



# **CORONAVIRUS**

## **10 STEP ACTION PLAN**

March 2020

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In amongst all the hysteria it is important that you control your own mental and emotional state if you wish to be effective and work through the current health and financial crisis that we are all facing.

We all need to stay centred and calm, and have a plan to deal with the upheaval that we are all experiencing.

I think it's the lack of control over what's happening that amplifies the uncertainty. But, there are things in life we have control over and things we have no control over. So let's start by looking at what we do and don't have control over.

## **For example;**

- You have no control over the decisions that the government do or don't make today.
- You have no control over the media response.
- You have no control over what your competitors are doing.
- You have no control over what others are posting on social media.
- You have no control over the banks.

And then there are the things that you do have control over.

## **For example;**

- You have control of how many news bulletins you watch daily.
- You have control over how much time you engage in social media.
- You have control over the conversations that you chose to have.
- You have control over how little, or how often, you communicate with your team members and clients.
- You have control over organising a cash flow budget [no matter how bad it might be].
- You have control over what you focus on, each minute of each day.

**There is no point investing time and emotional energy into the things that we have no control over.**

The speed at which our economies, our livelihoods and sense of security and safety are changing over the last few days is like nothing that we have experienced before, and so a degree of uncertainty and fear is inevitable.

But, if we are going to get through this and come out the other end stronger and even better prepared. Then we need to make sure we adopt a positive mindset, and not buy into the fear and panic, and most importantly to focus on the things that we can control.

As a business owner, you are by default a leader. As such, people will look to you for guidance and security. To help you, I have written a 10-point Action Plan. A checklist to keep you to be focused on the positive things that you can control over the coming days and weeks.

# 10 Step Coronavirus Action Plan for Salon Owners

**This is an Action Plan! To get any real benefit from it I suggest that you don't just gloss over it and feel yet more overwhelmed. Instead work through it as a checklist of practical 'Action Steps for you to implement in order to gain some control and to deal with the current situation in a positive way.**

The points listed will be more or less relevant to you depending on the stage that your salon, city and country are currently at in dealing with this pandemic.

## STEP 1.

### Stay informed but remain calm

It's important that you stay informed. But if you are wallowing in every news bulletin and are constantly glued to social media it is not going to help, it's just going to add to the stress!

- **Don't panic!** - In times of uncertainty people often have a tendency to focus on the worse possible scenario! Which is then in danger of becoming a self fulfilling prophecy.
- **Create some certainty!** Uncertainty creates fear, so it's important that you start by creating some certainty and structure in your life. Even if it is just structure around your new daily routine and habits.
- **Be disciplined in your own hygiene habits!** Whether your salon is still open or closed, this is a time to be fastidious about hygiene. Whether it's hand washing, or cleaning surfaces and utensils in the salon and elsewhere. Extreme vigilance around hygiene is the new normal!
- **Balance your news intake.** Social media is without doubt a great resource. Unfortunately though it has also sometimes become a platform for ill informed opinions, fake news and unhelpful emotional outbursts. So balance your news intake from social media with more reliable news outlets to give you a factual overview of what is really happening and how you need to respond. Check in on the latest developments a couple of times a day but don't be obsessed.

## STEP 2.

### Take control! Start by getting it out of your head and onto paper.

Get a pen and paper and write down 5-10 bullet points of the potential challenges that are causing you the most worry. Don't write a story just a bullet point.

Order the items on your list by the degree of urgency by which they need to be dealt with. Be prepared to change the order of priority based on how the situation is changing in real time, and based on what support your governments are coming up with.

Creating that list will lessen the feeling of chaos and overwhelm.

- **Be proactive!** Make the decision that you won't be a victim! Decide that you will take control. That you are going to get organised and plan ahead, in order to get in front of this new normal.
- **Insurance, are you covered?** There will be people that have all the insurance needed. Unfortunately there will be others that won't be covered with the insurance that they have. Find out the facts about what your insurance will cover you for and document any correspondence you have with your insurers.

**Reassure yourself. Remember that you have had challenges before and survived them! And you can not only survive this one, but you can grow from it too!**

**What can you learn from this!** Because these things happen, it's not always a pandemic! But there are plenty of examples of dramatic business interruption, caused by financial recession, political upheaval or extreme weather conditions such as droughts, storms, floods, fires, ... To acts of terrorism, unexpected health issues, accidents and even the sudden death of a family member. So while you are in the eye of the storm what can you learn from this to prepare you better for the future?

