

Revolutionary ROAD

New products come and go – but the outstanding ones last the test of time

Occasionally an innovation comes along that transforms the way we think, work and operate. In the wonderful world of hairdressing we're not guilty of standing still, and when it comes to product innovation and creative direction – the hairdressing industry certainly makes waves. Here are three products that have made their mark on the industry.

NATURAL WONDER

Raoul Perfitt is managing director of Herb UK – a company that pioneered organic hair colour and took natural haircare products to a new level.

The company was founded in 1990 by Stuart Taylor and Steven Landrith. Steven was a hairdresser who suffered from allergies to hair colour so severely he was forced to retire from hairdressing. It then became his mission to develop a natural alternative to conventional colour, which would minimise the risk to hairdressers and give clients an alternative.

"I joined the company in 1993. My background was in herbal biochemistry and, along with the team at Herb UK, we developed a non-ammonia colour. It's an oil-based gel and the oil is a soya oil derivative. But the real difference is that it is alkali based and not acid, which most colours are. This means that we don't need to use such an aggressive colour processor," says Raoul.

To get vibrant colour results it is essential to use pigments and PPD in hair colour – which can cause allergic reactions. "We still have to use pigments and PPD, but we are working to find an alternative. With ammonia you get a lightening effect and you need a lot more pigment. To give you an example, the maximum EU level of PPD in colour is 6%. The maximum level in our darkest colour is 2%. But on average it is 0.4%," he says.

These levels are substantially lower than most colour, according to Raoul, who says it significantly minimises the risk of a reaction. "However, there are people who react to soya or wheat protein, so PPD is not the only ingredient that will cause a reaction."

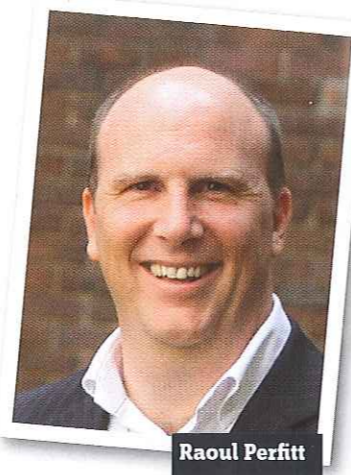
The company's quest to launch kinder colour is not just to benefit the consumer – it is the hairdresser who is exposed to the harsh chemicals every day. "In the US, for private healthcare insurance, hairdressers are classed in the same risk level as fire fighters," adds Raoul.

As well as colour, Herb UK has a non-ammonia perm as well as a range of organic haircare products.

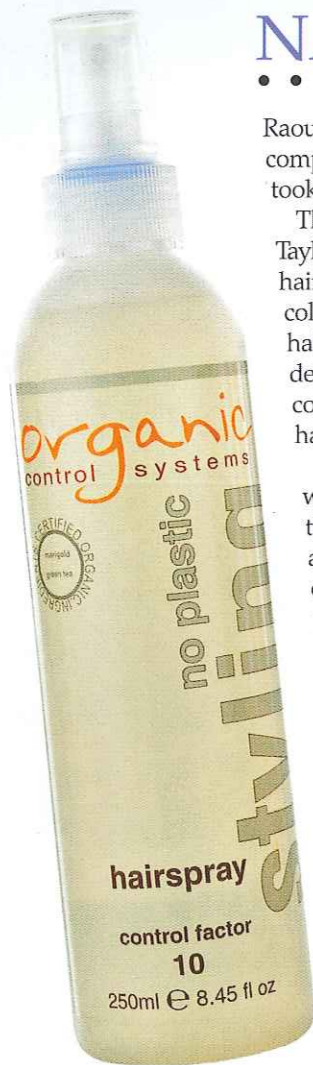
"It was a huge risk – we didn't pay ourselves for the first three years. We knew the product worked, and when we got letters from hairdressers saying they could not believe how good the product is, we knew we were making a positive difference."

The journey for success has not been easy, but the figures speak for themselves. "It was, and is, extremely hard work. The past five years we have seen a 30% increase on turnover year-on-year. We're now in 32 countries and former London Hairdresser of the Year Karine Jackson is our ambassador.

"Did we realise how successful we would be? No. I never thought we would have the success we have had," concludes Raoul.



Raoul Perfitt



STRAIGHT TALKING

The hairdressing industry was revolutionised when a new generation of straightening irons were launched in 2001. Clients that complained of frizzy, unruly hair could suddenly have sleek locks in an instant. "ghd was established in 2001 when founder Robert Powls discovered ceramic hair styling technology in the form of the ghd styling iron," says ghd global brand director Guy Longworth.

ghd's iconic styling irons proved so effective that, despite virtually no marketing, they became an immediate success and initiated a cult following. Thousands of copies worldwide followed, but the original was well under way to selling millions of irons across the globe.

