



Allison Beardsley



Thirteen studio locations, 45 staff and thousands of clients – it sounds like a lovely situation to find yourself in, or perhaps something that would happen to a friend of a friend of yours, but a myth it is not. This situation is a reality for Allison Beardsley, founder and CEO of Club Pilates. Believe it or not there was no master plan to make it big in business, it was something that simply happened organically, but make it big is just what

she's done. So who is this extraordinary woman and what is her secret to success? I bet you'd like to know, and so did I, so I went straight to the source and asked Allison herself.

When a background in sports, specifically basketball, resulted in a multitude of injuries including no less than 20 sprains in each ankle, a dislocated shoulder and a torn ACL that led to reconstructive knee surgery, Allison decided to call it quits so she might find something that would not further contribute to her injuries. Standing at a lanky 6 ft., she struggled when she started Pilates, “shaking like a leaf” she didn't feel like a natural, more like “the worst student in the class” and by her own admission. Though thankfully this feeling was short-lived because after taking class, she noticed her body felt better than it ever had, and it was this feeling that prompted Allison to pursue Pilates as a career.

From humble beginnings, Allison worked her way up, diligently studying anatomy flash cards behind the reception in a gym, whilst simultaneously completing a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and becoming a Pilates Matwork instructor. She also holds certifications as a personal trainer from ACSM and ACE. Ambitious, you think? Unsurprisingly Allison developed a huge following of clients, who followed her from gym to gym, and then went with her when she decided she'd financially be better off opening her own studio. "We were living in a small duplex and I started the studio out of my house for the first six weeks" explains Allison. It got to the point where she had to expand, finding a small business park down the street and opening up on December 2nd 2007.



At first the business model was no different to that of other studios but then the economy collapsed just a few months in, so prices were lowered and more equipment added, maxing out her husband's credit card, but all for good reason. She changed her approach, specifically in how to bring in and keep new clients, and she did it by making it something for everyone. "Club Pilates takes the prejudice and the 'elitist' attitude out of Pilates. We make it friendly, down to earth and accessible" says Allison. Not a new concept by any means, maybe, but it is a new concept in its application to Pilates outside of a gym environment. In doing this, Allison found she needed to make changes to her group classes in order to ensure they were safe and effective for different bodies and levels. By rearranging the structure and omitting certain exercises, she was able to do that without losing the sense of flow, which she now says she's "got down to an art".

Allison claims her secret is to "spiritualize business" and by this she means that "the more people you serve, uplift and help, the more you help yourself". Attributing Club Pilates fast-growing success to great service and results that speak for themselves, not talking figuratively, as word of mouth is their primary advertising. Allison explains, "Our model is very viable. It's a win, win, win. Studio owners make a profit; clients can enjoy classes on the finest equipment, with amazing teachers for around \$10 a class, and our instructors have nice schedules where they teach in blocks and make 2-3 times the industry standard in pay." Not bad for a company that's on its sixth year.

For Allison the future is an exciting place, with hundreds of Club Pilates locations all over the world, goals to revise teacher training manuals, refine franchise package information and to maybe throw in some travel on the side.

To learn more about Allison and her studio, click [here](#).

Words by Jehane Lindley