

MASTERS Audio Club, July 2017
Keri Davis-Duffy, Salon Owner and Educator
“Aligning Beauty and Business”



Keri Davis-Duffy is a world-respected educator who combines business leadership skills and salon creativity. Her Gila Rut Salons have been named six times as one of the Fastest Growing Salons in America; they received NAHA’s Master of Business Award, were named the #1 salon in San Diego, and have designed hair and makeup collections for New York and LA Fashion Weeks.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Keri has an inspirational industry-wide reputation due to her message on women in business and her love for the industry.

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to MASTERS. We are at the Loews Hollywood Hotel. It’s a zoo out there.

Keri: It is a zoo.

Winn: It’s, I guess, exciting for some people but—

Keri: And a zoo for us.

Winn: And a zoo for us but this is what’s more exciting for me, to be here sitting with a very dear friend, who I’ve known for a very long time. And she’s not a stranger to MASTERS because we actually did our first MASTERS interview together back when you and I were ... seven?

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: Sounds right.

Winn: Yeah. Long time ago.

Keri: Long time ago.

Winn: Yeah. Welcome, Keri Davis, to MASTERS.

Keri: Thank you. It’s good to be here.

Winn: And thanks for making the drive up from San Diego. You know, all of us have about ten jobs and we just do what it takes. We just make it work. And you've got your beautiful son here with us too, today, so. Huh, Shaia?

Shaia: Yeah.

Winn: All right. *[laughs]* So I'm going to read here a little bit about Keri so you know who she is, and we're going to address the importance of education. And it doesn't matter what kind of a company you run, it's all about training, training, training your people. I remember when asked the question or posed the statement to Vidal Sassoon, "Well, gosh, it's so expensive to train your people. What if you spend all that money on them and then they leave?" And he said, "Well, what if you don't train them and they stay?" When you consider that there's—what?—50,000 people that work at Disney, they did not find 50,000 people who automatically possessed the skills to create that type of a Disney culture. It's all about training. Train, train, train, train, train. And Keri is a bit of an expert, especially within the beauty industry, on that topic and that's why she's sitting here today. So thanks again, Keri. So I'm going to read this. So three decades as a salon owner, Keri has realized many dreams, learning well from her successes and failures—which we're absolutely going to talk about here. And she has never been more on top of her game. The name of her salons are Gila Rut Salons. You have three locations, right?

Keri: Yes.

Winn: So doing hair, makeup for collections in New York, for Fashion Weeks, as well as everything that you're doing within your own local community. Let's see, your staff has been recognized with their artistry and photo shoots, designing many runway collections, experiencing media opportunities, and consistently competing for and achieving nationally prestigious industry awards—which we're going to talk about why that's so important. You call yourself the "educator's educator"—which I love and we're going to ask about that. You are especially proud of being an educator for Aveda Business College. And you really call yourself a "purfessor"?

Keri: Yeah, that's—

Winn: Or is that a typo?

Keri: No, that was not a typo.

Winn: Okay. *[laughs]*

Keri: Yeah. Aveda calls their business speakers "purefessors."

Winn: *Purfessors.*

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: And I said “purfessor.”

Keri: It’s pure.

Winn: Purefessors.

Keri: ‘Cause we’re pure. *[laughs]*

Winn: Okay. But I love the topics here: Benchmarking for Front Desk, Benchmarking for Team Members, Culture, Leadership, all kinds of things. And the one that I love the most is that in 2012 you were presented with the Master of Business Award by the North American Hairstyling Awards, NAHA. So congratulations for that.

Keri: Thank you.

Winn: Voted the number one salon in San Diego by San Diego’s CityBeat’s Best of San Diego 2014 readers. You’ve got all kinds awards and recognition, you know? I have a feeling it’s not what you’re out for, though. You just kind of put your head down and you plug away, plug away, and you look up and, “Now, where am I?” And people are like, “Oh, you’re here. Here’s an award. Congratulations.” “Oh, okay.” You put your head back down. Is that kind of how you find that it is?

Keri: That’s kind of—that’s kind of how it happens.

Winn: Yeah. Let’s jump into this. I’m going to be all over the map here.

Keri: Okay.

Winn: With this. So I really want to talk about your failures. There you go.

Keri: Okay.

Winn: I want to talk about your failures.

Keri: Okay.

Winn: Because I think people relate to that.

Keri: Mm-hm.

Winn: People think that the first photo shoot that Vivienne Mackinder did won her Master Stylist of the Year.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: I doubt that Vivienne would even let us see her first photo shoot because, again, we call them failures or we call them discoveries. And so we learn from the discoveries that you made along the way. So share with us some of that journey.

Keri: Well, I never read a book on how to become a salon owner, right?

Winn: Is there one? *[laughs]*

Keri: I don't know.

Winn: Do they exist?

Keri: I don't even know because—

Winn: Okay.

Keri: —I don't read very much. *[laughs]* I'm too busy working.

Winn: We write books but we don't read.

Keri: We write books and we don't read.

Winn: Right.

Keri: Gosh, I mean, there's so many—I call them learning opportunities, you know, and they feel like failures in the moment but as we all know that when, you know, the walls come down, new ones need to be built. And over, you know, 25-plus years running a business and not knowing how to run a business—I never went to business school—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: —I think my biggest learning curves have been with my employees and dealing with staff issues and human relation issues. And *[exhales]* I learned early on that with every situation that I considered to be bad or challenging, I had to look in the mirror and say, "What was my piece?", so that I could continue to be a better leader. And I do that to this very day. So I—yeah, I mean, with my customers and all of the customers in the businesses, to me that comes so natural because I'm a hairdresser and so I love working with my customers and I love making them look and feel beautiful. And in business, it's navigating the waters, you know? You just don't know when a storm's going to kick up and it's ch—it's hard.

Winn: Have you ever had a staff walkout?

Keri: I have had a staff walkout before. I've had a few of them over 25 years.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: I'd be lying if I said—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —that I didn't. And, again, as horrible as they feel, because you feel a little bit blindsided and you get stuck in fear, like you don't know what your next step is going to be, and financial fear. And when we look back on it in hindsight, we always build a stronger, more cohesive team and people that want to be there that are a hundred percent enrolled.

Winn: Well, "That was the best thing that happened to us. That they left us."

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: "That they walked out."

Keri: Two years later.

Winn: Right, exactly.

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: Maybe we could shorten that time.

Keri: I keep trying to shorten the time but I have to tell you, you know, anytime that something like that happens, where people leave for whatever reason and it seems like there's groups or three—you know, one, two, three, we're waiting for the last shoe to drop—I say, "Okay, you know what? It's going to be a two-year haul on this location," or whatever it's going to be. And so, you know, you pick up your bootstraps and you scrap together what you can and you keep moving forward. I mean, it's persistence.

