

## BACK TO BUSINESS IOWA PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

A partnership of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and America's SBDC Iowa

### SEASON 1 | EPISODE 22: Business Reopening Strategies—Beauty Salons and Barbers (31:34; published June 3, 2020)

**Description:** *Today our guests are Stacie and Rick Mosley from Rick Mosley Hair in Clive, IA. In this podcast we discuss some of the challenges that hair salons, barber shops and cosmetologists have been facing during this Covid-19 pandemic. Steve Adams leads the conversation and the Mosleys provide best practice strategies for reopening.*



### Transcript:

[music]

#### Steve Adams, host 0:10

Hello, and welcome to the Back to Business Iowa podcast from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. This podcast is a collaboration between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the programs including Community and Economic Development, Farm, Food and Enterprise Development and the Iowa Small Business Development Centers. These podcasts cover relevant topics for businesses and individuals related to education, research and technical assistance during and post COVID-19.

I'm Steve Adams, field specialist III at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the community Economic Development unit and your host for these podcasts. Today our guests are Stacie and Rick Mosley from Rick Mosley hair and deploying, Stacie and Rick. Hey, thanks you both for being here today.

#### Rick and Stacie Mosley 1:15

Yeah, thank you, Steve.

#### Steve Adams, host 1:17

In this podcast we'll be discussing some of the challenges that hair salons, barber shops and cosmetologists have been facing during this COVID-19 pandemic. Rick, let me start with you. Can you first give us a little history and background on Rick Mosley Hair?

#### Rick Mosley 1:34

Rick Mosley Hair has been around, I actually graduated from school in 1976. I've been in different positions with that as far as partnerships and things, started with Mosley Hair in 19...?

#### Stacie Mosley 1:49

[indecipherable] 1990.

#### Rick Mosley 1:53

Okay, 1990. [laughter]

Anyway, so it has progressed from being partners, to...I have my own philosophy how to do things, so we started Rick Mosley Hair. And we are now located in Clive, Iowa, at 128th and University.

**Steve Adams, host 2:11**

So what number of employees do you have, Rick? And are there specialties and things that you do at your shop?

**Rick Mosley 2:19**

Yes, we have 12 hairdressers, one manager, and two receptionists. We do all hair cutting and coloring and extension services.

**Steve Adams, host 2:31**

So Rick, I gotta ask you, when the restrictions were first put in place in mid-March, what were your initial thoughts or reactions to all of that?

**Rick Mosley 2:41**

Well I think just like everybody else, we were all trying to figure out just what this meant, and weren't really sure what was gonna happen. It seemed to be kind of in flux for a long time. Even now, there are some of the different rules and things we've had to go by or just kind of came as they been made as we went along. So I think the first reaction was of disbelief, actually. And that we actually might shut the salon down for something like this that, you know, I've never had anything like this happen in my lifetime. So it was, it was one of disbelief, really.

**Steve Adams, host 3:16**

Well, I think everybody was kind of faced with that Rick and Stacie. I mean, I shock I think that would be a realistic assumption that all of us would have in a situation like that. Now, Stacey, I've got to ask there were a number of small business relief programs that were put out there by the federal government, including the Paycheck Protection Program, otherwise known as PPP, and also the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, otherwise known as EIDL. Did you all apply for those at any point?

**Stacie Mosley 3:48**

You know, we explored a number of options. Financially for us, we were thinking about the 12 members of our team. We were thinking about how we are going to get our folks paid, number one. There were a lot of folks that were not receiving unemployment, that were either not timely filers or there was a backlog. Number two, they were just not getting an income. So for us, the primary goal was always to pay our team.

And secondarily, we've never run our business with any kind of debt. We've never run our business with any kind of a loan or line of credit or anything like that, outside of our initial build out, so for us to take on the task of applying for some of these things, that were kind of surrounded in controversy and questions, really felt very different. We've never run our business like that. We've never relied on the SBA for anything, not saying, you know, positive or negative. We've just never done that. And frankly, in sitting down with my banker with a list of probably 15 questions surrounding things like this Paycheck Protection Plan, or program, and not being able to get answers, that was a little unnerving.

