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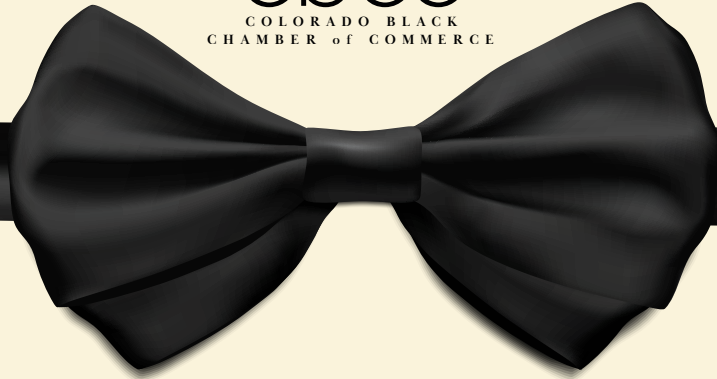
A Conversation With  
Benny Samuels  
BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

CELEBRATING 20  
YEARS OF EXCELLENCE  
FRANCHELL DUNHAM

THE BUSINESS OF  
PODCASTING  
DALE R. HUNTER

BACK2BASICS  
STORYTELLING  
BRITTANY WINKFIELD

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# CONTENTS



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10 **RSVP**  
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Illustration of four diverse people talking.



## 5 PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dr. Angelic Cole explains the transformative impact of Black Women in business.

## 20 MIRROR LEADERSHIP

A conversation about leadership with AYA Foundation's Benny Samuels.

## 8 THE BUSINESS OF...

Dale Hunter examines the impact of the podcasting industry.

## 26 CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Classique, LLC shares the impact of their work over multiple decades.

## 12 POWERFUL STORYTELLING

Back2Basics LLC shows the power of diverse communication strategies.

## 35 MAXIMIZE PROFITS

Important tips to minimize mistakes and maximize results. .



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12

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# President's Corner

## The Transformative Impact of Black Women on Small Businesses

Dear Reader:

Black women have long been at the forefront of entrepreneurship in the United States, driving innovation and contributing to the economic vitality of communities. They are the fastest-growing demographic of business owners in the country, defying systemic barriers to create opportunities not only for themselves but for their employees and communities. This article will explore the challenges they face, the unique strategies they employ, and their transformative contributions to small businesses and broader society.

### A Historical Perspective on Black Women in Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial spirit of Black women has deep historical roots. From the Reconstruction Era to the Civil Rights Movement, Black women have leveraged small businesses as a means of economic empowerment and community building. Historically, they were often restricted from traditional employment opportunities due to both racial and gender discrimination. This pushed many Black women to establish their own ventures, ranging from beauty salons to catering businesses, where they could exercise autonomy and creativity.

Madam C.J. Walker, for instance, became the first self-made female millionaire in the United States by creating a line of hair care products tailored to the needs of Black women. Her success laid a foundation of inspiration for future generations of Black women entrepreneurs.

### Modern-Day Entrepreneurship: A Landscape of Growth and Challenges

Today, Black women are at the helm of a diverse array of businesses, ranging from tech startups to wellness brands. According to the 2019 State of Women-Owned Businesses report, the number of businesses owned by Black women grew by an astounding 50% from 2014 to 2019, outpacing the growth rate of all other demographic groups.

However, this rapid growth comes with significant challenges. Despite their



contributions, Black women entrepreneurs continue to face systemic barriers, including:

1. **Access to Capital:** Studies reveal that Black women receive less venture capital funding than other groups. Traditional lenders often impose stricter terms or deny loans altogether, forcing many to rely on personal savings or alternative funding sources.
2. **Stereotypes and Bias:** Cultural and gender biases persist in many industries, often leading to undervaluation of Black women-led businesses.
3. **Lack of Representation:** The absence of role models in certain sectors can make it more difficult for Black women to envision themselves in leadership roles.

### Strategies for Success: Overcoming Barriers

Despite these obstacles, Black women entrepreneurs have demonstrated incredible resilience and resourcefulness. Here are some strategies they employ:

1. **Leveraging Community and Networks:** Black women often turn to their communities for support. Organizations like the National Coalition of 100 Black Women and chambers of commerce tailored to African American entrepreneurs provide networking opportunities, mentorship, and access to resources. These networks foster collaboration and collective growth.
2. **Alternative Funding Methods:** Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter and GoFundMe

## **President's Corner** *continued.*

have become vital tools for Black women entrepreneurs to raise capital. Additionally, grant programs such as the Her Rise Micro Grant and the Amber Grant specifically support women of color in business.

3. **Building Strong Brand Identities:** Many Black women entrepreneurs focus on creating brands that reflect authenticity and cultural relevance. Ciara Imani May's plant-based braiding hair company, Rebundle.co, is a prime example of a business that addresses unmet needs within the Black community.
4. **Education and Skill Development:** Continuous learning is a cornerstone of success. Many entrepreneurs pursue additional certifications, attend workshops, and seek mentorship to enhance their business acumen.

## **Economic and Social Contributions**

The impact of Black women entrepreneurs extends far beyond the businesses they create. They contribute to economic growth, job creation, and community development while inspiring social change.

1. **Economic Growth and Job Creation:** Black women-owned businesses collectively generate billions of dollars in revenue annually. By employing local workers and partnering with other small businesses, they drive economic activity in underserved areas.
2. **Community Building:** Many Black women entrepreneurs invest in their communities through philanthropic efforts, mentorship programs, and educational initiatives. For example, Lisa Price, founder of Carol's Daughter, has consistently used her platform to empower other women entrepreneurs.
3. **Cultural Representation:** By showcasing Black culture and excellence, these entrepreneurs challenge stereotypes and expand representation in industries where it has historically been lacking.

