



# Great Strides in Sustainable Business Practices Reveal a Positive Outlook for Salon & Spa Sustainability

**The National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas<sup>®</sup> (NAEFSS)** speaks to business leaders in all aspects of the salon and spa industry, asking the question “Where does the salon and spa industry stand, in regards to understanding sustainability and implementing its practices?”

“There was a time when Eco-Friendly Salons and Spas were considered innovators. Current conditions reveal that if salons and spas haven’t taken the first steps toward implementing sustainable business practices, the time has come to catch up.” Tamara Jercha

**Researched by:**

Tamara Jercha, MBA, LEED-AP

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## ABSTRACT

Where does one find signs of sustainability practices? The answer is everywhere! Who decides to embrace sustainability? Well, it's not just treehuggers anymore, you'll find CEOs of large corporations answering consumer demand to go beyond compliance and leave the earth a better place than when they found it.

While many may think sustainability in the salon/spa industry is an oxymoron, that couldn't be further from the truth. There are big players in the salon/spa industry embracing sustainability, but it is the mainstream professional who will create the biggest shift in the way the salon/spa industry operates in the future.

This paper is written to celebrate great strides in salon/spa sustainability and to further engage salon professionals in understanding and implementing sustainable business practices. Discover where sustainability is alive, well, and thriving in the salon/spa industry. Then decide for yourself where you fit into the mix.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sustainability is business' fastest growing megatrend<sup>1</sup>. During the past four years, I've lived in what I like to call a "Sustainability Bubble," studying sustainability and how it applies to the salon and spa industry. I surrounded myself with like-minded individuals. I researched businesses in all industries that were showing signs of implementing sustainability practices from manufacturing to hospitality to logistics. Still I wondered how far the salon industry had come in regards to making a difference in its environmental impact.

As I set out to answer that question, I felt it was important that I gather information from as many different players in the salon and spa industry as possible in order to get an overall view of where the industry stands. For this reason, I am extremely grateful to all of the people who graciously agreed to be interviewed and give their opinions on the industry as a whole, as well as how they feel personally about their impact on the planet. My heartfelt thanks go out to: John Paul DeJoria – CEO John Paul Mitchell Systems, Geno Stampora – Speaker & Consultant to the Salon Industry, Chuck

Bennett – Aveda's VP of Earth Community Care, and Sonya Dove – Master Stylist and Co-Owner of "The Doves Studio." Each of these professionals graciously consented to have their comments appear in this paper.

There are many others whose insight into salon/spa sustainability added value throughout this paper. I would also like to extend a special thank you to **NAEFSS** Members, whose sustainable business practices inspire all of us and support the main reason for creating the **National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas**<sup>®</sup>. Together we are working to improve the planet and lives of those with whom we interact.

## INTRODUCTION

Where does one find signs of sustainability practices? The answer is everywhere! Sustainability initiatives, strategies, and business plans are found within colleges and universities, large corporations, retail stores, and individual brand manufacturers. Sustainability practices are found in supply chains and global business strategies involving fair trade. Sustainability is also found in the most unlikely of places, such as NASCAR and big oil companies.

Who decides to embrace sustainability? Well, it's not just treehuggers anymore, you'll find CEOs of large corporations answering the consumers' demand to go beyond compliance and leave the earth a better place than when they found it, or at least do no further harm. So where does this leave the salon/spa industry, a billion dollar industry capable of influencing all others by the sheer multitude of people it comes in contact with daily?

The salon/spa industry is one of the strongest industries in existence due to its focus on personal care service<sup>2</sup>. It's an industry that uses a lot of water and energy, while releasing a lot of toxins into the air and water streams. While many may think

sustainability in the salon/spa industry is an oxymoron, that point of view couldn't be further from the truth. And it is up to salon/spa owners, consultants, manufacturers, and cosmetology schools to educate salon/spa professionals, individually or through manufacturing partnerships, on how to take the steps necessary to do less harm. The goal is one of eventually doing more good and becoming excellent stewards of the environment.

There are big players in the salon/spa industry embracing sustainability, famous stylists, popular wet goods manufacturers, and well known salon consultants, many of whom you will read about in this report. But it is the main stream professional that will cause the biggest shift in the way the salon industry operates in the future.

This paper is written to celebrate great strides in salon/spa sustainability, and to further engage others in the understanding and implementation of sustainable business practices. It is also intended to alert salon and spa professionals that if they haven't taken the first steps toward implementing sustainable business practices, the time has come to catch up!

