Jetta Koy – Ohana Salon & Spa - Fort Mill, SC

**What industry are you in?**

We’re in Cosmetology. We style hair, provide massages, and sell Aveda products in the Fort Mill/Tega Cay area.

**Tell me about your background.**

In past lives, I worked in apartment leasing as well as database marketing and management.

**What made you want to start a Salon business?**

I was getting my hair done at a salon by a good friend of mine. I looked at how many people were waiting to get their hair done and started thinking about how each person might be spending. I had some idea of what some of the products cost so I approached my friend about becoming a head stylist to help me get my business going.

There were a few things that attracted me to the business. One was the instant receipt of payment compared to 30 or 60 days for other businesses. Another thing I liked about the business is that it doesn’t require selling and high marketing budgets. Choosing the right location means you can spend a little less money on advertising as you’ll have walk-ins. I also like that you tend to get a lot of repeat business and referrals if you do a good job. One very profitable aspect of the business is the gift cards. One month I sold a significant amount of gift cards and only about 31% of those cards had been redeemed. They do very well during the holidays. If all other parts of the business is executed well gift cards alone can potentially cover the cost of doing business.

**What is your target market and how do you reach them?**

We target an upscale clientele. I did a lot of research on the area that I wanted to open my salon. I hired a market research company to provide the information on closest competitors, average income, quality of the school district and other demographics data. What I found is that many of the clients would travel all the way to South Park for these products and services.

**Is your salon a franchise?**

No. My salon is independent. I do carry aveda products, but wanted more control of my market. I believe that the fundamentals of business are always the same. The only thing that changes is the product or service that you provide. I wanted the flexibility of changing products if I needed to in the future.

**How has the recession affected your business?**

Vanity is recession proof. People will get their hair done in good and bad economic times. We did see a dip in gift cards, but other than that we are doing ok. Our revenues went down by 2 percent between 2008 and 2009. In 2010 so far we are on pace to beat 2008 revenues by 15%.

**How long did it take to breakeven?**

We broke even in about 6 months.

**What about the business concerns keep you up at night?**

There’s not much that concerns me. Aveda doesn’t like to have their products sold in locations that are too close together so that is one thing that helps. Another salon has opened up nearby, we are confident in the relationships that we have with our customers. Some of our customers have tried the new salon, but returned soon after.

**What are you passionate about business or non-business?**

I’m passionate about my family. As I get older I have become selfless and my focus is keeping my family happy. I’m also passionate about making something out of nothing and creating opportunities for others. I really enjoy hard work.

**Do you work in the business or on the business?**

I hired a manager and an assistant manager to run the day to day operations. I also created an employee handbook along with a training program that last 9-12 months. No one steps on the floor without going through training. I’m a trained stylist as well, but my time is better spent focusing on the business. I manage the books; meet with vendors; my attorney and accountant.

**What advice would you have for aspiring business owners?**

Find quality people. If you are the only quality person you can find then work yourself until those people come along. Don’t be afraid to hire a manager for day to day operations. Be willing to confront your staff and hold people accountable. There are times in business when you have to be firm, but also be fair.