I had a number of questions around to the EIDL loans, also from from the SBA and just a number of questions that couldn't go answers. So we explored a few financial options, we did end up taking advantage of a few things that became available to us. Our banker made the recommendation for us to take a higher amount than we did on our PPP loan. We ended up taking a lower amount. I had done some calculations and said, I feel like

this is what we can pay back in the allotted time. With all of these unanswered questions, I don't want to be left holding the bag on something that's not forgivable after the officials or the SBA reviews this type of loan and says, Sorry, it's not forgivable or there are portions that are not forgivable. So we did, but we did so very cautiously.

**Steve Adams, host 5:44**

Well, I think you're not alone there. I mean, we've we've heard a lot of stories over the last several weeks in regards to that. And, again, I don't think the SBA really had any expectation as to the volume nor did the banks, and the lack of loan officers available to handle some of these requests. So, again, I know you're not alone there. Stacie, again, just to follow up a little bit—so what did you and Rick do during your downtime here as it relates to the shop and your business?

**Stacie Mosley 6:17**

Well, we did a number of things. We wanted to keep in touch with our team, we hosted weekly calls, weekly zZoom call, thank goodness for Zoom. It's a great technology that I think has come along at a perfect time. We hosted a weekly Zoom call to kind of check in with our team and really take an inventory of the things that they might be concerned about. I was at the salon every day the majority of the break the majority of that eight weeks, I was at the salon each and every day, reaching out to our guests, reaching out to folks to reschedule. I mean, you have to consider some of those clients, some of our guests have been rescheduled two and three times during that closure.

So it was just really important for me to be in communication with not only our team, but also our guests. We provided a number of product deliveries, product shipments. It was also, I think, really important for me to be there for the financial end of things, you know, in gathering documentation, working on things that the bank needed from us, taking stock of what we needed to get started in, you know, the event that we were going to start early, we needed to think about our inventory, we need to think about our [indecipherable] color. We did a few refurbishments around the salon.

And we really tried to be public. We tried to be as public as we could while being shuttered and that was a challenge. You reach out to social media, you continue to rely on your phone line, your social media lines, you know your Facebook pages, your Instagram pages, your feed, your website, that kind of becomes your store. So we chose to stay connected. We chose to stay right in tune with everyone and continue to do some things at the salon that, you know, some minor improvements that needed to be made. But just to keep in contact with our public and to keep in contact with our guests and our team and check in. So those are some of kind of the minor things that we did just to stay connected.

**Steve Adams, host 8:12**

Well, I appreciate that. It was just last week, I think on a recent podcast that we heard that communication, especially with your employees was kind of key to things and then keeping that social media presence alive was key, and it sounds like you absolutely hit that nail right on the head. Would you agree with that? Or has that been a good experience, bad experience? Or has it worked out for you, I guess.

**Stacie Mosley 8:36**

Hundred percent a great experience. We've always maintained a social media presence, but in a completely different way during during this quarantine. And I think it's really important for a business to take a look, especially after this whole scenario, and some of it is still going on for different parts of the country. But take a look at what's your images, if your store is truly closed. Take a look at the way you're representing yourself

online through social media. And for us it was key to to keep that image up and to keep up the image that we were open. It was a great experience.

We chose to open at 12 noon on the 15th. I think the official order was lifted at 5am on the 15th. But we chose to open at 12pm and have a half day. And since the day we have opened, our reviews have been through the roof, online reviews, unsolicited reviews, unsolicited surveys. We have a platform that we can use, kind of like a Constant Contact platform, surveys and communication have been off the charts. And I really truly believe that people are communicating in a very different way than they ever have. I feel like folks are, you know, business owners are looking to communicate in a very different way. And I think it's important to be able to pivot in times like this because your social media presence is huge.