- **You are not alone!** Remember that there are lots of other people in the same situation as you so don't feel that you have to do this alone! Without dwelling on the doom and gloom join proactive online communities to share ideas, information and factual resources.
- **Have a decisive action plan.** Regardless at what stage of this pandemic your salon, your city or your country is at it's important that you take action. That you are decisive, and that you take control of what you are able to.

## **STEP 3.**

### **Get control of your finances.**

The biggest challenge for most salons is going to be financial. Unfortunately most salons run on cash flow and very small margins. So when the cash flow stops there is typically no fall back position or buffer to meet your financial commitments.

- **Deal with the financial facts.** Make a list of everyone you owe money to and the date and amounts due. Just getting the financial facts on paper starts to give you a degree of control.
- **Reduce all unnecessary overhead.** No one knows how long this will last, so it is essential that you eliminate any financial outgoings that you currently have that you do not absolutely need.
- Depending on whether or not you are open or closed will determine what your cashflow currently is. My prediction is that if you are not already closed that you will be in due course.

- **Should you clear debt?** If you are still open and have positive cash flow, or have savings, or access to money in order to clear your debt with your vendors consider doing so. That will ease the burden on them and nurture a good relationship for when you do reopen. But only do that if you are able to without putting yourself in a worse situation.
- **We are all in this together.** Everyone you presently owe money too is obviously aware of the current situation. And likewise, they will in-turn have vendors, suppliers and staff that they also have financial obligations with.
- **The number 1 thing is communication.** Keep in touch with those you owe money too. Be seen to be someone who is proactive about moving forward.

**Put yourself in their shoes.** Fortunately most salons don't have clients on account. Most salons have steady cash flow and don't have people on 30, 60 and 90 day accounts etc. But if you did, you would want to have some idea of when those accounts might be settled.

**Remember, your suppliers are people that you will want to continue working with when this is over. So communicate and come up with payment plans as best as you are able. Even if they have to be completely rewritten at a later date.**

- **Dealing with the unknown.** Obviously if you are already closed the problem is that you don't know when you will be reopening, and when you will have cashflow back to normal levels.
- **Government intervention.** Various governments are instigating measures to protect businesses with deferred payments of tax, subsidising staff wages, low interest loans, mortgage holiday etc
- **Payment plan.** Do not put yourself in a more precarious financial situation than you currently are. I suggest that you do not use all your savings to clear debt that you don't have to if it's going to leave you without a buffer zone.

**Prioritise payments.** You will need to meet all your financial obligations at some point but with limited or no revenue coming in it is obvious that you need to prioritise who gets paid first. I suggest that following as a guideline to clear debt or at least to put a realistic payment plan in place.

1. Pay all your employees. [Some governments are assisting here with various schemes to allow you to avoid redundancies]
  2. Pay all the smaller suppliers so that they too can stay in business.
  3. Pay all rent/mortgages, insurances and utilities. Unless there is a government back scheme to protect you.
  4. Pay all remaining suppliers.
- **Document all conversations.** Keep a log of all conversations and negotiations with people you owe money too. Make a record of the time and day of the call, the name of the person you spoke with, what was agreed and any commitments you have made along with follow up dates etc...
  - **Help yourself and each other!** Different countries and different states are changing hour by hour how they are responding to this because governments everywhere can't afford to see perfectly good businesses collapse through no fault of their own. But I also don't think that people should always look towards or just rely on the government to help them. What I mean by that is that I think we all have a duty to look for how we can all help ourselves and each other.

## STEP 4.

### Ongoing communication with your team.

- **Staff Contact details.** Ensure that staff contact details and emergency contact details are up to date.
- **On-going dialogue.** Whether you are still open or have already closed, take the time to talk to your team and have ongoing dialogue either face to face, over the phone or through digital mediums to bring comfort, factual information and reassurance to them.
- **Be kind!** Not everyone is as strong as you. A lot of people are very frightened of what might happen. So, be compassionate.
- **Use technology to stay in touch.** In the absence of communication your team will make up their own version of reality. So be present and visible and accessible. Whether that means face to face, or via email, text or any of the social media platforms from FaceTime to ZOOM or Skype, or Microsoft teams or Slack. There are numerous digital apps that allow you to have virtual meet ups so that you can connect and engage and reassure your people.
- **What resources do you have?** Some of your team will be in more vulnerable and in more precarious situations than others. What resources do you have both emotional, practical and physical, that can help and make a difference to others?
- **How can you help?** Look for way that you can you help each other? For example, Look after each others kids, walk their dog, shop for them, pick up prescriptions or cook a meal... or just be there to listen if it all gets too much.