## **Inspirational Success Stories**

The journeys of Black women entrepreneurs are filled with stories of innovation and perseverance. Here are a few examples:

Janice Bryant Howroyd\*\*: As the founder of The ACT-1 Group, Janice became the first Black woman to own a billion-dollar company. Starting with just \$1,500, she built a global workforce solutions firm that continues to set industry standards.

Melissa Butler: Founder of The Lip Bar, Melissa

disrupted the beauty industry with her vegan, inclusive line of lipsticks and cosmetics. Despite early rejections, she persevered and turned her Detroit-based brand into a multi-million-dollar business.

Trinity Mouzon Wofford: Co-founder of Golde, a wellness brand offering superfood products, Trinity has carved out a space in the competitive health and wellness market, bringing affordability and accessibility to holistic self-care.

## **Future Outlook: Supporting Black Women Entrepreneurs**

The future for Black women entrepreneurs is bright, but systemic changes are necessary to unlock their full potential. Here are some recommendations for fostering an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem:

1. **Increased Access to Funding:** Venture capital firms and traditional lenders must adopt inclusive policies to address funding disparities. Programs like Kiva Loans and the Black Economic Alliance can also play a pivotal role.
2. **Mentorship and Representation:** Expanding mentorship opportunities and highlighting success stories can inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs.
3. **Policy Changes:** Advocating for policies that support minority-owned businesses, such as tax incentives and grants, can create a more supportive environment for Black women entrepreneurs.
4. **Corporate and Community Partnerships:** Collaborations between corporations and Black women-owned businesses can provide access to new markets, resources, and opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

Black women have redefined entrepreneurship, demonstrating resilience, innovation, and a commitment to community upliftment. Their impact on small businesses transcends economic contributions, inspiring cultural pride, and paving the way for more inclusive and diverse industries. By supporting Black women entrepreneurs through funding, mentorship, and policy changes, society can unlock their full potential, creating a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

Dr. Angelic Cole  
**President & CEO**  
Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

# Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

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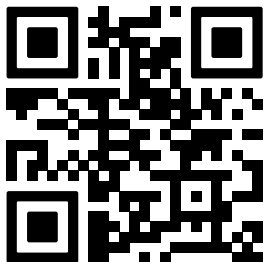
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# The Business of... **PODCASTING**

What is the dictionary definition of an entrepreneur - a person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks.

An entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. The process of designing, launching and running a new business is known as entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship offers unlimited earning potential that is directly related to your efforts rather than the hours worked. Period. Full Stop.

The two most important words in the definition of Entrepreneur are creates and risks. Yes, you can lose the entire family farm, inheritance money or even lose your pension/retirement money banking on a new risky business venture. The pandemic showed that there are a lot of different and creative ways to make money and proved to be a fertile ground for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs play a key role in any economy, using the skills and initiative necessary to anticipate needs and bring new ideas to market. According to Jorge Guzman, an Associate Professor at Columbia Business School, "new businesses are created because somebody sees an opportunity in the market."

The Podcast market has opened new business opportunities for many black entrepreneurs. Even before Covid, podcasts were a way to open a door to new people, with new topics, new cultures and countries. Podcasts are especially important now more than ever to shine a light on underrepresented voices in the media world. A podcast is an audio program that you subscribe to and listen when you like. Users can download to a personal device and listen wherever it's convenient. A podcast is like "talk radio" but the listener has more control on what they listen to, how and when.

Today, there are more than 500 different podcasts dedicated to black lifestyle, business, culture and health. Podcasts can also be incredibly therapeutic. The growth and power of podcasts

have allowed black entrepreneurs to engage in a popular new media option for most Americans. Podcast popularity has grown to such an immense level that starting a new podcast seems almost insane because the market is so saturated. However, black podcasters are beginning to blossom.

According to a recent black podcast listener report from Edison Research, 43% of the Black population in the United States has listened to a podcast in the last month. Not only is Black podcast listenership growing but they are avid listeners tuning to podcasts over five hours every day. For example, there are at least 45 different podcasts focused on Black Entrepreneurs and more than 100 focused on Black Health.

One of the hallmarks of podcasts is presenting opportunities to black creators to establish and extend their voices to black audiences in search of authentic black viewpoints. The Edison Research also revealed that 63% of Black adult listeners say that it is very important that podcasts include black stories and perspectives about Black excellence and the community. Podcasts are proving to be a powerful vehicle to showcase the talents of black creators and hosts.

The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce salutes all the Black Entrepreneurs in our great state of Colorado with a special recognition of those entrepreneurs who carved out their own unique path in this new business market called Podcasts.

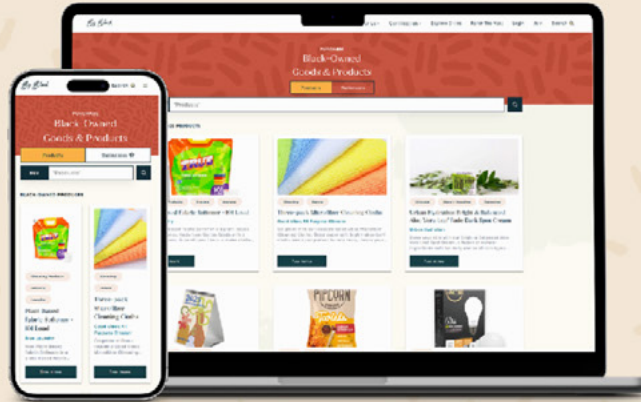
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**Dale R. Hunter**  
Founder, The Hunter Group (THG).

