

From Harvard to Beauty Startups

How threading, an ancient hair removal technique, is going mainstream with an MBA graduate's chain of salons

by [Shobha Tummala](#)

Threading is an ancient hair removal technique that we use in our three New York City salons. It utilizes thread to remove unwanted hair. The thread acts like a mini-lasso and actually lifts the hair out of the follicle directly from the root. I came up with the idea of my own salon, because over the years I had taken lots of different friends to get threading done but most of the salons which used the technique weren't in mainstream areas. I always wished that there was a place that I would go to (and my friends would go to) that had more quality control, and that's when I decided I wanted to open my first salon.

As an entrepreneur, I wear many hats, which constantly evolve over time. Back in 2001, I was one of two employees, so I did almost everything except the actual hair removal treatment. I was the public relations person, head of marketing, the bookkeeper, human resources, and receptionist, to name a few. But as my team continues to grow (we're getting close to 50 employees), my role has changed.

Here's a look at a typical day:

5:30 a.m.— Wake up and check my e-mail to see if there are any surprises that I need to know about before I start my day. I am looking to see if we had any issues at any of the salons that I need to be aware of.

6 a.m.— Go to the gym. I use this time to think. It's so hard to find time to just sit, think, and strategize when I am in the office so I relish this time in the morning. The two questions that I am grappling with are: 1) What is the right marketing organizational structure that we need to set up to handle all of the marketing and PR efforts for the salons and products? 2) As we expand to more salons, what is the right way to quickly train a pool of people with the skills that they need to provide superior customer service?

8 a.m.— Take the subway to our office.

8:30 a.m.— Meet with electricians who are installing new lighting for the salons. Lighting is really important for hair removal because [the beauticians] need to see the smallest hair and do a good job. I do a lot of the interior designing of my own salons. That way, the overall look and feel between all of the locations are similar.

10 a.m.— Respond to e-mails while I have my breakfast.

11 a.m. Weekly meeting with the marketing/PR honcho (we shy away from the term "manager"

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