

bossladies

ISSUE 02: LOS ANGELES



Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

“Surround yourself with great people.”

JEN GOTCH
ban.do

Jen Gotch is the queen of fun.

Ban.do, the company she founded, designs products ranging from iPhone cases and planners to mugs donning the phrase “Love Potion” and gym bags that read: “After this we’re getting pizza.”

Eight years ago when the company began, Jen and her business partner were designing one-of-a-kind hair accessories. But they quickly realized how difficult it would be to scale that business model. So they began designing things that they could make multiples of and diversified their product line. About three and a half years in, Jen’s partner needed to move, so the two decided to sell the business.

In 2012, ban.do was acquired by Lifeguard Press, the company that licenses with brands such as Lilly Pulitzer and Kate Spade. “They were looking for companies with strong brand voices,” Jen told us. They kept Jen on as Chief Creative Officer, and the company has scaled rapidly ever since. These days you can find ban.do products at Nordstrom, Anthropologie, Macy’s, and Paper Source. This year, they’re designing a line of apparel, so you’ll soon be able to dress in ban.do from head to toe.

What was your professional highlight of the past year and why was it particularly meaningful?

Watching our Los Angeles office grow from five people to almost 30 over the last eight months has been incredible. It has been fun and scary and means a ton of change for me and the company. To see something you created grow right before your eyes is pretty insane, and because I don’t have kids, ban.do has always been my baby. I’m guessing this is what parents feel like when they wake up one day and their toddler is a teenager.

What do you think is the secret to success in modern times?

For me, it has been about following my heart, understanding what I can learn from businesses that came before me, but passionately creating our own story. Oh and wait, the big one: humanizing our brand!

Do you feel like you’ve had to give up anything to be successful?

Everything in fact. I actually lost a house, gave up money, income, a successful career, time with my husband, my family, my friends. My butt looks different from sitting in a chair all the time. Ban.do is never not on my mind, so that’s pretty intense. I basically gave up boredom.

What is the next goal you have your sights set on?

We have some lofty goals: straight-up financial growth, new product categories, maybe some brick-and-mortar stores. Also, we’d love to get into philanthropy and build a varied and interesting way to give back and enrich the lives of the people who work here.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own business?

It’s hard, and lots of people will try to dissuade you. Some of them will be right, and some will be wrong, but if it’s all you can think about, stick to your gut, surround yourself with great people, get as good at it as you possibly can, and never give up.

What’s the best part of your day?

Waking up! I’m a morning person, so I am really happy in the morning. Oh, going to sleep is pretty awesome too. And most of the stuff in between.

CARRIE GIFFORD

red cap cards



Anybody who has spent time with Carrie Gifford knows she emanates creativity, humor, and fun. As a young girl, she wanted to make movies, and she dreamed of being a director. But after years of working in theater, she ventured out on a very different path: card making, which Carrie describes as her way of bringing art into people's lives.

Red Cap Cards has changed quite significantly since Carrie and her husband Hal started the business in 2004. At first, Carrie sketched all the designs, and they hand-painted each of the cards—all 20,000 of them. The cards were the perfect juxtaposition of humor and elegant craftsmanship, and they were well-received. But when the couple decided to have a baby, Carrie knew she wanted to change her role in the company, so she could spend more time with her daughter. That was the moment Carrie transitioned from a creator to a curator. These days, Carrie seeks out the best illustrators and helps them create work that will harmonize with the other art in the collection. All the cards are made in America, distributed by a family-run fulfillment center in Minneapolis, and sold in boutiques across the country.

Do you have a daily routine? If so, what does it look like?

Every day in our house begins with coffee and ends with a whiskey sour.

Was there a turning point in your career?

When I decided to have a baby, I took a step away from illustrating and focused my attention on the creative direction of Red Cap Cards. I didn't give up my career, but I allowed it to evolve. It was the best decision I ever made. Our business model changed, and I was able to channel my energy into what I believe is my true talent: championing the artists that we work with.

What is the single most important thing that you have learned over the years?

I've learned to enjoy the process. I think we live in an era of instant gratification that can be paralyzing to young people trying to carve out a path for themselves. I love the idea that things take time. I often wonder what people are in a hurry to accomplish. Where are you going? What happens when you get there? I feel like it's all pretty irrelevant unless you can enjoy the process.

