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## Tricoci attributes success to a highly trained staff

BY JAYA JIWATRAM  
Medill News Service

A crowd of stylists eagerly looked on at the teenager as he snipped the receptionist's hair. The owner, in particular, was taken aback by the young Italian who a moment earlier walked into his Michigan Avenue salon unannounced and said he was a hair dresser.

## Success stories

"I was doing one of those flips, and in those days nobody was doing flips here. They were all doing pin curls," recalls Mario Tricoci in polished English punctuated with hints of his mother tongue.

The owner, impressed, gave Tricoci a job on the spot with a salary of \$125 a week, launching his American career in his first visit to Chicago.

Today, at 66, Tricoci and his wife Cheryl run their own salon on Michigan Avenue and 19 others under the names Mario Tricoci Hair Salons & Day Spas and Mario Tricoci Too Hair Salons.

The business, chartered in 1977, grew to include spa services in 1986. Tricoci's salons and spas today range

## Business profile

**Company:** Mario Tricoci Hair Salons & Day Spas, and Mario Tricoci Too Hair Salons

**Founders:** Mario and Cheryl Tricoci

**Headquarters:** Palatine

**Locations:** Illinois (18), Kansas (1), Ohio (1)

**Revenues:** \$85 million estimated in 2007

**Employees:** About 2000

**Web site:** www.tricoci.com

in size from 2,000 square feet to 17,000 square feet and offer a range of services from hair design to skin-care treatments.

Headquartered in Palatine, the company in 2000 merged with Elizabeth Arden Salon Holdings Inc., operator of 30 Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spas across the U.S. and one in London. The CEO of the combined company, called Red Door Spa Holdings LLC, is Todd Walter, while Tricoci continues to run the Mario Tricoci

division and sits on the board of directors.

Not including Red Door Spas, Mario Tricoci estimates revenues of \$85 million this year with 54 percent of it coming from hair services, 33 percent from spa services and 13 percent from retailing. It has also seen a 22 percent increase in comparative-store sales in the last five years.

Tricoci, who has styled hair for celebrities including Lana Turner and has appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," said the formula behind his success is the same that it was when he opened his first Mario Tricoci salon in a mall in Schaumburg: go the extra mile to satisfy the customers' needs, and they will keep coming back.

"[The employees] have a communication or dialogue with the guest so that they understand the needs of the guest," Tricoci said.

Long-time customer Laurie Meissner agrees that Mario Tricoci stylists deliver on that promise, which is why she has been going back to the Naperville shop for the last 13 years.

"They raise the bar," Meissner said. "[The employees] are very skilled at



JAYA JIWATRAM/MEDILL NEWS SERVICE  
Mario Tricoci, originally from Cosenza, Italy, operates 20 hair salons and spas, including this one at 900 N. Michigan Ave. in Chicago.

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## Success: Stylists concerned about health of clients

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communicating with the clients."

Meissner said her hair stylist takes the time to teach her how to properly style her hair at home.

"Not only do they make you look good, but they make you feel good," Meissner said.

Tricoci said his employees must understand not only their technical work, but how products can benefit that work. For this reason, the company hires employees who specialize in one field — colorists only color, mani-

curists only manicure, for example — and supplement their qualifications with additional training.

Tricoci Senior Vice President Larry Silvestri said 5 percent of the company's revenue goes toward training of employees, triple that of the marketing budget.

"If you're going to make a promise, you have to deliver on the promise, so the training is actually much more important than the actual marketing and delivering of the message," Silvestri said.

Tricoci's number of employees has grown from

seven to about 2,000 today.

Silvestri said the company is also focusing on developing safer products, like its Zoya nail polish free of certain chemicals known to be harmful to pregnant women.

This year the staff also received training from the American Cancer Society to learn more about the prevention and early detection of skin cancer, Silvestri said.

Char Padovani, health initiatives manager for the Northwest suburban region of the American Cancer Society in Illinois, helped educate more than 450

Mario Tricoci employees in April. She said the aim was not to get the employees to diagnose, but to be able to detect anything unusual.

The training in this field is beneficial to customers, she said, as some employees work directly with the skin.

Tricoci said it is benefits like these that he continues to work on to provide the best service to his customers.

"I really believe we are on top of the game," he said. "We believe we are the best, we really are, because we put the effort on an ongoing basis."