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- **Gala Committee**  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
contact Dr. Angelic Cole:**

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+303-831-0746

 **WEBSITE**  
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An illustration featuring several stylized profiles of people of various ethnicities and ages. The profiles are rendered in solid colors like teal, orange, and red, with some wearing accessories like glasses and hoop earrings. The background consists of large, overlapping circles in shades of teal, orange, and yellow, creating a vibrant, abstract composition.

# **Introducing Back2Basics LLC**

**Getting back to the basics of  
powerful storytelling.**

**By BRITTANY WINKFIELD**





the firm emphasizes the power of genuine connection. Brittany Winkfield, the driving force behind Back2Basics, believes that effective marketing goes beyond simply broadcasting a message; it requires understanding the unique needs, values, and cultural nuances of the target audience. This philosophy is evident across the various facets of the firm's work, from media relations and content creation to community engagement and strategic partnerships.

"In today's complex media landscape, businesses and organizations face the challenge of not just reaching their target audience, but truly connecting with them on a meaningful level," Brittany shares. Back2Basics aims to address this challenge by focusing on authentic communication and strategic community engagement with a deep understanding of diverse audiences. "Back2Basics is committed to staying at the forefront of the ever-evolving, sometimes chaotic, media landscape."

When you think about how you get your news, the options are vast and the journalism is changing. Through Back2Basics, the Colorado Ethnic Media Exchange (CEME) serves as a central hub connecting businesses and organizations with ethnic media outlets across the state. This allows Back2Basics to craft and deliver culturally

Back2Basics LLC offers a comprehensive suite of advertising, marketing, and related communication services tailored to the diverse needs of corporations, state agencies, higher education institutions, and local organizations. The firm's mission centers on providing both comprehensive campaign management and targeted, à la carte services, emphasizing a deep understanding of each entity's unique objectives and tailoring strategies to achieve measurable results. A key differentiator for Back2Basics is its strategic partnership with the Colorado Ethnic Media Exchange (CEME), granting access to a rich network of media outlets and enabling effective engagement with Colorado's multicultural populations. This collaboration positions Back2Basics to develop and execute innovative programs that directly address advertising and marketing needs, particularly targeted outreach to diverse communities.

Back2Basics LLC's approach to marketing is represented in its name - a return to the fundamentals of communication and relationship building. In a world saturated with digital noise,





relevant messages that resonate with specific communities. This targeted approach is crucial in a state as diverse as Colorado.

Back2Basics' partnership with CEME is a critical asset, particularly for reaching Colorado's underrepresented groups. CEME is a network of independent publications owned and operated by media leaders of color, currently comprised of 12 member newsrooms. These newsrooms, including Afrik Digest, Aurora Sentinel, Asian Avenue Magazine, Colorado Chinese News, El Comercio de Colorado, Entérate Latino, GES Gazette, La

Ciudad, Sopris Sun/El Sol del Valle, and Rocky Mountain Public Media's KUVU 89.3 and The Drop 104.7, each serve Colorado's multicultural communities. CEME's mission is to empower these ethnically diverse communities through independent, culturally relevant journalism and media, with a vision of a Colorado where all communities have access to accurate and inclusive news and information. Their goals include developing sustainable business models, promoting newsroom collaboration, ensuring diverse newsrooms and content and building strong community relationships. Visit [ethnicmedia.co](http://ethnicmedia.co) for more.

This collaboration allows Back2Basics to craft and deliver culturally relevant messages through sponsored content that resonates with specific communities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 1, 2022:

- Colorado's Hispanic or Latino population, encompassing various nationalities and cultural traditions, made up approximately 22.5% of the state's population.



- The Black or African American population represented about 4.5% of the population.
- The Asian population comprised approximately 3.8% of the population.
- Two or more ethnicities make 3.5% of the population.

Understanding the nuances of communicating with each of these communities requires specialized knowledge and access to appropriate media channels. CEME provides that access, facilitating connections with media outlets that cater specifically to these communities, ensuring that messages are not only translated, but also culturally adapted to resonate effectively.

Back2Basics emphasizes a data-driven approach, focusing on delivering measurable results for its clients. This involves utilizing technology partners to track and assess campaign progress and make adjustments as needed. Back2Basics works closely with clients to define success and develop strategies to achieve it. This focus on accountability ensures that clients see a tangible return on their investment.

Back2Basics offers a wide range of services to meet the diverse needs of its clients, including:

- Media Relations - Building and maintaining relationships with journalists and media outlets to secure positive coverage for clients.
- Creative Content - Developing engaging and informative content across various platforms, including advertising, graphic design, blog posts, social media updates, and website copy.
- Marketing Strategy - Creating comprehensive marketing plans that align with client objectives and target specific audiences.
- Community Engagement - Connecting clients with their communities through events, sponsorships, and other initiatives.

Ultimately, collaboration is the key to our success. Back2Basics helps clients identify and cultivate strategic partnerships that amplify their message and expand their reach. By connecting with like-minded organizations, businesses can tap into new audiences and create mutually beneficial relationships. This involves developing communication plans, crafting key messages, and engaging with stakeholders effectively.



Founded in 2012, the nonprofit arm of Back2Basics originally launched as a digital lifestyle magazine for young adults. As the external environment changes, the needs of young people change too. Its mission is to teach basic life skills to empower youth and mold them into responsible and productive adults.

Its flagship program is the Go Girls Pop-up Stand, a snack and toy shop on wheels ran by children ages 6-13. The vision is to equip and raise children to be great while showing love to others. It is rooted in community with values of entrepreneurship, confidence, experiential learning, and creativity. Their annual fundraising event is a Daddy Daughter Dance, organized by Brittany and her dad, DJ Al Your Pal. All efforts provide opportunities and platforms for historically marginalized communities. Its sole purpose is to pour back into youth on a practical, yet meaningful level and have conversations that elevate and inspire!