## STEP 5.

### Ongoing communication with your clients.

Whether you are closed or still open, many of your clients will be people that have been coming to you for many years and will be genuinely concerned not just for their own health but also for you, your team and your business.

#### **In the event that you are still open:**

- Communicate to clients the hygiene processes you have in place from what precautions you are taking as a salon and what precautions you expect them to be taking. For example but not limited to...
- Social distancing and the spacing of chairs.
- Not shaking hands or hugging.
- Hand sanitisers at multiple locations in the salon.
- Not using magazines.
- All team washing hands before and after every client.
- Constant disinfecting of all salon surfaces.
- Staggered appointment times.

- Not handling cash. Only card or online payment methods.
- What your cancelation policy is at this time
- Not having any staff in the salon that have come into contact with anyone who has been ill.
- Asking clients not to come in if there is any chance that they may be ill or have come into contact with anyone who has been ill.
- Ensure that all clients upon entering the salon are immediately offered hand sanitiser.
- Etc

#### **In the event that you are now closed:**

- It's important that you communicate with your clients. Not necessarily from a selling point of view, just from a humanity point of view.
- Send them a text or email wishing them and their families well during these difficult times. It's important to value and nurture all relationships.
- Send weekly ongoing reassuring and informative text messages or email to your clients ...Or
- Create a facebook live for your clients and talk directly to them and answer any of their questions.
- Have a Coronavirus specific blog on your website with regular updates.
- Use your social media channels for regular updates with linking it directly to your blog.

## **STEP 6.**

### **Look for the positives and be optimistic.**

**If you choose to focus on the negative you are going to see an abundance of it. But if you look for opportunities and the things that you can do in a more optimistic light then you will not only survive but you will grow from this!**

- **Don't be trapped in fear.** Uncertainty breeds fear. I get that. But if you are trapped in fear and the worst case scenarios it's paralysing and holding you back from seeing opportunity and moving forward.
- **Don't be exploitative!** In difficult times for some there is always an upside for others. So without being exploitative of others misfortunes look for the opportunities that are being created that will allow you to grow at the same time as serving the needs of others
- **Be proactive!** This isn't a time to just curl up on the couch and wait for it to pass this is a time to reassure to re-asses, renew and maybe to reinvent.
- **Focus on improvement.** Use this time to to really focus on improving all those things that you have been putting off and to do the things that you have never had the time to do, like the systems that need developing, the manuals that need updating.
- **Systems audit.** Use this time to revisit every aspect of how you do business, from the systems of inventory management to staff training systems, recruitment systems.

- **Use this time to freshen up the salon.** Not just from a cleaning perspective but maybe a coat of paint that's overdue or some other cost effective decorating exercise that has been being put off for that 'rainy day'!
- **Get creative!** Use this time to 'get ahead of the curve'. What I mean by that is that you need to be one of the first to change to a new idea, or new way of doing something that later becomes the normal or popular way of doing things.

## **STEP 7.**

### **Educate yourself**

This is a great opportunity to learn. Obviously to keep informed and learn about what is happening in the world and how governments and people are responding to it.

But also use this time to educate yourself professionally! There is a lot of free as well as paid content out there.

- **I have a free podcast** at [growmysalonbusiness.com](http://growmysalonbusiness.com) or you can download it from Apple Podcasts or Spotify or Stitcher featuring some great industry minds that can help you and your business grow.
- **I have a collection of 400 videos** on my website and the 'Grow My Salon Business YouTube Channel' that are free to access!
- **I have a range of best selling books and audiobooks** that can be purchased and there are many other great resources that other educators have both free and paid for. So I encourage all salon owners and hairdressers to use this downtime to learn some new skills!
- We will offer free shipping on all book orders until midnight on April 31st.

## **STEP 8.**

### **Be a leader**

We all have a responsibility to lead. Whether it's our family, our team, our industry or our communities. Now is the time to demonstrate togetherness. Now is the time to demonstrate calmness when those around us aren't. Now is the time to demonstrate kindness instead of turning a blind eye. Now is the time to lead by example in everything we do and say and everything we don't do and say. So, be a source of calm and not anxiety and just be kind to people.