Winn: I can't remember who the person was, but it was a very, very famous person within the salon industry who was receiving an award and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, congratulations." And he whispered back to me, "My staff walked out yesterday." *[laughs]* Meaning—

Keri: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: —so there he is, receiving an award—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —for being a top salon owner. I think it was Tina Black, a good friend of mine who I interviewed on here as well, she says if you ask a salon owner or any business owner, you know, "What are your number-one challenges?" "My staff, my staff, my staff." Ask the staff, "What are your number one challenges?" "My boss, my boss, my boss." *[laughs]*

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: So how do you navigate that?

Keri: I mean, I think that it is always trying to bring the two mindsets together because it's just not a physical thing: I'm the boss and they're physically the staff. It is an emotional, intellectual connection; cultural connection that needs to be merged. And, you know, you and I have been educators since the day we were born, practically, but, I mean, we started together, right? We started together 30 years ago, at least, doing training and—and the richer the education, the more frequent the education—and not just any random education but yes, technical—but the opportunity to share culture and the why behind the culture has been the big key for me. That we could talk about culture, talk about our mission statement, but as new people come on, if we don't continue to talk about why we're doing what we're doing, then the message just gets diluted and the buy-in is not as deep unless people really know why we're doing what we're doing. So—

Winn: And what would be some of the whys where you find that, okay, now people are invested?

Keri: God, there are so many. I mean, in our business, in the salon industry, some of the whys around our culture is how we take care of people. How would you want to be taken care of? And we do a lot of—

Winn: As a guest.

Keri: —role-playing. As a guest.

Winn: Right.

Keri: We also talk about the whys financially. That as the kind of captain of the ship, I'm also navigating financial waters and I'm making decisions that my staff may not understand and think, *She's just trying to get more money in her pocket or be rich*. I'm trying to keep the boat afloat, right?

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: And so really sharing the financials and the profit and loss statements and the reasons why we make the decisions that we make and along with different guidelines. We call our guidelines in our salon The Ten Cultural Commandments and there's just certain things that we do, like being on time. You know, why should we value time? Why should we not be chewing gum when we're dealing with our customers? Why should we not be walking around with the phone on our ear or walking around texting? You know, we talk about when you go to Disney—you know, you opened up talking about Disney—you don't see, you know, Donald Duck walking down Main Street texting. You know what I'm saying?

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: I mean, people come in to buy—

Winn: Or a cigarette.

Keri: They—or with a cigarette.

Winn: Right.

Keri: Right. They come in to buy an experience and so there are so many whys behind the decisions that are made day in and day out. And the challenge for leadership is to be able to communicate all the different whys. Not just, “Oh we take care of the guest because of this.” But financially so many owners of businesses in general are afraid to share financially what’s going on, and I feel like that’s—

Winn: Why is that?

Keri: —just critical. I have no idea.

Winn: *[laughs]* Good answer. I have no idea.

Keri: I just have—I have no idea. I mean, I do get that it’s scary because you don’t know if someone’s going to perceive something the wrong way but it’s scarier, to me, to have people making up their own story and making story—

Winn: And they all will.

Keri: And they all do. So either—

Winn: They all will.

Keri: You know, either—you know, I have this adamant saying that either you create your culture or the culture will be created for you. And either you create the story or the story will be created for you, right?

Winn: Wow.

Keri: So I’d rather create the story.

Winn: I’ve been reading a lot about leadership and just the importance of leaders being so transparent.

Keri: So transparent.

Winn: So transparent.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: And that includes financial, as well.

Keri: Yeah, and it doesn't come natural.

Winn: Right.

Keri: 'Cause that's not—like, I'm old school. I come from old school—

Winn: Oh, we were told—old school—you don't talk about that stuff.

Keri: Everything shut—

Winn: Right.

Keri: I mean, it was shut from myself for a long time. *[laughs]*

Winn: Right. *[laughs]*

Keri: That's how—

Winn: You didn't even know.

Keri: That's how non-transparent it was. It was like—

Winn: “Am I profitable?”

Keri: Are there—right.

Winn: “Or is this a nonprofit?”

Keri: I used to look at the bottom of my financials and say, “Are there brackets or no brackets?”

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: 'Cause if there's no brackets, we're good for another month.

Winn: Right.

Keri: If there's brackets, I need to get—

Winn: And if there's—

Keri: —put my head down and start doing—

Winn: —no brackets, shouldn't that amount of money be in my—

Keri: In my pocket?

Winn: —in my pocket right now?

Keri: Yeah. So a lot of learning curves.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: A lot of learning curves.

Winn: Well, we sort of just touched on it: the difference between a leader and a manager. And I ask that question that a lot. In your opinion, in your experience, what's the difference between a leader and a manager? And, by the way, we have to be both.

Keri: We have to be both. Yeah.

Winn: You know, because managers are—you're managing systems—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —and systems have to be in place and checkmarks and all of that. That has to, has to exist.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: But if you're only being a manager then—

Keri: I think this is a challenging—not a challenging question but a challenging mindset and theory for managers that are used to managing systems to also embrace the leadership part. Because, to me, great leaders have the ability to have their team buy into a bigger vision and the ability to share what that is about a million different ways.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: Okay? Because if we keep saying the same thing, we're like Charlie Brown's teacher.

Winn: Okay. *[laughs]*

Keri: Right?

Winn: Right.

Keri: So it's just, "Wah, wah, wah."

Winn: Right.

Keri: So we have to find so many different ways and avenues for everybody to continue to move forward towards that common goal.

Winn: You mean, because you have to figure out where they're coming from to kind of enter that backdoor or—?

Keri: Well there's so many moving parts, as we were just talking about, right? So there is how they're working with their clients, how they're interacting with their coworkers, and how we show up every day to bring the best out of ourselves and our people. And I think great leaders know a lot about their team, what motivates their team, and how do we connect what motivates them with the bigger picture of the company?

Winn: I'm writing that down as you were saying it 'cause I was going to ask you that question and you said the exact words: the importance of knowing what motivates your team.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: 'Cause what motivates you may not motivate—

Keri: No.

Winn: —somebody else, which doesn't motivate the other team members.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: So, and if you're the leader here—so how do you find out what motivates them?

Keri: I think getting to know them. Taking time to get to know them. We're always talking about—our leadership team—is how can we carve out time to work independently with our team? Take them out to coffee, "What motivates you?" Get interested in their life so that you can, what I call "speak into their listening."

Winn: Hm.

Keri: Right? Because we have to, as leaders, be a chameleon. I have to be able to talk to you one way.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: I have to talk to you—you don't care if I hurt your feelings. You just take the information and run. The other one's in the fetal position.

