

OMG

EMPIRE

OLIVIA SMALLEY IS A WOMAN OF MANY TALENTS, HAIR AND MAKEUP ARTIST, SOCIAL MEDIA STAR, AND BUSINESSWOMAN; CLAIRE MACAULAY SPEAKS TO THE WOMAN BEHIND THE 'OMG EMPIRE' ABOUT HOW SHE DOES IT ALL.



I always say my brain is 50% business, 50% creative. I'm guided by my creativity and my business comes along with that. I'm not led by money; I do what I feel passionate about."

Interviewing **Olivia Smalley** is like chatting to an old friend. She's breezy as she asks about my day, laughs with me as I do the British thing and complain about the weather. She's as warm as she is intriguing, and I want to know more about the woman behind the empire.

If you don't know Olivia Smalley (or her moniker, OMG Artistry), she's a celebrity hair and makeup artist, businesswoman, educator, and social media star who works with brands such as Joico and Colortrak. Perhaps her most notable works are in her hair hacks, where she shares fun, easy (sometimes bizarre!) approaches to doing hair with her followers.

Olivia's career path has had a tangible dual focus of creativity and business, something she says she always aspired to; "I always say my brain is 50% business, 50% creative. I'm guided by my creativity and my business comes along with that. I'm not led by money; I do what I feel passionate about and work out if I can turn it into business".

Hair and makeup weren't always the avenue Olivia wanted to pursue. She studied videography before becoming disinterested in her path and returning home. In the wake of the market crash, she was unable to afford to go back to school, and after confiding her worries to her Mom, she found a new direction: hair.

"I couldn't afford hair school; it was so expensive" Olivia recalls "But I knew it was what I wanted to do, so I begged and pleaded with the faculty; I offered to clean when they were closed on the weekends and nights. After about six weeks of this, they gave me a grant to study!".

She's come full circle to become an educator herself and cites this as the reason she chose to do so; "That's why I teach: someone gave me the gift of education". Olivia is glaringly transparent in the content of her education and willingness to do all she can to help others. "I received such a beautiful gift through my education, and in return, I want to offer the most unselfish teaching I can. I tell all my secrets!".

As well as hair, Olivia educates in social media and her willingness to share her valuable insights so freely makes perfect sense when she tells me she once spent \$4,000 dollars on a social media class. "I was so disappointed. I didn't learn a single thing. I went to the class with an open mind, ready to learn and it just wasn't valuable to me. When I went back to the salon, I was so annoyed, I couldn't shake it, so I decided to start teaching it myself on my Instagram, giving tips and tricks on editing and captioning." ▶



Hair/Makeup/
Olivia Smalley.
Model//
Jamie Conrad.
Photographer//
Chris Ramos.

It wasn't long before her social media savvy soon became more ingrained into her longer-term career plans. "I met the marketing director for Cosmoprof when I was a judge on a Kenra competition, and we ended up becoming really friendly." Olivia says, "We followed each other on Instagram, and a few weeks after meeting she asked me if I taught social media classes. I didn't." She pauses before laughing: "So, of course I lied and stayed up the whole night creating a curriculum!" The next day, she was offered a position with Cosmoprof to teach social media.

Once other brands and salons saw what Olivia was creating, she started receiving more offers to teach. In addition to her live seminars, her website offers a wealth of resources for anyone looking to improve their social media presence. From image presets to photography and captioning tips, she has carved out a digital space where anyone can learn and grow.

As well as educating, Olivia is a celebrity makeup artist. Paris Hilton, Nick Jonas, and Sophie Turner are three famous faces she's worked with, which she reels off as casually as a coffee order.

Olivia first met Paris Hilton at the Diane Von Furstenberg fashion show at New York Fashion Week, while working with CHI haircare. A friend in the industry recommended her to Paris, who's hair and makeup she has now done "tons of times".

"Once you've worked with a celebrity there's an element of trust gained that you can do a good job", Olivia says "That's how I started to gain more celebrity clients and brand work in the early days".

