

Sam: Of course. I'm 65.

Winn: Okay, you're 65. So when did you enter the industry? You entered as a hairdresser. Let's talk about this.

Sam: Great story. I was going to college on a volleyball scholarship and I was a physical education major. I grew up—

Winn: Wait, how tall are you?

Sam: I'm about 5'7". I was a setter.

Winn: Oh, I was thinking, *Don't you have to be tall to play volleyball?* [Laughs]

Sam: I was a setter. I played—

Winn: Sorry to judge, there. Okay.

Sam: No. I played Manhattan Beach; played beach volleyball. I was playing those beach tournaments in college. But I grew up in a barbershop. My dad was a barber and I shined the shoes and I'll never forget, Winn, you know, being seven, eight years old on a Saturday morning, my dad put me in the car at 7 a.m. in the summertime, driving down the street, and as I'm driving by I'm seeing my friends on their bicycles and I'm waving goodbye to them. Went to the barbershop, shined shoes all day, and I watched my dad stand all day, Winn, in this pile of hair that I couldn't get to and my little voice would say, *I'm never going to do that*. But here I am today as a hairdresser, proud, not a barber but as a hairdresser. So I went home one weekend and said to my mom and dad, "I want to go to beauty school." My dad was clapping underneath the table. My mom was like, "What? You only got one year left." I said, "Mom, I cut school half the time to go to the beach to play volleyball.

Winn: [Laughs]

Sam: "I'm a physical education major. There's no money there." I said, "I want to give a shot what dad does but I want to do it on the cosmetology side." So my mom said, "Alright, let's do this if that's what you really want to do. Yeah, let's make a deal. If you don't complete that or it doesn't work for you, you're going to go back to college but you're going to be responsible for paying your last year because you're going to lose your scholarship." I said, "Deal." Now off I go Peter Hantz, Sally Ponce; I went to their school in San Mateo, California. Peter Hantz, a great guy. In terms he had, what was it, non-transfer rod perms in those days, back in 1976. I'll never forget, Winn, I was two months into school and my teacher comes up to me, she said, "Sam, go check your rollers underneath the dryer; they're falling out and I'm going to be honest

with you, you might think about doing something else.” This is what the teacher told me. So I went—

Winn: Wait, they were falling out—

Sam: Underneath the dryer.

Winn: —on a guest?

Sam: On a client. Yes, a guest that’s underneath the dryer, my rollers were falling out.

Winn: Got it.

Sam: So I went over there, put them back in, and you know, what she said kind of like *ah*. So my dad called me up, happened to call me up on that Friday, and he said, “What are you doing this weekend?” I said, “Well, Dad, I can’t afford to do anything. I’m not doing anything.” He said, “Well, I’m going to come pick you up Sunday morning, we’re going to go to a hair show.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “That’s where you learn the latest trends, things like that.” He put me in the car, he got there early and we took—I go, “Dad who are we going to see?” He said, “We’re going to see Vidal Sassoon.” Winn, I go, “Vidal Sassoon? Dad, that’s who everybody talks about, that’s the magazine. We’re going to see Vidal Sassoon?” My dad was smart. Got there early, second row right in the middle, he put me down. I saw Vidal, Roger Thompson, Alan Benfield Bush, and, oh I can’t recall. Anyway they had these four Asian models and they were just melting the hair, cutting it down, and I was on the edge of my seat. My dad grabs me, he said, “Sit back.” And I said, “Dad, I want to do that.” And he said, “Eyes here, Samuel-san.” He said, “That’s all ego and no money.” Now, when my dad said something, I always had to prove him wrong. Winn, I went back to school and I said, “I’m going to do this. I’m going to do this.” Two weeks back from that show my teacher came over to me and she said, “Are you okay?” I go, “Why?” She goes, “All of a sudden everything’s—you’re clicking it, you’re getting it.” And I told her, “I’m going to be a teacher someday, a platform artist.” She kind of rolled her eyes. Winn, I go back 10 years ago. Now I’m talking 10 years from now I go back to San Francisco Bay area. I’m doing a show. Who’s sitting in the front row? That teacher. That teacher was sitting in the front row and I saw her and she just kind of like looked at me with a smile. I did my show. I came back. She was waiting for me and I said, “Give me some coaching. How did I do?” She goes, “The student is now teaching the teacher.” And she said, “I came back to apologize to you.” But that’s where my experience came from, knowing that this is where I want to go. I want to drive—being a teacher. But I had a salon for 20 years. The two happiest days of my life: one, when I opened it and two, when I got rid of it; like a boat, right?

Winn: Right, right, right.

- Sam: But I tell you I do miss it in terms of the team and the connections made with the guests and things like that but I'm in the world that I absolutely love and that's teaching.
- Winn: Where was the salon?
- Sam: The salon was in San Mateo, California. It was called Avant Hair Studio and I started with four people and we grew to 26 people within five years and I had it for 20 years.
- Winn: And then at what point did you become an educator for different manufacturers? How did that all come about?
- Sam: In 1976 I went to school. It took about a year to get through school. In 1980 I'm doing a haircut on this lady and she says, "I'm Sharon Hayashi. I have a company called Hayashi out of L.A.; we're a wet line." She goes, "You were recommended. Would you like to join our team?" I said, "I would love to." That's where it started. It was actually with BacStat and then I went with Hayashi. But BacStat I started; Hayashi is where it really took off for me. And that's how it connected. But Hayashi was a brand where she wants to be really theatrical. It reminds me of the Altieri Brothers in those days, Winn, when we were twirling the scissors and throwing mousse balls back and forth. It's theatrics. I did that for five years and I looked at myself in the mirror one day, Winn, and I said, "You know what? I don't want to do this theatrics anymore. I want to teach." And that's when I changed the person that I wanted to be at these shows.
- Winn: Okay, so we still see that theatrics, though.
- Sam: Yes. I will pull the theatrics out when I need it but my focus is, like—they say, "Okay, Sam, you're going to do this mainstage thing." I say, "Okay, let's pull some theatrics out." Like I did a show in—where was I? In Barcelona. And I said, "I want a black box," and they go, "A black?" And I said, "I want the light in it." And I said, "I'm going to wear a Phantom of the Opera mask. I want my model all in black catsuit so all you see is her head and then I want her white blonde and we're going to go in this box." And I'm wearing a black suit and white gloves so all you saw was her head floating in there and me just wailing away on hair, flying, being crazy, and my white gloves and the hands.
- Winn: Right.
- Sam: So you just gotta know when to pull that stuff out. But I only do it when I need to. I prefer to stay more on the educational side.
- Winn: Okay, so how do you technically feel like you're making a difference in truly educating somebody—well, it's not just technical; it's how to be a success in the industry and build a clientele and retail products and the message of the salon owner—when your audience is so large?