Winn: Right. *[laughs]*

Keri: Crying in the corner, right? So it's like, "Oh my God," right?

Winn: Right. *[laughs]*

Keri: So it's really finding out how every single person operates best and being able to hone those skills. And some people can do that with such ease, and other leaders have to—or managers have to really work and consciously carve that out. It just is not something that's natural for a lot of people.

Winn: Has it always been natural for you?

Keri: I feel like it's something that's been natural for me. That—there's not a lot of things that have come naturally for me.

Winn: Right.

Keri: But I feel like working with people has always come really natural for me.

Winn: Huh.

Keri: I like it. I like finding out what makes people tick.

Winn: See, I struggle with that. 'Cause I'm—I get upset, *Well, I'm excited about this, why aren't they excited about that?* Like I remember when we were moving. We were opening up a location in California. So we had been in Utah, now we're open in California and I'm like excited, you know, "You guys, this is so exciting. This is incredible." And, "Oh, that's nice, Winn. Is the meeting over?" And I'd be upset that they weren't excited. And somebody pulled me aside and said, "Winn, if they were all excited the way we're excited, they would all be moving to California."

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: "You need some of them to stay here." Gah! You need some who are just thrilled to be from nine 'til three o'clock and off at three o'clock to go take care of their kids.

Keri: You know what's funny that you're saying that is you're the one that taught me that when I opened my salon—

Winn: Oh great, well—

Keri: —in 1992. *[laughs]*

Winn: Well, now teach me now.

Keri: I'm going to give it back to you now. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: But I remember in 1992, the first year I opened, and I would call you probably weekly and—

Winn: Right.

Keri: “Well, I don’t know what to do about this and I don’t know what to do with that.” And you said to me, “Keri, if everybody was a leader, they would all have their own salons.”

Winn: Complaining about the fact that their people don’t—

Keri: *[laughs]* Yes, yes.

Winn: *[laughs]* Right. Okay, got it.

Keri: So I said, “Okay, done.”

Winn: Okay. How has it changed for you over the years with the millennial generation? Because what motivates a Gen-Xer is different than what motivates a baby boomer, which is different than what motivates—because for a lot of people, “Hey, here’s a financial bonus,” and the millennials are like, “I don’t really care about that. Can I have a day off?”

Keri: *[laughs]* Without pay.

Winn: “Without pay?”

Keri: *[laughs]* Yeah.

Winn: “To go play with my friends?”

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: You know, to go—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —volunteer or something?

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: And we’re like, “You don’t want money?”

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: So how’s it changed for you?

Keri: I think the first step to anything is acceptance.

Winn: Okay. *[laughs]*

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: We learn that in other programs.

Keri: Yes. We can't fight it. It's bigger than both of us, right?

Winn: Right.

Keri: So I think when this new generation started emerging, I think we were all frustrated because frustration comes from really not knowing what to do or not having a plan that's working. That's what I feel like, so.

Winn: Say that again.

Keri: Frustration comes from not knowing how to change something.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And I think you can ease the frustration if you can find a plan that helps to make something happen.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And I think when we started figuring out what makes the new generation tick—and every new generation that comes in is a little bit different—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: —is then we can start doing different things. Like we can start having flex hours. We can put people in charge of a charity organization and they're leading up the whole team. They want to work, they just work differently. And something that is so fascinating to me—because I am so stuck in, you know, get in there and 10-hour days and I'll take a lunch on the fly and, I mean, that's just how I grew up—is that even my baby boomer teammates, they don't want to work like that anymore.

Winn: Right, right.

Keri: And so it's not really just the millennials. This is now like there's a different workforce in general that I don't think—I think it's transcendent.

Winn: And maybe it's—maybe it's a healthier way to do it, too.

Keri: It is. It is.

Winn: And what you and I did—

Keri: And you know what? I don't want to work like that—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —anymore.

Winn: Right.

Keri: I don't want—

Winn: So they're the catalyst to bring about—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —positive changes.

Keri: Yes. I do believe that and, I mean, I have people that have worked for me for 14, 15, 16 years and, you know, they worked 10-hour days and they also were taking 15-minute lunches and now they're coming in 4 days a week and they're 8 hours and you know what? We just have to staff differently.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: Because what's the goal? The goal is that the company is covered, that the customers can come in when they want to come in.

Winn: Right.

Keri: From the time we open to the time we close, so—

Winn: And that you don't have empty chairs—

Keri: That I don't have empty chairs.

Winn: —during—right.

Keri: Yeah. So okay—

Winn: You just have to staff differently.

Keri: —you want to work over here and this amount of hours and this one wants to work this so it's just like chess pieces, moving them around. And I think when people can work in an environment that they feel that there's flexibility like that and that leadership is open to hearing them—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: —which is not always easy—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —I think then we can get a little bit more longevity—

Winn: Do you know what percentage of your team are from millennial generation? 'Cause I heard it said that within five years, you know, 80 percent of the—

Keri: I was just going to say—

Winn: —team would be—

Keri: I was going to say about 75 percent.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: So if we haven't adapted—us baby boomers—are you a Gen X? When were you born? Never mind. Anyway.

Keri: Pleading the fifth.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: I just lump you with me whether you want to or not.

Keri: Well, this is also just very interesting: when we first opened, we set up all of our company benefits for full-time people, and that's working 40-plus hours a week. And when we, just a few years ago, looked at how many people were taking advantage of our full-time benefits—which was health insurance—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —paid vacation, paid days off, I mean, a percentage of education—we looked at what percentage, 'cause 80 percent of the people used to take advantage of our full-time benefits, and 80 percent of the people now are not taking advantage of our full-time benefits.

Winn: Wow.

Keri: So we completely rearranged our benefit package because people weren't taking advantage of it because they didn't want to work those hours.

Winn: And bottom line, you want them to take advantage of those benefits—

Keri: I want them to take advantage of it.

Winn: —'cause that's what keeps them loyal and—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —takes care of them.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: So we had to—

Winn: Wow.

Keri: —say, “Wow, how can our team work less and I can still offer the benefits?” Because that’s the tricky financial piece.

Winn: Right, right.

Keri: Right?

Winn: Got it.

Keri: So, yep.

Winn: Good stuff. Okay, you talk about—again, I’m all over the place here—you talk about experience-based education. Am I jumping ahead too far or do we need to go back a little bit—’cause I know you went through some mis-starts and frustrations in trying to create your own educational program for your company.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: But now you have a company that teaches everybody how to create an education company.

Keri: Yes.

Winn: So obviously, maybe we need to hear that story first of what you went through. ’Cause I watched a seminar that you did and you were telling the story about, you know, you find somebody, “Here, okay, you’re going to teach these classes from now on,” and then that person leaves and—

Keri: Then you’re—

Winn: —now it’s back on your shoulders—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —and—

Keri: And you’re hunting for the next busiest person.