What, for you, is an indicator of success?

For me, success is measured by my ability to hold a space of gratitude for what I have accomplished.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

“I feel like it's all pretty irrelevant unless you can enjoy the process.”

What is the next goal you have your sights set on?

Hal and I would love to start a small division of Red Cap that publishes children's books.

What's the best part of your day?

Reading books with Arlo at night. She is a very snuggly person. I like that.

What is the inspiration behind your business or career path?

Hal and I both knew we wanted a lifestyle where we felt like we were in charge of our time. We've never loved the concept of working your entire life to buy yourself freedom. When we started Red Cap Cards, our plan was to create a business that could grow with us and allow us to enjoy life along the way.

Do you think you've had to give up anything to be successful?

I think I've had to give up the concept of who I thought I was in order to become who I am.

CALLI CHOLODENKO

reader's choice • something social



In the course of just two years, Calli Cholodenko has built a social media marketing firm that employs eight people, represents more than 30 clients, and has received two acquisition offers.

Before launching Something Social, Calli worked at another boutique social media firm in Los Angeles. Because it was a tiny company, when her boss's partner left, she stepped in and started doing a lot of the client management. A friend soon pointed out that it was silly for her to work for someone else's firm when she could do it just as well herself. So when Cycle House asked Calli to join their in-house marketing and social team, she told them she was actually going to launch her own firm, and they could be her first client.

Now Calli and her team of Instagram-savvy women help brands define their visual aesthetic, fine-tune their brand voice, and engage with their community on social media. For Calli, the job is the perfect combination of photography, branding, and copywriting, and she loves that it allows her to bounce back and forth between different types of creative skills.

“I always ask myself: am I saying no out of fear or because it's not the right opportunity?”

What, for you, is an indicator of success? Do you feel successful?

I think seeing my team in action is when I feel most successful. Watching a group of talented, bright, hard-working, fun-loving women work together because of something I created really sets my soul on fire and drives me to work harder.

Do you feel like you've had to give up anything to be successful?

You mean like eating food when it's hot rather than stopping to take 12 photos? Ha! I definitely feel as though I've had to adjust my priorities to make my business successful. There are moments where it feels hard to make time for everything. I think work and life can get extremely blurred—especially when there's no 9-to-5. It can be difficult to focus on the present when there are a million to-dos racing around in my head. I find it hard, nearly impossible, to shut off.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own business?

Have passion, keep it authentic, and trust your gut. There are a million people doing a million different things, and the only thing that separates you is you.

What was the biggest challenge you encountered along the way and how did you handle it?

The biggest challenge so far has been understanding that I don't know what I don't know and to be comfortable asking for help. There are so many resources at our disposal, and yet I've spent so much time trying to solve problems myself rather than looking for outside resources.

Also, knowing when to say yes and when to say no has been difficult. I always ask myself: am I saying no out of fear or because it's not the right opportunity? Am I saying yes to people-please or because I really believe in it?

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

To trust myself. This continues to be a hard thing for me. Sometimes I experience imposter syndrome, thinking that any moment someone will figure out I don't really know what I am doing. But then I sit back and settle into the realization that I *do* know and I GOT THIS!

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

ELLE ROWLEY

solly baby



Elle became a mother while she was in undergrad. Then, when she applied for a Masters program, she was pregnant with her second baby. Elle simultaneously occupied the spaces of mother and student, and later—mother and business owner. So it hardly seems a surprise that she wanted to create a product that would allow other women to care for their babies while still pursuing their passions.

Before Solly Baby, Elle was sewing kids clothes and blogging about it. One day a friend suggested she make a wrap. Soon all her friends were asking for them. Being immersed in the blogging world herself, Elle knew blogs would be an impactful way to spread the word about her new product, so she reached out to a handful of blogger friends. When Naomi Davis posted about Solly Baby on her blog Rockstar Diaries (now Love Taza), the wraps were still in production. Even so, customers placed 200 preorders, and Elle knew she'd created something modern moms would covet.

“We make choices based on what's best for our family and truly serving our customers.”

