

Special Report



Jordan Landes-Brenman, left, and Kelly Kepner

MODEL MILLENNIALS

PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Ever wonder what is the secret sauce for success? Well, it turns out that there are as many recipes as there are successful people. It's not like that Coca-Cola recipe locked away in a vault. And in this special report, we have a baker's dozen who seemed to have figured out the ingredients at an age when most of us were just struggling through our first or second job. They are what we are calling Model Millennials, exemplary members of the generation who were born starting in the early 1980s, give or take a few years. Consider Jordan Landes-Brenman and Kelly Kepner, both 30, above. So they are in public relations and marketing, and don't literally have a secret sauce – though they have figured out how to run a successful agency. But there are others profiled who actually have figured out the ingredients. Antony Donico, 24, who is pictured on the front page, has a successful juice business. And Lindsey Deitsch, 28, runs a wholesale manufacturer of gluten-free baked goods. It's all pretty yummy. So why not just dig in.

PROFILES:

- Alan Campos
- Jordan Chien
- Taylor Chien
- Lindsey Deitsch
- Antony Donico
- Brandon Florian
- Kelly Kepner
- Jason Lau
- Jordan Landes-Brenman
- Troy Pollet
- Dimitry Slabyak
- Matthew Smith
- Frank Tesoro



Model Millennials

'I tell people all the time I was born to run my own business and be a leader. My brain has a million new ideas all the time.'

JASON LAU

JASON LAU, 30
BRANDON FLORIAN, 32
Founders

Evolution Martial Arts Academy

Northridge

Gym that provides training in the martial arts in hapkido, a Korean style similar to taekwondo, and CrossFit, an exercise routine that involves high-intensity everyday movements.

Founded: 2012

Employees: 7 volunteers

Financials: Did not disclose

What makes your company unusual or unique?

Jason Lau: We are still the only place to offer traditional martial arts and CrossFit under one roof in the San Fernando Valley and possibly Southern California. We wanted to bring the two very similar communities together.

What led you to start your own company?

I started doing martial arts at the age of 15 and I absolutely loved it. Brandon and I wanted to do what we loved for the rest of our lives.

Where did you get the financing?

Brandon and myself backed most of our financing through savings and some



Florian, left, and Lau

PHOTOS BY DAVID SPRAGUE

help from our family. We wanted to do our best to avoid any type of loans because interest is a killer.

What were the biggest challenges?

Finding a good location that would fit the demographic we were looking for. We wanted a good community atmosphere. Also, CSUN would be a good market for the young adults who wanted to do CrossFit.

What was the most important lesson you learned?

Brandon and I couldn't do this alone. It takes a support team of skilled people to help run a business, any business. Another good lesson is network with as many other business owners as you can.

What is it like working together?

It's great to bounce ideas off each other and helps avoid

any impulse decisions that would seem like a good idea at first but isn't later.

What is the biggest advantage of being young?

The both of us aren't married and we don't have any kids yet. This gives us great flexibility and the ability to take a massive risk of opening our own business. Another advantage of being young is the ability to function pretty well

on little to no sleep.

Could you ever be an employee?

No, honestly I tell people all the time I was born to run my own business and be a leader. My brain has a million new ideas all the time.

What advice would you give to other Millennials who may want to start their own business?

It is important to do your

research and due diligence before taking a big step in opening up your own business. (And) if you don't love what you do, all the hours of work needed to run a new business might make it feel like a drag.

— Mark Madler

KELLY KEPNER, 30
JORDAN LANDES-BRENNAN, 30
Founders

Haute House PR & Marketing

Sherman Oaks

Public relations and marketing agency

Founded: 2009

Employees: 6

Financials: Doubled revenue last year

If there's one business tactic that Kelly Kepner and Jordan Landes-Brennan have learned since starting Haute House PR & Marketing four years ago, it's that kindness will get you places – even in business.

"You never know when you will encounter people again, so always be polite and say thank you. People remember that and are more likely to

extend a hand in your time of need," Kepner said.

The two women, both 30, employ six people at their Sherman Oaks office, which recently added an in-house web division called HauteBlue that provides website development and social media services to clients.

Kepner and Landes-Brennan came together while employed by a fashion PR firm in Hollywood. After working side-by-side for three years, they decided to branch out on their own.

"Kelly and I were feeling stunted creatively at our old positions, and after running the company for a few years, we realized we could be doing the same thing on our own terms," Landes-Brennan said.

Haute House was founded in July 2009. The women didn't go the investor route, preferring to purchase their initial equipment for themselves: two laptops and a few rolling racks for clothing samples. It was a struggle to start at the

height of the recession but Landes-Brennan said it taught them how to adapt and become "recession-proof."

Today, the firm has 10 clients including online accessory retailer Y-Clad.com and clothier Monique Leshman.

The pair believe their age gives them an advantage with the latest technology and social media, but acknowledge it has also been an issue with older clients and associates.

"When we get a chance to speak about our business and the clients we represent, people immediately realize that we're hardworking, intelligent women," Kepner said.

Haute House doubled its revenue last year, though the pair would not release exact numbers. At this point, neither could go back and work full-time for someone else.

"I think I would have a tough time taking direction without giving my input," Landes-Brennan said.

— Rosie Downey



Kepner, left, and Landes-Brennan

'When we get a chance to speak about our business and the clients we represent, people immediately realize that we're hardworking, intelligent women.'

KELLY KEPNER

'After running (our former) company for a few years, we realized we could be doing the same thing on our own terms.'

JORDAN LANDES-BRENNAN