

# DePasquale Circle of Beauty presents Lakme USA

**C**armen DePasquale, founder and chairman, and Joe Mastalia, president, of DePasquale Companies epitomize the entrepreneurial spirit and drive that make the professional beauty industry so exciting. At DePasquale Companies, they hold multiple positions as manufacturers, marketers and distributors, while Carmen is also a salon and school owner, as well as a former stylist, creating a full circle of beauty. As a result, they understand their customers' needs from a unique perspective. In this interview, they share their point-of-view, as well as an update on **Lakme USA**.

**Beauty Industry Report (BIR): Carmen, you have had an amazing career and have been involved with so many facets of the professional beauty industry. With your extensive experience in so many aspects of the business, what are some of the insights you would like to share?**

**Carmen DePasquale (CD):** There are so many directions a person can take in the world of beauty, and because I have not been afraid to get involved or take chances, I have been able to expand my career in multiple directions. When you are not afraid of change, barriers almost become invisible. They are mostly in your mind. When you learn that, anything is possible.

**BIR: Your company's description—A Full Circle of Beauty—has not happened overnight. Please give BIR's readers a brief overview of how your entities evolved.**

**CD:** I have always looked for ways to improve myself. I became an educator for manufacturers, which exposed me to a broader view of the beauty business. That eventually influenced me in to become a distributor. While always staying connected to my roots as a hairdresser, I realized I could make a difference in more ways than one. Those events in my life all became and were driven by my desire to be more than average. As a result, I began my journey as a hair stylist, evolved to a salon owner, then to an educator and beauty school owner, and finally to a distributor and manufacturer. Each connection eventually made a full circle of beauty.

**BIR: Joe, before you came to DePasquale Companies, you were an executive in the shoe**

**business. It must have been a significant transition into the world of beauty, and it seems that since the day you started, the salon industry and the DePasquale organization have been going through rampant change. What have you learned from running the DePasquale Companies that you can share?**

**Joe Mastalia (JM):** The beauty industry gives anyone from any industry a great opportunity—provided you understand what it takes to grow. My 22 years in the shoe business allowed me to bring a common sense approach. Communication and interaction with clients every day taught me how to service and attend to their needs. Because Carmen helps me understand the difficulties that a hairdresser and salon owner face, I am able to relate to their concerns in servicing their clients and bring solutions—not just lip service. This approach consistently yields the best results.

**BIR: Carmen, please tell me about how you market your company's brands.**

**CD:** We own **ECRU New York, New York Streets, beautyADDICTS** and **CURES by Avancé**, and we are the exclusive importer of the Spanish hair care brand, **Lakme**. My hair, cosmetics and skin care collections are developed based on lifestyles and have a target market approach that appeals directly to consumers. Lakme offers professional hair color and color care products. We market those through education to the colorists and stylists, who are the conduits to consumers.

**BIR: Being a manufacturer/marketer and also a distributor is a unique combination. How has that experience helped you tap into both points-of-view in your sales and marketing activities with your brands, including Lakme?**

**CD:** It's always a challenge when you wear more than one hat. I find myself in many conflicts as to who is more right—the distributor or the manufacturer. However, having those dual view points allows me to reach conclusions I might otherwise not have considered. Both manufacturers and distributors have legitimate needs. My perspective as a manufacturer/distributor and salon owner/distributor gives me a unique advantage.

**BIR: DePasquale Salon Systems has had a long successful history as one of the premiere distributors in the industry. Over the years, the organization has gained credibility through its ability to grow brands significantly. You have also experienced the negative results of companies you've represented making distribution changes and terminating their relationships with your firm. In spite of that, DePasquale has not only been resilient, but it has continued to grow steadily by adding new brands and forming new marketing entities. What are some of the lessons and strategies that you have learned?**

**CD:** Diversification has been my best ally. Also, my willingness to immediately let go of what I cannot control has served me well. Embrace what you can do instead of crying about what you can't.

**JM:** By reinventing yourself and adapting in an entrepreneurial environment, you do not waste time dwelling over what you cannot control. If your fundamental beliefs are strong, you have a better chance of succeeding.

**BIR: Tell me about Lakme and why you decided to become the exclusive importer and licensee for the entire U.S. salon market.**

**CD:** We chose Lakme after a two-year global search for a hair color brand with great color support products. I was looking for a company that had a proven, credible history in the European market. Lakme was the result of that search. It is a family run company with a deep passion for what they do. When you believe in the people who represent a company and stand behind the product, as well as their perseverance, tenacity and willingness to do whatever it takes, you want to partner with those people.