What was the biggest challenge you encountered along the way and how did you handle it?

A year into the business I developed crippling anxiety. My husband, Jared, was working on another start-up that wasn't doing well, and Solly Baby still hadn't taken off, so we were strapped financially, living with his parents and our two little ones. I finally broke down to Jared. Like always, he said, “Let's take this head on.” We made a list of the things I needed help with and the ways in which I wasn't taking care of myself. Then we worked on each item together, one at a time. I felt like a new person, and it wasn't long before our business experienced a lot of growth—no doubt because of the changes we'd made.

What do you think is the secret to success in modern times?

Figuring out your own definition of success and going after it like crazy. The best path for one person is completely different than the best path for another. We've turned down opportunities that others think we're crazy for passing up, but we make choices based on what's best for our family and truly serving our customers. If it isn't best for both, it isn't best for Solly Baby.

Do you feel like you've had to give up anything to be successful?

For sure. I miss having more carefree afternoons where I'd meet friends at the park with a Diet Coke, and I've resented that some family events were interrupted by work. In the early years, I sacrificed a lot more—at times my sanity—but I knew that once we hit a certain point we would have more freedom. I may not be skipping through fields of clover now, but I do have a lot of freedom, and the sacrifices have been well worth it.

In what way do you hope to impact the world through your work?

I hope to bring babies and caregivers closer together while giving women the freedom to pursue their passions and interests. Mothers don't need to feel restricted by their choice to have children: they should feel empowered.

What's the best part of your day?

After the kids are in bed, Jared and I always have some kind of treat ready to eat and a show to watch together. No matter how old we get, we still feel like we are teenagers, sneaking out of our parents' houses to hang out. I cherish that quiet time spent connecting with him.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

LAUREN MCGOODWIN

career contessa



When she graduated college, Lauren McGoodwin wasn't sure what career she wanted to pursue. She took a job in university admissions, but she felt underutilized and started researching other options. She thought recruiting might be a good fit, but she knew very little about the industry. Being the go-getter she is, Lauren scheduled informational interviews with every recruiter she could get ahold of and ended up landing a job at Hulu.

Her life then began to change. "I was much happier," she told us. "It's really amazing how much of your life is influenced by whether you're happy at work." At the same time, Lauren was writing her Master's thesis on millennial women and career resources. She created a prototype of Career Contessa for school, but she continued building it out long after she graduated. Lauren assumed it would be a side project—until Hulu sent her to South by Southwest and she attended a panel about women and entrepreneurship. As soon as the panel ended, she called her husband and told him she was going to leave her day job.

In the two years since, Lauren has built Career Contessa into one of the premiere career sites for women. It features profiles of successful women in business and how-to articles on topics like finding a job in a new city or negotiating your pay-rate. In the past year they also launched their mentorship program, where women can find trustworthy, reputable advisors to guide them through a job search or career growth.

What is the inspiration behind your business or career path?

My own struggle to figure out my career. I spent my first two years after college working at a job that made me miserable, and I was desperate to figure out what I did want to do. I had so much ambition but zero idea how to find the right fit.

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

You will mess up. Often. But without failing, you don't learn how to adapt and push through. I think people need to start talking about their failures and being proud of them. I think if we were all more open about our mistakes, we'd grow a lot collectively.

What's the best part of your day?

This will sound so corny, but it's coming into the office each morning. A year ago, I was working from my couch, emailing with remote part-time staffers, wondering if I'd made a huge mistake. Eight months ago, I was in a warehouse with no AC in 100+ degree heat working elbow-to-elbow with my first full-time employee. Now we're working out of our own office in Downtown LA with a team of seven, complaining that the air's always cranked up too high. I couldn't be more proud of the progress.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

"I think if we were all more open about our mistakes, we'd grow a lot collectively."

Do you feel successful?

Right now, I live in the future a lot. I'm also working 24/7, and even though I love it, I'll feel successful when I can enjoy where I am instead of always looking ahead.

What is one thing that most people don't know about you?

I wear jeans, v-neck tees, and Chuck Taylors almost every day.