Discover where sustainability is alive, well, and thriving in the salon/spa

industry. Then decide for yourself where you fit into the mix.

## **SUSTAINABILITY DEFINED**

The most common definition of “sustainability” was developed by the Brundtland Commission<sup>3</sup> in 1987; “Meeting the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” It’s still the most widely accepted definition today, but it’s a pretty broad description of a very complex process. The concept takes into consideration the “Three Es” of Sustainability<sup>4</sup>: economic success, environmental impact, and social equity.

So how does sustainability relate to the salon and spa industry? Many salon and spa owners glance at the products they use to provide services and get discouraged right away. They think there’s no way they can go with an all organic or natural product line and still stay in business. What they fail to realize is that sustainable business practices go far beyond their wet good products’ ingredients, to include everything from operations, to build-out, to maintenance thereby revealing many opportunities to take steps toward a sustainable path.

The **National Association of Eco-Friendly Salon & Spa’s** Sustainability Model<sup>5</sup>, is the foundation for all education and certification. It is specifically designed and suited for the salon/spa industry. All categories of business operations intertwine, in some way, with the three Es of Sustainability.

## **THE DRIVING FORCE**

“Small-scale local business and giant multi corporations alike are discovering that applying an ethical sustainability filter to everything they do can add to their top and bottom lines, because the market place is rewarding good behavior.”<sup>6</sup>

There’s usually an easily identifiable driving force in the beginning stages of implementing sustainable business practices. The decision may come from the salon/spa owner’s preference to be viewed in a favorable light by consumers. It may also come from a desire to maintain some type of control over operating costs or there may be health issues that involve adverse reactions to a particular product line or ingredient found in most product lines. There may be issues with the quality of indoor air, or an overall urging from salon and spa staff to

begin the process of becoming an eco-friendly salon/spa.

Once there is a commitment to adopt sustainable business practices, the process must be supported by the owners and management of the salon/spa. At least one person must be given the responsibility to carry out the organization's mission to implement sustainable business strategies. Creating a "Green Team" is a great way to start, but if there's no sustainability coordinator most initiatives will fizzle out and motivation will be lost due to other individual responsibilities. There must be a specific person willing to spearhead efforts and move forward with the strategies agreed upon as part of their job responsibilities. This person will monitor the progress of new initiatives, point out successes as well as challenges in implementing new strategies, encourage and engage staff participation, and help the salon/spa stay on track toward meeting its sustainability goals.

It's worth noting a quote from Geno Stampora, speaker and salon industry consultant, about the salon/spa owner's present state of mind. "Most salon owners are smart. Due to the nature of our business they are on top of what is happening out there. I believe that most businesses understand the importance of this issue. I

believe the thought of sustainability and paying attention to the small changes that can save our world are very important to the beauty professional. It is a part of their daily conversation with the guest. They provide a service to the public like no other. I believe that they are getting it and the guests really like and embrace it. The time is coming."

## **THE ROLE OF THE MANUFACTURER**

The Salon/Spa industry manufacture plays an important role in business operations. As part of the supply chain they are responsible for adding to the salon/spa's carbon footprint, which reaches well beyond the businesses bricks and mortar. Salon and Spa Owners do business with companies that produce wet goods, salon furnishings, salon appliances, and a host of other materials needed to provide services to guests. In order to continue supporting the sustainability movement, experience lower operating costs, and encourage manufacturing innovation, it is important for manufacturers to lead by example. Manufacturers need to consider sustainability initiatives throughout their daily operations, and provide salon and spa

owners with eco-friendly alternatives at reasonable prices. They also have a responsibility to support salon/spa owners in their quest for sustainability by providing education on the subject.

**Wet Goods Manufacturers:**

Many wet goods manufacturers are paying close attention to their operating costs, by using energy and water efficiently. They're paying attention to materials used in packaging and also partnering with sustainable businesses to transport their product. These companies are sourcing wind power for their energy use and eliminating harmful ingredients from their product lines before government regulations require them to do so. Some wet goods manufacturers are concentrating on what happens to their product at the "end of use," making sure their packaging is recyclable, biodegradable, or implementing a "take back" program for items that are not easily recycled.

