



SUE B. ZIMMERMAN #THEINSTAGRAMEXPERT

Sue B. Zimmerman is #theinstagramexpert, founder of Insta-Results (the world's first comprehensive online Instagram course) and Ready Set Gram (a beginner Instagram course), and author of the number-one e-book, "Instagram Basics for Your Business." She's a popular Creativelive instructor, a powerful speaker on prominent stages like Social Media Marketing World 15, and a highly sought-after business coach. Sue B. is passionate about teaching entrepreneurs, business executives, and marketing professionals how to easily leverage the power of Instagram to get tangible business results. As a serial entrepreneur, she has started over 18 businesses, including her own boutique, SueB Do, Boxer Rebellion, and Sue B. Zimmerman Enterprise. With her extensive knowledge in social media and 25 plus years of business experience, it's Sue B.'s mission to teach, mentor, and empower others to be highly successful entrepreneurs as well.

My entrepreneurial spirit started from a very young age. I remember selling my hand-painted hair barrettes on the playground during recess at school when I was 13. Was I supposed to be selling during playtime? No. But that's kind of the way I've been my whole life. I'm always looking for opportunity while enjoying the journey. My first encounter with running a business came from my dad. He owned an auto shop called Al's Auto Supply, along with my uncle and great-uncle. I would work in his shop, observing his work ethic and how he sold to and helped customers. Even today I still watch my dad sell antique nautical doorknockers and lamps that he refurbishes and brings to direct to craft shows on Cape Cod. Being an entrepreneur is the only career I can relate to.

I studied nutrition at Simmons College in Boston, but when my first job offer fell through at age 22, I started selling hand-painted boxer shorts from my "Color Me" push cart at the Waterside Marketplace in Norfolk, Virginia. Quickly the business became a success as I landed licenses from Disney and The Simpsons. My first year of business I sold 1 million dollars. It was a feeling I'll never forget, and it solidified my need to make a living doing what I loved.



Eighteen businesses later, I've realized that my true passion is creativity. In each business I always thrive on the creative element; whether it's drawing, painting, embellishing photos, or another form of expression. The power of creating something, releasing it into the world, and having a positive response is always motivating. When my three daughters were in elementary school, I knew I wanted to pass along my creativity to others, so I began teaching and haven't stopped. I started teaching art classes in my basement after school, and now I'm teaching business owners all over the world the power of Instagram and social media.

In 2006, I started business number 17, SueBDo. It's a collection of preppy and nautical clothing, accessories, and decor with a true Cape Cod vibe. At first I was only selling direct to consumer trade shows in the Massachusetts area. After a few years, I decided to open a physical location right in the heart of Cape Cod in the Popponesset Marketplace in Mashpee. It's a seasonal shop only open from Memorial Day through Labor Day during the summer while foot traffic from tourists is high. I love the balance of having the store front in the summer while not being locked to the location all year.

Having a retail location has taught me many things. I see the patterns of return customers, and I find great joy in mentoring the young girls I hire. The girls know that I'm not only teaching them about merchandising and customer service, but also about general business and social media skills — because, yes, social media is a skill. In 2012, I started using Instagram to bring more foot traffic into the store. I had been actively teaching social media to local business owners already, but I hadn't tapped into Instagram until I observed my teenage twin daughters actively scrolling and smiling at their phones. Eager to understand, they explained Instagram to me. I was immediately hooked and set up an account for my store. →



BUSINESS TIPS

- The more information you can give away for free, the faster people will get to know, like, and trust you, and ultimately want to do business with you.
- Helping others make money doing what they love through online exposure is a great way to stop trading time for dollars.
- It's important to hire employees who have skill sets that balance out each others' strengths and weaknesses.
- Done is better than none. You could have all the ideas in the world, but without execution, you will go nowhere.
- Focus on one thing at a time. You'll get it done much faster and with much more clarity, and it will give you something to celebrate sooner, ultimately improving your confidence.

The increase in sales in the summer of 2012 proved that Instagram was not something that could be ignored. The following fall I knew I needed to share my success and start teaching other business owners how they could use Instagram for marketing. Together with my operations manager, Morgan Sutton, we created an online Instagram course in 2013. It was like a social media boot camp with the sole focus of how to use Instagram to grow your business. The course has since developed, and hiring additional people at full-time and part-time has enabled me to teach Instagram to thousands all over the world.

Success didn't happen overnight. We started small with a simple e-book and boot camp, and slowly other products like a handbook about hashtags and more robust Instagram trainings were created at a premium price. A combination of content strategy and digital PR has allowed us to rapidly grow our email list. This growth is the pulse of the business. I actively speak on podcasts and on stage, and we make a consistent effort to deliver quality blogs and YouTube videos. In this fast-paced world, it's essential to provide information quickly so people can absorb what you're teaching and move on. The more information you can give away for free, the faster people will want to do business with you. →



In 2014, I was an instructor for two Creativelive courses. I taught live from their San Francisco studio twice within three days. The courses were each live-streamed to thousands all over the world, and I really felt like I made an impact. There is nothing like live interaction and engagement from your viewers. Today, over a year later, new people tell me they saw me on Creativelive. Along with a content strategy, I find that it's equally important to collaborate and partner with other like-minded entrepreneurs teaching small business owners. There is so much to learn about social media and it can be difficult to stay up-to-date with the changes. I like to bring in other educators to teach those in my network. I also attribute much of my success to my team members, Morgan and Rachel. We balance out each others' strengths and weaknesses, which I think is an important part of running any business. Hire people who help you fill in the gaps.

Right now I'm finding the most joy helping others learn how to make money doing what they love through online exposure. With the evolution of the Internet and social media, there will always be new platforms, new features, and new things to teach and share. There is truly a method to the madness, and although it can be tough to stay focused on one project at a time, it has really allowed my online business to thrive. ■

Where Women Create BUSINESS would like to thank Sue B. Zimmerman for her involvement in our winter issue. To learn more, visit suebzimmerman.com.



"THE MORE YOU SHINE THE LIGHT ON OTHERS, THE MORE IT SHINES ON YOU."

— SUE B.