

Ivan Botha and Donnalee Roberts on starting *Mind Your Own Biz*

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

6 Jul 2020

Married couple, Ivan Botha and Donnalee Roberts, who owns a Cape Town-based company, 17 Films, chat to us about their new venture, *Mind Your Own Biz*, a live chat, showcasing local entrepreneurs on Instagram/IGTV and celebrating the grit of the business community one small enterprise at a time.



Ivan Botha and Donna-lee Roberts started *Mind Your Own Biz*, a live chat, showcasing local entrepreneurs on Instagram.

■ **Let's start with the basics. What is *Mind Your Own Biz* all about and where did you get the idea to do it?**

Botha: So, *Mind Your Own Biz*, in its essence is an opportunity and a platform where we literally just want to share and celebrate and learn from entrepreneurs, from business owners, share in each other's passions and hopefully just get the word out there to people that are interested in supporting local businesses, local entrepreneurs, local artists and just wonderful stories.

It started during lockdown. You always try and think about how you can contribute, where you can get involved and we try and be involved with charity work and community projects. But as entrepreneurs, obviously there was a massive light being shone on the economy and the stories were coming in on social media about businesses that were closing down and people were losing jobs and we just asked, 'What can we do? Whether it helps one person or a 1,000 people, what can we do?'.

And we said, 'Well, we've been blessed with these social media platforms due to the film industry, but we're also business

owners and passionate entrepreneurs and passionate marketers'. So, we said, 'Yes, let's start something', and that's where the dream and the idea started for us.

Roberts: Absolutely.

“ We've always been very passionate about entrepreneurship and I think what a lot of people don't realise is, as film producers, every single time you create a project and start on a film - because we write and produce and we have a marketing division within our production company. It's like starting up a brand and a business every single time. So, within that, we found that we are so passionate about marketing and business and entrepreneurship. ”

We also own a clothing range called the Romantic Collective, and we have been extremely thankful for how people have been supporting our brand locally. We've been wanting to do something with entrepreneurs and small businesses for the longest time, and within the lockdown period, it became so apparent that there is a need for that. And we're extremely grateful to have a platform where we can celebrate and shine a light and share the love when it comes to other businesses.

■ **Why did you decide to use IGTV/Instagram specifically?**

Botha: Well, I think specifically because just during lockdown we saw the growth specifically with Instagram and how Instagram just grew. We've been using Instagram personally, yes, but also for our business and it had an incredible impact. I'm sure there are other tools like TikTok and Facebook, but I think we are quite passionate about Instagram because there is a positive angle to Instagram that we really appreciate. And I think IGTV just allows you to grow that brand very quickly.

“

[View this post on Instagram](#)

[A post shared by Ivan Botha \(@ivanbotha17\)](#) on Jun 1, 2020 at 11:30am PDT

”

Roberts: What also made it quite exciting is that if you do go online or on Instagram Live, you literally then have the opportunity to not just have a focused conversation with one or two people but it kind of opens up that space to ask questions. It's extremely interactive. You get to speak to people from across South Africa. That's what we love about it because it gives us the opportunity to speak to small business owners and entrepreneurs and people who are starting movements and doing amazing work and in that way, through an IG Live platform, we get to share what they are doing.

■ **What is your growth strategy? Do you have plans to eventually take it into the studio, or do a talk show at a later stage or would you prefer to stick to digital and social media, specifically post-lockdown?**

Botha: Well, definitely. We have also said this has got to have its own organic growth. We obviously have dreams for it and hopes for it, where it can go and what it can become. But I think we never want to lose track of what it started off as,

and that is a platform and an opportunity for a celebration and to get the word out there and to get people to switch the mindset between just supporting and shopping from the usual to expanding your horizon.

So from now, every first Monday of the month, just purely because our time is limited. We have lots of projects happening and I wish we could do it full-time but at the moment it's not about making money, it's literally just about giving our time and actually just to open a platform. You'll see the emails I send out to the entrepreneurs, are five points and it's just guidelines: who are you, tell us your story, what are the challenges that you are facing and where can people get hold of you and support you?



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Daniel Dercksen 16 Aug 2018



It's literally just an opportunity to give somebody else a voice. Because a small business might have 400/500 people following them, and to get to 400/500 people following them, it's been a hard hustle. Where we have been fortunate, Donnalee has over 100,000 followers, I'm close to 100,000 followers. So, it's literally just an opportunity to actually give them a voice on our platform to a wider audience. We obviously select people. They have got to send us an email and we try and keep it interesting. So every first Monday of the month for now, and we are filmmakers, so you never know.

