

Just Get Serious® About Success

Pursue Your Passion

Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion.

Georg Hegel, German Philosopher
(1770-1831)

It is never too late to be what you might have been.

George Elliot, English Novelist
(1819 – 1880)



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This month I am interviewing Geno Evans, a man who is passionate about what he does and has decided at age 56 to pursue his life-long dream. I met Geno at the Mizani Educators Conference in February and then spoke with him at length during the 2010 Bronner Brothers International Hair Show.



Geno Evans

These days Geno Evans wears many hats. He is the owner of Geno Salon 376 in Memphis, Tennessee. He is a hair care educator who is known in the industry as the "Voice of Mizani." Geno is writing two books, an autobiography entitled "My Life For Women" about being a women's hairstylist for over 30 years and "How to Run a Successful Salon." In addition, he is pursuing a master's degree at The Academy of Art University. I hope my interview with Geno inspires you to discover and pursue your passion.

Donna: Please tell the readers how you "stumbled" into the hairstyling field.

Geno: It was 1978, and my desire was to pursue a career as a men's fashion designer. Because of that goal, I was working as a salesman at a men's haberdashery in Detroit. A gentleman by the name of Ivan Humphries came in to purchase several suits. I asked him, "How can you afford to buy five expensive suits, and I work in this store and cannot afford to buy one with my 40% discount." I just had to know what he did for a living. He replied "I'm a hair stylist." I immediately found the nearest beauty school and signed up because I wanted to make the kind of money he was making. Ivan took me under his wing and showed me the ropes and that was how I got started.

Donna: What happened next?

Geno: After beauty school, Ivan sent me to style the hair of a very special client, Ms. Gladys Knight. The famous diva of soul music was in town for a concert, and Ivan couldn't finish his appointments in time to see her before she was to perform. So he asked me to go in his place. I rose to the occasion and finished Ms. Knight's hair in time for her engagement, and she looked fabulous! I knew right then that I was going to be star stylist and famous in the beauty business. Hollywood Hairdresser Geno Evans was born that day.



Gladys Knight

Donna: So you started in the industry for, as they say, "the love of money."

Geno: Yes, I love making money; that's true. But today I am even more passionate about making women beautiful. I love the challenge of it all. Money is very important; however, it is not the main focus for me. You see, a satisfied client will pay gladly, but a happy and satisfied client will keep coming back for more. And I am passionate about making and keeping my clients happy.

Donna: What keeps you motivated and on "top of your game?"

For me it is education and training. I believe that for every industry there is a direct relationship between education and income. The more up-to-date you are on the current trends and where your industry is heading the more money you can make. And for me, it's the beauty and hair industry. For you, it's the speaking and training industry. For a reporter, it's the news and journalism industry. For a nurse, it is the health care industry. Everyone is part of some industry, even if it is fast food like McDonald's or Burger King. It is important to know what is going on in your industry.

I believe that when you are passionate about what you do, you are committed to excellence. And your excellence makes people talk about you. That's what keeps me motivated. And I love making my clients talk about me. It brings me more clients and more money even in this economic climate. That's my motivation. I bet you love to have your clients talking about you?



Hair Styles By Geno Evans

Donna: Yes, you are so right. If you recall, we met at the Mizani Hair Educators Conference where I gave a presentation skills program. I loved it when everyone was talking about how great my session was later on that evening.

Geno: That's what separates "liking" to do something from being "passionate" about it.

Donna: That reminds me of a quote: "Being passionate pays."

Geno: It certainly does!

Donna: I always say it pays not only in money, but it also pays in building your reputation. It pays in people wanting to work with you and for you. It pays in your own sense of personal satisfaction.

Geno: And it does not matter whether you are a stylist, speaker, car mechanic, teacher, police officer, or work in any other job. Be passionate!

Donna: Are the stylists in your salon as passionate as you are?



Mizani Display – Geno Salon

Geno: They most definitely are. I only hire people who have the same drive and passion that I have for the hair and beauty business. Also, I am professional in my attire, attitude, and actions, and so are all my stylists. They have various backgrounds, personalities, and areas of expertise. However, they are all very professional. The importance of that is clearly understood at the time of their interview.

In order to be successful in any field, you must surround yourself with like-minded people and like-minded companies. That like-mindedness needs to be reflected in everything. I am a Mizani exclusive salon because, as a company, they share my passion about hair care excellence in all of their products. Also, I am a Mizani educator and on their development team for the same reason - passion and professionalism.

If you had never met me and you walk into my salon, you'd know that I am a professional who is passionate about what I do. People have told me that because it is reflected in the way everything looks and feels in my salon.

Donna: Please explain what you mean.