Sam: It's pretty difficult. I mean, if I focus on three things when I teach and that's what, how, why. Tell them what I am doing, tell them how I'm doing it and why I'm doing it and then add a little business sense into there. But I think it's like I was saying earlier: simplicity is today's brilliance. It's a matter of taking things and keeping them simple and I think that's why I attract people. It's because they know, *Okay if you're going to go to see Sam you're going to walk away with something and you're going to be able to use it.* That's the huge focus in terms for me. But you know what, Winn? A lot of people say, "Sam what have you done? How did you get there?" My response to them is, "Listen, I cannot give you the formula for success but I will tell you the formula for failure is trying to please everybody."

Winn: *[Laughs]*

Sam: And I know, Winn, that when the audience walks out, hey, I didn't please everybody but I know that I'm coming from my gut, from my soul, my hands, my eyes, and I'm giving to you what I feel is what you need at the moment. If it works for you, great. If it doesn't, not my problem, it's yours because your mind was not open to what I was trying to give to you.

Winn: So early on you decided that teaching was going to be a big part of your career and drawing from your days as an athlete, it was about practice, practice, practice, practice.

Sam: You've got it, Winn; you just said it. There's names right now, Winn, that we don't know and I guarantee you by the end of the year they're going to be on a Wheaties box. I'm talking about summer Olympics. Someone's going to win a gold medal, they're going to become very popular, but the reason they're going to get there is because they did something: they practiced, practiced, practiced, practiced. People ask me, "Do you work out, Sam?" I go, "Yeah, I work out with my mannequins." I work out with my mannequins and they just are like, "Are you kidding?" I say, "Look guys, if you want to be successful it's just not going to happen overnight, it takes years of practice, practice, practice in your craft."

Winn: Okay, well then, I'm sure you hear this all the time. People call this the microwave generation. They want things instantly and I know that you have a message about people who feel they can get that education by watching a YouTube video.

Sam: One thing: YouTube is not cosmetology school. People, you got to get that. You've got to understand that. There are two resources of learning. You have online and offline. Online is a great resource. As people know, I really focused on educational soundbites for the past 10 years online but I also want people out there to know, and your audience to know that let's get ourselves back into live education because that's a sense of community. You take a look at the show now here in ISSE Long Beach, and I was walking across the street

with a guy and he goes, “Sam so glad you’re here,” and he goes, “but the show is so small.” And I tell him, “That’s what’s happening. There’s this whole thing of online and offline.” What I want the audience to know out there is they are both valuable to you. Listen, my friends, the computer cannot touch your heart. You cannot ask the computer questions, yet you can come to a show, you can feel the vibe, the energy, you can come up to me and ask me questions and we can connect. I did a class; there were about 100 people in the class and this one girl at the end of the class, she goes—we were talking about just putting a debrief in and she raised her hand and she goes, “You know, what do you do when you work in a salon with 20 people, and I’ve been in the industry now, Sam, for five years and I’m the only one that keeps coming to education and then when I go back they go, ‘What did you learn, what did you learn, can you show us?’” I said, “Good.” I go, “Well, what do you do?” She goes, “Well, I tell them, ‘Look, I paid for the class.’” I said, “You know what? Show them because what you’re doing, if you teach it then you will even own it more.” And I go, “Now, the second thing I’m going to tell you is you’re in the wrong place. You are in the wrong place, I guarantee, because you are here live with your energy that I feel from you right now you’re going to be offered at least five jobs by the time you walk out that door.” “How many salon owners do I have here right now?” They all raise their hand. I go, “How many of you would like to have her on your team?” And they all were like their hands up. I said, “The reason this is happening is because you are here live and that’s a big difference. Now, if you were focused on the computer, that experience, that moment would never have happened in your professional career.”

Winn: That’s great advice because I think a lot of people think that they don’t have to show up anymore, but a good balance between both.

Sam: Yes.

Winn: You’re not saying that online education is bad. You’re just saying don’t fully rely on that.

Sam: Redken didn’t build my name; they helped me build my name, I should say that. But what built my name was social. What built my name is education that I put on my social; those educational soundbites. I wanted to get away from DVDs and I knew that with the youth they want it now [*snapping fingers*], they want it immediate so that’s why I did educational soundbites and cut out hour-long DVDs, 45-minute DVDs.

Winn: There’s going to be a lot of brand-new, young hairdressers and barbers listening to this and of course they want to be on that fast track.

Sam: Yes.

Winn: Who doesn’t, nowadays?

Sam: You bet.

Winn: It's not just them. I think that they're just a catalyst for a lot of the things that most of us want. So what is the advice? Because the advice that I try to give is it's going to take a while. Maybe it's not going to take you as long as it took Sam Villa but it's still going to take a while. You still have to put in that work. So what's the advice that you give to people who want it quicker than you feel is really appropriate?

