

**Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way? Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?**

There were many struggles along the way. The main struggle was finding people I could trust. This was a nightmare, I can recall a time when I opened my first hair salon and I was working full-time as Director of Education at a beauty school. I was spending my day hours at the school and my weekends and evenings at my salon.

I spent a lot of money on marketing and a grand opening celebration to help grow the business. I gave keys to my staff and trusted them to do the "right thing". I noticed that business slowed down, and I started receiving customer complaints about services that were never on the books. To make a long story short, the team was robbing me blind. My learned lesson from the story is to make sure you check references, although there is no full-proof way to make sure a person is or is not dishonest. It is still important to know the integrity of people working with and for you. I've heard that you can't trust everyone, I learned that is true. As a business owner, I constantly remind myself it is the cost of doing business.

But it is our responsibility to be more selective and monitor all business activities.

**Appreciate you sharing that. What else should we know about what you do?**

Currently, I operate a training center that helps unlicensed cosmetologists and barbers prepare for taking their state exams.

We also offer continued education classes such as professional braiding and certification, professional lash extension application, and my favorite, our Little Diva's Braiding Bootcamp designed to introduce personal haircare to young ladies between the ages of 7 to 14.

I specialize in motivating others and helping them realize their individual potential. For example, if someone tells me they want to teach, my first question is why, I help them create a plan and help them put what they want into action. I believe in talking less and doing more. It is my intention to hold them accountable for what they asked for.

I am most proud of my professional growth in the industry and that I have the opportunity to help others. I believe what sets Ms. Kim's Beauty Exchange apart is that nothing is off the table, as long it does not cause anyone any physical or emotional harm and the focus is on personal and professional improvement.

**Do you have any advice for those looking to network or find a mentor?**

My advice on finding a mentor is never to stop talking about your dreams and your goals, because your mentor may be closer than you think. In my opinion, no one can help you if you don't let people know what you need. If you need help and guidance you have to seek it out.

But when you do make sure that the mentor has a good track record, great business ethics, and has no problem communicating and letting you know what you need to do to improve your current situation. Your mentor needs to be able to tell you the truth in a diplomatic way, even if may hurt your feelings in order for you to grow.

My experience with mentorship is most of my mentors approached me. They saw my potential and offered their advice, the first time it happened I was confused because I didn't ask for help. Later in life, I realized they were paying it forward.

Today, I am grateful for every piece of advice I received, there are mentors all around me.