**Steve Adams, host 10:00**

Absolutely terrific. I do appreciate all those comments. I think that's going to be uplifting to our listeners as well. So Rick, I'd like for you, if you could, to give our listeners some idea of the changes you've had to adapt now that restrictions have been lifted,

**Rick Mosley 10:18**

There've been quite a few changes we've had to adapt. Number one, our business isn't really high tech, it's high touch. And a lot of our clients we've known for a long time, we spend upwards of an hour or maybe even two or three hours with them. So you know, greeting them after a long time, they're kind of becoming, you develop relationships with them. And so making sure, you know, the virtual hugs, the elbow tap, all kinds of different things like that. Those are some of the things that happen right off when you first greet a client.

The other part is we, you know, the cleaning is constant. Everything you touch, and people don't think about, it's not just brushing, blow dryers, scissors, combs. It is bottles of gel you might use on a client, you've got to disinfect those as well. Going through the ...constantly washing clothes. We've always prided ourselves on being a very clean salon. We always had fresh capes and gowns for every single client, we never double-use things like that. But things like taking makeup displays down so clients can't test lipsticks, just wiping the chairs down constantly. There's just a barrage, and first of all in the beginning, just the fear of not being able to get hand sanitizer or alcohol.

We kind of went crazy and everywhere we went we would buy rubber gloves, any alcohol we could find. Yeah, stuff like that. Just very, very busy. So where we normally would have a little bit of space between a client, you know go back and have a drink of water or something, you're busy. You're busy all day. And after being off for eight weeks, you're kind of out of the work mode shape. And so it's been, you know, I went from working four days, I always got my schedule trying to get four days a week, I'm now working six days a week trying to get everything back in order, which is a pleasure, because I was really anxious to get back to work. So that really wasn't a problem.

**Steve Adams, host 12:23**

So would you say this transition has been easy, or has it been more of a challenge than you originally thought it might be?

**Rick Mosley 12:32**

Well, the challenge is just, you know, staying on time with all the extra things. And there's also an extra expense in all those. We get packets out to every one of our clients. They sit in the parking lot, we call them either via text or by our phones. They come in, I'm sorry, the receptionist will then, after they call the salon, the desk, the receptionist will take out a packet that has a mask, gloves, and hand sanitizer in it. They put

those on before they come into the salon. So the joke is we're no longer hairdressers, we're now hair surgeons and your price just went up. No, just kidding. [laughter]

No, but just stuff like that, you know, and it's a different world. And nobody can come in the salon and go to the reception area and sit. We don't have any water available. We have no coffee, we can't really give anything that can be touched. And so we eliminated some of the things, and we would offer wine at night, that's over, we can't do that anymore, because, we can't with all the [indecipherable]. But other than that, really not. We've been really fortunate that we're really busy. And I think that you know, people are kind of getting back in the mode. So I don't think it's been that much of a challenge, to be honest with you, except for the extra time to clean

**Steve Adams, host 13:55**

So did I hear you say you were at one point, serving wine?

**Rick Mosley 14:00**

We've had a few clients that wanted it early in the day but we try to wait till you know, like four or five before we start to saying we have wine to offer, but yeah.

**Steve Adams, host 14:13**

Oh well okay, so how do I make an appointment? I'm just kidding.

**Rick Mosley 14:17**

[laughter] Rich Mosley Hair, 515...

**Steve Adams, host 14:23**

So Stacie, did the Board of Barbering in the governor's office put out recommendations and guidelines that were easy to follow, and why or why not?

**Stacie Mosley 14:32**

Well, I think the the Iowa Department of Public Health is ultimately our governing body and then the Board of Cosmetology, the Iowa State Board of Cosmetology is who governs us or salons, and I think their ultimate goal was to have the salons follow the CDC guidelines first and foremost. And there was quite a bit of interaction that I had with.. and when I say I, there were collective opportunities to be on calls with different vendors, product vendors that we have, different affiliations, obviously the Cosmetology Board, the Board of Inspections.

