

Pibbs Industries

The Petruccelli family oversees an empire of leading products for the beauty industry.

by J. Elaine Spear

The Petruccelli family has been a fixture in the beauty business since the 1950s, when male stylists were called “mister” and rollers and styling goop were the only two things needed to curl hair. Today the Petruccelli Group has evolved from a family of old-school barbers and hairstylists into beauty executives for the 21st century, owners of a global empire who remain passionate about their strong ties to the hairdressing community. The Flushing, New York-based company boasts a number of well-known brands, most notably Pibbs Industries, manufacturer and distributor of a wide range of professional beauty products.

Pibbs Industries’ sales manager is Armando Petruccelli, one of 35 family members directly involved in the Petruccelli Group. He recently spoke to us about current offerings from the company and provided insight into how the prolific Petruccelli organization continues to build on its success.

BSB: Let’s start at the beginning. How did your family get involved in the beauty business?

AP: My uncles and my father emigrated



from Italy in the 1950s to pursue the American dream. They settled in Flushing and originally did barbering and hairdressing. Over a period of a few years our family purchased nine neighborhood salons. We were eventually buying so many supplies for our businesses that we decided to start our own distribution company. We originally sold razors, brushes and combs to salons, and promoted these lines at trade shows. After heavily promoting a couple of product brands that suddenly switched distribution channels, we realized that if we were ever going to be truly successful, we had to start manufacturing all of our own products.

BSB: What year was Pibbs Industries founded and where was it located?

AP: In 1964. It was originally located in my uncle Biagio’s garage, which was no bigger than an average-size bedroom. We began by manufacturing and selling soft goods, such as shampoos and conditioners. Placenta was a popular hair treatment back then, and it was our biggest seller. We also carried a few equipment items like shampoo chairs and heat lamps. By the late 1970s we had become strongly focused on salon equipment. It proved to be a lucrative niche market that has served our family very well.

We now make everything hairdressers and salon owners need, with products ranging from styling stations and shampoo chairs to manicure and pedicure equipment. We also make a full line of skincare equipment under our Liv-Agen brand. All equipment produced by Pibbs Industries—including the Salon Evolution series—is sold only to full-service wholesalers. We’re the only manufacturer that wholly supports the professional beauty distributor. We have 150,000 square feet of space in Flushing, including a factory, warehouse and administrative offices. We could instantly expand our production by at least 30%, but we don’t have any more room. Unfortunately, commercial property is scarce in Flushing. Most companies would simply relocate to a new city, but that isn’t a viable alternative for us, since Pibbs Industries and all of our other businesses are run by our extended family. We would have to uproot at least 90 relatives!

BSB: What other companies does the Petruccelli Group own and operate, and how many people do you employ?

AP: Pibbs Industries, Petruccelli International and Petruccelli Beauty Depot employ more than 250 people in all areas of manufacturing and distribution. The Petruccelli Hair and Skin Center, Rinascente, the Barbitto Co., Air Pioneer, Nuova Era, Elettra Europa, Interfashion U.S.A., Petruccelli Europa, Turbo Power, R.C.A. (Ricerca Cosmetica Avanzata) and the Petruccelli Group together employ more than 400 people. We also own a factory in Italy that makes our Terme line of shampoos, conditioners and treatments, as well as Avena, a conditioning treatment that adds volume to the hair. All of our products are distributed nationally, and many are sold throughout North America and the Caribbean. They’re also available at our 25,000-square-foot Petruccelli Beauty Depot, which is a one-stop mega-shopping experience for both salon owners and hairdressers.

At A Glance

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Product Lines

- Linea Viva skincare products
- Liv-Agen skincare salon equipment
- Salon Ambience USA salon, spa and beauty equipment
- Salon Evolution salon, spa and beauty equipment

view from the top

BSB: What is your current role at Pibbs Industries?

AP: As the sales manager I handle all new clients, open new accounts and take care of our larger distributors. I also schedule sales meetings and work on marketing and advertising campaigns. Even so, everything is always a family effort. We chip in wherever we're needed.

BSB: Why does equipment produced by Pibbs Industries do so well in the market?