Back2Basics, both the firm and the organization, are rooted in community. The commitment to understanding diverse audiences, building genuine relationships, and crafting culturally relevant campaigns sets it apart in a crowded marketplace. Back2Basics is well-positioned to continue making a positive impact on businesses, organizations, and the communities they serve. The work of Back2Basics, along with the efforts of organizations like the Colorado Ethnic Media Exchange, highlights the growing recognition of the importance of collaboration in all aspects of communication. While the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to build bridges through understanding and empathy is more critical than ever. Back2Basics LLC is demonstrating that by returning to the basics of human connection.

Brittany Winkfield, a Denver native, brings over 20 years of experience as a communications professional to her role leading Back2Basics. Her deep understanding of the Colorado media landscape is further enhanced by her current position as the director of the Colorado Ethnic Media Exchange. Winkfield's passion for media was nurtured from a young age, influenced



by her parents' involvement as an on-air radio personality and mobile disc jockey. She recalls her own high school internships at the Aurora Sentinel and 5280 Magazine, "It's incredible to be working with the same newsroom I started at 20 years ago at the Aurora Sentinel, now as a board member." Talk about a full-circle moment! Her academic foundation includes a communications degree with a journalism focus from Oakwood University, an HBCU with internships at prominent magazines such as VIBE and Upscale.

Immediately after school, Brittany started her professional career at the Chamber of Commerce, first in Huntsville, AL, then in Denver, CO. "I know my passion for civic engagement comes from my Chamber days," says Winkfield. "Community media is a vital source of information. I believe that well informed communities make well

informed decisions. My mission is to build community and ensure people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Recognized as Colorado Association of Black Journalists (CABJ) Journalist of the Year in 2013, Winkfield's commitment to the community extends beyond her professional work. She is actively involved in organizations like CABJ, the Urban Leadership Foundation of Colorado, Urban League Young Professionals of Metro Denver, Colorado Press Association, Colorado News Collaborative, Colorado Black Women for Political Action, and the NAACP. In her personal time, she enjoys traveling with her husband and three daughters. Her insights and perspectives can also be heard on the Back2Basics podcast, available at [back2basicsmag.com](http://back2basicsmag.com) and KGNU 88.5 FM at 3:00 p.m. every third Monday.



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A photograph of a person's arm in a tan jacket resting on a blue couch against a brick wall. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# **Mirror Leadership: Reflecting Brilliance, Building Community**

A Conversation with

**Benny Samuels**

*Executive Director, AYA Foundation*

**By DR. ANGELIC COLE**



**Cole:** What would you say is the primary motivating factor behind your leadership?

**Samuels:** Service to people, communities and society. My entire career has been focused on service that creates lasting change for people, families and communities.

**Cole:** Who are your role models, and what life-changing lessons did you pick up from them?

**Samuels:** Just about everyone of my bosses have been role models and mentors to me throughout my career. The majority have been women. I have learned something different from each one of them. My career has been defined by these lessons. From them I learned everything from how to extend grace, to how to be politically astute, to the indisputable value of building and maintaining relationships. For those mentors, my value as a human being came first (before my

value to them as a professional), and I know that way of approaching others has really rubbed off on me.

**Cole:** What inspired you to pursue a career in the nonprofit field, and how did you get started?

**Samuels:** My first job was in the private sector. I worked for the Rocky Mountain McDonald's Owner-Operators. Although I loved being involved in their advertising, what I loved more was being able to support them in their individual community relations goals. That's really how it all got started. I think it was valuable for me to pay close attention to the things that I was doing for work that brought me joy and allowed me to learn. If I had not been paying attention to how I felt about the things that I love doing and the things I hated doing, I might have missed what my true purpose is.



*Photo: McBoat Photography*

**Cole:** What do you believe to be the most important piece of advice for a leader to follow?

**Samuels:** I believe strong leaders are authentic and curious. I always say to young leaders: be you, and stay curious. Those two values will take you very far in career, and in life. Lately, I also find myself reminding them not to confuse having a career, for having a life! They are not the same.

**Cole:** How can you inspire others while also maintaining that you continue to be inspired by AYA Foundation's overall mission?

**Samuels:** I try to inspire others by reflecting their brilliance back at them. Sometimes you need a "mirror mirror" to tell you how amazing you are, when you can't see that about yourself. My work at AYA has been a gift. It has allowed me to get to know, understand and come closer to our younger generation (mainly to Gen Z and Millennials). I have learned so much from them. I love their energy and their pursuit of personal freedom, their way. Everyday I become confident that the younger generation has the technical knowledge to do what needs to be done. I worry about the distance I see between them and my generation (Gen X) and older. I worry that we are not wrapping enough love, support and mentorship around them. But this can be remedied, and AYA provides an avenue for that.

**Cole:** How do you prioritize work-life balance, and what advice do you have for junior professionals who are struggling to find balance?

**Samuels:** I wholeheartedly believe in balance. Even though my career has been one of service, and one that I have loved, I work to live. Not the other way around. My advice: find your tribe, and keep them close, and play as much as you can while building your career. Play on the weekends. Take long weekends. When you go on vacation, go away. For me, even a few hours in the high country of Colorado can be so therapeutic. Visit Colorado. Visit the world!



*Photo: McBoat Photography*

**Cole:** As an African American leader, what do you consider to be one of the most difficult obstacles you've faced?

**Samuels:** My obstacles and challenges have come from having an intersectionality in who I am. I have experienced obstacles because I am a Black immigrant woman. And I have to admit that at times, I have been my own obstacle. I say especially to women, imposter syndrome is real, and you cannot defeat it alone. You must always have your tribe close when you are feeling like you are not "enough" or you don't have "all" that it takes. If your tribe is for you, and knows you, they will set that record straight for you, and remind you that you can do anything you want to do.