- The real challenge that we face is that we have no real idea of how long this will last and obviously some businesses will not be able to reopen and many of us will become ill and the harsh reality is that some of us may even lose people that are close to us.
- Some people will disappoint you with how they react to the situation we are living through. But remember, "You can't control what people do, but you can control how you react"

- **Check in on family and friends.** If you know someone who is extremely frightened by the pandemic, listen to them without being judgemental but help them calm their nerves.
- **Support local businesses.** Remember when possible to support your local businesses, they're getting impacted just as you are.
- **The wider community.** This is also a time to look beyond your team and beyond family and into the wider community. Whether they are your neighbours or complete strangers we are in this together so "do unto others as you would have them do unto you".
- **Look after the vulnerable.** Our businesses are impacted and so are our people, but in the wider community there are many people especially the elderly and the sick and vulnerable that also need help. It is not the time to be selfish
- **Keep giving.** This is a time for generosity. There are going to be people that really need you to show up as a leader and demonstrate strength and stability. There will be people who need financial support. Many businesses will have been forced to close. There will be people that lose their jobs. Do what you can too mindful of this and find ways to ensure that people are taken care of.
- **Be the light!** So ask yourself, "Who can you help? What do they need? How can you be the light in someones life in their time of need?"

## STEP 9.

### Look after yourself and your loved ones!

In amongst all this drama remember to look after those that are closest to you. Starting with yourself. This a global Pandemic you need to be healthy to combat this virus. Many of us will get COVID-19 so we need to be healthy to get through it and bounce back.

- **Exercise.** Remember to exercise, you don't need a lot of space. There is numerous free and paid for content on YouTube two of my favourites are
  - <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1>
  - [doyouyoga.com](https://www.doyouyoga.com)
- **Eat well.** Keeping your immune system healthy is more important than ever.
- **Talk to others and build relationships.** Whether it's family, friends or your life partner. This gives us a time to reconnect to those that are most precious to us.
- **Quiet time.** Take the time to reflect, to pray or meditate. Or whatever you do to connect with your higher power.
- **Mental health.** Look out for those that are struggling. We are in the early days of this and there will be a lasting effects on our mental health so take the time to talk and reassure friends and family and help them deal with the tough times both physically and emotionally.

- **Be resilient!** This not going to be over in a week or two. All the indications are that it could be considerably longer.
- Remember that in your 'down moments' that you have the resources to be strong. You have done it before in your life, and you will do it again.
- **Find some joy!** Look for and create the moments of joy that exist in life. This is a difficult time but there are moments of beauty and kindness and laughter that we have to experience to keep our sanity.
- **You will grow!** As unlikely as it might sound at the moment you will be stronger for this!
- **Keep informed.** Keep it factual and don't buy into the hysteria.
- **Be fastidious about hygiene.** You know the drill by now...
- **And remember that – this too shall pass!**

## STEP 10.

### Prepare for when you can reopen!

If you have had to close, the day will come when you will reopen. So plan for it! You may not yet know when that will be and unfortunately some salons wont make it, but that needn't be you.

- **Pent up demand.** Start by being cautiously optimistic about the level of 'pent up demand'. It might be more of a slow burn as clients and hairdressers adapt to the new normal.
- **Discuss the 'new normal'.** As soon as you have a potential open date start communicating it to staff members and have a gathering in the salon to discuss the 'new normal' and address any of their fears and suggestions before you resume seeing clients.
- **Communicate to clients** the new open date and what the 'new normal' looks like for them and start booking people accordingly.
- **Prepare the salon.** Obviously from a cleaning and hygiene stand point. But don't assume that things will immediately go back to what it was before this pandemic. I suggest that unless the authorities say otherwise I would start with or at least consider:
  - Maintaining some social distancing between clients.
  - Create maximum space between styling stations.
  - Staggered client appointment times to avoid congestion.
  - Staggered staff shifts.
  - Maximise extended opening hours
  - Fastidious attention to hygiene
  - Hand sanitisers
  - Re-assess things like refreshments, magazines, gowns and towels from a hygiene standpoint.
  - Promote your cleaning policy and be vigilant about it!

- **Communicate to your suppliers** once you know you are reopening, and address your inventory levels.
- **Commit to a realistic 'Cash flow budget'** and payment plan to manage your debts without overcommitting.

So that's my 10 point plan to help you through this difficult time. I hope it has been of benefit in these difficult times. Please share it in it's entirety with your professional community.

**In years to come you will look back on how you handled this moment in history. I believe it is a defining moment and a turning point in many ways and it's leadership at every level that will get us through it.**

**Please stay safe, wash your hands, choose to educate yourself, and care for those you love and lead.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antony Whitaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Antony Whitaker

**GrowMySalonBusiness.com**

All the advice given should not be taken as official legal or financial advice. Your individual situations, governments, local authorities and legal and financial advisors should be consulted for specific guidance.