And it was kind of, the recommendation had been made for a number of salons or by a number of salons that you have to do ultimately what makes sense for your environment. And I think for us, by providing the kits that we're providing it made sense for us to reduce the number of services that are attached or the number of bare hands that are touching things. It also made sense for us to provide a mask, all of our team is masked. And there are salons that are not doing that. The Iowa Department of of Public Health never really came out and said, in order for a salon to open these things must be in place.

And we've had the unique perspective of kind of being on the other side of the Cosmetology Board. Rick has had affiliations both on the inspections and appeals level for, you know, a number of years and, and also with the Cosmetology Board, we've kind of seen how legislation happens. And it's really impossible to make sure that every salon is doing everything without inspectors. And there are frankly just not enough folks that are performing inspections, especially right now. So I think the Iowa Board of Cosmetology and the Department of

Public Health were somewhat loose in their guidelines. I think the governor's office was somewhat loose in their guidelines.

But at the same time, I think we have done what makes sense for us. There are salons that are open without masks. There is no requirement of masks. I know of salons that are taking temperatures, we do not take temperatures. I know salons that are asking guests to sign waivers, we do not ask anyone to sign a waiver. But the gloves, you know, and the mask and the hand sanitizer, and some salons are not doing blow dries. Some salons are not washing hair. Those are all decisions that have been made independently. But I think first and foremost, the governor's office and the Department of Public Health always, always have advocated to follow CDC recommendations and guidelines. And for us, our business is set up, just in the square footage that we have, it's kind of set up for social distancing, every station is five feet apart from every other station just by design.

There are some salons that are opening and operating right now that don't have that capability, that have had to rearrange their cutting stations, so they've had to rearrange their color processing areas. We didn't have to do any of that because just by the design of our place, we are already separated. But as far as strict guidelines and strict adherence, there's no way to enforce that. There's no way to inspect that and they didn't come out with a clearly defined set of rules. So I think it was really up to every business owner to do what made sense for them in their team and to act in a way that's responsible right now.

**Steve Adams, host 18:00**

Well, it sounds to me like you've really gone the extra mile. I did happen today to pull down some of that guidance out of the governor's office. And there really were only four steps that were recommended: capacity limited to 50% of your maximum legal occupancy, only by appointment, maintain that six feet social distancing, and then look at practicing not only the distancing, but hygiene and other public health measures. And that seems to come down from the Iowa Department of Public Health and also from the CDC. So sounds like you're way out in front of that game. But Rick, I got to ask, you know, when you talk about looking at capacity being limited here, how many clients would you typically see in a day, on a normal day, I should say, and how many are you seeing now?

**Rick Mosley 18:55**

We typically see 65 or 70 clients on a normal day, and we are seeing that many right now. Actually, if we could get people to work 24-7, we would be able to fill it up, because there's such a backlog of people that need haircuts. So right now we're extremely busy. But we pretty much have a set schedule, our schedule is what it used to be, except for the last two weeks, which we worked six days a week. Moving forward, we're going to be getting back to our regular schedule with that. But we literally can pretty much work as many hours as we wanted to and then fill those gaps. And that's how much of a backlog there is.

**Steve Adams, host 19:33**

Well, I understand the backlog. I think I went 14 weeks without a haircut and I was afraid my wife was going to shave my head during the night. So I take it then that you had to kind of stagger your scheduling or change your normal hours of operation, I heard you go from four days to six days a week if I heard that right?

**Rick Mosley 19:54**

Well, that was my schedule. Actually our schedule is five days a week. I actually mean my schedule which is four days a week, but we would normally would work five days a week. We have been working six days a week. And you know, some of the staggering and things like that, you know, we also have our clients stay in their car until they're called, so we have nobody in the reception room. We've taken our chairs made them so

you can't sit on them, we put things on them so you can't sit down. Like I said, it's we just try really stay on that. Nobody comes in, we have a sign on the door that says you can't enter unless you have a mask on. So even somebody is walking by that may want to buy a bottle of shampoo, they have got to adhere to the rule. I mean, it's right there on the door, we say you can't enter until you have a mask.

