

# GlamPalm and GBA drive paradigm shift for 2010

Over the years, **James Hobart** has worked in sales management for some of the top companies in the salon industry, including giants like **Redken** and **Matrix**. He recently brought his industry knowledge to two new start-up ventures—**GlamPalm (think glamour in the palm of your hand)**, an exclusive manufacturer and marketer of professional tools, and **GBA**, California's newest salon products distributor, with plans to expand into Arizona and Nevada this year. Recently, James, who serves as senior vice president for both companies, met with **BIR** to introduce GlamPalm and GBA to the industry, and I am pleased to share his story.

**Beauty Industry Report (BIR): Tell me about your background. How did you get to where you are today?**

**James Hobart (JH):** My 41 years in our industry started at two **Redken Concept Salons**, which I owned for 12 years. I then went to work directly for Redken in regional management while the company was experiencing tremendous growth in the early '80s. Next, I moved to **Matrix Essentials**, where I managed sales and education as the company exploded in the late '80s. I then helped **Irvine Rusk** relaunch his company, after which I moved on to other manufacturers and distributors, including launching **PureOlogy** in Los Angeles and working for **SudzzFX**. In addition, I am certified in hypnotherapy and have conducted numerous Mind Fitness seminars around the world, helping every day people take control of their destinies. I am blessed, having seen the great days of the industry, as we all rode the phenomenal growth curve and witnessed the power of the salon when it was supported by manufacturers. What a fun business when loyalty, passion, commitment and customer service ruled. Today, the landscape has been transformed by the retail giants that now rule the industry. The key reason that GBA came into being was that we concluded that the values of doing business that helped the industry grow are still applicable today—in fact, salons are craving to do business with partners they can trust—and we decided to make that happen.

**BIR: Give me a brief history of your companies.**

**JH:** I was fortunate to meet **Howard Mallen** and **Ramin Saeidian**, who co-own the distributorship, GBA, and GlamPalm, an innovative professional tools line that is directly manufactured by our parent company in South Korea. I was inspired to join the company by the vision Howard and Ramin shared, which reflected my views of the industry and generated a solid approach to helping to get this business back to where salons and spas are the centerpiece for consumers' beauty services and home care products and tools.

**BIR: What are your plans for GlamPalm?**

**JH:** We know we have the most unique styling irons and other professional tools in the market today. Our plan is to put these products in the hands of stylists by enlisting the services of quality, professional independent distributors looking for high end, exclusively professional tools that out perform the competition. This year, will we will expand our nationwide network by partnering with full-service, independent distributors and their salons that are looking for direction, guidance and partnership in a challenging marketplace.

**BIR: In a crowded marketplace, what is your brand's point of difference to both beauty professionals and consumers?**

**JH:** GlamPalm sets itself apart from all other tool lines in that our parent company, **Unil Electronics** in South Korea was and is the hair iron and curling iron OEM for many major brands in our industry throughout the world. They introduced many world firsts, such as ceramic heaters, ceramic coated plates, universal voltage, 3D swivel cords, tilting and cushioning plates, and automatic shut off, features that have driven their success over the past 15 years. The introduction of GlamPalm represents Unil's ongoing commitment to develop the world's most technologically advanced hair tools. GlamPalm tools are infused with exclusive Healing Stone, a precious mineral mined from our own mountain in South Korea that delivers ultimate shine, silky softness and beautiful healthy hair. Healing Stone contains an ore that is sealed

into our ceramic plates and emits negative ions and far infrared rays, which are beneficial to hair in creating a smoother cuticle, more shine, softer feeling hair and faster drying times. Our Heat that Heals tagline says it all. We have a less than 1% return rate and offer continuous support to all levels of the distribution channel. GlamPalm's price points are highly competitive with any of the upper end tool companies and offer so much more value. At the end of the day, the incredible results our products produce speak for themselves.

**BIR: What is your target market?**

**JH:** For GlamPalm, it's all salon stylists looking for the best productive tools on the market and all females who purchase a professional tool from their salon.

With GBA, we are searching for salons and spas that have lost faith in the current system and as a result, are looking for their distributor to offer them unique lines that bring value, have a great story, are not diverted and offer exceptional performance.

**BIR: How is your sales organization structured?**

**JH:** With GlamPalm, we sell directly to independent distributors employing sales people who service their accounts utilizing inventory control, motivation and education. They are committed to helping grow salons' business. We currently have six distributors and will be finalizing our national network this year.

**BIR: Describe your ideal distributor.**

**JH:** We look for strong, dynamic owners who take responsibility for their sales teams and for companies that have sales consultants who are open and willing to learn new information.

