

(1) THE SARTORIALIST, DIANE PERNET (ASHADED VIEW) AND SUSIE BUBBLE (STYLE BUBBLE) ARE ALL INFLUENTIAL FASHION BLOGGERS

(2) SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TERM THAT ENCOMPASSES TWITTER, TUMBLR, FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND LINKEDIN

(3) HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL IN THE US IS CONSISTENTLY RANKED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP GRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOLS



IMRAN AMED

THE MENTOR, CONSULTANT AND ENTREPRENEUR BEHIND THE ONLINE JOURNAL BUSINESS OF FASHION KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT GLOBAL SUCCESS - HERE, HE'S WILLING TO SHARE A FEW TRADE SECRETS WITH US

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THIS INDUSTRY?

After six years working as a management consultant, I wanted to try something new, but back then I barely knew what a blog was. The Sartorialist, Diane Pernet and Susie Bubble (1) each provided a window into fashion from their specific viewpoints, but no one was writing about the business side of fashion. So occasionally, in the evening, if I thought about an issue related to the fashion business, I would write it down. From that, the Business of Fashion (businessoffashion.com) was born in 2007. From starting the website, I've learned how digital affects fashion first-hand. My digital expertise was zero before that.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO?

I work at the exciting intersection of fashion creativity, business and technology. Through my work, I come into contact with a huge variety of individuals, from young edgy designers to seasoned business executives to fashion-tech entrepreneurs. On Business of Fashion we aim to tell their personal and professional stories and learn from their experiences and expertise. In my consulting work I advise senior business leaders and entrepreneurs on their creative, business and digital strategies and ensure alignment between all three. I also mentor young designers, advise new technology start-ups and teach at Central Saint Martins. Every day is an adventure.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB INVOLVE?

I used to write all the content on the website myself, but now I work with a small editorial team - two people in London and one in New York, plus 10 global contributors - to make sure the site is focused on the most interesting and important fashion issues of the day. I think of myself as a curator. We don't write news, we write analysis.

YOU ALSO WORK AS A STRATEGIC ADVISOR FOR LUXURY BRANDS. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU GIVE?

I work with clients on business, digital and creative strategies. My main advice is that all digital initiatives - like all major projects in a company - should be linked to specific business objectives. The truth is that fashion is a business. It's very creative, but it's not art. Eventually most people learn that regardless of how creative you are, or how amazing your ideas, you can't sustain yourself in this industry unless your ideas work commercially.

WHAT EFFECT HAS ASIA - AS A NEW GLOBAL SUPERPOWER - HAD ON THE FASHION INDUSTRY?

It's had the biggest effect on designers who today need to design for global customers with completely different lifestyles, living in completely different climates. A designer has to appeal to a Brazilian socialite, an Asian businessperson and a North American entrepreneur - all at the same time.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU SEEN IN THE INDUSTRY SINCE YOU STARTED?

The digital revolution! We're living in a world where someone can start a blog from their sofa and all of a sudden have a global audience of half a million people.

Business of Fashion has 550,000 followers on social media (2) from 200 different territories. Technology has enabled people all over the world to have a voice. I think this is very exciting. HAS THE DIGITAL AGE BENEFITTED THE FASHION INDUSTRY OR TAKEN AWAY ITS EXCLUSIVITY?

It means that it's more important than ever to have a unique point of view. This applies to everyone, from the most experienced fashion critic to the blogger starting out from her bedroom in suburban Chicago. The people who build a following online are the people who capture people's imagination and attention.

WHERE DO YOU STAND IN THE DEBATE BETWEEN DIGITAL AND PRINT MEDIA?

I'm no soothsayer, but in my personal opinion there will always be room for beautiful printed publications that people can curl up on a couch with and escape into. This cannot be replicated online. What becomes more challenging is when the content you're creating is time-based. The majority of people now get their news in real time on their phones. That's where I see the bigger challenge for print publications.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

Summoning the courage to take a leap of faith in 2007 to step off my traditional over-achiever business path and start BoF. That's where this adventure began.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD ACHIEVED BUT HAVEN'T YET?

I was very achievement-orientated when I was younger; I grew up in Calgary, Canada, and studied at Harvard Business School (3) in Boston. I had these milestones and goals, but I've learned to take life as it comes. I focus more on enjoying every day.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED?

Every decision has to feel right and make sense - a balance of intuition and logic. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

I take taxis pretty much everywhere I go. This is mostly for reasons of productivity so I can do conference calls and edit articles while on the go. I spend more than 120 days travelling every year, on average.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?

In my own little way I'd like to have made a dent in the universe and be remembered for being a kind and fun person.

WHAT'S YOUR IDEA OF HAPPINESS? Perfect happiness is when your talents, energies and passions are aligned.

WHAT'S YOUR STATE OF MIND? I feel extremely fortunate and grateful to be where I am today. I'm happy.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHERS WISHING TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?

WHATEVER YOUR VOICE, WHATEVER YOUR INTERESTS, WHETHER FILM, FOOD, CARS OR DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, YOU'RE GUARANTEED TO FIND A COMMUNITY ONLINE. TECHNOLOGY HAS ENABLED US TO FIND EACH OTHER, SO USE IT!