Winn: Exactly, yeah. *[laughs]*

Keri: “Do you want to a great opportunity?”

Winn: Isn’t that funny that we even do that? That the busiest person, meaning they’re competent in being busy and servicing guests and bringing in a ton of money to the company, and what do we do?

Keri: Just pile—

Winn: We make them—

Keri: —something else on their plate.

Winn: Exactly. Make them incompetent by saying—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —“Now take this on.” *[laughs]*

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Right, got it.

Keri: Yep. You know, we’ve had education since we opened our doors in 1992 and it’s taken such a different turn every year, and every new generation that comes in wants something different. So it’s taken years to get it to where we have it now. But when you talk about experience-based education, to me that ties into why people need to learn the certain things that they need to learn. And the why behind learning, again, has to be involved in all different kinds of training. So we finally, after years, have an amazing education program in our company and we hire in cycles now because we have our three locations. So we hire in cycles so people start—we hire every six weeks so they start in six-week cycles so our education, we finally—hello—it dawned on us that our education needs to be in six-week cycles.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: Okay?

Winn: Yeah, right.

Keri: I should have talked to you a long time ago.

Winn: There you go.

Keri: That’s probably how you do it in the schools. So when we hire people, so now then there’s a starting point for their education and they’re kind of six-week modules, if you will. And in sharing this with salon owners across the country,

as I'm speaking and chatting to people around town, there was such a huge interest of, "How do I put together my own education program?" So we took our platform that we had been using, that's been very successful, and we turned it into an industry platform on how salons, spas, waxing studios, blow-dry bars can train their educators how to teach great education. So by virtue of having a train-the-trainer program—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: —they have a great education program because we're training them how to teach great education.

Winn: Right.

Keri: So that's been a journey. We just launched that so that's—now I'm in a whole new online business and that's been interesting.

Winn: Hm. I want to learn more about that.

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: So in the beginning, though, it was you and I have a feeling it's the same for a lot of salons, it's the owner who's doing the training.

Keri: Yes. I mean, you know, we're the ones working the ten hours a week behind the chair, four or five days a week. We're doing education, probably on the Monday. And it's a huge undertaking. Education is a huge undertaking. So, one of the first things that I was looking at relieving myself from was being the educator. And I wanted out from that position so bad that I found my busiest hairdresser and I said, "Do you want a great opportunity?" "Sure." And so then it began.

Winn: Well. that's flattering, "You're so good I want you to train the rest of the team."

Keri: "I want you to train the rest of the team."

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: And usually because of their personalities, they do have the skillset to be trained to do that. But, like anything else with retention, everything goes in cycles and when those educators leave then I have to find another person to offer a great opportunity to. *[laughs]*

Winn: Right. *[laughs]* Right. "You. You're third busiest. I have a great opportunity for you." *[laughs]*

Keri: Exactly, exactly. And so this is, though, the issue that salon owners come up against is they don't even have time to train a trainer.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And so that's where our new company really has been able to help salon owners to say, "Look, we will put your trainers through this program." It's not how to do the technical work at all. It's how to actually teach classes. It's how to become a teacher.

Winn: Okay, so I have some questions about just education in general.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: First of all, how important is it to create consistency? And I'll use the example of just any kind of a system. You know, if you work for, you know, McDonald's, you can't show up with your own recipe for a hamburger.

Keri: Right.

Winn: There's—

Keri: You can't bring your own buns.

Winn: No. This is exactly how we cook a hamburger. It doesn't matter if you have a hundred years flipping burgers over there.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: We're going to teach you differently. So how important is it for any kind of a company, a salon, whatever, to have that consistency with the training and the education?

Keri: Well, it's so important and it's so important to us that when we have people that want to come and work for us that have experience, if they're not willing to go through our training program so that they're consistent with the rest of the people that work with us, then we won't hire them. And so it's hard sometimes. You stand and like I'm having to stand and the integrity of my company and—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —what we stand for and the consistency and in the face of sometimes letting go of or not moving forward with—

Winn: Not hiring somebody.

Keri: —some amazing people.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: But that just wouldn't keep our culture consistent. And one thing that's really hard, especially when you have multiple businesses, is maintaining consistency.

Winn: Right.

Keri: On anything, whether it's your front desk, customer relations, the technical skillset. That's the—becomes the biggest challenge.

Winn: Well, you know what? They probably did you a favor, though, 'cause if they weren't willing to budge on relearning a different way of cut and coloring hair, they probably wouldn't budge on—you've had those employees—

Keri: Yes, of course.

Winn: —like, “Well, at my last company, we did it this way.” And I'm like, “Yeah, but you hated it there.”

Keri: Exactly.

Winn: “You quit.”

Keri: Yes.

Winn: “And came to work for me.”

Keri: Yes.

Winn: “But now you want to re-create what—”

Keri: Yes.

Winn: “—you hated.”

Keri: That's true.

Winn: Huh.

Keri: It is true.

Winn: So, consistency, that's just as much a part of your brand identity as is anything else, right?

Keri: Oh yeah. Yep. And that—I would say that maintaining consistency takes up probably 30 percent of my job.

Winn: Really?

Keri: Yep. Whether it's with the technical training; whether it is with the systems, with our customers; whether it's with our front desk systems; whether it's consistency with how the managers are delivering information.

Winn: Right.

Keri: I mean, it is like a—it's a huge piece of what I get to do every day.

Winn: Oh boy. I remember Gene Juarez—and I don't know how many employees he had, probably several—

Keri: A gazillion.

Winn: —hundred—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —where he decided, “We're going to completely move this ship around and from now on we're all going to cut hair a different way.” So he had to retrain everybody.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: What a bold, bold decision.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: But he thought, *To create exclusivity and integrity with our brand, this is now who we are.*

Keri: Yep.

Winn: Wow.

Keri: Yep. It's critical.

Winn: And I'd be curious to know how many people listening to this right now, thinking, *Well, you know, you've been cutting hair for 20 years so who cares how you cut hair? You're part of my team now.*

Keri: Yeah, and I don't really think that there's good haircutting. I mean, we know there's bad haircutting but—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: —I don't think that somebody would come in that would be a great haircutter, that's had a successful career somewhere that moved to San Diego, that they cut hair bad or that it's wrong. It's just not consistent with—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —how we put our stamp of approval on things out to the community.

Winn: Well, maybe that's a good lesson that people listening to this then, too, who—you're leaving this salon to go for another salon: be open to that. They're not saying you're a bad haircutter.

Keri: No.

Winn: Or that you have a big—

Keri: No.

Winn: —butt.

Keri: Right.