Roberts: Absolutely. We can't help ourselves but to start dreaming big and go, where can this go and how can we take it into the studio and make it even bigger in that way, but, as Ivan said, we never want to lose sight of where it started and what the essence and the realness behind it is. Because what's wonderful with something like an Instagram Live chat and using Instagram TV, because you go live, it's very real and in the moment and it's relatable. And I think a lot of the time with big organisations, it has almost become unattainable for small business owners and people wanting to start a movement or a project, and to get people involved in that. And I think more than anything, we really want to keep it real and relatable and have people go, it is attainable, you can be given a voice and we want to share.

What our dreams and hopes for *Mind Your Own Biz* is, is that we can hopefully create a community within that platform, so that after a while that we've grown that platform to space where it doesn't necessarily have to be on Ivan's Instagram TV but that we can really move it to *Mind Your Own Biz*'s platform. That is the dream. But also with that to create a community where people who are busy with projects and starting movements and small business owners and entrepreneurs, where whenever we share something or post something, that the community, and that the culture within that community becomes one of supporting each other by going: 'These are the entrepreneurs we are celebrating this month, please share it on your platforms and spread the word.' So, after a while, it's not just myself and Ivan sharing the good news, and sharing the love and shining a light on different movements and projects and companies, but that becomes the culture within that community.

■ **What has the response been like and what have you learned from the first episode?**

Roberts: We've had a wonderful response. We're very thankful for that. Because it just goes to show that people are passionate about starting something and living out their dreams. My dream for *Mind Your Own Biz*, is to have a community where everyone that is part of that community follows the culture of sharing the love and celebrating within that community and celebrating each other and we've already started seeing that on our page, where people have shared. Even if it's just on their Instagram story with a swipe up link to someone's website. That's already started and that makes us very excited.



Interview with Ivan Botha and Donnalee Roberts

Daniel Dercksen 12 Feb 2016



Botha: I've just learned that there are some incredible entrepreneurs in this country. They just need a light to be shone on them and I think more than ever with Covid-19, what's been inspiring is the email that we've gotten where people, whether it be people that say, 'I've had a company for a month or I've had a company for six years,' say, 'I'm not giving up.' And that same kind of mentality that you need to be an entrepreneur, that same grit, that same fighting spirit is out there and it's not going anywhere and that is quite exciting. Obviously people are hungry to grab opportunities to help them to market, to get the word out there and that is what *Mind Your Biz* does.

Roberts: And what we've also found is people that have sent us emails going, 'Oh, I do this and this, maybe I can link up with the company that you celebrated,' and that is the dream; to create that kind of community. And it is wonderful to see that people have already emailed us and said, 'We've watched your first episode, this is how we would like to link up with this company or this is how we can share their products within our shop.'

■ ***I can hear how passionate you both are about entrepreneurship. I think there is a huge spotlight on start-ups and entrepreneurship globally, especially in 2020 when we look at how economies globally are struggling.***

Botha:

“ I think the mentality at school need to start changing and without going anywhere negative, I think something that still breaks my mind is that entrepreneurship is not a subject at school, from a business perspective. Because I truly believe the days where massive corporates were the backbone of the economy are over. And we've seen that time and time again. Look at what just happened with the Edcon group; 22,000 people with the click of a button have lost their jobs. Those are 22,000 potential entrepreneurs. ”



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Sasha Planting 18 Jun 2020



Roberts: If there was a bigger focus on schools on entrepreneurship. Even if it's not your dream or your passion to one day start your own business, I think if you get taught more of that in school, it's also going to make you a better employee one day to understand business structure and to go, "I'm passionate about the company that I work for because I really understand everything from A-Z."

■ ***Anything else you would like to add?***

Botha: I just wanted to add that, obviously, that part of the criteria [of getting on the show] is that it has to be a real business and not, I'm going to start, or I have this idea. It has to be a functioning business, an operating business and a registered business. It doesn't necessarily have to have a website, as long as there is some form of contact, whether it be, Facebook, or Instagram or something like that. We've had some beautiful ideas come our way, but unfortunately *Mind Your Own Biz* is not that. It's an opportunity for an established business, whether it be literally a day old or 10 years old, whatever it might be.

Roberts: I think it would be wonderful if more people start following *Mind Your Own Biz*, even if you're not a business owner. We want to also have people who have businesses - we want to get the word out there to consumers and people who want to support and people who want to become involved with campaign and drives and movements and companies. So, the more people that follow and listen and share and celebrate, the wider we can grow this network and create that community of support.

Botha: Call to action is get in contact and let's start a conversation. It's that old cliché that says, there's nothing like a bad meeting. In this instance, there's nothing like a bad email - let's start a conversation. Because you never know what kind of door it opens into the future, and we are all learning.

Myself and Donnalee are not business experts at all and that's not what we're trying to say here and that's not *Mind Your Own Biz* is about. It's literally about opening a conversation. We love stories, we are storytellers and we want to tell other people's stories in a sense.

You can catch *Mind Your Own Biz* on [Botha's Instagram](#) every first Monday of the month (tonight) at 7:30pm. You can also follow Roberts on [Instagram](#) for any new updates.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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