
Thinking business with Sara Kavanagh

Former model turned entrepreneur Sara Kavanagh talks about building a brand in the competitive beauty business.

When did you first have the idea for MudPie Beauty?

When I left school, I studied and worked as a beauty therapist for many years. I've always had a love for the beauty industry. I knew that one day I would love to open my own business and in 2011 I found the perfect location for the business model I had in mind. The location and serene setting went hand in hand with the ideas I had to design and brand the business.

How much time did you spend business planning before you opened?

Too much. Probably a year or more. I was working day and night.

What makes you stand out from your competitors?

Our brand identity stands out. My goal was to be different from the rest. Our setting and interior is very different to what you would find in most beauty salons. We've created a warm and welcoming environment in a cosy and quaint surrounding amidst the hustle and bustle of Dundrum Town Centre. Our staff is also key to our business. They're highly professional, helpful and happy, and in turn customers see the quality of treatments and respect the advice they give.

What are you most proud of since MudPie Beauty opened?

It has to be winning Retailer of the Year in Dundrum Town Centre for 2016/2017. It is based on reports from secret shoppers. I couldn't be happier. I still can't wipe the smile off my face.

What is the toughest part of running a business?

The toughest part is the work load. I work constantly but I wouldn't change it for the world. I thrive on being busy and building the business.

You've leveraged your own personal brand and the MudPie Beauty brand very well on social media. What are your tips for using social media to build a brand?

I'm learning more about social media every day. My best tips are brand consistency throughout, not overloading people with information, and keeping social media accounts visually appealing to draw users in.

Where do you see the company in five years?

I would like to see us bring beauty products to the market and opening another salon.

What advice would you give entrepreneurs who want to run their own beauty business?

Determination is key. If you're not willing to sacrifice your time your business won't work. Stand out from the crowd and build your own brand. Be different in a market that's highly populated.

What other job would you love or hate to have?

I would love to be a travel critic. Getting paid to stay in five star hotels around the world – that sounds like the best job out there.

If you were ruler for the day what is the one thing you would change to encourage more entrepreneurship?

There seems to be a lot of supports and grants in certain areas like food, science and tech and for big businesses involved in exporting. I would like to see more incentives for entrepreneurs in all industries to help them take that first step and start a business.

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