Sam: Well, if you want it quicker then I'm going to ask you: how long does it take to learn it? Because what I mean by that is you can get the information quick but if you don't understand it and you don't know how to use it and you don't know the why behind it, then it's going to take you even longer to apply it. So I think that people have to understand—it's real simple. As a teacher I must never cease to learn, yet as a hairdresser I believe we must never cease to learn. So you might say, "Well, Sam, I've been to all the shows. There's nothing new out there." I go, "Okay. How about going in with these shows with a different mindset?" I don't know about you but if I can find five ways to cut a one-length bob, I'm going to find five ways to do it and not just stick to one way because I want to create a sense of enthusiasm in myself and I want to challenge myself in my craft. So I think that's the mindset and the attitude that we need to develop is this: it's like I don't know everything. I still learn; every day I learn something. I learned a couple of things this weekend that were really cool that I'm going to use and share.

Winn: This hashtag that you have, #artistssupportingartists, tell me about that.

Sam: Well, it all—this came from my education director, Andrew Carruthers. Great man—

Winn: Love Andrew. Oh my gosh!

Sam: And he speaks very highly of you. He said, "You're about everybody." I go, "That's the name of the company that I have, it's called Allvus. It's A-I-I-v-u-s." He said, "You know, you support everybody. You're not just about us." He goes, "Well, what about if it's artists supporting artists and we create that as a hashtag?" So that credit goes to Andrew Carruthers and that's where it really started was, hey, I support you. I don't care what brand you're with. I support you. I don't care what brand you're with. I really thinks it's brands supporting brands and that's so important. There's plenty for everybody. There is a piece of pie for everybody. It's just how big do you want your piece of pie?

Winn: I love this because every single one of my Paul Mitchell Future Professionals are going to listen to this because it's built in within the curriculum that they have to listen to this and they have to sign it off—

Sam: I love it.

- Winn: They actually have to basically do a report on you; they have to answer certain questions. That way I know that they listened to this.
- Sam: I love it, Winn.
- Winn: But my message to these Future Professionals is—Sam, you have nothing, nothing to do with Paul Mitchell and yet here you and I are sitting here and I've loved that message from the beginning of my career. I never wanted to stay—I'm absolutely, you better believe, loyal to Paul Mitchell and I'm so grateful to John Paul and that partnership that he and I have, and I love Angus, he's a good friend, but I also love being able to have a relationship with the entire industry.
- Sam: Now I'm going to get a little emotional. After beauty school—you need to know this out there—after beauty school, the man I followed was Paul Mitchell. I would get—after working all day on a Saturday, living in San Francisco, I'd work all day, get in my Charger, drive six hours to Los Angeles so I could see Paul Mitchell, Paul the man himself, the next day on Sunday and then I would get back in my car and I'd drive home Sunday night. I would fly to Hawaii to go see Paul. I respected Paul because Paul was a man that was, *I'm about me and I am going to do the things that I feel right now*. Taping sections and pulling the hair over and cutting on the tape. The things that he did, I respected that because he was authentic when authentic wasn't cool. So I owe so much to Paul in terms of what I follow. So I'm doing Look Allstars. I'm sitting next to Angus and we're talking, I go, "Angus, your dad was my mentor." He goes, "Ah." So I took out a photo and I show him with me and his dad. He goes, "Oh my gosh." I said, "Now let's take a photo of me and you and I'll put this together." It was just great. But Paul Mitchell—this is what I mean: brands supporting brands. I really believe that you guys, as a brand, what you've done for the schools and the schools that you created and the way Paul set up his wet line and the way he approached technical skills in terms of the craft of cutting. I owe a lot to Paul.
- Winn: Quoting you, you have said, "It's time to shout it out. The way for us to be better is to come together as an industry and the shout begins here with Sam Villa and Redken."
- Sam: That's correct. It's about being really authentic and being—you know, like, I love Redken and we're great, we're married but it doesn't last forever. Who knows if I'm going to stay with Redken and end my career? I hope I do but the idea is this: I want you guys to understand out there, if I can do this, anybody can do this. It's just a matter of doing it.
- Winn: I've heard you say that before. Why do you want to say that a lot?
- Sam: Because—
- Winn: If I can do this—

Sam: Because I'm a human being; you're a human being. The only difference between me and you is I practice this more than you. That's the difference so it goes back to that thing we were talking about earlier: practice, practice, practice. And I want the kids to know that out there. A lot of you probably have fear. Should I enter NAHA? Guess what? Don't enter to win, enter for the experience: the learning experience you're going to have and a photo shoot, the learning that you're going to have in terms of molding that hair or whatever it is that you happen to be doing, the way you're coloring it. It's the experience that you're going to walk away with that I believe is a win.

Winn: I think because of social media—we were in Tulum, Mexico, for New Years and I guess there were a lot of influencers, social media, Instagram, celebrities there that love to get their—we sat and watched this girl. I bet it took her an hour on the beach to set up the perfect shot of herself. She's on the sand with her tripod and we were all just laughing like, *Are you kidding me?* She's trying to make sure this bikini strap was exactly right and this hair and the lips and the puckering and it was just like for an hour of this. I think what happens is people think, *Well, she just went down to the beach and she just snapped it and there it went.* No, she put so much time and work into that and I think that a lot of people are believing that, *If my work isn't perfect today then why bother?* They don't realize the struggle and the practice and the work. And your good friend Ruth Roche—

Sam: Yes.

Winn: I love telling this story. She told me that her first—and how many times has she won NAHA?

Sam: Oh gosh—

Winn: And NAHA—

Sam: Numerous times.