Winn: You know, they're just saying, "This is how we do things." And that's great!

Keri: Yes.

Winn: Support that. That's great 'cause they're—if there's consistency, there's longevity.

Keri: Yep. I like to hire people that have such an openness for change and growth. I don't look for the best person to hire. I know that the person with the best attitude can be trained to be the best.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And, God, I have some of those, I tell you what. If I could like take those people and clone them over and over. It's just like people that have been in the industry for so long that come to Gila Rut and they are just like the cultural ambassadors.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: They're the—they just are embracing the culture, even though it's so different from what their past is. And I just find that courageous and admirable and such a breath of fresh air. You expect most people out of school to be that way when they're starting off their careers. You don't always expect that from seasoned people. And I love when I see that because I look at them the rest of their life—

Winn: Hm.

Keri: —and I see that it is just a reflection of how they live their life, so open—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: —and wanting newness and change and embracing it. And I just like—

Winn: Which is so attractive, by the way.

Keri: It's so inspiring.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: I just love it.

Winn: I know 18-year-olds who already know it all.

Keri: Oh yeah.

Winn: *[laughs]* Which is so unattractive.

Keri: Yeah. That's—

Winn: But then I've seen 80-year-old hairdressers on the front row at a hair show taking notes.

Keri: Yep. That's so inspiring. You know, I have—

Winn: You know who's like that?

Keri: Who?

Winn: Yosh.

Keri: Yes.

Winn: Like I see him at shows. I'm like—and I mention this on these interviews a lot 'cause it just blows me away. You know—

Keri: It's awesome.

Winn: “You speaking, Yosh?” “No.” “You doing a class here?” “No.” “Why're you here?” “To learn.” *[laughs]*

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: It's like, “Wow, okay.”

Keri: That's awesome.

Winn: Yeah. You said ambassadors of culture.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: And I like that, too, because that's the other thing. You know, leaders have fans. Managers have employees.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Who try to please the boss.

Keri: Yes, yes.

Winn: To have—

Keri: Great distinction.

Winn: You have fans of yours—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —that are ambassadors of the culture.

Keri: Yep. That's—

Winn: So they'd scream it from the mountaintop louder than you would.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: That's what you want.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: And we create cultural ambassadors in our company because we just—our management team can't do it alone so our educators are cultural ambassadors. We have certain people in our company in each location that are our cultural ambassadors. And we have, every month, our cultural ambassador meetings that are leadership meetings to keep them enrolled—

Winn: Is that what you call them?

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Oh wow.

Keri: Yeah. Yeah, 'cause that's what they are. They go out and preach the good word so it's—

Winn: Huh.

Keri: —great. Yeah. Takes a village.

Winn: You also talk about the importance of having a roadmap when it comes to education. Meaning, how do they know that they're making progress? How do they test out? And how important is it for them to have—okay, I'm starting this training. It's going to last for six weeks or six months or six years or whatever, how important is it for people to know from day one what that roadmap looks like?

Keri: Oh my God. It's so important. And we have found when we do exit interviews with people when they leave, one of the main reasons is they never felt like they were getting anywhere. And I think that is one of the—the impetus that really got us to put structure around our training program. 'Cause I'm like, "Oh, you were right there." They're like, "Well, I didn't know I was right there."

Winn: Oh my gosh.

Keri: And so it was just, again—

Winn: I got goosebumps with that one.

Keri: —like you have to like—it's like, okay well, let me just look in the mirror and be like, *What were you thinking?* You know? So—

Winn: Well 'cause, you know, we're like, "Well, when I was your age they just—"

Keri: Oh my God.

Winn: "—threw me—"

Keri: "They just threw me out there—"

Winn: "—in the—"

Keri: "—with the wolves." *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* Or in the back of the salon, folding towels forever.

Keri: Absolutely. So—

Winn: "And we were happy to be there."

Keri: And we were happy to be there. You know—

Winn: Exactly.

Keri: Exactly. *[laughs]*

Winn: "Suck it up and fold a towel."

Keri: Exactly.

Winn: “Be happy to be here.”

Keri: “And just wait for the next client to come in.”

Winn: “You’ve got a job.”

Keri: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Winn: “One day we’ll throw a hamburger back your way, a little scrap of food.”

Keri: Totally.

Winn: Right. But not now. They—

Keri: No. So now—

Winn: Remember those TV commercials, you know, like, “Oh I’ve been here working for a day. When can I make partner?”

Keri: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: Yes! But if you show people now a roadmap—so I was saying earlier that we hire every six weeks. Our education, we have a new cycle or module that starts every six weeks.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: So right when they start, they have their student handbook.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And their student handbook has in it their roadmap. These are the amount of classes. These are the amount of models—

Winn: So you can tell me on day four of that six-week cycle at two o’clock in the afternoon what I’m going to be learning.

Keri: Not only what you’re going to be learning but the student will be able to tell you—

Winn: Oh.

Keri: —if they are following the protocol and don’t call out sick and make sure they bring their models in—if they’re following the protocol, they’ll be able to tell you within a two-week period, when they should be able to be on the floor.

Winn: Wow. Okay.

Keri: So it is—there are checks and balances. Also what they're being tested out on, they have their evaluations from the beginning. The very beginning. This is what you get evaluated on, these are the models you're going to need.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: So the test outs are not—there's no big surprise. It's not anymore the way we used to do it. Again, taking the busiest person and each person has their own perception of what good looks like. So, "God, I feel like you did a really great haircut," or "I feel like you did a really great color and so you pass. You know, I like you."

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: "So you pass." And so—

Winn: "You're going far."

Keri: Yeah. So then they get out on the floor, I'm like, "Who passed this person?"

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: You know? It's like—

Winn: Right.

Keri: "Well, they were so nice," you know?

Winn: *[laughs]* They were so nice.

Keri: And so—they were so nice. And so, even—

Winn: Their model cried but—

Keri: *[laughs]* They were bawling. But so now there's numeric evaluations. So it's not on feeling anymore. It's, you know, it's lines and sections and how long did you take. And so, you know, we go over the criteria before they even get evaluated and everything is numerically calculated now. So this is what pass is. This is what—we're going to work on some stuff.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And this is what liberation feels like. *[laughs]*

Winn: Okay, got it. Well, testing is scary anyway.

Keri: It's scary. It is.

Winn: And I think the more we can do to remove fear—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —from the experience of learning and growing and moving up in the company. Let's remove fear; people are going to perform at their best.

Keri: Yeah. Yeah, and show them—

Winn: If fear is present—

Keri: And show them the road. Yeah.

Winn: Yeah. Forget about it.

Keri: Yeah. So—

Winn: Nobody performs at their best if there's fear.

Keri: No.

Winn: And testing can just scare the heck out of people.

