



DI BIASE HAIR EXTENSIONS USA
EXTENDED REVOLUTION

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The Link The Voice of the AHLC



Hair Extension Forecast for 2014



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AS WE LOOK toward 2014, all indications are that hair extensions will continue on course to becoming mainstream. The proliferation of hair extension companies translates to increasing numbers of hair extension professionals and extension wearers. And there are no signs of lessening interest. While there may be a degree of saturation in some markets, there are many more that remain nearly untapped or which are growing rapidly.

For better or worse, we envision a workplace that begins to more closely resemble the European version, where nearly every stylist is trained in extension services. Unfortunately, the trade-off may be a degree of loss in quality as more and more training is taking place with relaxed standards or outside of the company sanctioned certification programs. Fortunately, indications are that cosmetology schools may be taking up the baton, making extension education a basic component of the curriculum.

And yet, the most positive outlook is not in the mere numbers of extension wearers, but in advancements in helping a most deserving and underserved group – individuals who suffer from hair thinning. With finer bonds, allowing for work on the top of the head and advanced training of stylists, we foresee extensions adding richness to lives to an extent we have not seen before.

Our Experience

Being a relatively young company with a national agenda, Di Biase Hair USA has taken a path that provides a unique personal insight into the state of extensions. We have spent, on the average, two weeks each month on the road holding certification classes, meeting with distributors, detailing with sales representatives, engaging in in-salon cold calling and interviewing job applicants, while visiting nearly every

region on the map. We have talked with stylists, students and salon owners in their own environments, listening to their stories and gaining an understanding of their regional demographics and individual business challenges. Through person-to-person involvement, and through some difficult times, we have quadrupled our sales over the last three years, trained hundreds of stylists, and in the process acquired what we believe to be a strong understanding of where the industry is trending.

This world of extensions is a very big world indeed, with tremendous competition, interesting and varied products and emerging markets. There is, of course, a great amount of saturation in some locations, such as southern Texas, southern Florida, and southern California and yet even in those areas many segments remain untouched. In areas like New England, the San Francisco Bay area, and many parts of the population bases of the Midwest and south, the potential has hardly even begun to be reached. In a number of locations, we are finding it difficult to even train enough educators to meet the demand.

Notably, a lot of new enthusiasm is coming from students in cosmetology schools and from regions that are not large population centers. In holding classes recently at schools in Nebraska and Iowa, we were energized by how confidently the students spoke of building client bases in areas that have barely been

glazed by the extension business. Meanwhile, there is the small mid-north college town of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, where nearly every stylist in every salon is now offering the service and its largest beauty school has begun scheduling classes. We have even found interest in Hawaii, training salons and demonstrating to schools and at shows, in a place where long beautiful hair is naturally the norm. The fact is that extensions are a source for new money and new clients and stylists do not want to be left out, and that will continue to fuel the industry, certainly in the near future.

Inching Toward European Model

As all hair extensions companies that deal internationally will know, an ocean separates the U.S. and European markets. Within Europe, it is possible to sell to any stylist as nearly every one has learned how to do extensions in some manner or other independent of hair extension company training. Whether they apply them well is another question. On a recent visit to Di Biase Hair Extensions USA, Aniello Di Biase, founder of Di Biase Hair in



Vikki Parman leading an extension certification class

Italy, remarked that he was amazed at the high quality of our applications. He said that he often cringes at the poor work he sees in Rome and Paris and describes what he sees as “hit and miss.” Still, the companies that sell extensions can perform wonderfully as they are unhindered by the impediment of educating their consumers.

Within the United States, we have traditionally been aided in efforts at quality training by excellent company operated education programs. Historically, hair extension companies would simply not sell to a hairdresser who had not been certified. Some of the reason for that, of course, was self-serving. Since very few knew how to work with extensions, companies trained stylists in order that the stylists would begin buying hair. There was the opportunity to control the market as well as it was then possible to build in loyalty programs and other incentives. Moreover, the cost of the classes was significant and so they served as important money-makers. Still, the net result was an emphasis on education and that has served the industry well, as we have continued to maintain high standards.

