

THE

SUMMIT

SOCIAL

MAR/APR 2019





Wendy

INTERNATIONAL **REDKEN** ARTIST

This March marks the 5th issue of The Summit Social, an edition inspired by all things business. The professional beauty industry has changed more in the past 3 years than it has over the past 30. Much like the seasons, the salon industry is shifting and shows no signs of stopping. Such dynamic and dramatic changes require a response from beauty professionals, as traditional approaches to owning and operating a salon business are becoming obsolete. Perhaps now more than ever, there is pressure to adapt and to actively create a more prosperous future. So, the Summit Social set out to connect with an industry leader who continues to thrive during these times of uncertainty. This particular salon professional has managed to grow and develop her salon business, with ambitious plans for expansion, and has had a positive impact on the beauty industry as a whole.

Summit salon partner, International Redken Artist, and award-winning platform artist, Wendy Bélanger, admits that owning a salon is an ongoing project and attributes her success to effective strategic business planning. Wendy recently jetted off to New York, where she worked on-set alongside Tracey Cunningham, and was live on stage for Redken's 2019 symposium in Las Vegas. Known for her extraordinary talent and trendsetting vision, this hair fashion designer's role and international presence

requires extensive travel. Wendy's impressive portfolio boasts 26 years behind the chair, 18+ years as a platform artist, as well as a variety of hair shows and editorial shoots; many of which have been successfully published. She is an educator, coach, and mentor for various salon professionals across the globe, all the while maintaining an active role in owning and operating Influence, an upscale salon located in the heart of Calgary.

A few of Wendy's career highlights include: Contessa, MTV Music Awards, the Oscars, the Emmys, NYFW, CTV, Global, as well as VMA and Vogue. All things considered, we needed to understand more about this industry influencer who continues to inspire and create impactful change within the hair and beauty scene. What has Wendy learned from her rich work experiences and what insight can she offer like-minded, entrepreneurial salon professionals looking to shine today?

The Summit Social sat down with Wendy to get the scoop on all things business + beauty. Not only is she insightful, the woman is authentically humble, refreshingly honest, down to earth... and funny as hell! Read on to learn more about what's next in the world of Wendy, and check out the editorial we shot, in-house, showcasing a collaboration with YYC talent. - X

Words / Jenée McMahon • Photos / David Dean @david.dean • Art Direction / Janet Lapuz Dean @janetlapuzdean
Hair / Wendy Bélanger @wendybelanger • Hair Assistants @lexraetand.yyc @beautybyamantha
Make-Up / Karen Malcolm @karenmalcolm

Q&A

with **WENDY**



Can you tell me about your salon, Influence?

Influence salon is my baby! We say that you can get your hair done, or you can experience Influence. Our whole idea is taking a regular salon experience and the expectation of what's going to happen, and then do something different. The second you walk into the salon we say, 'Hi welcome to Influence, do you have a reservation with us today?' We refer to people as guests as opposed to clients, and we just try to have them be pleasantly surprised by their experience. There's no hierarchy in the salon, people wouldn't even know I was the owner unless they asked. We have such a cool team atmosphere and it's completely drama free.

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I laugh at myself. Honestly the reason why I think I'm so successful is because I've fallen on my face a thousand times.”

- WB

What inspired you to open your own salon?

I had been doing hair for 10 years at the time and was also working as an educator. I kept going into salons and hearing stylists and owners complain about each other, and I didn't understand why they just weren't getting along. I wanted to create a place that people would like coming to work and I made that my goal. I opened my own salon and focused on building a strong culture. Eventually, Glen Baker (SSBC) told me I had already achieved that goal and needed a new one. Then it became my goal to create a place that people wanted to stay.

It's evident that your salon culture is one of a kind, what's your secret?

I don't know why it's drama-free and if I did I would bottle it up and sell it to other hair salons. I think it's the amount of respect that we all have for one other. I've been in business for 16 years and right now we have a small team; I'm super specific on who I hire because I'd rather go slow and steady and get it right. I always hire the person first and the skill after. I can teach anyone to do hair, I just can't teach them how to be a good person, or how to look after people. I've never in my whole career poached a stylist from another Salon, I'm very proud to say that.

What is your favourite part about being a business owner?

I love being a business owner in Calgary - I think that we have a really cool city and that's something to be proud of. I think my favorite parts are: coaching and mentoring, being able to see growth from the top level and being a leader. I love seeing everything happen from getting the babies when they first come in, to

seeing them grow into amazing stylists and reach their goals. I always ask my staff, 'what's your freedom?' Everybody gets a pay cheque, but they all have something different they want to do with it. Some want to save for a house or a car, and some want to go on a fancy trip. When I find out what their freedom is, that's what we talk about in their one on ones.

What is the most challenging part of being a salon owner?

