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age shall not weary us

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procrastinate and pay



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Golden Girl

Ashleigh Sharman meets Victoria Curtis and discovers the real glow behind Curtis Collection's salon success.

Blonde, tanned and bubbly, first impressions are just the icing on the cake when it comes to the latest rising star in the makeup game, Victoria Curtis. Quite literally overflowing with passion (she doesn't stop and yes it's infectious) Victoria is the real deal — a PR dream, fashion darling and beauty industry buddy every salon wishes they had.



And yet what, on the surface, may appear a pretty, high-fashion brand ambassador, reveals a hard-working, strategic and intuitive owner whose intention is first and foremost for her salon stockists; even stoically so.

"It might surprise a lot of people that I have a background in salons. My family are hairdressers and makeup artists so it's an industry I grew up in and it has always allowed me to be good at what I do," explains Victoria who first honed her savvy marketing skills working across Redken and Kérastase at L'Oréal Australia.

"I understand that making your relationship to the salon owner as easy as possible is a key pillar to success, and so is loyalty. Curtis Collection is for salons and I have to be the one the salons see. I need to deliver the brand message so if I can be there I will."

Only five years old, the brand's infancy is packing some mighty punches — all driven by its leading lady and her own skin history that provides the perfect combination of emotion, motivation and intention.

"With a family working in television, I was 16 years old and wearing stick foundation however by the time my final year of high school came around, teamed with adolescence, acne had presented itself in a big way," a bad combo Victoria admits who went from microdermabrasion to laser and mineral makeup to help her skin improve.

It wasn't until she moved from Melbourne to England with her husband years later that the very idea of product formulation was born. Desperate to



try something new on her skin she started talks with a handful of manufacturing companies and discovered the mineral makeup she'd been using all along wasn't such a skin saviour.

"A manufacturer in the US specialising in minerals told me my makeup contained the inorganic compound bismuth oxychloride. Derived from lead, copper and chlorine, it is known to aggravate and inflame rosacea and acne.

"They gave me a new formula to try for six months and it wasn't long before I started to see flat patches on my skin. Within a year, clear skin and still scarring, but flat patches instead of bumps and it completely freaked me out! I then put together a range of foundations and off we moved to Brisbane," says Victoria who on arrival back in Australia took up work as a freelance makeup artist, knowing that she could finally relax in her own skin.

And, as passionate then as she is now, it is no surprise that a salon wanted to become her first stockist.

"Because of my background, I knew I wouldn't sell into salons unless it was presented nicely. I worked on a small colour range with my mum and so the makeup bar was launched with over 110 salons now supporting us."

What those salons sell to clients isn't just makeup; they sell beauty solutions encompassing both products and treatments. From pigmentation to hooded lids, dark circles to fine lines, Victoria

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stresses the importance of consultation and interactivity with clients who place the beauty therapist on an expert pedestal.

"If there is something wrong with my car, I have no idea what's going on under the hood, so I take it to an expert who can find a solution — you are the expert here so always remember that and yes, you can perform an instant facelift with brows and makeup!

"Remember that makeup comes at your client from every angle so how will you capture them when you don't specialise in makeup? Compared to our retail counterparts salon makeup has a daggy, old-fashioned reputation, not fashion, trend driven enough for the social media generation. We have to keep up with the rest of the makeup industry but stay true to salon philosophies such as great skin and I don't want my salons to miss out. I have to give them more and that could mean by appearing at fashion week or developing the latest 'it' product."

For Victoria then, it's important to look at her clients' treatment menu and work with them to produce the best results in combination with products — adding value to their treatment with a makeup service and with the awareness of a new product. More importantly it's about creating a destination point in the salon where clients can experience 'expertise', because a product sitting on a shelf isn't going to sell itself.

"Clients are investing hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, in treatments but what of their home care, their enhancements that keep your work looking good? We are the final step in their treatment plan. You have to 'follow-through' when it comes to the skin and I know that when

my skin looks good then I feel more comfortable experimenting with colour," says Victoria whose best-selling Naked Glow range proves that skin is most definitely still in and you won't catch her at the gym without it.

"Our name might not be as strong as others but it's about how you communicate what your products can do for a client. We want to be that brand," she adds.

With a mantra that confidence is beautiful, Victoria also has her sights set on the hair and aesthetics industries also. From changing hair colour to dermal fillers, she believes there is always a need to highlight and enhance features, or 'dressing up' as her husband playfully calls her perfectly painted eyes.

But this is typical of Victoria who is happy that her superb organic growth allows her to focus on reputation and providing great service to clients — to give whatever she can to make her brand come alive. And that's the real 'glow'. ■

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