Keri: I mean, even if they know everything, it's just naturally someone feel like they're being watched and judged, so.

Winn: Yeah. You talked about your Ten Cultural Commandments. Is that what you call them?

Keri: Yes.

Winn: And you said one of them is being on time.

Keri: Yes.

Winn: Why is that important? I know it's important. Why'd you have to make it a Cultural Commandment?

Keri: Well, I didn't make it a Cultural Commandment. My team made it a Cultural Commandment.

Winn: Really?

Keri: So I didn't write the Ten Cultural Commandments.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: Our team wrote the Ten Cultural Commandments.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: Based off of our core values of our company.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And so we said based on our core values—

Winn: So the core values came first.

Keri: The core values came first.

Winn: And who wrote those?

Keri: My business partner, Carla, and I initially wrote them.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And then we peeled the onion back with the managers.

Winn: Right.

Keri: Then they had their input.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And then we took it to the team.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And then they had their input.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And then—

Winn: So it's constantly—this is a working document.

Keri: It was—yep. It was working—

Winn: Constantly evolving.

Keri: —until we got our three core values.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And then we said, “Well, if we have these core values how are people going to know they’re our core values?” And how people are going to know what core values are—any company’s core values—is behavior driven. So what

are the behaviors then that would have people come in to visit the Gila Rut Salons and say, “This is what their core values are.”

Winn: Okay. Well, people are thinking now, *Well, what are the three core values?* So tell us what they are.

Keri: Education is one of our core values.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: Communication and relationships.

Winn: Wow. So education, communication, and relationships.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: How do you think you ended up with those three? Which are wonderful, by the way. How do you think you ended up with those three?

Keri: Well, we’re an educational company. We always have been from day one. So that was just, for me, we educate our customers so we educate on that level. We’re educating our team and then I’m always in education so—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —you know—

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: —life is one big, you know, learning opportunity for me. So education was very easy. And then when we talked to our team, we did actually a video a while back for the schools, like a recruitment video when we would go into the schools. And so we interviewed our staff around what was cool about the company.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: And family kept coming up over and over, the word. Like, “We feel like it’s a family here.” I mean, for—people didn’t know what the other person was going to say.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: So relationships and communication just was an organic—

Winn: Hm.

Keri: It kind of organically came.

Winn: Hm. Could you just give a challenge out to any owner or leader listening to this about the importance of having core values?

Keri: I talk about this a lot in—when I’m out speaking—is I always like to see a show of hands of people that even have a mission statement. And a lot of people raise their hands and I say, “Keep your hand up if you have a mission statement.” They keep their hand up. I say, “Now keep your hand up if you can recite that mission statement by heart.” Ninety-five percent of hands go down.

Winn: *[laughs]* Right, right.

Keri: So then there’s five hands left and then I say, “Of the five people left, how many can keep their hands up so that their staff can then recite the mission statement?”

Winn: And every hand goes down.

Keri: And every hand goes down.

Winn: Right, right.

Keri: And so because back in the day, the “they’s” told us to write a mission statement—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —and then no one told us what to do with it.

Winn: Right.

Keri: Right? And so I would love to challenge any business owner out there to say what is—what drives you? What’s your mission? And from your mission, what are your core values? What is the nucleus of how your company is run? And how do you make decisions? Like based on our mission statement and our core values is how we make decisions. It’s like our beacon, right? We keep moving towards that in the decision making. And sometimes when we don’t know what the answer should be, we have to say, “Let’s look at our core values. Let’s look at our mission,” and our decision is made by virtue of going through that process. So if this is who we really are as a company, then how do we make decisions?

Winn: Meaning, that could be the easy deciding point: “Wow, this decision would not support, would affect, would hinder our—”

Keri: Yep.

Winn: “—core values. So the answer is no.”

Keri: Yes. Even if on a personal level—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —I want to make the answer different—

Winn: Hm.

Keri: —to fit what would feel right in the moment, to make somebody happy.

Winn: Who was that American tribe of Indians that, anytime that they make a decision, they decide, “How will this affect us in five generations from now?”

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: We make decisions, we do things, we’re not even deciding how it’s going to affect—

Keri: Tomorrow.

Winn: —us tomorrow.

Keri: Or in an hour.

Winn: Exactly.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: How will this affect us five generations from now? If we make this decision, how is this going to affect our core values, who we are as a company?

Keri: Agreed.

Winn: Who is it? Is the Ray Civello’s company where he says theirs is TLC, which stands for Teach, Learn, Clean. *[laughs]*

Keri: That’s like if you got time to lean, you got time to clean.

Winn: I love that—

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: —statement.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: *[laughs]* Oh gosh.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: Okay. Core values. Okay, so then from there you then came up with your Ten Cultural Commandments.

Keri: Yes.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: So we really have 20. *[laughs]* Okay?

Winn: You have 20, okay.

Keri: Well, there—I wanted—I like the spin of the Ten Cultural Commandments but—and ten of them are what we want to see and ten of them are what we do not want to see.

Winn: Oh.

Keri: So what we—we refer to our Ten Cultural Commandments is really we—I posed the question: if we were going to create this beautiful garden to have these—an English garden with these beautiful flowers blooming, you know, what is the number-one risk that's posed to a garden? So everyone says a weed. Okay. So what are the weeds then? If we want to have this beautiful garden, we have to identify the weeds so we can pluck them out to keep, you know, the garden flourishing.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: And so, you know, a lot of the things that they came up with were, you know, no gossiping in the backroom, no talking about each other, no dropping your dishes off in the sink. I mean, just things that create weeds in a culture.

Winn: Right.

Keri: For somebody else to wash their dishes, you know? Not being a team player. Walking out the door without checking in with your team. So they came up with the ten weeds, right?

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: And then the fertilizer I guess, if you will, over here, which are our Ten Cultural Commandments, so.

Winn: So now you have new team members who are coming in and they automatically need to buy into these Ten Cultural Commandments along with the ten things that we don't want to see, along with the core values.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: But they really didn't have a part in writing them and creating them.

Keri: That's right.

Winn: Is that part of the hiring process, saying, "This is who we are. This is what we believe. Sign on the dotted line"?

Keri: Yes. And this is why.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: So, again, it's back to the—

Winn: Always back to the why.

Keri: Always back to the why because if someone wants a job, they're going to sign on any dotted line.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: Right?

Winn: That's true.

Keri: And so it's really, you know, it's like, "Yeah, I'll sign it even if—"

Winn: "I'm going to be the worst employee you've ever had."

Keri: Yeah. "But I'm signing up."

Winn: "I'm going to be late—"

Keri: *[laughs]* "I'm going to—"

Winn: "—three days next week."

Keri: "Signing up."