Winn: —is based on a photograph. It's based on the work that you do. And she told me that her first photo shoot was in the back of a Chinese restaurant in Santa Barbara, California. I said, "Can I see those photos?" She said, "No, you can't." *[Laughs]*

Sam: *[Laughs]* I love it.

Winn: Because everybody assumes that her first photo shoot won NAHA. No, there were hundreds and she spent thousands of dollars before that ever happened but people only see the end result and they think, *Wow right out of the gate look what Ruth did and I can't do that so why bother.*

Sam: Well, one of the things that I've noticed at the awards this year at NAHA was the youth. The student category alone, Winn, was like, oh my gosh, look at

the hair these students are doing. I couldn't touch that when I was in school. So yeah, I agree it's just a matter of—I love the analogy of that girl on the beach: getting that perfect money shot, working the time to get that perfect money shot. I don't think people out there realize what it takes.

Winn: Yeah. So talk about your relationship with Redken. And I want to talk about two things. I want to talk about Sam Villa, because that's a brand. It's your name but it's also your brand and you've been working just as hard, if not more, on building your name, your brand, but at the same time you're helping Redken build that brand and supporting that.

Sam: Well, Winn, it goes all the way back to when I was sitting down with myself and I was thinking, *You know what? I've watched platform artists for years. Where's so-and-so now? Where's so-and-so now? Where's so-and-so now?* You know, a platform artistry career doesn't last forever so I started thinking, *I need to create my exit plan from Redken. I need an exit plan.* So I thought—I had my best friends. I said, "Come to the Redken symposium with me, guys. I need to talk to you about I got to do something else than just being a platform artist and being artistic director for Redken." So they came to the grand opening and they said, "Okay, well, let's go back to the hotel room to talk." I go, "Okay great." Then they go, "Are you going the back way?" I go, "No, I exit out the front way." And it took me two hours to get back to my room. They go, "Sam why did you do that?" I go, "Guys, I owe it to these people. I'm not going to hide from them." They said, "You stopped for every single person that asked to talk to you or take a picture; you stopped for them." I said, "I owe it to these people. So now let's talk about what I'm going to do." They said, "Well, what do you want to do?" I said, "I'm a teacher. Let's do DVDs." They go, "No, no, no, you need to think bigger than that. What else would you want to do?" "Tools." So then I went back to Redken and I said, "Look, I need to fill a void that you don't have, that's tools, and I need you to know that I understand that I'm not going to be with you forever. So I want to create something that you don't have and I just ask you, I want you to support me in this. I'm not asking for money, I just want you to give me the okay that you'll back me up on this." And this was with Pat Parenty at the time, and Pat said, "Great." Then I show up, Winn, with a business plan, I show up with an agency out of Las Vegas that created "What happens In Las Vegas stays In Las Vegas," Christine Schuster. We're all sitting there and I've got that agency sitting with me. Next to me is a guy that was the vice president of the Gap; that's my business partner that I kind of grew up with. And then I've got this guy that was the accountant of this big firm and Christine Schuster, she goes, "Wait a minute. I know this agency because my sister's in that world. She goes, "How'd you, what, look at these." Then we laid out the business plan and Redken was going, "Okay, you're doing this right. You've got a business plan, you're not coming out with one SKU, you're coming out with 10 SKUs," and they're like, "You have our blessing." I mortgaged my home. I started out and said, "Okay, let's put a business plan." But the main thing I want people to get out there: if you're going to do it, don't just create something and then say, "Okay, now

let's go sell it." What you want to do is create the marketing. You want to get the distribution, then build that product and then put it out there and you've got somewhere to go. I was talking to an artist today and I said, "How's it going with your combs and your—?" He's going, "It's okay. I just got to get it out there." I go, "Remember the first conversation we had. I told you get investors. Get investors, mortgage your home, do what you need to do to come out with a big package." So with Redken, Redken's been very supportive of it. With Redken I've never asked to be an artistic director. They saw the leadership skills, they saw what I was doing, and people have pushed me to the top, Winn. And the relationship I have with Redken is huge in the fact that they support what I'm about and they see what I'm about and I complement them in the fact that I support the product and sell the product.

Winn: So how long have you been with Redken?

Sam: Oh gosh, Winn, let's see. Since 1996. So how many years is that?

Winn: That's quite a few years, wow.

Sam: Yeah.

Winn: And how many days a year are you committing to Redken?

Sam: Well, let me say this. I can tell you how many days a month I average at home and that's probably about 8 to 10 days a month at home.

Winn: Wow.

Sam: Yeah.

Winn: We're going to talk about that in a little bit.

Sam: Yes.

Winn: You mentioned you were so impressed with the work of the youth at NAHA that you got to see. You're not the youth; you're 65 and yet what does it take to stay ahead of that and to be on top as the artistic director of such a major, major company all these years?

Sam: I've had that question asked in terms of, "How do you reinvent yourself, Sam?" I think it goes back to that concept of research, research, research, knowing that I want to teach. Research, research, and trying to not necessarily trying to reinvent the industry but coming out with information that's going to help people grow their business behind their chair. If I stay focused on that, I think success is going to stay in my lane but if I focus on other things and get outside of it and focus on trying to build my name bigger, then I think that's the wrong mindset for me to have. For the students out there, listen to your teachers. Maybe it's not an area that you say, "Well, I

don't need to listen to this." Let me give you an example. When I was in beauty school, Winn, all I wanted to do was focus on cutting. Cut, cut, cut, cut, that's all I wanted to do. No, don't give me the shampoo sets but in school you had to have those, right? You had to do it. But I knew that's what I wanted to do. I'm going to tell the students out there: you learn everything, you listen to everything, and here's why. Because eventually curling irons came back, And they said, "You're going to do fashion week," and I go, "Okay, so what am I going to do? Cut some—" "No, you're going to be working with a curling iron." Look at my arms.

Winn: All burned.

