

Zerran International

Driven by innovation, this company seeks opportunities to combine health and efficacy in hair care wherever possible.

ZERRAN INTERNATIONAL CORP. IS A SOUTHERN California-based vegan haircare manufacturer. Chances are you may not have heard of it. Here's why you should know of it. The brand takes hair seriously. Very seriously. Its products are 100% vegan, botanically based, and paraben and sulfate free. The company also holds an international patent on RealLisse, marketed as the world's first 100% vegan semi-permanent hair smoothing system. *Beauty Store Business* caught up with Zerran International's busy director of marketing, Cindy Van Steelandt, for a chat about the company, its unique vegan haircare line, its long-term goals and what else it takes seriously.

Where does the name Zerran come from?

It was made up by the owner. We have no idea whether it had any particular meaning for him. But for now, it stands for botanical traditions and cutting-edge science.

What's Zerran's mission statement and philosophy?

Our philosophy is to provide innovative products that really work for professionals. We want to always strive to provide a product that exceeds the expectation of the professionals in their own environment. We have always used innovation—thoughtful innovation—to make sure that we take a look at

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BSB: What's Zerran's background?

Van Steelandt: The brand of Zerran International has been around for 25 years. We've always been a quiet innovator in the industry and have only produced products for the professional industry. We are based here in California and have focused our energies primarily on the West Coast. We have good products, and we want the rest of the world to have them. So we started to focus on expansion and reaching everyone else. Again, we only market to the trade.

botanical tradition; to go back a couple of centuries. If someone's been using something botanical for centuries, there has to be something behind it. Let's find out what it is. And find out if it has applications in today's usage. We want to make sure that we're not just using things because it sounds good. We want to make certain that we are using a combination of ingredients that actually bear out in hard-core science now that they have applications for this. Otherwise, we would all still be using animal lard on our hands.

Why did Zerran choose to focus on vegan hair care?

When you take a look at the animal components of most haircare items, it works out to be animal protein. I think animal protein is very similar to vegan protein when you look at the molecular components. I feel we can provide the same—if not better—results using vegan protein sources, rather than animal protein sources. It also kind of boils down to: I like animals, and I don't think they should suffer or die for my beauty.



Cindy Van Steelandt, director of marketing

What prompted Zerran International to develop a line for the multicultural sector?

If we take a look at the traditional thought process for treating hair different ways, we've come to discover that we can't just treat hair as Black hair or Caucasian hair anymore. Because we are so mixed, there isn't a one true way for Black hair or Caucasian hair to present itself. So what we have to do is take every person's hair as multicultural and expect it as such and take every person as an individual. Rather than being multicultural, as in we're going to aim something specifically at this type of market, we want to make whatever we provide work for everyone based on their hair type. We want to offer flexibility because what works for you may also work for me.

What does the line consist of?

We have a full professional line of shampoos, conditioners and styling aids. We also have a very unique line called Advanced Professional Services. These are chemical-support items that will make coloring, perming, bleaching and smoothing go much faster, much safer and much better with more even and predictable professional results. We carry two vegan



Multicultural Focus

relaxers that rely on vegan proteins. We have a permanent straightening system called Reform. You can do permanent straightening of any kind of hair without gloves. It's been dermatologist tested. No irritation. No allergic reaction. No gloves. This would be great for clients who want to have their hair permanently straight because they know for a fact that's the way they want to wear their hair. And because there are no harsh chemicals, regrowth [can occur] without breakage. So [people] who ordinarily would have problems with breakage could grow their hair to their waist and beyond. The hair has natural movement, natural body. So this is also a nice way of transitioning someone off traditional straightening or relaxing systems.

"We have our own capabilities for formulations and testing. IF YOU ASK FOR IT, WE CAN MAKE IT."

Are there other products planned?

Yes, we've got the other one out right now. It's called RealLisse. Our permanent straightener is called Reform and our semi-permanent smoother is called RealLisse. The genesis behind that name is "lisse" is French for smooth. Now this is a semi-permanent smoothing system that is very unique. Again, dermatologist tested. No gloves. No masks. No venting system. You don't even have to leave the window open. But it gives you two to four months of relaxed curl and a lot easier styling. I did this for a couple of lovely young ladies who wanted the flexibility of wearing their African-American hair either straight or natural. RealLisse gives them two to four months of being able to wear their hair with a soft natural curl, or they can blow-dry it smooth without any kind of problem.

Which traditional ingredients are replaced by vegan ingredients within the brand's formulations?

The traditional ingredient replaced in our products is keratin. [Our products are not] sodium hydroxide-based. Here's where our products differ: We don't alter the pH. We similarly alter the temperature. So instead of requiring a neutralizer, all you have to do is have it returned to room temperature. This is a very unique technique. It's so unique we have it as an international patent. It has never

been done before. A lot of people are initially very skeptical because it's never been done. But we just started doing it.

What are the specific benefits of the vegan ingredients used?

I find that as a manufacturer—and we are the primary manufacturer—that I get much more reliable raw materials, and I get to sleep at night knowing that no animals have been harmed. Also, with the very short chance of amino acids that we have our proteins cut down to, your hair does not know the difference. So, to utilize keratin because it's a complete genetic match [is unnecessary]. Once you get down to the small pieces of protein, your hair cannot tell the difference and will accept the protein from a vegetable source just as easily.

Which of your multicultural products are the brand's best sellers?

RealLisse. Our customers have been in disbelief. Most of what I'm hearing from customers is that "it gives me flexibility in the way I wear my hair, and it is so much easier to do my hair."

Can we expect to see any additions to the line in the near future?

Absolutely. One of our biggest things here at Zerran is that we do not stop innovating. We love, love, love to come out with new products. One of the reasons why I like to go to the shows and talk to people is to get ideas. I want to know what people are looking for. Is there something missing from their haircare regimen? If it were a perfect world, what kind of product could I produce for them that would make their world even more perfect? We always innovate. We always push the boundaries. That's what we are all about. We are our own manufacturer and have our own capabilities for formulations and testing. Basically, if you ask for it, we can make it.

Does Zerran use distributors/manufacturer reps?

We use distributors all over the United States as well as in South America and Canada. If anyone wishes to know the distributor in their immediate area, that information is readily available



at zerran.com, and they can look it up by their geographic area.

In what ways does Zerran uniquely promote and market the brand?

We love to go to shows. One of the main reasons why I like shows is because I get to talk to people. That's very important to us. Innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum. We also utilize trade magazines and our distributors. We have social media going all over the place, and we strongly encourage people to look us up on our website, Twitter and Facebook. We take our role as an industry conduit for information very seriously.

What are Zerran's long-term goals?

Simply put, healthy hair for everyone. Think about it this way: Healthy hair can do whatever you ask of it. If a sudden new trend comes out, and we are going to be wearing our hair straight up in the air, healthy hair can do that, damaged hair can't. Damaged hair has very few tricks up its sleeve. I want to make sure that hair is healthy. Period.

What would you like to impart to our readers?

We are here for the professionals. We are in it for the long run. We've done this for 25 years, and we're looking forward to many, many more years. If you take the profession seriously, look into us. We take it very seriously.

Zerran International Corp.

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