I would say being responsible for so many people, I care so much about my team. They chose me, they chose Influence and I don't take that lightly. I feel pressure to make sure everybody is in a good place, and that can be hard to shut off sometimes. I just want everyone to win, and if the whole team doesn't win then I don't win. I think the hardest thing is that your mind doesn't shut off.

Work life balance - what does this look like for you?

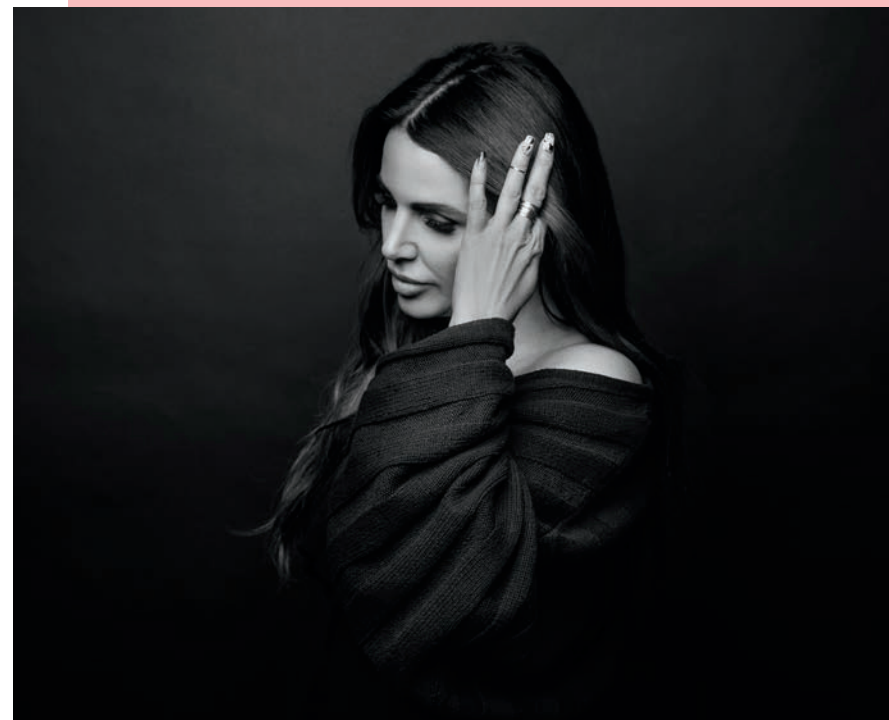
I was a single mom for a period of time in my career. What I've learned is the importance of really being present. It can be hard to be in the moment and stay focused on the task at hand. I plan my weeks depending on what's upcoming, what's a priority, and where to focus my energy next. I do an audit at the end of each day, to debrief how I did and what I need to carry over. That's what I do from a business standpoint, and from a personal standpoint I ask myself what and who is important. I book in time with my friends like I would a meeting, you have to! You have to realize what feeds you. As soon as I started being more self-full and looking after myself, I became a better salon owner, stylist, mother etc.

What advice do you have for a new stylist trying to shine today?

Take responsibility! I think that when people wait for somebody else to inspire them, they fall short. Decide what you want your life to look like; if you feel like you're just standing behind the chair doing the same thing over and over, then do what you need to become more inspired. This industry is so amazing for having all kinds of education and resources for professional development, but you need to have that sense of responsibility and focus. You can make great money and have an amazing life doing hair, but you have to take it as a career and not as a job.

Your role as a platform artist requires extensive travel, what support systems do you have in place, on a business level, to give you peace of mind when you're away?

Well I can tell you this: just because you're a good cook doesn't mean you can own a restaurant! I'm really good at doing hair, teaching, leading and inspiring my people, but owning a business is more than that. My success, hands down, has been from bringing in the right people to help me from a business standpoint. I don't pretend to do it on my own; I have a business coach, a life coach, a lawyer, an accountant, etc. The Summit Salon Business Center (SSBC) program was a huge part of my success. If I don't know how to do something, I bring in somebody who does, like my sales consultant, Cynthia (Summit Salon Services). I know what products I like to use on my guest's hair, but I leave it up to her to coach and make recommendations on what to do with promotions, or how to encourage & inspire my staff. So that's why Cynthia and I have meetings to put together a plan, that's her jam



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You have to love what you do, you can't fake it. If you're not happy and enjoying your work, others can tell.”

- Wendy

not my mine. I think salon owners make the mistake of thinking they can do it all on their own.”

How long have you worked with Cynthia?

Wow, almost a decade now. We meet as regularly as we can! My last text from her says, 'Wendy, I need to meet with you ... NOW!' And I tell her that she has to get after me because every time I leave a meeting, I'm like, 'thank God that we did this!' She has so much knowledge and if she was selling a brand that I wasn't 100% in love with, I would probably carry it just to keep the relationship we have.