SARAH GIBSON TUTTLE

olive & june



Three years ago, Sarah Gibson Tuttle opened the chicest and most beautiful salon in all of Los Angeles. But before she was immersed in the world of nail art, she had a very different life: that of an equity sales trader on Wall Street.

"I was passionate about client services, but I wasn't really interested in the market." She moved to LA in search of sunshine but was disappointed that she wasn't able to find a good nail salon. So in August of 2013, she opened the first Olive & June in Beverly Hills. Two years later, she opened a second location in Pasadena, and the Santa Monica salon opened the following year. "I wanted to put the luxury back in the manicure experience," she told us. "And I wanted to lift manicurists up to a place in which they are artists again—where they are celebrated and fairly compensated."

Recently, Olive & June collaborated with Chanel to provide manicures at their pop-up during Oscars weekend, and they frequently provide on-set manicures for the stars on The Voice. Sarah's next big goal is to find a way to serve the members of the Olive & June community who can't come to the physical space. "We provide such a rad in-salon experience: we want to find a way to bring that to more people."

“Success occurs when you care deeply—not just about the outcome...”

What was your professional highlight of the past year and why was it particularly meaningful?

Our second day at the Santa Monica location was the biggest in the company's history. It felt so good. With the first two openings, we were still learning so much about how we wanted to do things. The Santa Monica opening demonstrated we're a company poised for growth—not just a nail salon.

Who do you admire professionally and why?

So many people! Our management team for their amazing skills that I can only dream of having. Lena Dunham and Jenni Konner for creating content for and about women that stops people in their tracks. Eva Chen for having so much passion for her career. Barrett Prendergast for creating the most beautiful gifts and delicious food, yet staying so grounded and real. Jen Atkin and Emily Weiss—just killing the game! I could go on and on. I absolutely love seeing women crush it.

Do you feel like you've had to give up anything to be successful?

My personal life has definitely taken a backseat. There just isn't enough time in the day to do it all. I'm lucky that a lot of my friends come into O&J, and I can hang with them while I'm working!

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

To listen. I came from an industry where talking at someone was the way you got spoken to, and it was a very hard habit to break. But no one wants to be talked at; they want to be heard and supported.

What book has influenced you most profoundly?

Setting The Table by Danny Meyer. It's the only book you need for client service.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own business?

Go for what you want with your whole heart. Success occurs when you care deeply—not just about the outcome, but about the whole experience from start to finish.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

KYLE MILLER + SIAN GORDON

love yoga



Amidst the corporate yoga studios in West LA, Love Yoga is a breath of fresh air—with its seafoam green floor and neon art. It's a space that feels simultaneously more grounded and more inspiring than other studios, thanks, in large part, to the two women at the helm, Kyle and Sian. Their design sense and yoga philosophy have deeply informed the space, creating a studio that values imagination, community, and a daily practice.

Sian had been operating a Love Yoga location in Montauk when she decided to move to LA. Coincidentally, Kyle was moving back to LA around the same time. She had spent roughly eight years teaching in New York and could feel herself becoming bitter in the city. She knew it was time to leave. Although the two women had met only once, when they had both settled in LA, Sian direct messaged Kyle to ask if she'd like to be her business partner. Kyle agreed, and they opened Love Yoga in October of 2015.

Although the studio has only been open a little over a year, there is already a thriving community of Venice locals for whom the studio is a second home.

What, for you, is an indicator of success? Do you feel successful?

Sian: Honestly, just being able to pay my own bills by doing something I love makes me feel successful. I know that I can take care of myself and others, and that's all I need.

What was the last job you had before you embarked on your current path, and how did it prepare you for what was to come?

Sian: I was in grad school studying psychology and working for an organization I really cared about. It was my dream to work there, and yet I was miserable. It taught me that I wasn't meant to work in an office every day. When I graduated, I decided to shift gears and open my own business. I'm really happy I did that.

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

Kyle: Taking risks is important. Believing in yourself is everything. And if you pour your energy into something, it will eventually bear fruit.

Was there a turning point in your career? If so, what was it?

Kyle: Opening our studio. As a yoga teacher, you spend a lot of time on your own—working for private clients and different studios. Opening our business gave me the career stability I was looking for.

What do you think is the secret to success in modern times?

