

Rosana Marques

Founder and CEO, OUSEUSE

BRAZIL



“Ouseuse integrates a sustainable business model with concrete actions on social responsibility. The secret is the ability to reinvent myself every day!”



Rosana established her lingerie and underwear company, Ouseuse, in 1994, in Juruiaia, a small town of 10,000 people in the state of Minas Gerais. She started with one seamstress and always focused on providing her customers with innovative products that meet their needs and taste and, now, Ouseuse is the largest company in the State of Minas Gerais. Quality and customers' satisfaction have always been the driving principles of Ouseuse: before launching a new collection, the company carries out a careful assessment of target customers' needs and preferences, and when production starts, each item undergoes severe quality checks before it reaches showrooms and points of sale. According to recent data, each Brazilian woman buys on average 7.6 items per year. Besides lingerie and women underwear, the company has expanded its portfolio to include men's underwear, and beach and fitness wear.

With Ouseuse, Rosana has created 100 direct job opportunities (90% women) - and 150 indirect jobs; in addition she has been one of the community leaders, contributing to Juruiaia's economic development. As first president of the Commerce Association in Juruiaia, founder of the CME - Câmara da Mulher Empreendedora (Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs), and financial director of CNME - National Council of Women Entrepreneurs, Rosana played a direct role in improving the livelihoods of her community. The small town has now turned into an important regional hub in lingerie and underwear manufacturing, attracting several other companies and suppliers. It has the highest per capita income in the South of Minas Gerais and the third in the State. Concerned with women's health and well-being, Rosana created a line of panties with copper-ions lining, which is capable of killing up to 99% of fungi and bacteria. Innovation and technology are at the core of Ouseuse's sustained growth: some collections use, for instance, insect-repellent fabrics or biodegradable nylon with UV50+ solar protection factor for fitness lines. In the past years, she has also launched two social responsibility initiatives: with "Amigas do Peito" she manufactures and donates specially-made bras to women who underwent mastectomy, and with "Amiga Recicla", underwears still in good state but no longer used are

recycled through a careful sanitization process and donated to communities in need.

Rosana's attention to employees' well-being and work motivation translates into personal, social and professional development courses offered on a regular basis. This could explain why Ouseuse's job retention rate is particularly high: several employees have been working for the company for two decades.

One of the biggest challenges for Rosana is to continue giving prominence to her business. In this respect, Rosana's approach is very pragmatic: "If it is good for everyone, I do not see any problems in joining forces with competitors, if this allows us to leverage when negotiating with suppliers. I know that if we can all improve, we will be able to attract more customers to our city."

Empretec has helped Rosana better managing her business and getting more confidence in decision-making. Recognizing that the programme has left a valuable mark on herself as an entrepreneur, she is sure Empretec has also contributed to her company sustained growth: "Thanks to Empretec, I got to know my business much better, set new goals, and start expansion projects."

Rosana's long-term goal is to expand Ouseuse brand and internationalize it to several countries, mostly the North- and South-American and the European markets. For this reason, she is investing a lot in trying to understand customers' needs, taste, and preferences, in close connection with regional behaviours and national cultures of the target markets. Ouseuse's collections have already made their appearance on international catwalks in Lisbon, Paris, and New York.



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