Photo: McBoat Photography

**Cole:** How clear is your vision for what the future of corporate responsibility should look like for AYA Foundation?

**Samuels:** It's clear. AYA is a young organization. A solid infrastructure has been built. Now it is time to scale it. I am confident that as I retire at the end of the year, the board will select a new CEO that will do just that, scale the foundation. In time, AYA will become a community foundation that will serve our community for generations to come. In addition to uplifting small businesses, I expect to see Coloradans choose AYA as a partner in their family and personal philanthropic goals.

**Cole:** In what direction does AYA Foundation see itself going?

**Samuels:** The goal for the next 3-5 years is to scale the operations and impact of the foundation. That doesn't necessarily mean more programs. What it means is serving more business owners with our programs, and families with our philanthropic services (donor-advised-funds, family endowments, scholarship funds and more).

**Cole:** What do you think are the biggest challenges facing AYA Foundation today, and how do you see AYA overcoming them?

**Samuels:** We are a foundation that serves the entire community, and we have a niche which is to support Black entrepreneurs. In these challenging times where the intent of the Civil Rights Act is being turned against us, we must remember those who came before us and fought for so long for our freedoms. Do a little sankofa everyday to help you visualize how our ancestors solved some of these same problems in the past. And for goodness sake, we better stick together!

**Cole:** Let's switch gears and end with you as a Chamber colleague by providing a positive and forward-looking statement about the Black Chamber's future for the next 40 years.

**Samuels:** The more resources for entrepreneurs, the greater chance they have to be prepared to succeed in the market. May the Black Chamber continue to be an institution for us and by us for the next 100 years.

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# **Classique, LLC: Celebrating 20 Years Of Excellence**

**By FRANCHELL DUNHAM**



For the past two decades, Classique, LLC has been a trusted provider in private client services. We empower individuals, small businesses, corporations, and industries to achieve their individual goals with excellency! As a proud member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, we are committed to providing high-quality, customized solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of each client we serve.

Our success is built on strong relationships and adaptive strategies we have developed over the decades. Whether it's coaching individuals on presentation skills, assisting corporations with compliance programs, or training law enforcement professionals for career advancement, we remain focused on providing innovative, results-driven services that make a real difference nationally and internationally.

### **A One-Stop Solution for Client Success**

When Classique, LLC was founded in 2005, we envisioned a company that could provide a broad spectrum of services under one roof.

We understand that success is not one-size-fits-all, which is why our services are designed with flexibility and personalization. Our clients trust us as a comprehensive resource for expert guidance.

For 20 years, we have worked with a diverse range of clients and have been successful in our ability to provide tailored solutions has made us an indispensable partner for professionals and businesses looking to elevate their performance and reputation.

### **Our Work Over the Years**

Classique, LLC has been at the forefront of numerous successful projects, partnerships, and training initiatives.

#### **First Decade**

Classique LLC proudly led the first international conference on Moving Beyond Trauma: Building Resilience, held at the prestigious Broadmoor Hotel and Resort in Colorado Springs, Colorado. As the exclusive U.S. provider of trauma and



resilience programs developed by the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma (ICTP), Classique LLC brought together leading experts, mental health professionals, First Responders, medical personnel, and peer support specialists for this transformative event.

With stress-related disorders on the rise among military personnel, veterans, First Responders, and frontline professionals, this international conference introduced ICTP's innovative research, methods, and training designed to treat trauma, manage stress-related disorders, and build lasting resilience. Attendees gained invaluable insights into evidence-based approaches that have been proven effective in high-stress environments and trauma-impacted populations.

In addition to hands-on training and expert-led discussions, participants had the opportunity to earn Continuing Education Units (CEU credits) in fields such as domestic violence support, medical care, psychiatry, and legal education. By leading this critical initiative, we reinforced our commitment to advancing trauma treatment, supporting professionals on the front lines, and fostering resilience within communities worldwide. A wonderful and fulfilling conference that prepared us for our second decade!

### **Second Decade**

Most recently we are proud to have played a pivotal role in the successful campaign that led to the Denver City Council's decision to end the sale of flavored tobacco products. This historic 11-1 vote is a major victory for public health, protecting children and marginalized communities from the predatory tactics of the tobacco industry.

Our team worked alongside community advocates, public health organizations, and local leaders to push this legislation forward. By amplifying voices and shaping messaging we helped ensure that Denver took a bold stand against flavored tobacco products. This included menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, and e-cigarettes, which have long been used to target youth and communities of color.

We are honored to have been part of this crucial movement, proving once again that when communities unite, we can create lasting change.

Here are some additional highlights of our work:

- **FasTracks RTD-Colorado** – Provided strategic support for this large-scale transportation initiative.
- **Partnerships with Industry Leaders** – Worked with organizations such as ABM Industries, Xcel Energy, and the City and County of Denver.
- **Public Safety Training** – Helped more than 300 law enforcement officers achieve a 100% success rate in promotional exams.
- **Community Development Initiatives** – Developed workforce training programs aimed at increasing employability and career advancement opportunities.

We also have had the privilege of serving influential public figures, including Mayor Michael B. Hancock from 2011 to 2023 and the Obama Campaign-Organizing for America in 2012.

With a 98% promotion success rate and a 96% entry-level placement success rate, our impact is clear.

