

# Making Their Own Destiny: Communication Students Launch Start-ups

by Christine Nappi

Being a full-time college student and running a successful business isn't easy, yet, Sophie Demurjian, a senior in the advertising concentration, has figured out how to do it. Demurjian is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of her brand, Cut and Cropped.

Cut and Cropped is an online clothing boutique that currently sells various types of apparel, such as t-shirts and sweatshirts, and jewelry such as rings, bracelets, and necklaces. Demurjian initially sold t-shirts that she would bleach, cut, and crop, giving rise to the brand name. However, she then expanded the business to include more options. The product expansion has increased her following on Instagram, the main platform she uses to promote her business. Since starting in 2018, Demurjian has grown her Instagram following to over 50,000.

Before starting Cut and Cropped, Demurjian was looking for a creative way to make money and support herself as a college student. In high school, she ran a bath bomb business through Instagram and knew that she would succeed at doing something similar in college. Before she knew it, Cut and Cropped was born.

"I was sick of spending money, so I wanted to figure out a way to make money," Demurjian said. "I just started posting shirts I bleach on Instagram and it kind of just took off from there."

Demurjian primarily uses Instagram to promote her business and has an effective strategy — she posts consistently and optimizes the hashtags she uses. She has also been trying to grow her business on Pinterest and Tik Tok because of the quick and easy growth opportunities these platforms offer. Despite successfully growing a following on Instagram, Demurjian notes that doing so has not been as easy as it seems.

*“It’s like sleepless nights type of work because you [have to be] interactive all the time –Sophie Demurjian*

explore different types of software, such as Photoshop and Indesign, that help with the content that she posts. The project she's doing for the Advanced Advertising Strategies class this semester has also allowed her to expand upon business ideas.

"I'm doing [the project] about my business," Demurjian said. "I really like that [class] because it gives me so many campaign ideas, like just ideas for posting. I use them all the time." The Communication Department has also helped Demurjian improve her social media strategy.

"The best way to present things is in the easiest way possible because people aren't going to understand it if it's even a little bit difficult," Demurjian said.



Although being a full-time student and managing a successful side-hustle is hard, Demurjian plans to focus on Cut and Cropped after college and fully dedicate her time to growing the business. The Communication Department has helped Demurjian get to where she is now, but the crucial lessons she's learned from her classes will continue to help her business grow in the future.

As a media production student, Jess Solan's work has always been steeped in making ideas come to life. For the past year, she's been able to take her creativity to a new level by starting her own podcast, "Speakeasy."

Speakeasy is a comedy, dating, and sexuality podcast that Solan started in March 2020 in quarantine. She had always liked to produce content through YouTube, yet quickly learned that podcasting was a better way to share stories and advice with the world. Having been inspired by comedy podcasts, Solan created "Speakeasy" as a way to spread humor and make others laugh, however, her podcast has transitioned into the relationship genre as it evolved.

"It was pretty much a comedy podcast for a long time," Solan said. "I wasn't really into dating podcasts or anything like that but the comedy podcast would often talk about [dating] because it's a subject that everybody can relate to."

In the past year, Solan has grown her following to a steady 600 listeners. Although she is still gaining popularity, Solan finds that marketing her podcast over social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram increases her following. She describes TikTok to be a game-changer in promotions because the platform allows for quick audience growth. After creating a few viral comedy TikToks and gaining a following, Solan then directs users to her podcast, which increases listenership.

Solan has two specific promotional strategies she uses to gain a following on social platforms. In her media production classes, Solan learned that the way one holds a camera can impact the message and video quality, which is something she takes into consideration when creating TikToks. Whether on Instagram or TikTok, Solan makes sure to broadcast a certain brand image or personality, because she believes that, "personality is what keeps people on your page."

Solan has already created 25 episodes of Speakeasy, but it has been challenging to stick to a consistent posting schedule as a full-time student.

"I'm always just thinking of something new even when I'm not posting as much. I'm still [writing] episodes and [jotting down] bullets and ideas for episodes to do for the future," Solan said.

***“In order to get somewhere in the production industry, you need to just create, create, create***  
–Jess Solan

"In order to get somewhere in the production industry you need to just create, create, create," Solan said. "If I'm sitting around doing nothing instead, I'm not going to get any sort of audience, and if you do have an audience, then you have something to work off of.... And I just love making content so I think production has just gotten me to understand that and like thinking about a target audience."

Although she's only just begun, Solan plans to dedicate more time to podcast post-graduation and continue working on Speakeasy in addition to her future job in the Communication Industry. Speakeasy has given



her the opportunity to not only refine her Communication and production skills, but it has also allowed her to pursue something she loves, and she encourages others to do the same.

“I think people should just, if they have an inkling to do something that’s exciting to them, just do it,” Solan said. “Because spending a lot of time on something you care about is going to feel a lot more rewarding than something you don’t care about, and even if you’re not getting a lot of viewers or followings at first, if you stick to it it’s eventually going to turn into something great.” ★