An interesting but somewhat unsettling aspect of the increase in and access to extensions is we seem to be moving closer to the European manner of operating. Nowadays, nearly everyone at least knows that extensions are available. Stylists are under pressure from their clients to do extensions “now.” In order to remain competitive, stylists have been doing whatever they can, quickly, to learn in whatever manner might be expedient. With access to YouTube videos and fellow stylists who are willing to “help them out,” it is clearly a disincentive to traditional certification that they have to put out significant money, travel, and spend the time. They just don’t want to have to go through all that trouble and cost.

For 2014, it appears inevitable that informal training will grow as a concern. Hair extension companies may continue to offer and urge training but find themselves unable to monitor and regulate in sales who has been trained and by whom. Unless we can alter that course or re-direct the education component, our typically high standards in this

country will be challenged.

One alternative scenario, attractive for several reasons, is for cosmetology schools to take up the gauntlet. With ever-increasing interest in extensions, progressive school owners and administrators may realize that adding an extension training program to their curriculum will greatly benefit the school, its students, and the industry as a whole. Incorporating an extension component may be a bit away for many programs but there are many others who are already reaching out. We are confident this very positive trend will continue into the coming year. Di Biase Hair Extensions USA is certainly not alone in experiencing increased attention from the students and schools across the country. This is very much a positive for those of us who consider the well being of the hair extension wearer to be paramount.

A Finer Future

Perhaps the most uplifting development that we see for 2014 is within the thinning hair demographic. For so long, and excepting the talents of some truly advanced practitioners, the benefits of hair extensions have been ordinarily confined to those desiring length and fullness on the sides of the head. Virtually no attention has been paid to the ability to work with thinner hair on the top of the head. The weight and size of the bonds, even when cut, simply put too much stress on the hair or resulted in bonds that could easily be seen.

The advantage that Di Biase hair extensions enjoy is that they are very fine and lightweight. They can be cut even smaller and, when properly used, they can be applied on all surfaces of the head. When combined with the flat wrap technique, extensions above the occipital can restore confidence and a positive image for many who thought it impossible without a hair system.

My partner, Vikki Parman, has developed and oversees our national education program. She has a very deep personal concern for those who suffer from hair thinning issues, which led us to join the AHLC. After years of work and study, she decided the time had come to reach out, not only to those stylists who work exclusively in the hair

loss industry, but to the great numbers who are not intimately involved and yet have clients who suffer in some manner. In 2013, she developed a class aimed specifically at those hairdressers who are advanced in extensions and motivated in this area.

Not surprisingly, the early returns on these classes have been ecstatic, from both the stylists and their models. As members of the AHLC of course know, the ability to replace hair is an amazing experience. It is satisfying to us that we are now able to offer that opportunity, albeit at a more basic level, to a relatively large segment of the hairdresser population who could not otherwise offer any assistance to their clients.

We are unsure of how other hair extension companies will react to this type of education, or if they will react at all. Some may not have the product or education component in place, or otherwise see the viability of working with thinning hair. We suspect, however, that other companies will in fact recognize the significant market and take appropriate steps, as we all address the needs of an aging population.

Certainly, it is Vikki’s intent, and a direction that we will support, to increase our own efforts. Hair stylists are among the most giving professionals on the planet. They usually are in business for the primary reason that they love to make people look and feel better. We think this ability to work with thinning hair will fit in well with those aspirations and even open up new avenues for stylists who may not have considered extension work previously because they have “older” clients.

Final Thoughts

It is evident that extensions are going to continue to grow in popularity in 2014 and beyond. With that growth there will be challenges as hair extensions companies no longer retain control over the education process. To fill the void, we believe there will be an increase in cosmetology schools that offer hair extension training. We also believe extensions will begin to move in additional positive directions as the industry begins to serve the needs of the thinning hair population. It promises to be a very interesting year. ■

Product Spotlight:

Pink Rules! DiBiase Hair Extensions USA

Di Biase Hair Extensions USA is excited to introduce an array of brilliant new colors, beginning in our fantasy selection with this gorgeous hot pink. Launched during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we were blown away by the rave reviews. This pink is well on its way to becoming a top fantasy choice. Call 248-489-8900



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