A shining example of our success is Devin Weadon, who was promoted to Fire Lieutenant at the Westminster Fire Department in April 2023! He stated, *"Thank you. I can't thank you enough. [You all] helped me to reach a career goal I didn't think was possible. Thank you, thank you, thank you. [You all] are a master of your craft."*

Some of our other successful students are Denver Chief of Police Ron Thomas, Lieutenant Kathleen Hancock with the Aurora Fire Department, and Aurora Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Derrek DeVan.

### **Meet Our Executive Team**

Our leadership team is the foundation of our success. Each member brings a wealth of experience and industry knowledge! We could not do what we do without them.



**Selena L. Dunham -  
Owner/Principal**

Selena L. Dunham is the driving force behind Classique, LLC. As the company's Principal for the last 20 years, she ensures that Classique's services continue to be the

standard of excellence and drives business.

With an extensive background in corporate leadership, political consulting, and hospitality, Dunham's expertise spans multiple industries, making her a sought-after consultant and speaker.

Dunham played a pivotal role in the 2012 campaign to re-elect President Barack Obama, serving as the Director of Human Resources and Administration for Organizing for America - Colorado. In this position, she oversaw the hiring process for more than 400 employees and managed intern, volunteer, and supporter housing programs. She was one of only two Human Resources and Administration Directors working on the presidential campaign nationwide.

Previously, in 2008, Dunham was appointed Chief of Staff for the Denver Convention Host Committee, which planned the Democratic National Convention. She played a key role in training 20,000 volunteers, overseeing staffing and procurement, and helping the Host Committee raise over \$60 million. Her efforts ensured the convention was recognized as one of the most inclusive and environmentally sustainable in U.S. history, generating an estimated \$266.1 million in economic impact for Metro Denver.

Dunham's influence also extends to public service. She served as Deputy District Director for U.S. Congresswoman Diana DeGette, where she spearheaded outreach efforts and helped direct congressional attention to neighborhood redevelopment projects in Denver.

Before launching Classique, LLC, Dunham held leadership roles in the hospitality and financial sectors. As Regional Director of Advertising and Promotions for Adam's Mark Hotels and Resorts, she managed branding and marketing efforts across 19 properties, ensuring compliance with the Department of Justice while strengthening brand communication. Her success earned her recognition as one of the top 100 lodging industry executives in the country.

Earlier in her career, Dunham served as Vice President of Bank One, overseeing community reinvestment policies and marketing management for seven banks with assets totaling \$1.5 billion.

Dunham's expertise in etiquette and protocol led her to manage the daily operations of an international etiquette and protocol school, where she developed training programs for institutions including the White House, the Pentagon, and U.S. military branches. She has designed training curricula for hospitality executives and facilitated diversity and inclusion programs in corporate and governmental settings.

Throughout her career, Dunham has been widely recognized for her leadership. She was named Business Woman of the Year by Colorado Black Women for Political Action and received the Corporate Citizens Award from the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce. Her work in promoting diversity earned her the Christar Award from the National Baptist Convention and the Mayor Webb Community Recognition Award. She was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Public Service from the Denver Institute of Urban Studies and Adult College.

Deeply committed to community service, Dunham has served on more than 100 boards over the past decade and was a contributing author to The Colorado Patient Partners in Research Stakeholder Council: Creating Common Ground from Diverse Healthcare Experiences.



**Franchell S. Dunham -  
Chief Executive Officer**

Franchell S. Dunham is the Chief Executive Officer of Classique, LLC, having previously served as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for over 15 years. With

a strong background in strategic planning, leadership, and operations management, she ensures the company's continued success in consulting, training, and professional development.

As CEO, Mrs. Dunham oversees all daily operations, including business development, personnel management, and staffing. She leads national and international business expansion efforts, supervises all employees, instructors, and contract workers, and manages pre-employment background screenings for both the company and its clients. A dedicated advocate for public safety professionals, she directs educational test preparation programs for over 300 public safety officers, contributing to a 100% success rate in hiring and promotions.

Beyond her corporate leadership, Mrs. Dunham provides career counseling for military spouses, offering guidance on the challenges faced by families of deployed service members. As a licensed esthetician, she also offers personal consulting to politicians, business owners, and students, ensuring they project confidence and professionalism.



**Chametre Anderson -  
Senior Vice President  
of Operations / Project  
Manager**

Chametre Anderson brings a wealth of experience to Classique as the Senior Vice President of Operations

and Project Manager. Chametre manages compliance for both national and international contracts and ensures that Classique's public safety exam preparation services meet the highest standards.

Under her leadership, the company has achieved an impressive 98% success rate for students. Chametre has extensive experience in financial management, customer service, and business operations, making her a critical asset to Classique.



**Debbie Gibbs -  
Vice President of  
Operations**

Debbie Gibbs rounds out the leadership team as the Vice President of Operations. With a background in community service and event planning,

Debbie brings invaluable skills to her role at Classique. She is responsible for managing executive meetings, training programs, and vendor relations. Additionally, she plays a key role in recruitment and career advancement for First Responder Agencies.

Debbie's experience in managing AP/AR processes and her dedication to community service have made her an integral part of the team and its growth.

**Specialized Services for Every Sector**

Our extensive range of services allows us to support a variety of industries, providing tailored solutions to meet specific needs.

For individuals, we offer training in presentation skills, personal appearance, and professional demeanor to help them build a strong and confident presence. Additionally, our confidence-building coaching equips individuals with the skills needed to succeed in both personal and professional settings.

Small businesses and corporations can benefit from our expertise in etiquette training and relationship management, ensuring that teams foster positive interactions in the workplace. We also provide international protocol consulting to help businesses navigate global professional settings with ease. Furthermore, our compliance programs ensure that companies meet all necessary regulatory standards.