Winn: *[laughs]* "Do you want to hire me now?"

Keri: And so it is, it's about the why again and then they actually go down and initial next to each one that they understand it. And so if there's coaching that needs to happen, we get to pull that out and say, "Okay, when you signed on for this—"

Winn: "You agreed to this."

Keri: You know, "You agreed and you knew and so what's going on now that's different from when you signed this?"

Winn: "How can I help you abide by what you agreed to?"

Keri: That's right. Or abide by walking out the door. *[laughs]*

Winn: Don't let the door hit you.

Keri: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: Whatever. Okay.

Keri: You know what? We have a poster in the backroom of each one of our businesses—

Winn: Okay.

Keri: —with the core values and the—

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: —Ten Cultural Commandments on it and so—

Winn: We have our 13 Golden Rules and they're poster-size—

Keri: Yep.

Winn: —hanging in every location.

Keri: Yeah, so it's similar to that.

Winn: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keri: It's similar to that.

Winn: I love it.

Keri: So. Yeah, it's good. It's good. And we revisit them at our—what we call salon celebrations. Some people call them staff meetings or staff beatings. But, you know, we try—

Winn: Staff beatings?

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: *[laughs]* Okay.

Keri: We try to celebrate.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: We celebrate. But we go over, all the time, our mission. We go over the core values and we try to conquer a couple of the Cultural Commandments. So it's—talk about a living, breathing document.

Winn: How often do you have to revisit Cultural Commandments?

Keri: We revisit them all the time.

Winn: Okay.

Keri: 'Cause we do daily huddles before shifts get started in the company and so we're revisiting them there. We revamped them not too long ago because I think people—it was—it ended up being like the wallpaper that you never really notice that's still on the wall.

Winn: Oh right, right.

Keri: And so we gave them a facelift and a revamp and—

Winn: Okay.

Keri: —a new image and a new poster. And so, you know—

Winn: Okay.

Keri: —everyone likes new. So you—look, as you know, you can create amazing systems in your company; if there's no follow-up they fall to the wayside. And so—

Winn: I call it throwing pasta at the wall.

Keri: Uh-huh.

Winn: Meaning, if it doesn't stick, what's the point?

Keri: Mm-hm.

Winn: You can have the best pasta in the world but if it doesn't stick—

Keri: Yep.

Winn: —then we're not making any progress here.

Keri: Exactly.

Winn: Right.

Keri: So it's just—and it's constant revisiting and follow-up. So if we don't follow up to all of these lovely systems that we put in place then they're just words on a paper.

Winn: Right. Okay, switching gears here again. Industry awards and recognition. Do you feel like these things are important? Maybe they're more important to your team and to your brand than they are to you personally. I mean, can you just share with—'cause I've talked to salon owners that they still do photo shoots, they're still putting it out there, and they're like, "I don't—I'm not really interested in this. I'm doing this because this is what keeps my team excited." This morning I was talking to my—a group of my education leaders and I said, "You always have to give our students the why." Like 90 percent of the emails that I get from my students are about, "I really want to do hair in the entertainment business." And I'm going to say, "Well, that's probably not going to happen. I doubt that you're going to be the Kardashians' hairdresser." You know, "Cause I know who he is and he is a Paul Mitchell graduate and he's doing pretty good so I doubt that they're going to hire you." I'm not going to say that to them but sometimes it's the fact that they have a dream, this pie-in-the-sky fantasy that sustains them, gives them the motivation to show up—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —every single day.

Keri: Yes.

Winn: So is that what these awards and these opportunities to do photo shoots and collections and Fashion Weeks, is that why you pursue all of that?

Keri: Yeah. I mean, it keeps our company multidimensional. That's one reason that I—

Winn: That's a good word.

Keri: I like that. I like that we have our hands in—and we do Fashion Week. We've done LA. We've done New York. And we're now the lead salon for San Diego Fashion Week, which is emerging really, really strong. So we do the collections and stuff. So we have a Fashion Week team. We have a photo shoot team. We have an outreach team. And this—it—I like being multidimensional but I think that you hit the nail on the head where it keeps people engaged.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: And it keeps them motivated. We just did a great photo shoot the other week with Ginger and her husband Robert.

Winn: Oh wow. Dang.

Keri: And with our team 'cause, you know, we have all of our photos hanging in the salon. We don't have posters. We have Gila Rut photos of our team doing photo work hanging and they get published and, you know, it's fun.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: And going to work is fun but work sometimes just ends up feeling like work.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: So this is like fun to do shows—

Winn: A little diversion.

Keri: —outside of work and—

Winn: Where it's hundreds of hours for one look.

Keri: For one look. I mean, there were tw—Robert emailed me and goes, "We have 1,200 photos to look through." I'm like, "I only need seven." *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* Great.

Keri: So but it keeps it fun. It keeps it exciting.

Winn: Okay. Talk about balance in business. And to tell you the truth, I'm kind of taking you in a more of a personal journey here, too, because you've been on the other side of that. On the other side where you were not balanced and your life was threatened—

Keri: Yes.

Winn: —because of—

Keri: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean, I think balance is fluid also. I think sometimes you feel really balanced and sometimes you feel like all you're doing is working. And I think it's kind of what's going on at work and I'm still trying to learn that it's not what's going on at work but it's how I choose to look at what's going on at work.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: And yeah, in 2014 I was diagnosed with lymphoma and that was a huge wakeup call for me. And sometimes I think things come up in our body to shout, "Look at me. Take care of me." It has been quite a journey over the last few years to listen to that voice. And I thought I knew that voice but there's a whole other one that is—you know, it's calling for a deeper sense of balance

and time and silence and family and finding the value in working. It's one thing to work and it's another thing to find the value in work because that allows you to re-fall in love with work. That's where I am right now. I'm re-falling in love with my work.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: 'Cause I went from—to be really honest, I went from, you know, going through months of recovery and healing to wanting out of work. I went on the total opposite end where I didn't even want to work anymore.

Winn: I think you offered your company to me for five dollars.

Keri: I think I did. And I was pissed when you didn't take it. *[laughs]*

Winn: Right. How scary was that, getting that diagnosis?

Keri: It was like my world fell out from under my feet and I never saw it coming. So, wow, it just is, to this day, is such a reminder of how precious every minute, every day, every relationship you have. And also a reminder of who you want to spend your time with and what you want to spend your time doing. So it goes back, to me, to value. What's the value in my relationships at home? So that I can be in love with being a mom and be in love with being a wife. And be in love with being a boss.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: And if I don't feel that way then I know that I'm out of balance.

Winn: Hm. Yeah, if you're not having fun, there's something wrong here.

Keri: Mm-hm.

Winn: And by the way, all of us entered this with joy.

Keri: Yep.