Sian: Pick one thing and work really hard at it. I see friends and colleagues try to do a lot of different things and they don't understand why they don't get very far. Success takes hard work and focus. When you have a lot of different projects to focus on, your energy becomes scattered.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Kyle: I hope I'm in a dreamy relationship and have kids, a successful 3-5 studios in LA, a fully functional teacher-training program, employees, happy students, and a beautiful home with a big garden. And five years after that, I hope to go to Chinese medicine school. I'm open to all the possibilities, and I know everything can shift, but this is what I want, and I definitely hold it in my vision.

“I know that I can take care of myself & others, and that's all I need.”

MELISSA HANNA + JORDAN LANDERS

mahmee



“We are all so connected to each other, whether we like it or not, that one person’s success can become a tide that raises all boats.”

Melissa Hanna and Jordan Landers are reinventing the healthcare experience for new mothers. Melissa’s own mom is a registered nurse and board certified lactation consultant, and as a child Melissa watched in awe as she provided excellent care for new mothers. However, Melissa noticed that most professionals in her mother’s industry were not taking advantage of newer technology. So after getting her MBA and working in education tech, Melissa set out to build software that would bring maternal healthcare into the digital age. Soon after she’d begun, she teamed up with data scientist Jordan Landers. “Most start-ups don’t have a data scientist as a co-founder,” she told us. “But I knew predictive analytics were a big component of improving postnatal health and we needed someone with that kind of knowledge on our team.”

Their company, Mahmee, provides ongoing support in five areas: infant feeding, physical wellness, diet and nutrition, baby care, and emotional health. Mahmee offers at-home lactation consultations, provides virtual support groups, and curates a selection of recommended articles and products. They also have a virtual care team to whom you can send questions any time of day.

In what way do you hope to impact the world through your work?

Melissa: I’d love to see all women and children get access to high-quality healthcare. It breaks my heart that new moms and infants are still dying from preventable causes in this country and around the world.

Jordan: I want patients and providers alike to engage in care that is informed by data—both about the community at large and specific to the patient.

What do you think is the secret to success in the modern era?

Jordan: Don’t get attached to any one plan. Frankly, that’s a timeless suggestion, but today we have less time and mental bandwidth to transition between seeing something as the “best plan” to seeing it as the “outdated plan.” Staying atop that wave requires releasing the outdated plan back into the wild, and starting on the new best plan in one (deep) breath.

Melissa: Collaboration. It produces the greatest returns for everyone. We are all so connected to each other, whether we want to be or not, that one person’s success can become a tide that raises all boats.

What is one thing that most people don’t know about you?

Melissa: Entrepreneurism and the immigrant experience run deep on both sides of my family. On my father’s side, I am a first-generation American. His family is from the Bahamas and have built and led businesses on the islands for decades. On my mother’s side, I am descended from survivors of the Holocaust, who built new lives in the U.S. after their furrier business in Vienna was destroyed during Kristallnacht.

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

Jordan: Learning to consider the connections, incongruities, assumptions, and truths embedded in a thought process without judgment. I will probably continue to hone this skill for the rest of my life.

What is the best part of your day?

Melissa: When our team needs to meet to brainstorm solutions to real challenges. Everyone is thinking very hard, and we start building on each other’s ideas. Eventually, we’ll strike on something so good that people’s faces light up.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

SARAH SHERMAN SAMUEL

designer • art director • blogger



“Success isn’t an overnight thing.”

Before launching her own studio, Sarah Sherman Samuel was the Creative Director for a fashion paper company that designed notebooks and stationery for Target. Since she was the first full-time employee, she wore a lot of hats and had immense creative control. But then the owners discovered that one particular pattern was selling better than the rest, and they focused all their attention on producing more products with that one pattern. Sarah no longer felt like her job was enough of a creative outlet, so she began blogging.

At first she wrote about the renovation of a Michigan cabin that she had undertaken with her husband. Soon, she branched out to cover other style and travel-related topics. Only six months later Sarah launched her first product line, complete with items like picnic baskets, cutting boards, tea towels, and rolling pins. As her studio grew, she began doing interior design in addition to product and surface design. Most recently she designed Light Lab, a creative warehouse space in Atwater Village, known for its pink marble wallpaper—one of Sarah’s custom creations.