Sam: They're all burned. Why? Because I was sloppy with my iron work and I had to relearn the iron work. So my message to the students out there is learn everything that you can because eventually that cycle comes back. Don't make the mistake I made where I had to go back and relearn how do I hold that Marcel iron, how do I make a wave? All those kinds of things are so valuable in the career of a hairdresser.

Winn: I remember once talking to a very successful salon owner and manufacturer and distributor and he said, "How I stay on top of it is realizing that it's not about me anymore, it's about who I surround myself with." He says, "If it were up to me, I'm done tomorrow."

Sam: So true.

Winn: But he's been brilliant at attracting the youth and the next generation and somehow creating a place, a space, where they wanted to play with him, where they wanted to be involved with him. Who do you surround yourself with?

Sam: Oh gosh, right now I'm surrounded with, I mean—

Winn: What do you look for? So like somebody comes along and you're thinking, *I want that person on my team*. What exactly are you looking for?

Sam: Freshness.

Winn: What does that mean, freshness?

Sam: Fresh, not necessarily in the way they look but fresh in terms of, you know—you can really read somebody's personality now; I really believe I can. And I can read it in terms of the way they communicate. And what I mean by that: this person's fresh, this person's honest, this person seems authentic, this person seems like they have the desire. When I can find that, those are the people I want to surround myself with; not the people that are, "Hey, I look cool" and every other word is the F word. You know? I'm sorry, it doesn't work

for me. What works for me is the fact that they have a desire in the industry to help the industry. Those are the people I choose to surround myself with.

Winn: Oh my God, if I could have scripted you today, which I certainly didn't and couldn't, that's exactly what I would have said, because I don't think it's about the résumé.

Sam: No, it's not.

Winn: It's about that passion and that desire.

Sam: Yes.

Winn: We've had those people with the incredible résumé and you're like, "Is there any spark in there? Is there any freshness?" as you said?

Sam: Can you imagine, Winn, you've got somebody that you interview and what do most salons say? They interview them and then they say, "Okay. you gotta cut a bob, you gotta to do this, you gotta to do this." But guess what? They may not have it in their hands, but they've got the passion, they've got the desire. That's what I want. I will teach their hands how to perform but nowadays I think you need to look for that: that passion, that desire in these people and I listen for that.

Winn: Well, as much as you share what you're looking for, I think it's also valuable for you to share with us what is a turnoff. You just said somebody who's dropping the F-bomb because they think it's really cool to do that is a turnoff for you, it doesn't work for you. What else doesn't work for you?

Sam: What doesn't work for me is people when they come up and talk about them. It's me, me, me, I, I, I. I look for the people that are about we: we need to do this. Or when we look at this, we look at it this way; that kind of thing. I do a lot of presentation skill classes, facilitation skill classes with the Redken artists. I was teaching, coaching someone, and he kept going, "I, I, I, I, I." So I kept slashing how many times he said "I." In 20 minutes, I said, "I'm going to tell you how many times you said 'I.' Would you like to know?" He said, "Sure." I said, "A hundred two times."

Winn: No way!

Sam: Yes. I said, "Now I want you to say it 102 times right now; we're going to count. I have two people here; they're going to count and I'm going to time it. Ready, go." He's like, *I, I, I, I, I . . .* and we're counting. I go, "Now it took you three minutes to say it 102 times. What you could have done in those three minutes, you could have impacted someone's life by making a profound statement but instead you choose to live on an I-land."

Winn: Oh my God, I'm going to steal that.

Sam: Get off your I-land and get with us. And then I'm with another guy in New Zealand and I was training the Redken team there and the education manager said, "You've got to knock this one person to his knees." I go, "What do you mean?" "He's all ego, ego, ego." I go, "Okay." So it was his turn to deliver, Winn. You're going to love this one. And he delivered. I said, "Pause. How are you doing?" He said, "I think I'm doing great." I go, "You're doing great. Grab another chair. Yep, grab another chair. Stack those two together. Okay, now have a seat. Now deliver sitting down." He goes in to deliver and I said, "Pause, how are you doing?" He said, "Well, I think I'm on a roll but you keep asking me to pause." I said, "Alright, go grab another chair. Put it on top of that one; have a seat." Now he's three chairs stacked. I had the guy 10 chairs stacked and I said, "Now look at what we are looking at. You're up there and we're down here. Why don't you get off your high mountain and come down here and speak to us at this level?" He's just like, "Oh, wow." He got it. I go, "You gotta understand it's not about your ego and you choose to talk about you and what you're doing and where you're at in your salon, but I want to ask you: watch this. Did you guys learn anything from this? Anybody learn anything?" Not one hand went up. "So why are you doing this? Because you want to be a star? Great. Guess what? It's lonely at the top. You want to really do this? Get down here with us and be with us down here." And when he had those 10 chairs it was wobbly so I had people holding the chairs and holding his hand and I go, "It's a little difficult delivering up there." He said, "Well, I'm scared I'm going to fall." I go, "Absolutely right. Guess what? The higher you get up there, the more frightened it becomes because now you've got people throwing darts at you, you've got people talking behind your back. What this industry needs more behind the back, it needs this: the pats behind the back, not this behind the back." He got it and that guy is a great session stylist. His name is Richard Cavanaugh and he's a huge, huge man in the industry and he did a book and he has me in the book about how I mentored him and helped him out. But, you know, that's what it's about, guys, and I want to the students to get that, is that it's not about you. It's about the people that you're around. It's like if you go to get into a conversation, people say, "Well, Sam I'm afraid of public speaking." I go, "Well, I'll tell you what, have you ever been at a party?" And they're like, "Yeah." I go, "That's public speaking." You know, you're public speaking. What's the difference? Just because you're speaking, you've got people staring at you, you get fearful?" I said, "The idea is this: be real. If you're real or authentic and you're just trying to help them, it just comes out in a natural way."

