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Inside the business of an online personal trainer, who makes over \$450,000 a year and works with hundreds of clients at a time

Robin Madell 34 minutes ago





BreeAnna Cox. BreeAnna Cox

BreeAnna Cox, founder of [BodyByBree](#), has been a certified personal trainer for over 11 years, and is also a certified nutritional specialist who specializes in prenatal and postnatal fitness. Based in Southern California, Cox also has a podcast called "[Better Me with BodyByBree](#)," which was on the top seven trending podcasts on Apple in mid-July.

When Cox shifted her business online, she was able to triple her income in the past two years, after attempting to balance a tough personal training job at a gym and two small children.

With a focus on community, she relied on cultivating a strong social media following, where she met current and potential clients through referrals, Instagram, and YouTube — now, she has over 61,000 followers.

"I'm driven by my clients and helping women see their potential every single day. That's what keeps me going, and I think they can feel that," she says.

Here's her story, as told to Robin Madell, a freelance writer.

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Back in 2009, I was working as a personal trainer in a gym about five hours a day, three to four days a week, and I was getting frustrated with the fact that I could only make as much money as there was time in the day. I was making \$25 to \$45 an hour, and I had to sit in a dark noisy gym all day. I had to wake up at 5 a.m. and couldn't take vacations as often as I wanted.

I felt stuck because no matter how many certifications I was completing — I have five certifications from the [American Council on Exercise](#), to name a few — I still could only fit so many clients into my schedule. Not to mention at the time, I had two small kids at home under the age of three and wanted to be with them.

But in the last two years, I've almost tripled my business and income. Working just three days a week, I grossed over \$450,000 last year — and am on track for this again in 2020 — with the combination of personal training clients and selling supplements. At this point, 100% of my business is through online platforms.

It started when I saw an ad for the [Trainerize](#) app, which delivers on-demand and video workouts.

I loved the reminders for the trainer that keep you in the loop on what your clients are doing — whether they're working out, tracking habits, tracking meals, or messaging you. They also keep you aware of when your clients' programs expire so you can touch base and keep them engaged.



and do it during my children's nap time and work when I want and where I want.



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So I started telling friends and family that I wanted to practice using this new app with them and I would train them for free while I worked out all the kinks and got used to the program. After a few months, I felt confident and started advertising to more people. This was so beneficial because I'd moved from Utah to California and a lot of my former clients wanted me to still train them.

When people purchase a program from my website, they instantly get an email to

download the program and use their money. The fact that this automated program

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I usually work from 9 to 5 on Monday and Wednesday, and then on Tuesdays and Thursdays I'm working during nap time or after the kids go to sleep. I'm always answering questions throughout the day from clients, and all my work is done at home.



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I plan out all my content for the week on Monday and schedule it out. I'll also respond to emails and direct messages on Instagram as needed. I'll frequently create [IGTV](#) clips to answer questions for my followers or clients and record podcast episodes.

Once location wasn't an issue, I started advertising my personal training services all over the country through [Instagram](#) in August 2014.

I now have over 61,000 followers.

Once I started an Instagram account, I was surprised how quickly it picked up. I was nervous I was getting so many clients that I wouldn't be able to handle them all.



collaborate with other influencers as well. I put my Instagram as a top priority since it generates all of my clients, as well as referrals.

I now sell my online services and macro-based cookbooks and supplements on my [Shopify website](#) as well as promote them on social media. My business relies a lot on community, so social media (especially Instagram and [YouTube](#)) plays a big role in engaging with my current and potential clients.

In 2019, I had the goal of launching my own supplement line.

I had always had an issue with supplements and how they're filled with artificial sweeteners and fillers. I wanted to create a supplement line I trusted and that I knew was clean for all my clients.

I have all my supplements tested for heavy metals, pesticides, and harmful chemicals, so I feel confident recommending them to my clients and their children. Supplements made up about 5% of my revenue last year and 13% of my revenue this year since I added protein.

I was approached by a company who wanted to work with me, and I was impressed that they listened to everything I wanted and would formulate until it was perfect. It took two years to create my protein because I was very picky and wanted it perfect.

2 Months of Free
Service for New
Customers

\$9.95 per month
+ tax after
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Fast forward into the COVID-19 era, and having an online business has been even more invaluable, giving me more time to spend with my children.

Demand for my online personal training services have skyrocketed. My sales from Q1 to Q2 went up 53%. Because of our streamlined processes, my team and I were able to adapt and help clients change their programming from gym to home workouts and focus on a more holistic approach to health and fitness. I believe mental strength is irreplaceable, and COVID-19 was testing the world in that area.

Today, I'll usually have anywhere from 700 to 900 clients training at a time. After a client completes the initial [eight-week training program](#), they can continue month-to-month training for as low as \$30 per month. I have most of them enrolled in auto-billing once a month.

My biggest tip for how to grow your online personal training business is to have a strong social media presence.

That's how I sell a lot of my programs. Also, you should have a good referral program. I have my clients become affiliates or ambassadors and either pay them a percentage of the sale or give them a free month of training if they refer clients to me.

Communication is key. Make sure you're answering your clients' questions promptly and thoroughly so they feel they're not alone in the journey.


Create a strong brand that's authentic to you. What are your training philosophies? What's important to you? What's your niche market? Brand it and be consistent with it.

I want to relate to women just like me — women who are trying to be healthy and



My training philosophy is that women should enjoy getting into shape and being healthy. They should eat foods they love and have plenty of energy for their family. I want them to learn moderation in all things. I never have my clients cut out major food groups. I'm constantly sharing information about how to do this with my clients and during check-ins.

In terms of branding, I want to be the approachable expert. I don't want my clients to see perfection — I want them to see someone they can relate to. Someone who gets it and has been there. Someone who also has three children and is trying to make it work.



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I would also suggest creating templates for yourself so it's easy to adjust to each new client.

I created a premade training program, which includes a customizable nutrition plan, home workouts, biweekly check-ins, and other features. These templates will allow you to focus on client care and increasing your client list.



clients if they need specific things changed.

For example, I have men's and women's programs divided up into beginner, intermediate, and advanced. I also created home or gym versions of every program, and I have a postnatal and pregnancy program as well. If clients need adjustments, you work off what you've already made. I recently refined my niche and only train women now.

Also, take advantage of autopay to make billing and payment easier for your clients. That has been a game changer for me. People hated when they had to resign up each month.

My last tip would be to have clients make a commitment up front. My clients have to purchase eight weeks plus a meal plan for me to train them. They need to be committed. That's where they'll see the results.

Usually people will follow me on Instagram for months before they actually buy a program.

They have to see my training style, my personality, and my client's successes. I truly believe in my program and the value it can bring, but it's a high price point, so sometimes it takes a bit for clients to see that.

I also give a two-week free trial to my app so they can get a taste of the workouts and see if they like it. I have hundreds of testimonials and client progress pictures on my website, and they can also read reviews of client experiences on my website. Word of mouth is the best seller. When my clients see results, they tell their friends and family.

I have a genuine love for helping people and that's what people are drawn to. I'm driven by my clients and helping women see their potential every single day. That's



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