Geno: The salon has a waterfall, fresh flowers, burning candles, chocolates, and waiting rooms that feel like are you in a special place. I set the tone at the front door by engaging the senses of smell, touch, feel, and sight. My clients are spoiled, and I love spoiling them.



Waiting Area at Geno Salon Studios

Donna: Sounds like an experience, not a salon!

Geno: It is. I believe that when we are passionate about what we do, we want people to experience our passion in as many ways as possible.

Donna: Now, that's an interesting thought. I need to consider how my clients and audiences can experience even more of my passion before and after my presentations, not just during them. I believe most of us, regardless of our position or field could benefit greatly from doing that.

Geno: It is so important.

Donna: What comes to my mind is that regardless of whether people have their own businesses, like you and I, or if they are employed by others, they should be thinking about how they can exhibit their passion or, at the very least, true professionalism, not just in their work but everything about themselves, including their attire, office, work area, even how they interact with others.

Geno: I definitely agree with that.

Donna: What a great insight. When we talked at the Bronner Brothers Show, you told me that your life-long dream was to be a fashion designer. Tell my readers about that.

I started sewing in high school and created a line of men's cashmere scarves. However, I stopped pursuing that original passion when life gave me the green light to go into the hair styling business. I feel it is now time to return back to it. So I enrolled in a graduate program at the Academy of Art University. I am in my second semester and presently taking courses in fashion design, fashion illustration and the history of 20th century fashion.

Donna: So at age 56 you are back to formal learning?



Geno's new passion is fashion!

Geno: Yes, two years ago I decided to move my career to the next level by pursuing my original love. I am making plans for a "Geno Evans Couture Collection" to premiere during the New York's Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in 2014. One main bonus for attending the Academy of Art is that the graduate students get to premiere their collections twice a year during fashion week. I am definitely looking forward to that shot at the top.

Donna: How exciting. You are a living example of the quote, "It is never too late to be what you could have become."

Geno: Yes, I guess I am. I love the lyrics by Earth, Wind and Fire --- "Keep your head to the sky, and the clouds will tell you why." I believe that age has given me the experience to make tough choices with a clear vision. I know how I want women to dress. I believe in the feminine edge in fashion: beautiful dresses, flowing wedding gowns and classy lines.

And just like I have years of experience which I can use to my benefit so do many of your readers. They just have to figure out how to use what they already know to take them to a higher level.

Donna: That is great advice. What were people's reactions when you told them about your plans?

Geno: One must always have a strong self belief in order to achieve great success. If you don't believe in your dreams, why would you expect someone else to take you seriously? My father always told me, "I don't care what you do with your career as long as you are the best at what you choose to do." I have something to prove, and my attitude is to prove it to myself. My greatest competition is me. I believe in what Nike says: "Just do it!"

I wake up every day with a zest for life. Other people can be a distraction to your belief factor if you listen to their bad advice, negative comments, or unenthusiastic remarks. I believe in myself, my skills, and my God. I was born to be creative, and once I tapped into that creativity, I started seeing beauty in everything: interiors, clothing, art, gardening, food, and relationships. My passion is my driving force.

Donna: From the conversation we had earlier this year, you think that everyone should find and pursue their passion.

Geno: Yes, most definitely. That makes life exciting!

Donna: What do you see yourself doing five years from now?

Geno: I admire "Valentino," the great fashion icon. In five years I see myself heavily involved in exporting my clothing and distributing my brand of beauty. I have already formed my new company Geno International, which involves beauty products, fashion designs, educational videos, books and ideas for international beauty products.

Donna: When we talked, you mentioned a movie about your life. Tell me about that goal.

Geno: Hopefully, with completion of graduate school, I will have also completed my autobiography, "My Life for Women," my memoirs of being a hair stylist. I have finished eight chapters to this point, and I would love to turn this project into an inspirational movie for our youth and aspiring hairstylists. This book is my blueprint to how I started my career, went through many challenges and changes, and completed my beauty career on top of my game.

Donna: WOW! I am anxious to read that book, and I am not even a hairstylist! Before we finish up, what insights would you like to share with my readers about discovering and pursuing their passion and being a success?

Geno: Live your dreams. God gave you the gift of life; it's totally up to you what you do with your career or business. Find your passion and drive it past the limit. Your greatness is waiting on you; you must reach out and capture your own destiny. Stop thinking about the past, missed opportunities, or failures. You must take charge of your life today and create your own mind-set and environment for success.

Donna: Thank you so much for your time, stories, insights and inspiration. You have made me even more excited and motivated about my business than I usually am.



Geno: The pleasure was all mine. I hope your readers get as motivated and inspired by reading this article as you are.

Donna: The next time I find myself in Memphis, I will definitely stop by your salon, so I can experience the passion you have for your work.