The restaurant and hospitality industry relies on exceptional service, and we provide guest service training to enhance customer experiences. Our staff development programs focus on improving professionalism and efficiency, while our targeted marketing strategies help businesses attract and retain clientele.

For public safety and law enforcement professionals, we offer promotional assessment centers designed to support career advancement. Our interview preparation services help candidates excel in selection processes, and our tactical exercises enhance response readiness in high-pressure situations.

Schools and educational institutions can benefit from our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) consulting, which helps create inclusive learning environments that support all students. In the construction industry, we offer OSHA safety training to promote compliance with industry regulations. Additionally, our small business marketing plans help construction companies grow their brand, while our construction management support services streamline operations and improve project efficiency.

By offering these specialized services across multiple industries, we ensure that individuals and organizations receive the guidance and support they need to thrive.

### **Looking to the Future**

As we celebrate 20 years of excellence, we are more committed than ever to expanding our impact. As a proud member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, we remain

dedicated to fostering resilience, success, and innovation in all aspects of professional development.

We are also passionate advocates for workforce development. Through our mentorship and internship programs, we continue to cultivate the next generation of leaders. Our expert instructors bring decades of knowledge to each training session, ensuring that our clients receive maximum value and real-world skills.

### **Upcoming Conference**

We are excited to announce our upcoming conference, where we will bring together industry experts, business leaders, and professionals for an immersive experience in leadership, business development, and professional growth. This event will feature keynote speakers, hands-on workshops, and networking opportunities designed to empower attendees with actionable strategies for success.

Stay tuned for more details and registration information. We can't wait to share this experience with you as!

### **Cheers to 20 years!**

With our track record of success, dedication to excellence, and unwavering commitment to client satisfaction, Classique, LLC stands as a pillar of professional growth and development. We invite you to connect with us and explore how we can help you and/or your business thrive. For more information, visit our website or reach out to us directly. We look forward to being part of your success story!



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Image: Adobe.

## 10 Essential Tips to Prevent Business Mistakes and Maximize Profitability

By TAYLOR MORLAN

Any business can make blunders. However, certain mistakes can be avoided with careful preparation and execution. Here are four methods to steer clear of blundering in business:

1. Have a goal and a clear vision.  
Having a distinct vision and aim is crucial when beginning a business. What do you hope to accomplish? What must be done to accomplish that objective? Having a certain destination in mind helps you stay away from detours that could result in errors.
2. Recognize the market.  
Make sure you understand your target market before launching a product or service. To whom are you marketing? What do they require or desire? What are the aches and pains? Understanding your market will help you develop a product that satisfies their wants and prevent you from making errors that might drive them off.
3. Prepare and plan.  
Planning thoroughly might help you steer clear of many pitfalls. You're less likely to err when you know what you're doing and have a plan to follow. Additionally, being ready for emergencies might help you weather bad situations and maintain running your company.
4. Assemble a team you can trust and delegate.  
It's a recipe for catastrophe to try to handle everything on your own. Delegate duties to those who can complete them more effectively than you because you cannot be an expert in everything. Moreover, surround yourself with a group of reliable people. These team members can offer insightful advice and direct you away from blunders.

**How a Business Plan Aids in Decision-Making and Helps to Avoid Common Pitfalls**



According to a proverb, failing to plan is planning to succeed. Particularly when it comes to enterprises, this is true. A well-written company plan can serve as your success's road map by guiding your choices and assisting you in avoiding frequent pitfalls.

Here are some examples of how a business strategy might be beneficial to you:

1. Take calculated risks  
A business plan compels you to consider every facet of your enterprise, from the broad strokes—such as your overarching mission and goals—to the finer points—such as your target market and marketing approach. You can make judgments about how to proceed after using this technique to find any hidden issues or potential barriers.
2. Avert typical pitfalls  
Both large and small firms may fall victim to one of many potential traps. You may avoid making common mistakes like:
  - Not having a clear vision or purpose
  - Not understanding your target market by taking the time to create a thorough business strategy.
  - Lack of a sound marketing plan and little funding
3. Obtain financing

A business plan can be an effective tool if you're trying to get financing from lenders or investors. Financial predictions that outline how much money you'll need to start your business and how you'll recoup that money should be included in your business plan. This information may persuade potential financiers or investors to provide you with the funds you require.

4. Entice important personnel  
A strong business strategy can also assist you in luring important partners, collaborators, and other stakeholders. You may inspire individuals to join you in creating a great company by outlining your vision, goals, and strategy for accomplishing them.
5. Track development  
Your business plan can be a useful tool for tracking development and establishing new objectives once your company is up and running. Your financial estimates can be used to track actual outcomes and contrast them with your original plans. You can also utilize your business plan to change your strategy as necessary and maintain the direction of your enterprise.

### **How Market Research Helps to Identify**

## **Opportunities and Reduce Risks**

Businesses base their decisions on the opportunities and threats they face. Market analysis is essential for seeing possibilities and reducing risks.

Market research can be used to determine the potential market for an item when a company is thinking about launching a new good or service. This is crucial to figuring out whether there is enough demand to warrant the expenditure. Additionally, competition identification and strategy comprehension can be aided by market research. The development of a market entry plan requires the use of this information.

Market research not only helps firms spot possibilities, but it may also help them reduce risks. For instance, market research can assist in identifying potential hazards if a company is considering entering a new market. Making a decision regarding whether or not to enter the market requires knowledge of this information. For organizations to make wise judgments regarding possibilities and dangers, market research is a vital tool.

## **Outline specific objectives, aims, and business strategies**

Setting and attaining defined goals is crucial to operating a successful business. But what should these objectives be in detail, and how can you make sure you accomplish them? These and other issues will be addressed in this blog post, which will provide you with all the information you need to define precise goals, objectives, and business plans.

