

# GENERATION GAIN

**ACADEMY SALONS HAS GONE FROM ONE SALON TO FOUR AND A TRAINING FACILITY IN 15 YEARS WITH TWO GENERATIONS OF HAIRDRESSER AT THE HELM**

**H**aving a younger colleague come on board as your partner – in a business you’ve been running for years – could prove a challenge for many successful salon owners, but for Franco Capozzi, director of the Academy Salons group, it was a very positive transition.

Franco’s co-director Salv Mulé joined the business as salon manager in 1999 – some 27 years after Franco launched the business. Within a year Salv became a partner in the business and has been a major influence over the rapid growth of the group.

Franco opened his first salon in Cobham, Surrey, in 1972 under the very grand name Franco’s of Rome – he arrived in the UK from Italy in 1962. The glamorous connotations obviously struck a chord with the local population and clients were soon clamouring for its services.

In fact, the salon proved so successful that come 1985 Franco decided to sell it to the then manageress and retire to Spain – at the age of just 42. However, within a few years Franco missed salon life, and in 1995 he returned to the UK and opened up a new salon in Hershham. At this time Salv was working at the original Cobham salon under the former manageress and looking for a new challenge. He joined Franco as manager and so the

partnership began.

In 2000, with Salv now a full business partner, the salon was rebranded as Academy Salons and a new salon followed in Claygate in 2006, a training academy in 2013 and the Esher salon in 2015.

According to Franco, he always knew Salv would make a great business partner. “The most obvious reason was that he always had a fully booked column and the clients loved him,” he says. “As a manager he continually and consistently motivated and inspired the team – those qualities, coupled with fantastic ideas on expanding the company, really confirmed that he would make a great business partner.”



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Continues Franco: “Salv brought with him a management structure, which included targets and bonus schemes. He also started one-to-one development meetings regularly with every team member, helping everyone meet their full potential and also achieve their personal goals.”

Salv also realised very quickly that he could achieve a lot as Franco’s business partner. “After being a manager for him and helping to get the salon running efficiently, it just seemed like the natural step. Also we get on so well and have the same goals,” he says. “We trust each other implicitly and are com-



pletely honest about everything. We always work through issues together, even though sometimes there are disagreements.”

One thing the pair didn’t disagree on was the need to open an academy to train its team members to the required standards. Explains Salv: “We were struggling to find the right staff so decided the best way forward was to create our own team.”

Salv undertook an assessors course himself and the pair also took on John Baxton Hill, another local salon owner, to undertake some of the training. Training encompasses all the skills needed to work in a salon. “We like staff to understand our ethos and want to buy in to it,” says Franco. “Most people can learn to cut hair. We concentrate on the customer service elements – client retention, rebookings, and so on.”

The group’s reputation for training is spreading and finding new trainees is never a problem. “We don’t advertise,” says Franco, “but people find us.”

Another salon is now imminent and this one will be a mix of hair and beauty, including nails, waxing, facials and lashes – all services for which internal training has been organised. Continuing the ethos of training from within, Salv says: “The original idea was to have five salons and a training academy, but now that we have the right people on board we will probably open more.”

Concludes Franco, the man who started it all: “As long as pampering the client remains the focus – there has to be a balance between expanding and keeping those core values.” **[H]**

**Franco and Salv’s top tips for launching a salon business**

- 1 When developing a new salon set a budget and stick to it as closely as you can
- 2 Set a time frame and try and stick to it
- 3 Research the location, make sure it will work for you – if it’s an existing salon, why is it closing?
- 4 Create an effective management structure
- 5 Continually motivate and inspire your team, make sure you know their personal goals and support them to achieve these.