**BIR: Hair color has continued to be the largest growth area in the salon market and, as such, is an important part of a distributor's business. What is your philosophy on a distributor distributing more than one brand, and why should a distributor consider adding Lakme?**

**JM:** Every distributor knows that most salons have two to three color brands—the first being the brand they have a major commitment to, then a second and a third for a multitude of

reasons. As a distributor of major color brands, it is our goal to take all three positions in the salon's color dispensary. That gives us maximum opportunity for growth. In addition, by having more than one position in a salon's color dispensary, you protect not only your business, but the business of all the manufacturers you represent. The more needs you can meet, the more market share you will have. We also need to be realistic. We all know by now that any distributor who has all its eggs in one basket is walking on thin ice, or should I say, walking on eggshells?

**BIR: Carmen, you told me that it's your experience with hair color that no one line satisfies a salon's total hair color needs. Can you explain what you mean?**

**CD:** Lakme hair color, along with the other brands that we distribute, can satisfy a salon's total color needs. However, the reality is that a salon carries multiple color brands for multiple reasons—because a brand is perceived to have the best reds, the best coverage or the highest lift. It doesn't matter if that's really true; it's the perception that matters. Some salons choose more than one brand for more versatility, because of the specialized categories they cover or strictly on price. In addition, you have salons carrying a brand solely to satisfy the comfort zone of a new stylist or colorist. The more scenarios a distributor can satisfy, the more color market share it can acquire.

**BIR: Many distributors only want to be involved with established brands. Yet the salon business has been and always will be about what's new. What are some of the benefits of going with a new brand?**

**JM:** The salon industry is always about what's new, especially in hair color. Colorists want choices. It's worth repeating: The more choices you offer and the more needs you satisfy, the more market share you can control.

**BIR: What makes Lakme different?**

**JM:** Lakme, a family business headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, has a successful global history. With Lakme, the integrity of the hair will improve over time—even when using high-lift blondes and highlights. It's foolproof color that's pre-calibrated with no oxidizing off tone. **Collage** is a soy-based permanent color offering 100% gray coverage that conditions, softens and boosts the hair fiber. With a low level of ammonia, it respects the hair's balance

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and keeps it healthy, shiny and bright. Boswellia, an active natural ingredient, reduces irritations caused by extreme pH levels. In addition, Lakme has several categories of color support hair care and styling products.

**BIR: What is your vision for DePasquale?**

**CD:** To one day be an advisor to my children and grandchildren, as they take the Circle of Beauty in directions that I could never imagine.

**JM:** To be at the forefront of developing the new independent distribution network that is currently emerging. This network will be the dominating force that will connect to the hairstylists and salon owners of tomorrow.

**BIR: What is your company's greatest accomplishment in the last five years?**

**CD:** To have completed the Circle of Beauty. Each link supports and adds strength to the others. The strength of the circle has been able to provide support to many of my employees. To see their growth and longevity inside the circle gives me great satisfaction.

**BIR: Who are the key members of your team?**

**JM:** We are fortunate to have **Arda Itez**, our director of sales and marketing, a former director of education for **ARTEC**, with 16 years of hair color experience as a corporate trainer. In addition, our director of education, **Marlene Nucifora**, has 25 years of hair color experience and executes our color certification programs at the Lakme USA Hair Color Academy. Together, they bring a level of excellence and integrity to the Lakme brand.

**BIR: What do you have planned for this year?**

**CD:** Change—lots of change, new plans and new directions, 2010 will not be about selling more products. Nobody needs another product. What they need are more customers, and our future success will be obtained by how we help salons fulfill their needs.

**BIR: How do you partner with salons?**

**JM:** In New Jersey, we have created the Lakme Academy where we train, teach and inspire talented and passionate colorists and stylists. Our website ([www.lakmeusa.com](http://www.lakmeusa.com)) also offers on-demand training. Programs include Fundamental Color, Reds & Blondes, Learning Lab, Boot Camp (Full Day) and Color Exhibition.

**BIR: What's your company's biggest challenge for the balance of 2010?**

**CD:** Finding the bright stars of the future. There is a new brand of distributor. To succeed, they must do things in a new way. Searching for those people is our biggest challenge; finding them is our biggest opportunity.

**BIR: Any final words?**

**JM:** New brands, like Lakme, help us to continue to grow our business. For an independently owned distributor in a competitive environment, Lakme can open doors in an arena that is otherwise closed.

*Reach Carmen DePasquale at 800-724-4247 or [carmend@depasqualeco.com](mailto:carmend@depasqualeco.com). Reach Joe Mastalia at 800-724-4247 or [joem@depasqualeco.com](mailto:joem@depasqualeco.com). Visit Lakme USA at [www.lakmeusa.com](http://www.lakmeusa.com). Visit DePasquale companies at [www.depasqualeco.com](http://www.depasqualeco.com). Visit DePasquale Salon Systems at [www.depasqualesalonsystems.com](http://www.depasqualesalonsystems.com).*