

JULIETTE ASTRUP *speaks to two beauty businesswomen from very different parts of the world who are using beauty therapy to help women onto a fulfilling career path.*

# JOBS for the GIRLS

**W**omen dominate the beauty sector. From Avon ladies, to the pioneers behind global brands like Elizabeth Arden, for decades it has been a place for women thrive, on a big as well as a small scale. The potential for flexible hours and self-employment means it suits those juggling a family alongside their jobs, and even at a time of recession, beauty training is still getting women into the workforce. Not only that, but there strong female role models, ready to offer a hand up to those following behind.

*Vitality* spoke with two such businesswomen on opposite sides of the globe doing just that – sharing their experience to unlock life-changing careers for a new generation of therapists.

## INDIA

**Shahnaz Husain** is at the helm of a massive multi-national beauty business in India. She started small four decades ago, selling handmade products from her veranda. Her self-titled brand now exports traditional Indian ayurvedic products to more than 400 centres around the world, and supports beauty training institutes across India. Through ‘Shamute’ and ‘Shasight’ she also provides free beauty training courses for speech and hearing impaired and blind girls.

Her personal mantra is ‘you are what you will yourself to be’ – a message she is passionate about sharing with other Indian women.

She tells *Vitality* that she started out encouraging housewives to start salons at home, giving them training and the Shahnaz Herbal franchise. It led to the foundation of a professional beauty training academy, the first of its kind, at a time when only apprenticeship training was available in India.

Her institutes help a range of students, from entrepreneurs

who want to take courses covering business and clinic management, to those who are becoming beauty therapists, masseurs, make-up artists, hairstylists, salon managers and beauty school teachers.

‘A career in beauty has helped to transform lives,’ she says. ‘For one thing, the beauty business has tremendous potential for growth. Secondly, it has offered them the means to be financially independent and self-reliant. I have encouraged ordinary housewives to open salons in their own homes, and seen them blossom into confident entrepreneurs and career women.’

‘When I started, the beauty business offered me the opportunity to work in a career that involved only women. I felt that, as a woman, I could understand their beauty needs. The beauty business gave me the opportunity to emerge from a sheltered life into the world of entrepreneurship.’

She adds: ‘Having employed mainly women in my organisation, I believe that sound management and business acumen are without gender.’

Shahnaz has gone on to share her passion and experience in her own business, through franchising, as well as lecturing at colleges and various summits across the world.

‘I have tried to motivate women to be entrepreneurs and also enter the beauty industry. I think by sharing my experiences, I have been able to inspire women to follow their dreams with faith and courage.’



## THE UK

With 30 years as a therapist, and 20 years as an educator, **Yvonne Sullivan** founded Beauty Training Harrow in London three years ago to ‘turn out really good therapists’, by demanding the same level of excellence in them as she expects of herself. She offers qualifications in waxing, threading, massage and facials, among others.

Working on a small scale, with no more than six students per course, has allowed her to remain hands on, as well as provide flexibility. With weekend and part-time courses, and fast-track training, she gives access to beauty training to women who might otherwise miss out – from high-flying city bankers to stay-at-home mothers.

She says: ‘Just recently I trained an accountant. She loves what she does but is thinking towards the future when she might have children, and wants to have a job which will be flexible for her.’



‘When I was raising my son, I had a lovely balance. I had quality time with him, and at the same time I was earning an income. I feel I have been blessed. That has been my experience – but it can be anybody’s experience.’

*“If you want something in this industry you can achieve it”*

Passing on her love of the beauty industry is clearly a driving force for Yvonne, and as she speaks of the women she has trained, her pride in their achievements shines through.

She recounts the case of a recent successful student who had left her job in insurance to retrain as a manicurist and pedicurist: ‘When she first came she didn’t know how to file nails, and yesterday she passed her NVQ through sheer perseverance.’

‘If you want something in this industry, you can achieve it. I can only speak for myself and what I see the girls doing. I have seen the salons they’re opening – they are living the dream. They are really hard workers and they are out there achieving.’