Regulating personal care products by the FDA is in its infancy. Therefore it's important that manufacturers are not deceptive in their advertising. Using words like "natural" or "organic" when the majority of the formula is neither is a form of "greenwashing". Greenwashing is a term used to describe a person or business that

make misleading claims to gloss over wrongdoing. While Greenwashers do their fair share of promoting the sustainability movement, they lose terribly in the end by experiencing the loss of consumer trust.

In order to promote a greener environment in the salon and spa industry it is important to do business with companies for whom sustainable business practices are deeply ingrained. Chuck Bennett, VP of Aveda's Earth Community Care states; "It is the historical essence of the brand to be committed to creating products that are good for the users, especially professionals who use their products intensively. Products are produced in an environmentally and socially responsible way." While no company can boast a totally sustainable business profile, it should make every effort to exercise truth in advertising and extraordinary efforts of transparency.

The drive to give back to the environment for John Paul De Joria, CEO of John Paul Mitchell Systems (JPMS), stems from his days of pure enjoyment and appreciation for nature as a child. Growing up in inner city Los Angeles, CA, John Paul was very appreciative of the Boys Clubs of America for taking him on camping trips where he could experience the beauty of nature first hand. That is why John Paul

Mitchell Systems is a great supporter of environmental causes such as American Forests, Waterkeeper Alliance, Sea Sheppard, and Global Green, to name a few.

The choice is up to the salon owner as to what they are looking for in an environmentally responsible wet good manufacturer. The decision may revolve around the ingredient list, packaging or an overall understanding of the businesses operations. With a little research, salon and spa owners will find that it isn't difficult to partner a wet goods manufacturer in tune with their individual sustainability goals.

### **Salon Furnishing Manufacturers:**

When a salon or spa begins to embark on a build-out or remodel, there is a great deal of eco-friendly material to choose from. Interior designers have long been ahead of the game in understanding and recommending sustainably sourced materials. Today you will find a huge selection of environmentally friendly flooring, wall finishes, and textiles to meet the needs of any salon/spa's décor.

When it comes to furnishings specifically suited to meet salon/spa service needs, consumers have some digging to do. One salon furnishing manufacturer makes a low-key statement listing ten substantial

sustainability initiatives that need to be in place in order for the company to operate as a greener corporate citizen. Another looks at their entire manufacturing business cycle, from sourcing material locally to water conservation and distribution of their final product, as part of their efforts to operate sustainably. Other well known salon furnishing manufacturers are in the beginning stages of offering eco-friendly furnishings and face certain challenges when it comes to offering such products.

It's important to remember that new products entering the market place may have performance flaws; this is why many manufacturers are hesitant to introduce new eco-friendly lines that have not proven themselves over a sufficient test of time. According to Jonathan Pugh, experienced salon/spa designer and current Senior VP Marketing and Business Development for Belvedere USA "Consumers are asking for eco-friendly salon equipment but at the same time they are unwilling to accept a higher cost incurred from design innovation, the challenge then becomes creating a quality product at a reasonable price."

### **Appliance Manufacturers:**

There appliance manufacturers that are producing products that are energy

efficient or are made from sustainably sourced materials. By creating such products, and offering eco-friendly options to salon/spa owners, the appliance manufacturer becomes a key contributor in supporting efforts to run an eco-friendly business.

Transparency in regards to all of a business's eco-friendly attributes serves two purposes. First, it encourages employees to continually come up with innovative ideas for improvement, and second, it shares best practices, thereby allowing the sustainability movement to evolve and grow. A quote by John Paul DeJoria sums it up nicely "Success unshared is failure." It's important for the manufacturers to understand that salon and spa owners will be looking to them for innovative products that meet sustainability standards today, as well as into the future.

## **THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS**

There is something to be said for being a "professional student" or a "student of life" as education is always the key to success. And it is the role of manufacturers, schools, and associations to provide a balance between product, business, and instructional technique education.

### **Manufacturers:**

The average salon and spa may spend up to \$6,000 per year, per operator, on wet goods. A 6-chair salon can bring in sales of \$36,000 or more to the manufacturer. For this reason there is great competition for salon and spa business. In order to add value to their product, many wet goods manufacturers have extensive offerings in education. If a manufacturer is making sustainability claims such as employing energy efficient operations, reduced or improved packaging, and so on, it would be of great value to the salon and spa owner to learn more about sustainable practices that could be incorporated into their daily businesses operations as well. To date, my findings show there is a great disconnect between salon and spa owners who purchase sustainably sourced products and those who actually have the knowledge to operate their businesses sustainably.

