

Innovating the Manicure Delivery System

10Beauty founder Alexander Shashou spoke about the future of beauty as it pertains to his robotic manicure machine. BY KALEIGH WERNER

"Everything about your life is different today, except for your manicure. And that's a problem," said Alexander Shashou, co-chief executive officer and cofounder of 10Beauty, a Boston-based robotics company.

Inside Lavan Midtown at The Catalysts – before a room full of fellow beauty founders, entrepreneurs and investors – Shashou described how he and his partner, Justin Effron, have set out to fix this.

Their story starts in 2013, with the launch of Alice, a hotel software platform designed to help streamline staff workloads for "better hospitality." Six years and 4,000 hotel participants later, Alice was acquired by Expedia, and Shashou and Effron were left with the age-old question of what's next. Enter their five-step robotic manicure machine.

"You're probably wondering one very important and very fair question, which is why are two guys building a manicure robot?" Shashou said.

The inspiration was their wives, both of whom are founders and look after an aggregate of five children and can rarely afford 10 minutes for themselves, let alone an hour to get their nails done.

The issue is not that products and formulas haven't been improved, it's that the delivery of said products hasn't, Shashou emphasized. "When you change the delivery of something, you can change the entire experience. Imagine if one day changing your nails was as easy as a cup of coffee. Imagine how big it could be if you could get a manicure everywhere you already are, and then one day in your home."

He continued: "Today's market is not one of desire, but of tolerance. And desire is everywhere. Desire is when you look at someone's nails and say, 'I'd love to do that.' But then you realize, 'I have a meeting.'"

With the expertise of engineers from Shark, Ninja, Keurig and Roomba – and financial backing from the likes of Victoria Beckham and Imaginary Ventures – the 10Beauty team has managed to build a machine that mimics the skills of human nail technicians, in just 25 to 45 minutes. The robotic manicure will remove old polish, buff the cuticles, file and shape the nails and apply new polish, as well as a topcoat. How? There are seven cameras inside that map and create a three-dimensional model of the hands and nails. The actual services are performed using tools inside a Manicure Pod, including removal sponges, cuticle brushes, and, of course, their polish, which comes in 30 shades, all nontoxic and vegan, and lasts between seven and 10 days.

"But that's just today. This is just a delivery system. We imagine a world where every single person in this room, if they want to, whether you're a nail polish company, a brand, an individual, and you want to put out a nail polish line, we can help you create one and put it through the machine," Shashou said.

After six years and \$50 million invested, the machine is now available in two Ulta Beauty stores in Massachusetts, with a larger rollout across major retailers, hotels and salon spaces to come.

Alexander Shashou

