

# Franchising Success

With a clear vision and ambitious goals, Amy Pal attempts to modernize and franchise the high-end salon concept with a sharp focus on customer satisfaction.

BY STACEY SOBLE

With a background in finance and marketing and experience working for E\*Trade, **Amy Pal** started searching consumer trends that would make powerful franchises a few years back after getting the entrepreneurial itch. She started as a franchisee herself by licensing two Spin Studios, which she eventually grew and sold.

One of the studios in Ridgefield, Connecticut, was next to a hair salon Pal describes as “outdated with an old business model,” and she envisioned taking over the space and launching a blow dry bar concept.

Although that plan fell through, the exercise of writing a business plan for the new concept encouraged her to take a closer look at the professional beauty

industry and how her expertise in business and developing systems could create an attractive franchise.

Pal’s research confirmed that a cut and color salon was a more attractive business opportunity than the blow dry bar, and that her own backyard was the perfect place to launch her concept.

“While I knew my market inside and out, I was new to the beauty industry, which can make launching a new concept tricky. But I also didn’t have the baggage of ‘this is the way you have to do it,’” says Pal, who launched the first **Whip Salon** in 2016 in Ridgefield, where clients expect the edginess of a New York salon with the convenience of something local.

In 2018, Whip expanded to a second

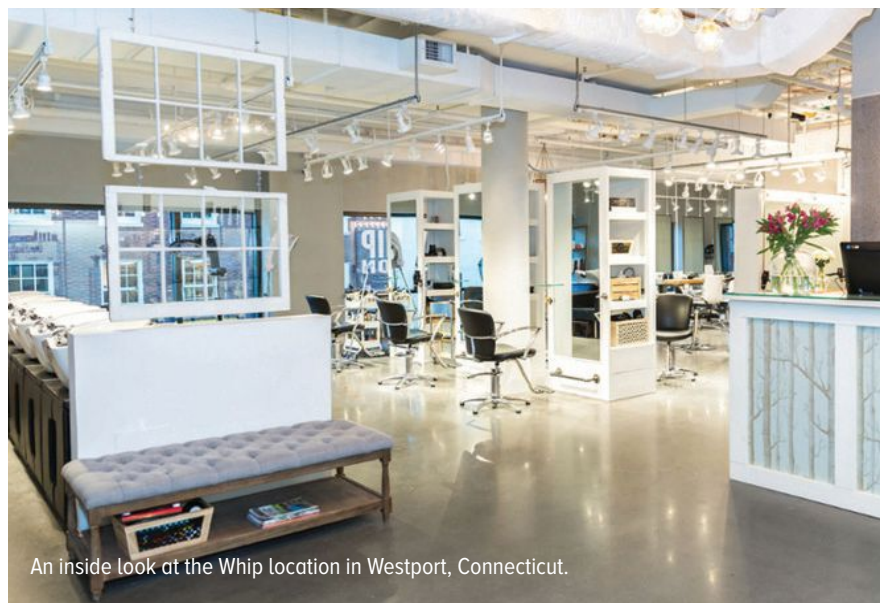
location in nearby Westport, and in July 2019, Pal partnered with **Marcelle Tiffany**, one of the salon’s stylists, to open the first Whip franchise salon in Newtown. A third corporate location is currently in the works, and today, Pal’s sights are firmly set on growing the franchise concept nationally by offering future salon owners the strength of going into business with a tested and proven concept.

## THE WHIP WAY

The meaning behind the name is Pal’s brainchild. “Simply put, ‘Whip’ is a slang term for hair—I thought it had such a playful ring to it that would set us apart in a landscape of predictable names,” she says. Whip leverages that playfulness with hashtags that communicate the fun



Whip’s first franchise owner Marcelle Tiffany with Whip Salon Founder Amy Pal.



An inside look at the Whip location in Westport, Connecticut.

that happens within the salon, such as #getwhipped and #whiphappens.

Pal describes Whip as a modern, high-end experience that obsesses over customer service and creates a nurturing, no-drama environment for stylists to learn and grow. The salon's culture is based on positivity, with everyone committed to continuing education and delivering services keenly focused on client satisfaction.

Pal synthesizes her approach down to three Es—Ease, Excellence and Edge. Ease relates to the salon being open seven days a week, offering blowout memberships and easy online booking.

Excellence centers around hiring top talent, fostering a serious dedication to the craft and staying on top of what's hot. And Edge, says Pal, is more important that you might think:

Franchisees will have access to all of Whip's turnkey systems and technology, which include an in-store POS with low credit card processing fees; website and integrated online booking; the Whip Salon app; **Frederick** salon management software; the **Vish** color management system; **Rockbot's** curated music system that allows customers to request the songs they love; a G-Suite that includes email, calendar, storage and sharing; and operational manuals that help new owners set up their network, phone and cameras.

Whip also supports its franchisees with built-in marketing support, which includes a strong social media presence; an array of social media geotargeted to

each salon; a photo and video repository; monthly ad and email templates; and a growing collection of client testimonials.

Simultaneously, Pal has been hard at work cultivating Whip's own product line, with high-performing SKUs featuring clever names such as Slay All Day Black Clay and Charcoal Exfoliating Shampoo, The Struggle is Real Dry Shampoo, and Feels Like Summer Reparative Shampoo and Conditioner.

## THE FRANCHISE TEAM

In addition to Pal, new franchisees have access to **Angela DePalma**, the head of franchise training, who trains all corporate employees and offers on-the-ground support, and **Ken Manley**, the head of technology, who is dedicated to getting franchisee systems up and running.

"It's truly a wonderful place to work, and I knew early on that I wanted to be part of the Whip Salon movement, so when the opportunity came along to franchise and spread this positive way of doing things, I seized it," Tiffany says. "Working with the Whip franchising team gave me incredible confidence and in less than three months, I had signed and opened my new salon, which is now humming along."

"Our first franchisee Marcelle Tiffany is 29 years old and has two young daughters. We were able to help her achieve serious speed to market by taking over an existing salon and rebranding it to Whip Salon with startup costs at the low end of the spectrum," DePalma says.

Tiffany isn't the only one that's confirming Whip has created a unique and positive culture. Hearst Connecticut Media Group recently named the salon to its "Top Workplaces 2019."

Out of nearly 1,000 businesses across the region, the salon placed 11th in the small business category, was the only salon to be recognized and was the youngest company on the list. Whip also picked up a nod from employees as being the most open to "New Ideas."

The award is based solely on employee feedback gathered through an anonymous third-party survey that measures alignment, connection, effectiveness, management, leadership, engagement and working conditions.

## TARGET MARKET

When asked, Pal says the ideal Whip franchisee has an entrepreneurial mindset and has attended cosmetology school. But she also believes her opportunity is a perfect solution for a businessperson who wants to open a salon but has no industry experience, or someone who is on the verge of taking over an existing salon but needs to update and modernize its operations and systems.

To become a franchisee, Pal requests a capital investment, a one-time franchise fee of \$25,000 and a monthly royalty fee of 6% on sales that covers all the marketing and technology that comes with the opportunity.

Visit [whipsalon.com/franchise](http://whipsalon.com/franchise) for more business details. **SI**

“  
My goal is  
to have 50  
salons in  
five years.”

—Amy Pal  
founder of Whip Salon



The Whip color squad in action at the Westport, Connecticut location.