So, strong working relationships are key for you?

Yes, I actually have a brand manager, Selene, from Summit's Luxury Brand Division. She's highly qualified for the role and attends our staff meetings regularly, to educate my team and ensure our continued growth. Selene is very invested in making sure we offer the whole experience.

When did you attend SSBC?

I've actually taken it twice! I recommend everybody does, because you get something more out of it the second time. The first time was about eight years ago in Toronto.

How has SSBC changed your business?

In every way. I believe a lot of people open a hair salon because they are sick of working for other people, and then go, 'what the f*** did I just do?' I think they have the creative side down, but not the business aspect and that's the whole problem. People don't want to admit that they don't know what they're doing, but they aren't supposed to! That's why these programs are so important. I knew what direction my salon was going when I could see the numbers on paper. Numbers don't lie. Everything just fell into place after that.

What key factors are you currently focusing on to help grow your business?

The initiative that I'm really focusing on right

now is the retail component. There's a huge deficit in this business for salon professionals. The sale of beauty products for women are constantly rising, but they are not increasing in salons. This is because stylists are seeing retail as more of an 'add-on' than a part of their job. Clients today are looking for the full guest experience, so if you don't take the time to provide recommendations and teach them, they are going to go somewhere else... and they should. That's why places like Sephora are doing so well, because they are creating an experience. We're not doing that in the hair industry and I think it's sad. It's sad because it's really affecting our business, a huge portion of the business can be paid by retail sales. Retail is what creates trust and longevity with guest relationships - it's really everything.

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Because nobody gets inspired by the person who just killed it in life, people get inspired by people who had to work for it.”

- WB

How is your Retail-to-Service Ratio (RTS) at Influence?

My salon had poor retail sales before I went to SSBC. I remember my business coach told me my RTS should be higher and I was surprised. I told her it was fine and I had assistants and she said, 'No, your assistant's numbers are there.' So, I looked and I was like holy crap! I wasn't doing my retail at all and I thought I was. That made me realize that I needed to 'walk the walk.' Today my salon sits at about 20% RTS, or higher. That's huge! The average

is still maybe 11% in the industry and lots of salons are down below 6%.

What advice would you give an existing business owner?

I think existing business owners need to stick together. I have a group of business owners that I meet with to talk about everything. We share numbers, what's going on internally and lean on each other for support. It's amazing because sometimes I'll feel frustrated and I'll call up a friend who just experienced the same thing and they'll give me advice.

What Accomplishment are you most proud of?

The highlight in my career, hands down, was having my 16-year-old son DJ behind me on stage for a hair show of 10,000 people in Las Vegas. Most parents get nervous about their kids doing hair, and my parents always supported me. So when my son told me his dream was to be a DJ I said, 'Hell yeah, you need to be DJ,' and then bought him all of the equipment. My son is the only person I know that loves what he does as much as I do and he says that I'm the only adult he knows that has never complained about going to work, so we have this close bond between us and do what we truly love.

What's next in the world of Wendy?

I just signed a contract with Redken and I'm super excited to be part of the tribe. Their culture is exponential and there's just something I love about it. It's only been a month and I already feel so welcomed. The brand's range is massive and I love having the opportunity to reach so many salon professionals. I'm also working on another project, I'm looking at the end of 2019 to launch. This is something I've been working on for a really long time that I truly believe is going to change and have a huge impact on the beauty industry.

Is this project going to be local?

Yes, the first one will be... stay tuned! - X

PALM LIFE



Hair @wendaybelanger @influencethesalon using @redken Hair Assistants @lexrouland_gyc @beautyby_samantha
 Make-Up @cailynadixon Photography @david_dean daviddeanphoto.com Art Direction Janet Lapuz Dean
 Location: Summit Salon Services HQ

unwind



relax



calm



chill

vibes

GET TO KNOW ³ of our LOCAL INSIDERS



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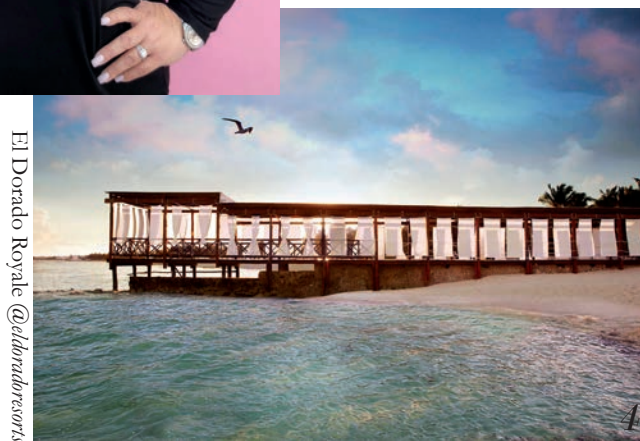
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The Hideout / The Laylow @hideoutnaukiki @laylownaukiki



