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Count On It

A burned-out banker takes an unconventional path to salon ownership

If you ask Freddie Berumen, owner of Freddie B. Salon in Ventura, CA, none of this was supposed to happen.

The chic, modern-yet-comfy environment, the stylists at work in happy harmony with their surroundings, the growing client base... everything about Freddie B. says success. Yet Berumen, who started his career as a banker, never envisioned being where he is today. "Owning a salon was the last thing I wanted to do," he says.

FROM 3-PIECE SUITS TO FOILS AND ROOTS

Berumen was coaxed into trying beauty school by his own stylist after confessing to banker burn-out. An apprenticeship with that stylist and post-graduate education with Vidal Sassoon led to a job behind the chair and a part-time teaching gig at the local city college. Berumen says he loved the creativity, but, "I was missing something. I needed something to bite into."

He started looking into buying an existing salon, but says nothing stirred his imagination, mostly because



everything he saw was an embodiment of someone else's vision. "Even if it was new, it wasn't my taste," he says.

It wasn't until he looked into an empty building that he found his inspiration. "It wasn't even a salon," he says. "It was an office building, with cubicles. But right when I walked in, I fell in love with it." The location – away from the heart of town where the other salons were – was unexpected too, yet perfect in its own way, since Berumen says he wanted his salon to be "more of a destination."

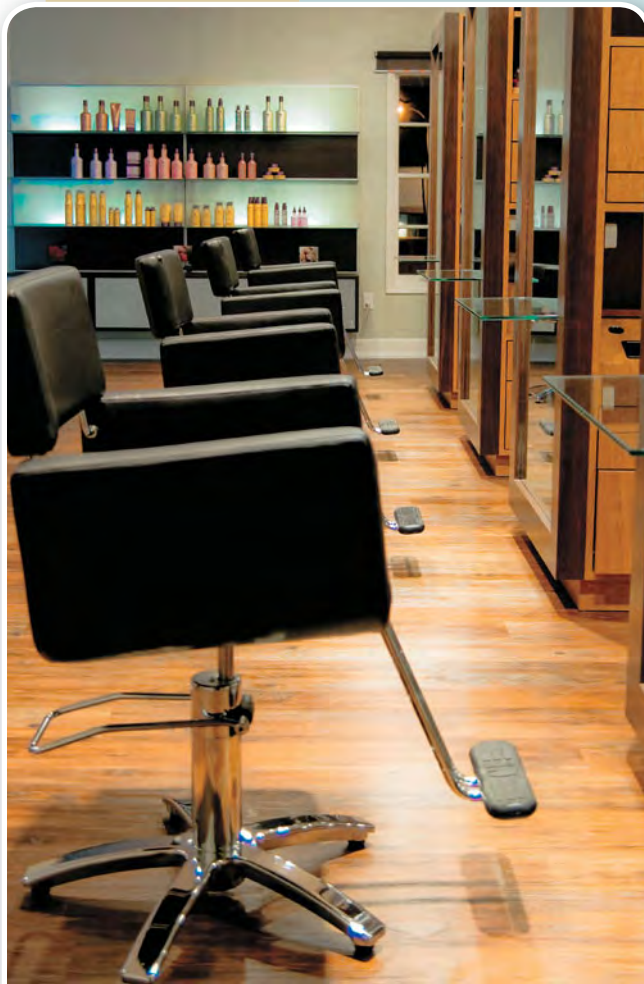
Transforming the space into a working salon was the challenge. Berumen turned to another unlikely source, his life partner Hector Galvez Jimenez, a former Human Resources Director with no experience in the salon business. Yet when they were ready to draw up plans, the architect didn't change a thing the two had created together. "The colors, the aesthetics, the floorplan, it's all ours," he says, calling their approach "stylist centric."

To outfit the salon, Berumen turned to Richard Winkleman of SalonCentric's Furnishings Division. "SalonCentric has been there since day one," he says, explaining that Winkleman went far beyond the call of duty, offering help and advice with every phase of the project. "There was so much hand-holding!" Berumen laughs. He says Winkleman understood Berumen's goal of building a space that supports the way stylists work, offering work-smart choices like the ergonomically friendly **Takara Belmont Sara Backwash Shampoo Units**, with reclining chairs. At every turn, "SalonCentric came through and stood behind their work," Berumen says. "They are true business partners."

WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

Though there's still a smell of new leather from the **Takara Belmont Bossa Nova Hydraulic Chairs**, there's a vibe among the staff that feels like they've worked together forever. That's due in part to Berumen's personal management style. "The whole part of working with a team really does come naturally," he says. "I want to do what I can to help them grow." At first he was wary of imposing anything that looked like a "rule" on his young staff. "But I discovered something; that's exactly what they're hungry for," he says, remembering his own discomfort at managers who seemed to be making things up as they went along. The environment at Freddie B. is relaxed but professional, which puts clients immediately at ease. "It's become like a retreat," says Berumen, adding that one of his stylists recently proposed adding 15 minutes onto appointment times. Asked why, the stylist replied, "My clients like to hang out."

Nothing could please Berumen more. This unconventional salon, in an out of the way location, run by a stylist who was supposed to be a banker, has become a dream come true for the owner and his clients.



“It's become like a retreat...
My clients like to hang out.”

Freddie Berumen,
Owner, Freddie B. Salon



OPPOSITE PAGE (ABOVE): A custom lighted desk by **Collins** greets clients at Freddie B. Salon in Ventura, CA. (BELOW): **Takara Belmont Sara Shampoo Units**. THIS PAGE (ABOVE): SalonCentric's Salon Furnishings Division worked closely with Owner Freddie Berumen in designing the salon's interior.