Winn: Wow. So let's switch gears for a little bit.

Sam: You bet.

Winn: I mentioned Tracey Hughes, our good friend, who is from Australia and went back to Australia, so she abandoned us here. We thought we had her for a while and then she leaves.

Sam: I thought, *Oh God, Tracey you're fresh*. You know how she's brought—you know she's just really good at what she does.

Winn: She started a program called Leading Ladies. It's a nonprofit but it was the whole idea of our industry is what, 85% women, and yet sometimes a lot of the powers that be are men: the decision makers, sometimes the artists—

Sam: Sadly.

Winn: —who are standing on the stage, sometimes those who are winning the awards, oftentimes it is focused a lot on men and so she started this thing, Leading Ladies, and I was honored enough to sit in the back and watch and there were people like Vivienne Mackinder on that stage and some—

Sam: Ruth Roche.

Winn: Ruth Roche and pretty powerful women. But Tracey asked you to be the emcee for that, I guess because I wasn't available.

Sam: *[Laughs]* As a matter of fact, you would have been perfect.

Winn: So talk about this.

Sam: Well, I was honored in fact to be asked to do that because I think Tracey saw it in me in terms of, *Man, this guy. he's about everybody*. It was about that. You're so point on in terms of saying—you take a look at Antoinette Beenders, take a look at Vivienne Mackinder; such creative people. There's so much hidden talent out there, female hidden talent, and I love what Tracey was doing: let's bring the women to the forefront. When she asked me to do it I was honored and humbled, but the reason I said, "Yes I'm in," is because I supported what the message was and what she wanted to bring to the industry and that is: women deserve it, too.

Winn: You could have just gone the wrong way on that whole thing. You know what I mean? I was thinking of other people who could have been up there and turned it into what you were talking about before, where they turned it into an ego thing where it could have been all about that male emcee and, "Oh, and by the way, we have these fabulous women on the stage." You were just behind these women with that incredible support, which was—

Sam: When we did that first one, Tracey and the girls were like, "Where'd he go?" I got off that stage and went in the audience and was talking to them from the audience. And one of the reasons being was because when I would ask them a question, they would stare at me. I'd go, "Don't look at me and answer to me; answer the audience." But I also wanted to take myself off that stage because it wasn't about me, it was those ladies that were sitting in front of them.

Winn: What impact do you think that that had on the industry?

Sam: I think it really impacted the youth, the female youth of the industry and I saw it. I saw the youth, some of them having tears in their eyes and believing, *Gosh I could be up there someday, I could do that someday*. It's about the desire, it's about the idea of going, "Yes, I can do that," and believing in that.

Winn: I don't want to categorize or stereotype but technical skillset is one thing but emotional intelligence is another.

Sam: Yes.

Winn: And I think maybe women more naturally have emotional intelligence, which needs to be stronger within our industry.

Sam: Yes, that's true. I think the emotional intelligence is a part of it, like a lot of times when you present you want to hit that technical side, that emotional side, yet I think that—I don't know, I just really believe that there are so many women out there that are better teachers than I am and better hairdressers than I am. I really believe, yet I've got some communication skills and I've got some desire to get it out and get this message out, that there's plenty for everybody. It doesn't matter. I mean inclusive. We now need to be much more inclusive. There's so much negative stuff going on in our world today and what we need to do is everybody needs to understand: stop worrying about black, white; start worrying about textures of hair and understanding how to work with all kinds of textures. Think about a fashion designer. A fashion designer understands the limits and capabilities of silk, the limits and capabilities of wool, of cotton. They don't just fall in love with one texture and sometimes they will blend those textures together to create something. That's what we need to think of. So I really encourage the students out there: learn to work with all textures of hair because you're going to fall in love with something that might push you to the forefront. You just never know.

Winn: I also talked to another good friend of ours, knowing that we were doing this interview: Candy Shaw.

Sam: Ah, love Candy.

Winn: Oh my gosh.

Sam: Love Candy. Here's the thing about Candy. When I told her, "Candy, I followed your father when I was young, in the magazines," and she goes, "Really?" I go, "Yes!" What's important is I love what Candy is bringing in terms of that color but I love the way they are doing it. They're doing it, they're building their brand on their own; they're not so much relying on a distributor. They're relying maybe on the small people and things like that but I just love the message and how much she is a true teacher out there.

Winn: So here's what she said about you. She said, "His fundamentals of not only teaching great technical skills is only rivaled by his teachings of mankind and the human spirit."

Sam: Wow! Oh my gosh. Well, I tell you what, that's—she's hit it on the nail. If I could touch people in a way—you can touch people in a way where you teach them something and if you can touch their heart, that's really impactful.

Winn: Because education has been such a passion of yours, is that sometimes the advice that you give to a burned-out hairdresser or a burned-out salon owner, is like, "You know what? You need to go volunteer and teach a class at beauty school." Do you give that advice?

Sam: You know, that's what I did when I was a salon owner. One of the things I would do is volunteer to go to the beauty school. Yeah, great, I was promoting my salon or trying to find students, that kind of thing. But I think what you've gotta do, my recommendation to those people that feel that way, it's because you continue to do things the same way every day. It's because you continue to show up the same way every day. I think what you have to do is, like I said, find five ways to cut a one-length bob. Continue to keep that enthusiasm and I think that's important out there. Learn as many things as you can and try to perfect it. Be like a postage stamp: stick to something until you get there and you master it.

Winn: *[Laughs]* Say that—oh, my, gosh.

Sam: Once you get there, move on to something else.

Winn: Okay, say that again.

Sam: Be like a postage stamp. Stick to something until you get there and you master it. Once you get there, find something else to stick to and keep moving on.

Winn: That was great.

