

JANUARY 2025

Scissors, charm and Amaretto Sour

Interview by Timo Albiez
with Sandro Scarabelli



Sandro Scarabelli (on the right) has been working as a hairdresser for 30 years. He is the entrepreneur and creative head of Scarabelli Hairdesign in Baden.

Dear Sandro - do you remember how your professional career began?

Of course I remember! I cut my first hair as an apprentice at a hairdresser in Baden. But to be honest, I never really wanted to be a hairdresser. I was more the rebellious type who wanted to do things my way. But my teacher didn't let up. He said: «Sandro, you have a feel for people and you're creative - that's your path.» Fortunately, I listened to him. Today I know that working with people is what I'm really good at.

And how did you take the step into becoming self-employed?

That was 24 years ago. I always knew that independence was important to me. I wanted to be able to make my own decisions. At the beginning, I had nothing, no savings, no financial security. Fortunately, a customer believed in me and supported me. I started out with this trust. It was risky, but worth it.

Customer contact seems to be particularly close to your heart. What does that mean to you?

It's everything. As a hairdresser, you are very close to people, not just physically but also emotionally. Some come in to get their hair cut, others just to talk or clear their heads. Customers want to be recognised and acknowledged. In these crazy times of selfishness, digital dependency and lack of time, many long for moments of «being seen». A good hairdresser senses what the customer needs. Sometimes it's a consultation, sometimes just a sympathetic ear.

That sounds pretty intense. How do you deal with it?

It's definitely demanding. You have an average of seven customers a day, and each one brings their own energy and story. Some are totally relaxed, others challenge you - be it with their wishes or their mood. Of course, there are days when it's exhausting. But there are also those special moments when someone leaves with a big smile and says: «Thank you, that's exactly what I needed.» That's why I love this job so much.

Are there any customer relationships that are very important to you?

Oh yes, many! I remember customers coming from far away - travelling two hours by train just to have an appointment with me. That touches me every time, because it shows that it's not just about hair, but about the feeling they have in my salon. There are also regular customers who I have been working with for decades. That makes me proud!

How do you maintain this close relationship with your customers?

It's the little things. I greet customers by name, offer them a good coffee, and really listen. It's about making everyone feel seen and valued. These small gestures often make a big difference.

There is the «silence hairdresser» trend, i.e. haircuts in relaxed silence. What do you think of this?

I find the idea exciting. Some people just

want to switch off and not talk - and that's perfectly fine. It's not yet official in our salon, but I can sense when someone would prefer to seek quietness. Ultimately, it's about engaging with the customer and finding out what they need.

What have you learnt from dealing with so many people?

A great deal. Everyone is different, and that's what makes the work so exciting. I've learnt to read between the lines and interpret the mood of the person I'm dealing with. Especially after the pandemic, many customers told me how much they missed the dialogue with us. It shows how important personal encounters are - and not just at the hairdresser.

Is there anything that is particularly important to you when hiring new employees?

Yes, in addition to technical expertise (which I require), I pay a lot of attention to how someone treats people. You can be the best hairdresser, but if you find it difficult to deal with customers, it will be difficult. On the other hand, people with an open and empathetic manner can often achieve much more, even if they may not be technically perfect.

The hairdressing market is highly competitive - how do you differentiate yourself from your competitors?

I would be lying if I said I didn't care about what my competitors are up to. I like to get an overview. My aim is to be at the

forefront in the region. The challenge lies in discipline. Keeping up to date and holding a position over so many years is a big challenge! My key question is always: How can we make the good things even better?

What is the secret of your success in retaining customers in the long term?

Authenticity. Customers notice when you are genuinely interested. Of course, it's also about quality and service, but the most important thing is the relationship level. If that's right, people will keep coming back - even for years.

Imagine your company was a cocktail. Which one would it be?

An «Amaretto Sour» - a sweet and sour drink with a subtle almond flavour. Pleasant, but with a certain kick - the way we organise our service.

What if it were a film?

An Italian romantic comedy for sure! «La Dolce Vita» sums it up quite well: stylish, charming and a little playful.

If you had a superpower, what would you do with it?

I would close the gap between rich and poor - just as I hold the scissors in my hand every day to make things better.

What keeps you motivated after all these years?

I've been doing this job for 30 years! I see it as my duty and my calling. This is what I'm really good at: cutting hair, dea-

ling with people, leading a team. I realise that many people give up too quickly these days. When things get difficult or too tight, it's easier to say goodbye. We would all benefit from a little humility. My parents were immigrants from Italy in the 70s. They told me a lot about how difficult their start was. There was no wish list. Perhaps this still characterises me today. But the most important thing is that every day brings new encounters, new stories. And sometimes

I think that I have to write these stories down at some point.

And where do you see yourself and «Scarabelli Hairdesign» in the future?

To be honest, I let myself go with the flow. I love what I do and as long as it stays that way, I'll keep going. Maybe one day I really will write a book! We still need to find a catchy title.

Thank you very much for the entertaining interview! And if you, dear readers, have a title idea for Sandro's book, you are welcome to get in touch right here:

Scarabelli Hairdesign

Untere Halde 5 | 5400 Baden
www.scarabelli-hairdesign.ch