### **Schools:**

It is important to teach salon and spa professionals, from the beginning of their careers to incorporate ethical sustainable practices into their style of doing business. Students who come from schools that practice sustainability strategies are more

likely to continue this practice in the workplace and in their personal lives. Cosmetology schools are beginning to take their cues from colleges and universities that already consider their commitment to sustainability an asset to increasing enrollment. At this time there is no standardized form of introducing sustainability education into cosmetology's professional trade school curriculum, but there are cosmetology schools that encourage sustainable business strategies through the formulation of student green teams. The greatest strides in salon and spa sustainability will be achieved when a standardized sustainability education model is added to school curriculums nationwide.

#### **Associations:**

In 2008, America's Beauty Show presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Salon Sustainability Summit (SSS). Paul Dykstra, VP, Client Management at Smith Bucklin stated that "As always, it was the members of our association, Cosmetologists Chicago (CC), the owners and producers of America's Beauty Show who were the force behind the initiation and development of the SSS. Many on our education committee had questions about how the sustainability movement affects salons and spas."

Traditionally business classes are a hard sell and economic times left show organizers to conclude there wasn't enough interest in providing sustainability classes to continue offering them after 2010. It was then left up to exhibiting manufacturers to present any eco-friendly attributes they may have as part of their marketing appeal. It is important to continually make sustainability education available to the salon and spa professional. Reflected in a quote by Bonnie Canavino – President Red Cherry Group and CC Board Member "The need to broaden a greener sustainable education platform must continue. Professionals in the salon and spa industry need preventative health changes for cleaner and greener environments to work in."

Most salon and spa professionals care about the environment, but their passion is in the creative process of perfecting their craft. Conducting their business in an eco-friendly manor becomes something that rests on their "to do" list. When there are too many choices or paths to take, a person gets a sense of information overload and becomes paralyzed. They do nothing because they don't know where to start. **The National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas<sup>®</sup>** was created to form a community of environmentally

responsible business owners. It is organized to be a source to its members for sustainability information, product awareness, certification, and educational opportunities.

It is important for all educators to remember that most salon professionals are creatives. Typically classes containing insights on business operations have a low attendance rate. But a class on salon and spa design would be very well attended. Why, because it's creative! It involves color, design, and discusses many other creative components. Therefore in order to get this valuable information into the minds of the salon/spa professional, it is vital to intertwine business with creative classes.

## **THE ROLE OF SALON & SPA OWNERS**

While the motivation to add more sustainable business practices in the corporate world include: higher profits, competitive advantage, and decreased risk, individual salon owners have another take on their motivational push as reflected in a quote by Sonya Dove, Master Stylist and co-owner of "The Doves Studio" in California "We try and practice an eco friendly lifestyle because it keeps us in tune with our

community and also has inspired many of our team members to practice an eco friendly lifestyle at home as well, further helping the environment." The Doves are members of the Sustainable Works Education and Action Committee (SWEA) located in Santa Monica, CA.

Salons and spas are taking advantage of low hanging fruit by reducing waste. Waste is defined as using too much energy when sources that draw electricity can be turned off or lowered when not in use. Waste is reduced by using the right amount of product, thereby eliminating the need for frequent supply refills. Water waste is alleviated by fixing leaks, leading to a savings of hundreds of gallons monthly.

Salons and spas are making investments that pay off in the short term, like switching to energy efficient light bulbs and replacing disposables with durables wherever possible. Larger investments include installing new lighting, hot water, and HVAC systems. In addition to these steps, salon and spa owners who recognize that great improvements can only be accomplished by creating baselines and documenting progress are creating salon/spa sustainability plans.

If the focus is on ingredients used to perform services, many salon and spa

owners are faced with a dilemma. Doug Schoon of Schoon Scientific states that “If salon/spa owners don’t do their own research, they have to rely on someone to tell them the answers. If they believe everything that marketers put out there, they open themselves up to a lot of green washing. Even if they do their own research, it’s difficult to know the truth without an advanced technical background.” Bonnie Canavino, Chicago Cosmetologist Board Member states that “Although watchdog groups for a green environment are making an impact, the social media public is heavily relying on blogs like <http://toxicbeautyblog.com> that focus on healthy products.”