Olivia could have easily specialized to celebrity artistry, but instead has grown an empire of her own. With a podcast, a merchandise line, and an Instagram account reaching nearly two hundred thousand people, it's clear she hasn't stayed in the background! She's perhaps best known for her hair hacks. But where did it all start?

"I saw this video online where someone curled their hair with a plastic bottle and a hairdryer. I actually intended to upload a reaction video showing how it didn't work... it didn't go the way I had planned!" she laughs.

In fact, the hack worked perfectly. She edited the video in half an hour and posted it online, only to check the comments two minutes later and find it had amassed 4,000 views. "I had never heard of this in my life! Allure Magazine wrote a piece on it, and by the time the article went live the next day it had over half a million views!"

Within a week, the video had reached well over a million views, and Olivia's followers were climbing. She got verified, and her video was being picked up by news agencies across the nation.

"I'd been living in such a professional world for the four years before that", Olivia says "teaching the hair hacks has been a new kind of fun! I research and play with different ideas, and they're easily sharable".

For all her professionalism and business savvy, Olivia admits to having off-days, just like the rest of us. "I'm a total perfectionist. Knowing the ins and outs of social media, and the content I'm producing means that I feel the pressure to do everything perfectly. It can be draining!".

"I've been so excited to do hair hacks because it's the total opposite! It's raw, it's on my phone, the captions are easygoing. The pressure I've put on myself in the past has taken me far, but I think nowadays people are gravitating towards more authentic content. Once I realized that, I started to enjoy myself again!"

Olivia is a Joico Ambassador, a love affair that for her began when she was on the team at Cosmoprof.

"Through my work with Cosmoprof, I was introduced to Joico's products and fell absolutely head over heels!". For Olivia, simply appreciating the brand wasn't enough – she knew she wanted to work with them!

"I headed to their Instagram page and started investigating how to get featured by them. I noticed that they posted these joyous, happy hair shots on really clean, editorial backgrounds, so I mirrored my own content around this too!"

Olivia's perseverance paid off, and the brand invited her to Coachella to do celebrity hair and get to know the brand more deeply. "I did Sophie Turner's hair, but I didn't watch Game of Thrones, so I didn't know who she was!"

As her contract with Cosmoprof was drawing to a close, four brands asked Olivia to go exclusive with them. "I told everyone to make me a deal I couldn't refuse. If I was going to be associated with one company for the next two years it needed to be worth it! When Joico shared their future plans with me, I was so excited, I knew they were the right choice!"

Now signed to Joico, Olivia has never looked back. "I love them so much", she says, "I love the whole team. We're more than a team, we're a family".

I asked Olivia what her favorite Joico product was, which turned out to be an impossible task. In the end, we compromise on two she would take to a desert island: Weekend Hair Dry Shampoo ("it smells delicious and will keep my blonde in-tact") and Zero Heat Air Dry Cream ("it transforms my hair, I have never seen anything like it!").

As well as her work with Joico, Olivia works with Colortrak. "I love that team so wholeheartedly!", she tells me "they have supported me so much, sponsored my classes, and come to see me". Loving Colortrak's products has led to Olivia working with the brand for nearly seven years! "It's just different. I just have so much fun with them!", she says.

One thing is clear to me; Olivia Smalley is one very busy lady! She has recently added another string to her bow: a lifestyle bikini blog. "I recently turned my personal page into a business page which sets out to inspire and empower. My 'OMG' page is a lot more educational, and it's really exciting to explore a new route and work on a different type of content!"

Olivia rounds off our interview with a few words of gratitude; "I could never have imagined a life like this without the love and support of my husband Aaron, he's been a rock. My parents and brother have always encouraged me to follow my dreams and be the best version of me. I'll always be thankful." •

"Before I did video I was never in front of the camera. I was so bad, but one day I just said to myself 'Olivia, you have a voice' and began to practice, practice, practice!"

"If I'm going to be associated with one company for the next two years it needs to be worth it! When Joico shared their future plans with me, I was so excited, I knew they were the right choice!"



Advert