Sam: And you'll continue to grow.

Winn: Well, two other things; topics that Candy brought up that I want to ask you about. This is also quoting Candy: "When you look up *hardworking team player* in the dictionary, Sam's photo is right there. He lives by his word of stylists supporting stylists. He is no-nonsense, which is why I love him so." So hard, hard work. I mean, you're 65 and are you working less now? Are you working just as much? You working harder? What's going on in your world right now?

Sam: I'm trying to work less, Winn. I really am.

Winn: You're trying. Right, right.

Sam: I'm trying and I need to learn—one of my good buddies, Chris Barron, said, "Man, you need to learn that the word *no* is okay." And I'm learning that, especially now that I have a family.

Winn: Which we're going to get into. We have to talk about that.

Sam: Yes, we will. But I think it goes back to this thing about my energy. It has nothing to do with the age. I think the beauty industry keeps me youthful, keeps me young; at least, I hope. But the idea is this. Age is a number. I still have this energy. I still have this desire to grow the industry. I want to upgrade the industry. I want people who stop—you know, influencers. I think influencers are great in our industry. I think what we need to embrace them. The industry is going through a vicious cycle right now; it's spinning and spinning and the ones that are going to remain standing are going to be the true teachers. Those are who's going to be left standing. I think that there's a lot of change going out there but it just goes back to that whole thing of desire.

Winn: Back in that story when I realized that I was not as smart as Van Council, what I realized was that I could work really, really, really, really, really, really hard and nobody could take that away from me. As long as I just worked really, really hard then I was going to be okay.

Sam: Right. And people ask, "Well, Sam, what's working really hard?" We've talked about practice, we've talked about research. I think that's working really hard. It's not necessarily working really hard and standing behind a chair. It's about working on your communication skills. One of the things I love is this story that I tell. I'll never forget this, Winn. The first time I flew Southwest Airlines, I got my ticket, had a big fat number on it. And I asked her, "What's this number mean?" She goes, "Oh sir, you'll be the sixth person to board. You go stand by that silver stanchion there." So as I'm standing there, I'm going—my little voice talks to me and says, "I felt like a herd of cattle." But then when I got on there, I'm like, "Wow, that was the quickest way to get people on board." Then the lead flight attendant, he stands in front and he goes, "Hi! My name's Bill; I'm your lead flight attendant. Standing in the back of the plane is my ex-wife Sally."

Winn: *[Laughs]*

Sam: And I lifted my hand off the paper and I started laughing. I'm like, *Oh God, that's gotta be kind of tough. I've been there before.*" And then he goes, "Now, standing in the front of the plane is my boyfriend, Bobby." And the plane is laughing. And he goes, "Now standing in the middle of the plane is my lover." And everybody is laughing. See, what they did was—Southwest Airlines was smart. They took and they revolutionized the airline industry in terms of how

we boarded. They revolutionized times of how they got our attention in terms of listening to security. So they weren't getting the outcome that they wanted in terms of people listening to this; listening is going to save your life. They weren't getting the outcome so they changed their style of delivery, their method. Now let's take that to the industry. If you're not getting the outcome out there then you need to change the style of the way you are doing things. You need to change your method because those three things are what give you the results and if you practice it long enough it becomes a habit. Then it becomes a belief. And it's so important that they understand that mistakes are okay. You learn from mistakes. You know this. You fall down five times, stand up eight. The idea is it's only a mistake if I don't learn from it. And you probably know this: mistake, that comes from the movie industry: *That's a miss-take. Let's take it again. Let's retake it and shoot it again.* It's the same thing and you're going to make a lot of mistakes with students on the way. If you only knew the amount of mistakes I made, but you know what? I learned from those mistakes and I think that's valuable. That's what I mean by Southwest Airlines is they revolutionized that. Who followed it? United Airlines followed with zones and a funny video. As a matter of fact, Robert Cromeans was on—remember there was a video on the airplane promoting Paul Mitchell, which I thought was great. Leave it up to Paul Mitchell to put it right in front of us. I think that people just need to understand—look, I'm not the best hairdresser out there but I will tell you I know how to teach. I can teach and I believe that.

Winn: You mentioned the importance of removing ego from teaching because ego absolutely shuts down the doors, the walls of learning, in the minds of the students. What else makes you a great teacher, do you feel?

Sam: I think communication skills. It goes back to that comment I made earlier: simplicity is today's brilliance. Winn, I get so confused, and I'm being really honest, when I walk out on the show floor and you have people making things sound so difficult. Why do you make things sound so difficult: so that you can sound smart? To me that doesn't work in today's world. If you can touch people in a way, in a simple way, and you can touch people and show that it's really important for me that you get this. I think that's what makes it all the worthwhile. The industry is just so crazy out there right now but it's evolving. It's in a good place but everybody's trying to figure things out right now. It goes back to that attendance level at these shows. Where are you? Students, you know what? You need to remember: get yourself to live shows and continue to learn online; two critical, critical resources of learning.

Winn: Now you're a dad.

Sam: Oh, yes.

Winn: This is something new. Listeners, now you're going to see two grown men cry.