In what way do you hope to impact the world through your work?

I hope to encourage people to incorporate design into their lives and demonstrate how our surroundings can influence our sense of well-being.

What was the biggest challenge you encountered along the way and how did you handle it?

The transition from working a traditional 9-6 to working for myself was a huge adjustment. Honestly, I left a toxic work environment, and it took time to find a healthy life/work balance. I learned not to beat myself up if I don’t finish everything on my to-do list. There is only so much time in the day, and sometimes you won’t get to it all.

What is one thing that most people don’t know about you?

Even some of my close friends would probably be surprised to know that I used to be a competitive runner and that, when I ran my first marathon, I qualified for the Boston Marathon!

Do you have a daily routine? If so, what does it look like?

The best part about having a creative studio and writing a blog is that each day is completely different from the last. My only routine is my morning tea... PG tips with a lot of milk.

What do you think is the secret to success in our modern times?

Hard work and focus... A damn good Instagram feed helps too.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own business or pursue the same path as you?

Take small steps every day and just keep going. Success isn’t an overnight thing. The people you look up to have worked long and hard to get where they are. Also, if you want to start your own business but don’t have the funds, start doing what you want to be doing on the side, while still working a full-time job.

What is the next goal you have your sights set on?

I have some exciting things in the works: new products for the shop, interior projects, and hopefully the completion of our A-frame cabin renovation in Palm Springs.

What’s the best part of your day?

Most days, my husband, son, our two dogs, and I take an evening walk right before my son goes to bed. It’s our way of winding down and catching up on the day together.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

Los Angeles

KATIE HUNT

tradeshow bootcamp



“Decide what you want to do and how you want to do it, and then get to work.”

If you own a paper goods company, chances are you've attended, or considered attending, Katie Hunt's Tradeshow Bootcamp. Every year she hosts two Paper Camps in Southern California, where she brings together industry experts to teach students how to create a product line, sell wholesale, and prepare themselves for tradeshows. Last year she began hosting Business Camp as well, where students come to learn nitty-gritty aspects of business operations, hiring, taxes, and social media strategy.

Before she started Tradeshow Bootcamp in 2011, Katie worked in the legal industry for thirteen years, managing business development and marketing for a team of lawyers. She loved the strategic element of her job but knew she wanted to start a more creative business. “I was helping each attorney build their own brand, very much like what I do now, but now my students write me thank you notes,” she grinned. In addition to her conferences, Katie also teaches courses through CreativeLive, has spoken at Unique Camp, and offers 1-on-1 coaching.

In what way do you hope to impact the world through your work?

I want to make it easier for creative entrepreneurs to succeed, particularly women. The artists I work with love creating their work, but many struggle with running and managing a business. I want to give them the tools, information, and support they need.

What was the biggest challenge?

Knowing my limit during the start-up phase. When I started Tradeshow Bootcamp, I was working a demanding day job, and my husband and I had two children under the age of two. No one expected me to do everything; I'm not sure why I assumed I could or should. I put too much pressure on myself and I quickly realized I needed to slow down, change my way of thinking, and ask for help.

What is one thing about you that most people don't know?

I have a dual MBA in marketing and finance from Loyola Marymount University. While getting an MBA is certainly not a requirement for business owners, it has given me a strong foundation for managing my business finances, making decisions, and planning strategically.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own business?

Stay focused. Decide what you want to do and how you want to do it, and then get to work.

What was your professional highlight of the past year, and why was it particularly meaningful?

I'm really proud of the four classes I taught for CreativeLive. I presented 12 hours of live content over two days. It was the largest audience I've ever presented in front of, and I told my producer at CreativeLive that I didn't want to know how many people were watching online until we were done shooting because it made me nervous. Ha!

What is the single most important thing you have learned over the years?

Surround yourself with people who believe in you. It is INVALUABLE to have a community of close colleagues who understand what you're going through and can act as a sounding board.

What's the best part of your day?

Crawling into bed with my kids at night to read stories and talk about their days.

Photo Credit: Marisa Vitale

Los Angeles