

10 MINUTES WITH DEB FARNWORTH-WOOD

By April Jones



Deb Farnworth-Wood is the founder of the Australian Skin Clinics Franchise. She is an MBA graduate, a Certified Franchise Executive and serial entrepreneur.

She has incredible vision and passion for the aesthetic industry where she has immersed herself for 10 years but she has nearly 30 years' experience in the management of large, complex and multi-disciplinary healthcare organizations, including pharmacy, GP services, surgical facilities, dietetics, podiatry, nurse practitioners, counselling and secondary care services. She also has significant experience in the multi-outlet retail sector having held a variety of store and head office roles in a leading department store as well as big shed DIY and home furnishings retailers.

Deb has participated in strategic think tanks for the Prime Minister's Office of public reform (UK under Blair government), as well as consumer feedback initiatives and her work on GP Night co-operative models influenced the 1993 national GP contract for the UK.

Deb also has a track record of business disruption. She was the first non-GP to become a partner in General Practice in the UK and in doing so changed the rules for a wave of managing partners that followed. She opened the first drive-through pharmacy in England and with her doctor business partners became the first non-pharmacist group to be permitted to open a UK independent pharmacy.

In 2007 Deb made the momentous decision to sell her UK businesses, move across the world to Australia with her family and "retire" aged 44! After a brief spell of relaxation, she realised that she had more goals to kick and set about building another successful business, with no network, no contacts and as an anonymous new arrival in Australia.

Deb describes the next 10 years as the most difficult yet exciting of her life during which time she studied franchising, built a successful franchise brand, a shopping company and an equipment supply company. She also founded an RTO and turned around an ailing skincare company.

"WE ARE STILL AT THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG WHEN IT COMES TO INJECTIBLES, AND I PREDICT THAT THIS GROWTH WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME YEARS TO COME"

We asked Deb to share her story with the Beauty Biz readers in our '10 Minutes' with feature...

AS THE ORIGINAL FRANCHISE CLINIC FOUNDER OF AUSTRALIAN SKIN CLINICS IN AUSTRALIA, HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE INDUSTRY CHANGE IN THE LAST 5 YEARS?

It has been an interesting journey and in some respects the industry has branched in many directions. By taking treatments that were previously "Secret, women's business" such as injectables and rejuvenation treatments into shopping centres, we gave rise to a new customer mindset. We have seen a significant increase in demand and more acceptability of 'having work done'. Back in 2007 I couldn't get my customers to tell or even admit to their friends that they had injectable treatments but now people freely speak about it.

It has also been interesting to see the sudden increase in bigger brands too. When I first launched the franchise in 2011 so many people said it couldn't be done and yet here we are with so much on offer.

Non-surgical treatments have become more effective and equipment has become more affordable for clinic/salon owners. Cosmetic surgery is now seen as a last resort held at bay by better maintenance regimens.

Really, I don't feel that training in beauty has kept pace with industry developments in that the

majority of beauty schools don't prepare their students for the advanced treatments widely offered now and this is continuing to place employers at a disadvantage because so much extra training is needed in clinic or in salon.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT DURING THIS PERIOD?

Finding and retaining the right staff has been a constant challenge. Aside from the skills/technical shortages we have seen quite a mindset shift in staff. Rapid growth in the industry has made it possible for these staff to literally walk out of one job and into the next immediately. Staff that move around frequently rarely develop their skill set to their highest potential both in terms of technical skills and customer service and retention. In turn the clients suffer from lack of continuity. In turn employers take short cuts with recruitment often not seeking references. Even if references are sought, we tend not to believe them. For example, I have dismissed several staff members for theft or other gross misconduct and they have managed to get work immediately without references.

AS AN INFLUENCER AND A MENTOR FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BEAUTY INDUSTRY, WHERE DO YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

My main inspiration comes from my own needs and those of people I come into contact with. I view everyone as a potential user of aesthetic services and I'm therefore always looking for solutions for them. I make an effort to travel to international conferences and shows and I attend as many educational events as I can that are relevant to the industry. While there, I try out new and interesting treatments. I also have great relationships with suppliers who I consider to be my business partners, and I listen to the needs and feedback from clients and staff too.

It helps that I am not a therapist or practitioner because I have no pre-conception about anything that is new. This means I look for facts and evidence base in everything I see.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE LASER AND INJECTABLE INDUSTRY IS ON TRACK FOR FUTURE GROWTH IN THIS COUNTRY?

I believe there is still significant growth in the injectable services – in fact, we are still at the tip of the iceberg and I predict that this growth will continue for some years to come. I once predicted that having injectables would eventually be as popular as having a haircut and I still believe that. However, I think we are reaching saturation with



laser hair removal clinics because of the sheer number of clinics in this space. As a result, prices have been driven down as low as they can go.

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FROM AN EDUCATION STANCE DO YOU THINK THERE NEEDS TO BE IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR CLINICS?

Absolutely but I believe the industry should be pressing for change at curriculum level in beauty schools. On-line learning, reduced client contact and lack of understanding of the new technologies means employers are struggling. I have girls turning up for interviews who can't shake a hand and look the client in the eye and have a conversation.

At the end of the day, this is a service business and our staff need to understand our customers, be able to communicate with them and develop treatment plans for them.