So if they want to buy a product, they have to, we have our phone number on the door, they have to call in, our receptionist will take the order, do their credit card over the phone and then take the product out to the car. So that's how we're keeping the numbers down in the salon as much as we can. Because typically we might have 12 clients in there, and eight people sitting in the chairs waiting. It's worked out pretty well for us due to the configuration and the size of our salon.

**Steve Adams, host 21:07**

I wish I'd gotten a picture of that, to be real honest with you. So, Stacie, many of our guests on these podcasts have talked about how they've changed their business model, or actually pivoted to a new way of doing business. In what way would you say you and Rick have adapted to these changes?

**Stacie Mosley 21:26**

Well, I think in addition to, you know, kind of beefing up our social media presence in our online presence, the retail aspect that Rick just mentioned is huge for us. I mean, retail typically makes up 30%, you know, 20 to 30% of our sales. And so for that chunk to be missing is a huge portion of revenue that we had to kind of adapt to, how are we going to get—number one, how are we going to get product in the door and how are we going to get product out the door. Because you know, 20 to 30% reduction in your overall sales, it is not going to take very long before you start to feel that.

One of the things that we have started to do in line with a couple of our vendors is, you know, not necessarily through an online store per se, but having our orders either shipped or delivered to our guests. They can simply call us at any point and we will either ship an order of their regular maybe top five products, favorite five products, or deliver that. And so that aspect for us, especially when we were closed, still having the retail income, still being able to offer a retail sale was huge. And I think that our guests really appreciated the fact that, they wanted to support us.

Number one, your clients always want to support you. Yes, they can go buy your product online or directly from the vendor, but they want to support you, they've built a relationship with you. And they really like what your organization is about. And so folks were being driven, if it was a product line that they wanted to purchase, yes, they can go to myfavoriteshampoo.com and they can purchase their shampoo, there. But the vendors that we worked with worked really pretty much in harmony with all the salons and said, Hey, are you open? We would love to drive your clients to you. So rather than going to myshampoo.com and ordering your shampoo, you would put in your zip code and, you know, you would be driven to Rick Mosley Hair if it was the correct zip code for us. And then you would be prompted to call the salon to see if they were doing delivery or curbside. So for us, that was huge.

The other thing that we've put into place is the system of referrals. We've had that referral system forever, I think now more than ever, it's important to generate referrals. Folks are coming to us because either they can't get into their salon, they have maybe a less than pleasant experience with their salon, there are maybe things that they wish their salon was doing that they are not. And they've heard from friends or guests of ours that we have protocols in place. So the referral program for us is still huge.

And I think the final pivot for us is to really think about ongoing programs. We've entered ideas of an auto-ship for certain products. If you were enrolled in an auto-ship, auto schedule program, where we would just, we know you want your hair cut every five weeks, we're going to auto-schedule you for the year. We know you purchase these products regularly every four to five weeks. We want to enroll you in an automatic shipping program where you're going to receive that product every four to five weeks on your doorstep. I mean, I think we've all been in the shower and run out of shampoo. And that's not ever a fun feeling. So we've really looked at doing business in a different way. And unfortunately, it may be because of this. But fortunately, I think that businesses really do need to take a look at how they're going to continue to do business both in a limited exposure environment, maybe a limited contact environment.

**Steve Adams, host 24:48**

Well, that's just such a wonderful segue into the question I was going to ask Rick. Rick, you know, I know it's difficult to gaze into the future but what do you foresee happening with this business segment going forward? Is what you're experiencing now, is this the new normal or will there be probably other adaptations down the road?

**Rick Mosley 25:11**

Steve, it's hard to follow my wife's explanation of things, but well, I hope it's not the new normal. I hope I don't have to come to work every day and wear a mask. I mean, it's kind of unbelievable, I mean, to do that. I can't hug people that want to give you a hug. I mean, little things like that, which mean a lot to people. I mean, I can't tell you, every other client at least wants a virtual hug, you know. I would suggest to, especially younger hairdressers that, you know, don't get used to the government giving you money. I think this may be somewhat of a weird example for young people that got bailed out. Some people are making more than they made when they're working with some of the programs. So I would say save for a rainy day. And know this could happen. I don't think anybody thought this sort of thing would happen. I would have, somebody who told me this, this happened this was happenin, I would say it sounds like a bad movie, combined with everything else has recently transpired.

