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## Valley entrepreneurs embrace TikTok marketing

**Donald A. Promnitz** - STAFF WRITER

In Parlier, a mustachioed man in a granny wig and glasses reads a letter in his best Mrs. Doubtfire voice. In another video, he dons another wig and women's clothes to yell in Spanish — at himself, as a character named “Joker” — before giving himself the “chancla.”

It's all to promote Jay's Fresh Pressed Lemonade. The content is silly, ridiculous and often bizarre, but according to Javier “Jay” Juarez, it's working.

By their estimates, Jay and his wife, Cindy, have seen their business double since taking to TikTok earlier this spring. In fact, he says he's getting people from as far away as the Bay Area and San Diego who've told him that they've seen his videos and want to check him out, along with common visits from people living an hour away.

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“It’s not that they have any family members around the area — they actually take their time out of their whole day just to get the lemonade,” Juarez said. “And I’m like, ‘are you serious?’”

According to Juarez, he started making the videos at the suggestion of Cindy’s millennial son. After discovering it, he’s taking to making five videos a week — one for each day they’re open. The Juarezes say the quality of their lemonade speaks for itself. All they needed was an extra push.

Since its worldwide release in 2018, TikTok has gained considerable fame — especially among younger users — with its ability to let people make quick, seconds-long videos. Unsurprisingly, this has now attracted the attention of business owners around the United States and like Jay, Valley entrepreneurs are getting in on the fun.

Other business owners are promoting themselves on the app, but not necessarily by talking business.

For Recovery Credit Repair, Inc. CEO Aldiva Rubalcava, she combines her vocation of financial advice with a glimpse into her more relatable personal life. November will mark Recovery’s fifth year in business and while they have offices in Visalia and Fresno and awards for their service, Rubalcava credits aggressive promotion as a key component to her success.

Rubalcava, who utilizes virtually every social media platform at her disposal, has been using TikTok since

earlier this year and sprinkles in business-related videos with content featuring her pets, baking and other personal interests.

“I try to make it well rounded just because people buy people, and people buy you based off of your personality and if they can relate to you,” she said. “So my marketing strategy has always been not just promoting my business, but promoting myself.”

Rubalcava added that it tends to be a good approach with younger customers in particular who may not necessarily be interested in videos about personal finance.

Meanwhile, other users on TikTok are still trying to find the right formula to generate business through videos. Isaiah Trejo, a realtor for Keller Williams in Fresno, has been on the site for about eight months.

His videos vary from quick comedy pieces, to motivational talks, to advice on real estate. He’s gotten a few views — but not many — and it hasn’t translated to new customers just yet.

“I honestly can’t get a grip on what it is about my account that I can’t get more views on it to push traffic,” he said.

But this isn’t too much of a concern for Trejo, and he isn’t putting too much concern into his content.

“If I ever do get a viral video that starts my profile off, then great,” Trejo explained. “If not, then I’m just having fun with it and sharing motivational stuff and stuff about real estate and finances.”

For Jay’s Fresh Pressed Lemonade, the trick has been a combination of

fun and product. In Juarez’s case, it’s saved him the money he’d need to pay for a commercial, since he can do it all himself with a phone and a few costumes.

“We have a great product — we just needed to get more people to come to our business and try it,” Juarez said. “If we get some funny comedy stuff and people laugh, people see it, people come by and get our lemonade at the same time, they get a great product.”

There have been concerns about the TikTok app, however. Most notably, allegations that it’s also being used to harvest data from its users.

But this doesn’t seem to bother the people who rely on it. For her part, Rubalcava is more concerned with not the fact that the app is from China, but that her equipment is.

“To me, it’s more of a concern that it’s Chinese companies that design and develop all of the technology behind our cell phones,” Rubalcava said. “Our cellphones have way more information than what TikTok is collecting.”

Other concerns have emerged about the future of TikTok’s ownership and its potential ban by the Trump Administration due to privacy concern. But in the meantime, the entrepreneurs and fans alike will continue to utilize the platform and try to harvest its full potential — and have fun doing it.

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED | Javier “Jay” Juarez takes a sip of lemonade at the end of one his advertisements on TikTok. Jay has seen his sales increase dramatically since he started using the video-sharing platform earlier this year.

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