"A key decision in the brand's history was to rewrite the rules of the market and make the products only available through the best

professional salons. The elite fell in love with ghds and women were desperately seeking salons that stocked them," says Guy.

The phenomenal growth was intensified when, in 2008, the revenue had risen from zero to more than £100m. "ghd is now established in 15 countries. As we know, hair is essential to how women look and feel. ghd has used this intrinsic link between hair and fashion to its advantage, by sponsoring catwalk-collection launches in addition to styling models for fashion weeks around the world," he adds.

Perhaps it was this mix of fashion, style and image that amplified the exclusive, desirable brand positioning ghd possesses. "Nobody in the company could have imagined that a local company, based near Leeds, could have achieved so much in eight years. With exciting plans for the future, the company is looking to achieve further success and growth," concludes Guy.



TANGLE TASTIC

Shaun Pulfrey was a hair colourist of 30 years when he designed the Tangle Teezer – a hairbrush that glides through the hair and banishes any tangles. Despite being knocked back when he appeared on BBC's hit TV show *Dragons' Den*, Shaun's invention has been a huge success – recognised in 2008 at HJ's British Hairdressing Business Awards, scooping its Innovation of the Year category.

"I was always dealing with tangled hair, so decided to develop a brush that would get rid of tangles. The technology is based around getting the two sets of bristles to work together. Tangle Teezer performs differently to any other brush or comb; it passes through the hair while detangling it," says Shaun.

Research started on the internet when Shaun was looking for a plastic manufacturer. "I examined the teeth and looked at bristles. I wanted a bristle that collapses while still being rigid," he says.

The design process was based around the bristle collapsing at a certain point – which is what allows the hair to detangle. While developing Tangle Teezer, Shaun worked four days a week as a colourist to fund his venture. The rest of his time he spent developing the product, which took three years. "I financed it all from my salary. When I got prototypes, I tested them for six months and the

response was stupendous," he says.

The product was finally launched at Salon International in 2007 and it was at this point that Shaun had to make a decision about how he would spend his time.

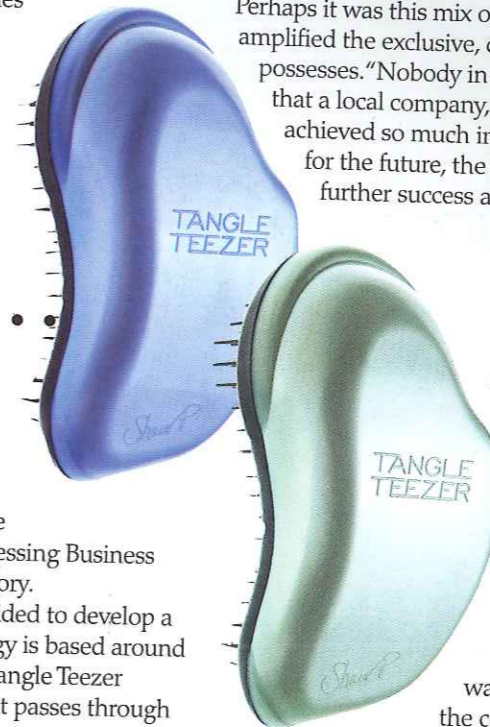
"I had saved enough money to give up hairdressing for six months to work solely on Tangle Teezer. So I stopped colouring and devoted myself to the business."

Thankfully, from the moment the product was launched, it sold. "After the money ran out, the company was self-sufficient."

Shaun's venture was not without risks, and it was only his hard work as a colourist that allowed him to fund it. "It cost me £98,000 to get the product to market. In the first eight months we had a £98,000 turnover and made a loss of £18,000," he says.

However, this was only the beginning, and since then, profit has risen dramatically. "In the second year – 2008/09 – we had a £428,000 turnover and made a pre-tax profit of £127,000. We are projecting a turnover of £700,000 this year," says Shaun modestly.

Tangle Teezer is in 13 countries and two equally innovative products are due to be launched next year. To date, 270,000 Tangle Teezers have been sold, of which Shaun says 180,000 have been sold through salons. Asked if he imagined his invention would be so successful, Shaun says: "Yes. But not this quickly. It is thanks to hairdressers. If it were not for the salons supporting this product, I wouldn't be where I am today." [H]



Shaun Pulfrey