AP: Because we're always on the leading edge of the latest trends. We listen to salon owners and stylists, and incorporate many of their suggestions into our new designs. Our Salon Evolution New York Station, model #SH/025, for instance, has a steel frame that you can mount on a wall or place back to back, so salon owners can change the look of their salons without buying new furniture. We also have stations with mobile caddies, as opposed to having built-in



drawers that force stylists to go back and forth as they retrieve tools and supplies from their station during hair services. New models of our stand-alone caddies have changed to accommodate color specialists—the model #2002 Compass Trolley even has a foil dispenser. Another popular caddy is model #PB43. It's a perfect fit for stylists who no longer need drawers for rollers and setting supplies,

but do need more workspace to hold tools and haircare products.

BSB: Where does the Salon Ambience USA brand fit in?

AP: Four years ago Pibbs Industries partnered with Salon Ambience, based in Bologna, Italy, to distribute Pibbs Salon Ambience USA throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Salon Ambience is positioned as a high-end equipment line that is sold by exclusive distributors throughout the country. Many of these pieces have exquisite designs, such as the award-winning Hawaii station, model #SH/087. To date we have two showrooms in Florida, as well as showrooms in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, Canada, and Central and South America. And that number keeps growing.

BSB: How are you improving the way you do business at Pibbs Industries?

AP: We recently updated our computer

system to allow us to instantly track orders and shipping. This has improved our response time immeasurably when clients have questions about their orders. As far as customer service goes, though, we've always been known for swiftly responding to our clients' needs. If something goes wrong—from lost shipments to defective products—we immediately address the problem.

BSB: How does the company manage quality control when it's involved in so many different aspects of the beauty industry?

AP: We take a hands-on approach to all aspects of production. We have uncles, cousins and siblings working in all departments and overseeing critical areas of manufacturing, assembling and shipping. We take our business personally and are deeply involved in importing, producing and distributing all products owned by the Petruccelli family. After all, it's our name on every product.



BSB: What's the best-selling piece of equipment in the Pibbs line?

AP: We have a lot of best-sellers, but our top-performing product category at the moment has to be our pedicure chairs. We have one unit in particular, the Liv-Agen PS81, that's just 28 inches wide. It's a special design that leaves a smaller footprint in salons, allowing owners to nearly double the number of pedicure units in the same amount of space. Older pedicure units are typically up to 4 feet wide. The PS81 also features four Jacuzzi jets and durable fiberglass construction, making it a great experience for both the salon owner and the client.

Our Liv-Agen 2505 Skincare System is also a huge seller. It performs eight different functions, including brushing, vacuuming, spraying, magnifying, steaming and disencrustation. It also has high-frequency and galvanic units. It's compact and portable, making it convenient for services in more than one treatment room.

BSB: What's new with Turbo Power?

AP: Turbo Power was originally developed under Pibbs Industries, but grew so rapidly that we created a separate company for it in 1996. Turbo Power products are distributed through full-service dealers and include TwinTurbo hair dryers, irons, brushes and accessories like the Universal Finger diffuser.

All Turbo Power products are highly regarded in hairdressing circles for their quality, power and durability. Our Turbo Power Ceramic Iron, model #338, for instance, has solid ceramic plates rather than a thin coating of minerals. And our newest TwinTurbo Ionic 3000

blow-dryer, model #322, features a high-frequency coil that generates a cloud of negative ions to help preserve the health of the hair and control static electricity. Our Turbo Power 1500, model #307, is the original turbo-powered hair dryer and is still the best-selling high-end dryer we produce. It has five temperature settings, a cold-air button, two speed settings and an anti-overheating device. Like all our Turbo Power blow-dryers, it features an impact-resistant thermoplastic casing.

Our Turbo Power Blue Line brushes are manufactured in Italy. They have ash handles that have been treated for three months to strengthen the wood, producing a brush that's lightweight, yet strong enough to withstand heavy-duty salon usage. All of our Blue Line brushes are covered in Velvet Venice and have an antistatic finish and sure-grip design. The bristles are made from the highest quality nylon available and are guaranteed to never melt—even under the most extreme conditions.

BSB: What shows will Pibbs attend for the balance of 2004?

AP: This year we'll be at the Congress of Esthetics; Cosmoprof in Bologna; BBSI/Cosmoprof in Las Vegas; the International Beauty Show in New York City; Bronner Brothers; Premier; the International Esthetics, Cosmetics & Spa Conferences (Magda) in Las Vegas and Orlando; and a big beauty trade show in Mexico City. Exhibiting at the major trade shows that focus on the salon and/or skincare industries is a marketing concept we've strongly believed in since starting our first distributing company in the 1950s. It's one of the things that will never change for us. **BSB**

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