**BIR: What's new and/or hot in your line?**

**JH:** GlamPalm offers the first dryer designed specifically for fine and thin hair, which makes up a good 40% of a salon's clientele who are always looking for a new tool or product that will add volume and shine. It features new motor technology, is extremely lightweight and our Healing Stone technology produces amazing volume and shine. We just launched an innovative curved plate **Styling Wand** that gives quick and easy root lift, creates volume and produces curls much like a curling iron.

**BIR: What type of education/product knowledge and training programs do you offer?**

**JH:** We offer our direct sales people working for GBA and our distributors' sales teams continued and comprehensive education. Education is the foundation of this industry. Currently, I personally manage the company's education and training; however, I am recruiting experienced people who can help in different capacities, in particular hair color.

**BIR: What is your long term plan for education?**

**JH:** With education being the cornerstone of sales, our vision is to set up a comprehensive in-house training facility utilized for local events, and to produce events for our distributor partners across North America.

**BIR: Tell me about your ecommerce initiatives.**

**JH:** We are setting up online sales through several groups that understand this medium and its unique differences compared to the brick and mortar world. It will continue to grow in importance for us, as consumers turn to the Internet more and more for convenience and to research the companies they do business with and their products thoroughly before making a purchase.

**BIR: Tell me more about GBA.**

**JH:** Our unique difference as a professional full-service distributor is that we are not trying to be all things to all people. Our direct focus is specifically the professional salon and spa looking for the latest in technology, quality and performance. Our lines are positioned to the upper end of the market.

We have several salon business consultants (SBCs), who represent **Landoll Milano** (Italian color & liquids), **GlamPalm**, **Kasho** (Japanese shears), **Ilumicure** (American LED Light therapy) and **Stylerush** (South Korean salon tools). We have seen growth in many salons that adopted our concept, philosophy and products with education driving the initial launch and consistent support by the SBC maintaining the partnership for real time growth and success.

**BIR: What's your company's biggest challenge?**

**JH:** The economy and the consumer, who is still wary as to what is happening and not spending money the way she used to. We are tied to her confidence in the system.

**BIR: In your opinion, what is the salon industry's biggest challenge in 2010?**

**JH:** Diversion and the loss of retail dollars through the salon. Until salons are willing to

**“GlamPalm tools are infused with exclusive Healing Stone, a precious mineral mined from our own mountain in South Korea that delivers ultimate shine, silky softness and beautiful, healthy hair.”**

step away from the retail giants that have taken this industry hostage, things will not change.

**BIR: What business trends do you predict?**

**JH:** Higher Internet sales, stronger movement to boutique lines with natural, anti-aging and a green mentality, more investment in education, more investment in the environmental

movement and closer ties to smaller, focused manufacturers and distributors.

**BIR: Who have been your mentors in the professional beauty business?**

**JH:** I was blessed to start my career at Redken, where **John and Paula Kent Meehan**, **Jim Brooks** and **John Hammer** gave me my start in manufacturing and taught me how business operates. I was privileged to work directly for **Arnie and Sydell Miller**, the founders of **Matrix Essentials**, who instilled in me entrepreneurial principles that still apply. **Irvine Rusk** showed me the artistic side of the business and how interrelated it is to sales.

**BIR: What is the best business advice you ever received and who was it from?**

**JH:** Arnie Miller taught me how to “find a way” whenever insurmountable challenges come up..

**BIR: What are the effects of the economic downturn on the beauty business?**

**JH:** Short term, we will continue to see many salons not as busy as they used to be, who need to change their attitudes about what to do now—not tomorrow. For example, it will be more important than ever for them to pro-actively recruit clients by conducting public relations and marketing activities. They also will need to stay in greater contact with their clients through direct mail, phone calls, special offers, in-salon training sessions on what products they need, how to properly use salon tools and limitless other ideas to stay in close contact. Long term, we are going to have to adjust to new standards, dictated by a smaller universe of salon clients who are actively looking to maintain their image through professional services. Finally, I see the merging of hair and skin care services and products to serve an aging population.

**BIR: Anything else you would like to address?**

**JH:** I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to introduce **BIR's** readers to GlamPalm and GBA. I would like to see more interaction between like-minded individuals. If anyone feels and thinks as we do, open up dialogue as to how we jointly can take it to the next level for mutual benefit.

*Reach James Hobart, Howard Mallen or Ramin Saeidian at 818-390-9000 or [jamesh@gbabeauty.com](mailto:jamesh@gbabeauty.com) and visit [www.gbabeauty.com](http://www.gbabeauty.com) and [www.glampalmusa.com](http://www.glampalmusa.com).*