Winn: We did not enter the beauty industry thinking, *Oh, that industry sucks. I'm going to join it.*

Keri: Oh yeah, and such enthusiasm.

Winn: Uh-huh.

Keri: And so sometimes—

Winn: You signed your lease with joy.

Keri: So much excitement. Every single one of them.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: And hope and—

Winn: And now it's like, "I'm going to throw the keys the second this lease runs out,"—

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: —is the attitude of some salon owners.

Keri: Well, it's been the attitude of mine.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And, again, that's not where I want to be and so how can I re-find the value and be in love with where I am and who I'm working with. And so, God, going into work being in love, so much more fun than going into work and feeling stressed out and dreading it.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: You know, so. It's a good life.

Winn: Hm. Having children obviously brings us that balance. I was recently hired by a big company outside the beauty industry to come in and do a training and they had their managers from around the U.S. and Canada that were there. Some of them had been with the company for like 35 years and I was there to talk about, you know, relationships and this kind of stuff. And anyway, the V.P. of the company is the one who had hired me and I guess he went onto my Facebook page because the photo that he pulled off of the Facebook page to put onto the big screen to introduce me to his audience was the photo of me as a room mom. So it's me *[laughs]* with 30 other—

Keri: That's fabulous.

Winn: —room mothers. Like for some reason, in his mind, in his company, with who his people were, he thought that that photo would give me more credibility than if they put up my little business suit—

Keri: I love it.

Winn: —photo of me. I know.

Keri: I love that.

Winn: I loved it, too. Like—and it almost made me like—well it did. It kind of shifted my message a little bit.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Like, *Oh, so this is why I'm here.*

Keri: It goes to the heart.

Winn: Yeah.

Keri: You know? There's—we have so much information in our head and that just drops us right down into the heart space, so that's a good thing.

Winn: What would be your message to, first of all, to students, beauty school students listening to this?

Keri: I love working with students because I feel like they're such a blank canvas. I would say, God, there's so many different opportunities in this industry. Do your research. Before you go in to interview with a company, do your research on that company. Go in knowing and knowledgeable about as much as you can about the company that you're going to be interviewing with. And the more you know, the higher the likelihood is that you'll have longevity in that company.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: So, you know, shop hopping or hopping around or whatever industry you're in—even when we're hiring not for hairdressers, when we look back at people that have worked in so many places in one year, *[laughs]* you know—

Winn: Right.

Keri: —they're not a great candidate.

Winn: No.

Keri: Right? So really do your research. Don't be in a huge hurry and have fun. Have fun.

Winn: What would be your message—and I told you I wanted to talk about this—what would be your message to businesswomen? Women in business? women in positions of power and leadership?

Keri: That's such a difficult question for me to answer, to be honest, because I don't differentiate myself of that I'm a woman in business versus a man in business. I just say that I'm in business.

Winn: Right.

Keri: I am a business owner.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: I don't say, "I'm a businesswoman." I don't know why. I just—I'm a business owner. And it's hard for me to answer also because I don't think that I've ever let that be a deterrent for me. It's never been intimidating for me. I just show up and do the best that I can do and I don't really look at it as a gender thing.

Winn: But you know people do put that onto you or they put that onto—I remember the salon owner husband and wife team, employees working for them would say, "This is my boss"—the man—"and his wife." *[laughs]* "Uh, I'm your boss, too." *[laughs]*

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Is the response. "Well, I'm your boss, too."

Keri: I think it's becoming really good at communication.

Winn: Right.

Keri: And in standing your ground.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: And, you know, someone told me a long time ago that what people think about you is none of your business.

Winn: Hm.

Keri: If someone wants to bring it to me then it becomes my business.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: But to really stand for what you believe in and stand for what your vision is for the future, to me, is not a gender issue. Standing up for yourself sometimes becomes a gender issue.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Keri: So, you know, it takes courage to always take a stand for what you want. But what's the alternative?

Winn: Hm.

Keri: To not and be resentful?

Winn: Right.

Keri: Right? That's the best I have to offer you.

Winn: Huh. A good friend of mine is friends with Quincy Jones and he asked Quincy Jones, "Why is it that some artists have one hit? They're a one-hit wonder. What happens after that?" And Quincy responded something along the lines of, "They just became content with that." Whereas the other artists, they didn't even know they had a hit 'cause they're already working on the next one.

Keri: Right.

Winn: And the next one. And the next one. And I think that that sometimes applies to lots of different businesses and people's experiences. They became one-hit wonders.

Keri: Yeah.

Winn: Their salon was successful during this period of time and then when times got tough—they had a staff walkout or something changed—they just lost that drive.

Keri: Yeah. I just got the chills because you do lose it along the way. But it's about what you're doing to regain it again because, to me, when something happens—a walkout or some state-mandated law changes, *[laughs]* you know?

Winn: Right.

Keri: I mean, my only choice is to persevere. I don't have another choice. This is my business. This is our livelihood and this is my love. And I don't have another choice but to pull up my bootstraps and put my head down and just keep moving. And—

Winn: Do you own boots, by the way? That's the third time you've said bootstraps. Do you—

Keri: Really?

Winn: I'm just kidding. *[laughs]*

Keri: I do have a lot of boots. *[laughs]*

Winn: I'm not kidding *[laughs]* 'cause it is the third time but I just—you like that analogy, though. I was just—

Keri: I do like that analogy.

Winn: Okay. I've got to get me some boots with straps.

Keri: I could say I could pull up my big girl panties.

Winn: There you go.

Keri: How's that one?

Winn: I actually did that at a training where I literally had—

Keri: Some big panties?

Winn: Big girl panties. I was trying to buy them for every person in attendance. Just put on your big girl panties and get over it.

Keri: That's awesome.

Winn: Just get over it. Yeah, okay. *[laughs]* And Vance, you don't have to edit that. Vance is our editor. You can keep that one in, Vance. This has been amazing. Do you have a final message for our listeners? I love getting together with you because you can be telling the worst story and you're laughing while you're telling the story. "You're not going to believe what happened." And it's like—and you're chuckling while it's—yeah.

Keri: Well, I will leave you with one of my favorite sayings, which is, "Be now what you want to become."

Winn: Hm.

Keri: Be now. Don't wait for it to happen. So show up and be it now and you will be closer to becoming it.

Winn: Beautiful.

Keri: I love you.

Winn: I love you.

Keri: Thanks for having us.

Winn: And believe it or not, her beautiful son has been sitting here quiet the entire time. He's got incredible patience. We love this boy and, Keri, I love you. Thanks for what you're doing for the beauty industry and thanks for not selling your company for five dollars.

Keri: *[laughs]* Thanks for not buying it.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Keri: *[laughs]*

Winn: Bye.

Keri: Bye.