Personal care product regulation is a daunting task and the truth is we have a long way to go before we can count on true transparency in this arena.

The role of the salon and spa owner lies in support; they must support green product manufacturers by continually purchasing eco-friendly products over others in order to create a higher demand. As demand goes up, more competitors enter the marketplace. As competition increases, prices will decrease. While a salon and spa owner may be hesitant to switch product lines due to performance, they can apply

pressure on manufactures to show sustainability initiatives outside of the ingredient list. Consumer demand, created by salon and spa purchasers, will encourage manufacturers to employ sustainable business strategies when faced with the possibility of losing an account.

Salon and spa owners must also educate themselves to learn as much as they can about how the sustainability movement directly relates to their business. Gaining this insight will help them create their own plan for sustainability success. Due to the ever evolving nature of this fast growing megatrend, sustainability becomes part of the journey, not a destination.

It is up to the salon and spa owners to make sure their efforts are communicated throughout their business channels and into the local community. Doing so increases the odds of continued success and sharing ideas is the key to salon and spa sustainability. The best thing a salon and spa owner can do is stay educated about sustainability, and become open to innovative ways in which improvements can be made.

## REFLECTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

“There is only one institution on Earth large enough, powerful enough, pervasive enough, influential enough to really lead humankind in a different direction, and that is the institution of business and industry.”<sup>7</sup> I believe the salon and spa industry, with its combination of individual and chain salons, manufacturing corporations, and associations, can be that powerful force. I believe the salon industry can lead the way in transforming the human race into better stewards of the environment, enhancing the well being of all whom they come in contact with.

“Two years ago sustainability was barely on the minds of private equity businesses, but now it’s the exception to not be thinking of it in some way.”<sup>8</sup> What is found are inconsistencies in outlining, planning, and implementing sustainable behavior. But businesses with the best record for success develop sustainability plans that incorporate all elements of the sustainability mix, modeled to fit their individual business strategies.

“No one these days seriously denies the need for sustainable business practices. Even those concerned about only business and not the fate of the planet recognize that the viability of business itself depends on the resources of healthy ecosystems – fresh water, clean air, robust biodiversity, productive land – and on the stability of just societies. Happily, most of us also care about these things directly.”<sup>9</sup>

This paper was written to celebrate great strides in salon/spa sustainability and to further engage others in the understanding and implementation of sustainable business practices. I invite you to become part of a “Living Case Study,” not something that has become a finished document but something that grows and evolves like the true nature of sustainability itself. **NAEFSS** opens this document up to constructive criticisms as well as innovative ideas to move forward. I do this because as a leader in salon/spa sustainability, I want to encourage all others to engage in a mission to protect the environment, and to thrive personally as well as professionally.

This report will be updated periodically. You can contribute to this study by contacting [Tamara@naefss.org](mailto:Tamara@naefss.org) or become part of our growing community by

joining **The National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas®**. Be responsible for turning something good into something extraordinary and never dreamed possible, through the creation of the truly sustainable, eco-friendly salon and spa!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tamara Jercha is a Sustainability Consultant and Coordinator. She works with individual clients as well as corporations to assist them in understanding the term “sustainability” and how its components directly relate to their business model. Considering all aspects of sustainability, Ms Jercha uses her knowledge to assist companies in creating sustainability plans and reports.

Ms Jercha is also the Founder of the **National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas® (NAEFSS)**. The first association formed in the United States designed to encourage salon and spa professionals to become the driving force in transforming the industry into a community of environmentally responsible business owners.

Ms. Jercha has studied environmental processes for commercial interiors, achieving Leadership in Energy

and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional status. She used her experience in the salon industry, insight from manufacturing industry sustainability experts, as well as her knowledge in the build out of commercial interiors, to create sustainability models standardized and suited specifically for the salon and spa industry.

Ms. Jercha holds an MBA in Sustainable Business, a Bachelor’s Degree in Business, majoring in Marketing, as well as a degree in Interior Design. She is a member of the International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP), U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and Cosmetologist Chicago (CC).

To learn more about **The National Association of Eco-Friendly Salons & Spas**, visit [www.naefss.org](http://www.naefss.org)

To contract consulting services in order to create a manufacturer, salon/spa, or chain salon sustainability plan contact [Tamara@naefss.org](mailto:Tamara@naefss.org). Ms Jercha is also available for educational speaking engagements and school curriculum writing.

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