@selenezuke_summit



El Dorado Royale @elboradoroyale



@daniel_dean

1. Cynthia Maclean

Sales Consultant with Summit Salon Services

Cynthia has been a part of the industry for 34 years and counting. Prior to bringing her contagious energy and spirit to the Summit Fam, almost 2 decades ago, she worked as a stylist for 10 years. In addition to her experience behind the chair, Cynthia educated for 9 years as a Redken Associate Artist (RAA) and spent 5 years as a Regional Manager for the brand. Needless to say, she is extremely devoted to the industry as a whole from both the creative and business side. Cynthia brings a wealth of experience to her role and is passionate about sharing her knowledge. She is invested in helping her salon partners grow their businesses and their teams, and it is her goal to help others to be able to raise their income and enjoy a more prosperous quality of life. In her free time, you can find Cynthia exploring sandy beaches with a dry Grey Goose martini in hand. This travel enthusiast is a self-proclaimed 'foodie' and has never been known to turn down a great glass of wine. Cynthia was born in the Maritimes, as evidenced by her pronunciation of "barrrr" or "carrrr," or as she would say, "by how nice I am." (insert charming giggle)!

2. Cynthia, tell us about your fave vacation spots?

"Club Marival in Nuevo Vallarta for a quick affordable vacay (great Italian and Mediterranean a la carte restaurants and the margaritas are hard to beat.) If I want to splurge a bit, El Dorado Royale Gourmet All Inclusive in the Mayan Riviera. The name says it all- it's a foodie's paradise. They have a massive greenhouse where they grow most of the food they serve! And they have a Culinary Theatre that is a unique dining experience. I recommend the wine pairing, of course."

3. Selene Zuke

Luxury Brand Manager with Summit Salon Services

Selene has been a part of our Summit Fam for 13+ years; anyone who knows her has experienced her glowing personality and charismatic nature. Having a cumulative 30 years of experience in the beauty industry, Selene brings a diverse background to Summit's Luxury Brand Division. After fine-tuning her customer service expertise, managing the Spa at the Banff Springs hotel for 9+ years, Selene transitioned into a Spa Director role with Summit. Two years ago, she welcomed the opportunity to be Southern Alberta's Luxury Brand Manager and admits that she is loving every moment of it. Selene loves what she does and is committed to delivering an exceptional experience to both colleagues and clients alike. Her favorite quote is a direct reflection of the way she treats others, "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. - Maya Angelou." When she's not out, "changing the world one shampoo at a time," you can find Selene with her fur baby, Marley. She's constantly scoping out new recipes to try with her husband, Ron, who recently bought a smoker, "Bring on the BBQ Weather!"

4. Selene, when is the last time you jetted off to somewhere tropical?

"It's funny because Cynthia actually recommended El Dorado Royale to me! It was by far the most luxury gourmet resort I have ever stayed at. My husband, Ron, and I stayed there last April for our honeymoon and walked out of our patio doors every morning to step into our private pool. It was heaven on earth!"

5. David Dean Photographer

Based out of YYC, David has spent the last 10 years perfecting his artistic skillset and honing his craft. David's photography is diverse and engaging, typically ranging from thoughtfully composed architectural shots to far-away landscapes and adventure-fueled travel imagery. That said, his range is quite diverse, he has collaborated with big name players like Nike, been published in Men's Health and has prints displayed in Marriott hotels worldwide. We've worked with David on 2 Summit Social issues, and he is an absolute gem - making his clients feel calm and at ease by providing unmatched direction. When he's not behind the lens, you can catch David enjoying a good cup of coffee or watching an inspiring documentary. David has a tight knit family and maintains an active lifestyle, usually accompanied by his wife and two sons. Check out more of David's portfolio on the gram at @david_dean or online at daviddeanphoto.com - his work speaks for itself!

6. Where is paradise on earth for you?

"Having lived on Maui for 2 years after high school, I may be biased, but Hawaii truly is paradise. I've traveled to plenty of other destinations across the globe and have never been disappointed by any of the Hawaiian Islands. On Maui, we like to frequent Kō at The Fairmont Kea Lani. On Kauai, I would recommend Bar Acuda and The Fresh Shave. For a more vibrant experience, Oahu is your island; you can find the best coffee with the greatest urban patio on the island at The Hideout located at The Laylow Hotel. The best part about Hawaii is the abundant natural beauty to explore - from fresh waterfalls to swim in, to mountain valleys to hike."

@wendyabelanger
@influence.thesalon

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Hair Assistant / **Lex Rowland** *@lexrowland_yyc*
Hair Assistant / **Sam Kolasko** *@beautyby_samantha*
Photo / **David Dean** *@david_dean*
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