****

**June 2021**

**For immediate release -** Joan Westenberg, the first openly transgender woman in Australia to run a PR and advertising firm, says that being an outsider with her own story to tell has given her an advantage in a competitive, noisy and crowded industry.

Since launching Studio Self in the middle of the COVID pandemic, building on her 10 year background in startups and technology firms, where her creative campaigns have won international awards, Joan’s focus has been on choosing technology clients that reflect her own values and a sense of authenticity driven by her identity. It's a strategy that's paid off, with Studio Self passing 6 figures in the space of 6 months.

For Joan, creating her own firm in the face of adversity was about putting her stake in the ground.

*“Starting my own advertising and creative studio was one of the biggest risks I’ve ever taken. The data shows that 0.1% of creative agencies worldwide are owned and operated by women, and the number of firms run by transgender women globally is less than 5.”*

*“I wanted to prove that who I was didn’t limit what I do - and that in fact, it informs, guides and shapes it in a way that other founders could never reach. The way I tell stories, and the stories I choose to tell are directly influenced by my unique perspective, and the people I work with love and embrace that.”*

Despite a successful career in startups, her transition and coming out was a difficult and often confronting experience.

“In the space of six months, I went from being headhunted by tech firms to not being able to get an interview at a dog food subscription startup, and the reasons I was suddenly being given were that I wasn’t a culture fit, or that I didn’t have enough experience.”

Joan decided to strike out on her own, launching a firm that would enable her to embrace a philosophy of staying small and focusing on her craft, while being able to pick and choose the projects that resonated with her. Studio Self clients including Finch, Chuffed.org, YouPay and D&I influencer Aubrey Blanche, and have received press coverage from publications from The AFR to Channel 7 to The Australian to Smart Company, proving the strength of the agency’s commitment to who they are, and what they do.

For Mish Sparks, COO of Studio Mod, working with Self has given the VR company an opportunity to grow and share their narrative.

“Joan’s work with us through Studio Self was creative, effective and impactful. Working on a short timeframe and a tight deadline, she was able to weave an engaging narrative around our work, including coverage in The Australian.”

Studio Self is primarily focused on helping technology enabled brands communicate with human audiences in a way that is accessible and empathetic.

[**About Joan Westenberg**](http://www.apple.com/au/)

Joan Westenberg is an award winning Australian contemporary writer, designer and creative director. She is the founder of branding and advertising firm Studio Self. Her approach to messaging, communication and semiotics has built her reputation as a writer, and she has been named as one of the leading startup voices in Australia by SmartCompany.

Her writing has appeared in The SF Chronicle, Wired, The AFR, The Observer, ABC, Junkee, SBS, Crikey and over 40+ publications. Her regular work can be found on Pizza Party, a blog about creativity, culture and technology. Joan is the creator Transgenderinclusion.com, an open-source workplace inclusion hack, and the author of the book #DIY, a manifesto for indie creativity.

**Media Contact**

Joan Westenberg

Studio Self

**P**: + 401734212

**E**: press@thisisstudioself.com