

From the Albany Business Review:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/albany/news/2021/09/30/women-who-mean-business-jessica-fuller.html>

Women Who Mean Business: Jessica Fuller

Sep 30, 2021, 2:01pm EDT

At 22 years old, in the wake of a difficult job market and a long recession, Jessica Fuller made the tough decision to abandon her plans to become a social studies teacher and open her own business.

"I just tried to think about, you know, what is the area need? What can I bring that's different and what can I do that's still a profession and helping people and teaching people. So I



DONNA ABBOTT-VLAHOS | ALBANY
BUSINESS REVIEW

Jessica Fuller is owner and founder
of The Hot Yoga Spot and co-owner

realized that my passion for movement and wellness could lead me to open my first hot yoga studio," she said.

and co-founder of BARE Blends Bare Blends.

Now, a decade later, Fuller's The Hot Yoga Spot has five locations across the Capital Region, and her juice bar BARE Blends has begun to franchise nationally.

Were you hesitant about opening your own business? The Hot Yoga Spot was your first business, correct? It was, yes. I was probably too young and inexperienced at the time to realize how risky it was. I think I was careful when I did it to make sure that I wasn't overextending myself. It was a very small studio. I had a very short-term lease and I had two other jobs, bartending and tutoring, so I knew that between everything I would be able to cover my expenses. So even though it was definitely risky, having no business experience at all, I tried to make it a calculated risk so that I wasn't going to end up unable to pay my bills. And luckily, it took off so quickly that we expanded the first location within a year to more than four times the size of [the location at] Stuyvesant Plaza. I opened four other studios within the next five years of that. I opened some myself, some of them I purchased and were existing. And even now, 11 years in, I always get nervous when I do a new location or create a new business concept.

How would you describe your leadership style? I think that my talent when it comes to owning businesses and creating concepts is coming up with concepts around what people really need, what will help the community, and then really aligning myself with like-minded individuals, whether it's the teachers at my studio or my

business partner from across the gym and our juice bar franchise concept.

Did that always come easily to you or was it something you had to learn? I think it always came easily to me, I'm naturally good at reading people, I'm good at building relationships and I think I have a good understanding of what people need in a relationship to be fulfilled. I think being a little bit more hands-off and all the business that I have gives other people a chance to flourish and feel valued and build connections. And ultimately, it makes them care more about your brand and the community and your shared mission.

Did you have a mentor? No. I have a very great relationship with my parents, my dad had given me some business advice when I opened my first location and helped me figure out what numbers would look like just because he has a bit of an accounting background. I do tell people all the time, if it wasn't for the support of my parents growing up, I'm sure I wouldn't be where I am today because they told me every step of the way I could do anything.

Finish this sentence: As a young professional what I needed to hear most was ... I would say, as a young professional, what you need to hear is just do it before you're ready. My reasoning behind that is that over the last 11 years, I've spoken with so many people who want to own a business or want to change their life but who always say as soon as this is figured out, I'll do this, or as soon as I have the money, I'll pay for that. What I've learned along the way is that you just need to jump and assume the net's going to appear. You obviously want to work hard and be as prepared as possible, but ultimately I think being a successful business owner really

comes down to timing and guts and understanding that the circumstances are never going to be 100% right.

What advice do you have for women who want to move into leadership roles? I would say get comfortable being uncomfortable. Be open to the fact that sometimes you're going to be the only woman in the room and that's what's needed to make sure there's always a woman in the room.

If you could invite five people to a dinner party, dead or alive, who would you choose? This is not going to be profound coming off the top of my head. I would say Chuck Palahniuk, Lucille Ball, Beatrice "Bea" Arthur, Queen Elizabeth and I'll be the fifth.

Interview has been edited and condensed

About Jessica Fuller

Title: Owner and founder, The Hot Yoga Spot; co-owner and co-founder, BARE Blends

Age: 34

Where she grew up: Wantagh on Long Island

Where she lives: Delmar

Education: Master's of science in education, University at Albany; MSSE, secondary education, University at Albany

Community: Vice chair, Academy for the Advancement of Teaching, Leadership and Schools

Family: Husband, Mike; son, Harrison, and daughter, Hazel

About the companies

The Hot Yoga Spot locations: 5

BARE Blends locations: 3, with plans to add four franchises before year's end

Employees: Approximately 60-70

Glenn Epps

Associate Editor

Albany Business Review