Sam: Right. Winn, I knew that I wanted to do this, which meant, alright, am I going to have a family? Because if I'm going to do this, I'm on the road three-quarters of my life, so I thought, *You know what? I'm going to make a decision: I'm not going to have children so I'm going to find someone that can't have children.* And I found a woman that couldn't have children. I came home from playing golf one day; she's on the sofa crying. I go, "Are you okay? Is your mom okay? Is my fam—" She goes, "I'm pregnant." I go, "What? I thought you—" She goes, "I know. I've done it three times." I said, "Call the doctor; let's go." The doctor's on the phone, speaker phone, "No way, no, no way." She's 42; no way. So we go in, sure enough she's pregnant. So then I told her, I said, "Alright, for some reason God wants us to have this child, we're going to have this child." Winn, the tough side of this was me traveling so much and her going in for her monthlies, into the doctor. As she got closer, about six months, something was wrong. She'd go in, something else was wrong. Then the doctor said, "Your son has skeletal dysplasia." He explained to us what it was and his hand was here and the nurse said, "Excuse me, I'll be right back." I said, "Is there an issue?" She said, "I'll be right back; brought the doctor in and that's when we—Down syndrome, skeletal dysplasia; everything. Every time we went in it was something else. And a lot of times, my wife would go in with just her and her mom while I was on the road and she never shared with me, but every time they went in something was wrong. So we went in once and the doctor said, "Okay, he's being crushed. We've got to take him tomorrow. You have to come back tomorrow morning. We need to take him." So he was seven weeks premature and when I walked into the delivery room, Winn, 26 people in the delivery room. He looked at me and I said, "Doctor—" He brought me in there first before he brought my wife; he wanted me to see—I said, "Doctor, why so many?" He said, "Sam, this is doctor so-in-so from Sweden, this is doctor so-in-so from Italy, and every trauma unit is here. I've got brain, I've got heart, I've got bone; every trauma unit is here. Now let's get your wife in and let's get on with this." He goes, "And let's just keep this to yourself; we'll set your wife up." We go in and I'll never forget he's delivering my son Mateo and he pulls my son out and he raises him and he says, "Oh my gosh, we have a miracle baby boy; nothing's wrong." Nothing was wrong. I said, "Doctor." He goes, "Let's just celebrate right now." And the room burst out clapping. He said, "I want to see you a month later." We go back a month later and in there there's these three European doctors and I go, "Now what do you want to tell us? Why did you tell us all this?" They go, "Well, Sam, you saw it all." I go, "What do you want to tell us now?" They go, "Your son is one of four in the world where this has happened; where we see these things and then it just comes out completely the opposite." He goes, "We don't know what to tell you but what we want to do is we need your son to come quarterly to the University of Florida. You guys need to come with him. We need to do these tests; we need to figure out why this happened." And basically what they discovered was there's a gene that I have or possibly my wife has so we gotta make sure that whoever he marries doesn't have the same things.

That's my story. He's two and a half now and he just loves music, Winn, and something that I never thought I wanted but I thank God I got him because it has changed my way of life, it's changed my way of thinking, it's a different kind of love, and I'm very grateful that I have a child; something I never thought I wanted to have. So you have to understand that things that are thrown at you in life, they happen for a reason. And if you can capture that reason and just embrace it, I think that there's something there for it. But it's really embraced me. It's given me a new life. It's given me a new energy. It's given me a new way to look at people and it's given me a way because, Winn, guess what? I'm teaching it. And I tell my wife, "No, don't say it this way; say it this way." You need to make him understand the why behind it. Life is just great now that I have a child. What I want to do is figure out how to be home more and do that kind of thing. So I'm learning to say no.

Winn: Congratulations.

Sam: Thanks. Yeah, it's really—yeah, it's something else; something else, man. You know. I don't need to tell you.

Winn: Oh yeah.

Sam: I don't need to tell you, but I'm very blessed.

Winn: Yeah, our kids—

Sam: My career is blessed, my family life is blessed, and things happen for a reason. I believe that I'm put on this, whatever, to be a teacher. That's what I believe. *[Crying]* I believe I'm doing the right thing and where I need to be in my life and I wouldn't trade my life for anything, Winn, in terms of being a hairdresser and being a father and being a teacher. I love where I'm at in my life and I hope I'm around for a long time. That's what I hope.

Winn: I can add nothing to that.

Sam: I bet you can. I've been a fan of yours for a long time and I went, *Wow, Winn's having a baby?* *[Laughs]*

Winn: *[Laughs]* Thank goodness.

Sam: Right?

Winn: We thought we knew it all. We thought we were this or that, and then you have a kid.

Sam: Yeah, I thought, *Aw, we're going to travel the world; we're going to see the world*, and that's what we had planned, my wife and I.

Winn: Right, right. We thought we would be living in Florence, Italy, for a month and then in Thailand for a month.

Sam: When I go do a show here, you're going to come with me. When I go to Sydney, Australia, you're coming with me.

Winn: Now I'm at room parent meetings.

Sam: Yeah, there you go. I know someday I want to be able to do that. Yeah. It's amazing. It's a beautiful thing having a kid.

Winn: Congratulations.

Sam: Thank you, my friend.

Winn: Sam do you have a final message for our listeners?

Sam: Yeah, if there's anything I can tell you it goes back to this thing about *If I can do this, you can do it*. I want you to always remember that, out there, for that audience that's out there listening to this. It's just a matter of capturing the desire and where you want to be but it's a matter of practice, practice, practice. People out there, understand: you're a human being, I'm a human being, the only difference is I practice these things more maybe than you have. The other thing is this. I want people out there to know that I'm not a rock star, I'm not a genius, I'm not an inventor, I'm not a visionary. I'm proud to say I'm a hairdresser who's a teacher and I'm motivated by the passion to teach. So I suggest to everybody out there, what do you say we teach each other? What do you say we support each other? What do you say that it doesn't matter what tool you're holding in your hand, it doesn't matter what product you're holding in your hand. What matters is the person that you are serving, whether it be a student, whether it be a fellow hairdresser or a guest. The person you are serving, you're doing it with a desire and the passion to help them have a convenient life and build an experience in your salons or wherever it is you are at. And remember: education, education, education, education. Never stop learning.

Winn: Beautiful.

Sam: Thank you.

Winn: Thanks, Sam.

Sam: My pleasure, Winn, my pleasure.

Winn: Finally.

Sam: Yes. We finally made it happen.