So I'd just say, know that things can happen, you can be knocked off your feet, and be prepared, have a nest egg, you know, and know what's going on. And when it does happen, pay attention. Pay attention to what's going on. Because I think a lot of people like Stacie said earlier either filed wrong or did they didn't get the benefits when they were, on a timely manner. I think just really pay attention to what's going on around you. And to continue to be clean. I mean I think it's really really important, because I've been on the other end of my profession where I went into beauty schools and inspected them, and you know, opened doors and see what's going on with people. I think that if anything it's really drawn attention. I think clients especially now are really paying attention, you know, to what you're doing. You open your door, they're looking in it. And they're looking at what you're looking at. I've never really noticed that before. So I say keep up the good work with the sanitation, don't let your guard down, and just try to be as professional as you can with clients in regard to sanitation and things like that.

**Steve Adams, host 27:24**

Well, Stacie, kind of on a humorous note here to close this out. And this is purely out of my own curiosity, how many clients have you had to salvage who gave themselves a home hair makeover or a corona haircut, so to speak.

**Stacie Mosley 27:41**

Ah, the corona haircut, there are so many iterations of that, and it usually is a men's haircut, usually our male guests and most of them are pretty discerning, but they come in and they say, Well, I let my wife/

son/daughter take the clippers to my hair because I couldn't stand it anymore. We've had a few of those. We've had a few of the hack and maim situations with bangs. And we definitely had some home color, which you know, is its own animal. Probably the biggest thing that I will say is a lot of folks are deciding that they're going to let their gray hair grow out. They're going to stop coloring their hair [Rick: Longer styles, longer haircuts] Longer haircutss are coming back, I want it longer.

But I think you'll see a lot of folks that are getting back to gray, going to gray, going to white, letting the white come through. We've had it we've had a lot of those folks that have come to the realization of this is my hair. It's gray, it's long, it's white, it's whatever. I'm not gonna fight it anymore. So maybe it's a nice moment of clarity for some people. And we haven't really seen too awful, too too bad of haircuts, but that the clippers in the wrong hands do quick damage. Yes. Yeah.

**Steve Adams, host 29:03**

It's a dangerous dangerous thing to put clippers in the hand of your wife or your significant other.

**Stacie Mosley 29:09**

Especially after eight weeks of face to face quarantine in a house.

**Steve Adams, host 29:13**

Yes, well, I can certainly identify with that. And by the way, speaking of going gray, as I tell people, I'm not I'm not gray, I'm platinum blonde. [laughter] Well, Rick, if other folks in the business would like to reach out to you or Stacie for advice or counsel, how would they do that?

**Rick Mosley 29:36**

Probably the best way would be to call the salon and leave a message to call them at 515-279-4075, that is the salon number. And I return all my phone calls so that would be the best way to get ahold of me or Stacie.

**Steve Adams, host 29:55**

And I noticed that your website address is [www.rickmosleyhair.com](http://www.rickmosleyhair.com) and that's M-O-S-L-E-Yhair.com. So if they needed to reach out to you via your website, that would also be a good contact link.

**Rick Mosley 30:10**

Certainly, certainly.

**Steve Adams, host 30:13**

Hey, Rick, Stacie, this has been a real pleasure for me to be honest with you, and I want to thank you both for taking the time to visit with us and we appreciate the hard work and dedication you're providing to your clients and customers.

Well, folks, if you have any questions about this Back to Business Iowa podcast, please feel free to contact me, Steve Adams, at [stadams@iastate.edu](mailto:stadams@iastate.edu). And thank you for listening. This podcast, by the way, is a collaboration between Iowa State Extension and Outreach and the Small Business Development Centers of Iowa. Always Serving Iowans, #StrongIowa. Let's get back to business Iowa!

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