## **What Are Corporate Goals?**

The overarching objectives you intend to accomplish with your firm are known as business goals. These may include things like boosting sales, entering new markets, or introducing new goods or services. It's crucial to make sure your goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).

## **What Exactly Are Business Goals?**

The exact actions you must take to accomplish your overall business goals are known as business objectives. For instance, if you want to improve sales, one of your goals can be to launch a new product or increase your marketing budget.

Make sure your objectives are clear, measurable, doable, pertinent, and time-bound, just like with corporate goals. This will enable you to keep tabs on your development and make sure you're on track to meet your objectives.

## **How to Set Business Goals and Objectives**

It's time to start establishing goals and objectives for your own company now that you understand what they are. The SMART technique, which we already said, is the most effective way to accomplish this. This stands for clear, quantifiable, doable, pertinent, and time-bound objectives.

Make that all of these requirements are met while establishing goals and objectives. By doing this, you'll be able to set goals and objectives that are distinct from one another, feasible, and consistent with your entire business plan.

It's time to start creating strategies to reach your goals and objectives once you've established them. Your company plan will come in handy here. The steps you need to take to accomplish your goals and objectives should be outlined in your business strategy. For the purpose of tracking your progress and ensuring that you stay on course, it should also include a timeline for each goal and aim.

## **Put operational procedures and processes in place**

Any organization that wants to avoid making costly errors must have clearly defined operational processes and procedures in place. A clear idea of how your company should operate on a daily basis will make it easier to make sure that all of your staff are on the same page and pursuing the same objectives.

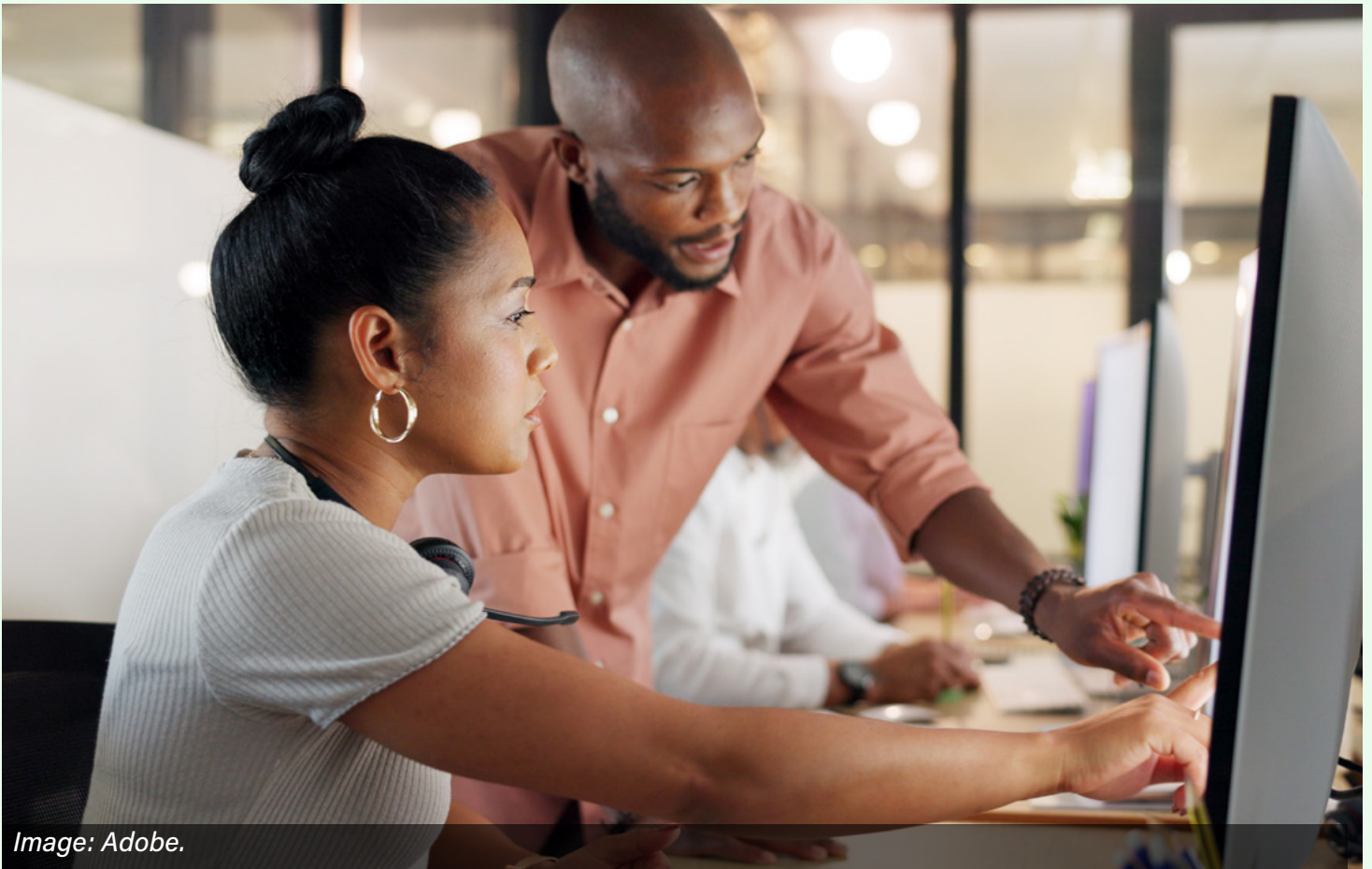


Image: Adobe.

When developing operational processes and procedures for your company, keep the following in mind:

1. Don't try to overcomplicate things; keep it simple.
2. Write with clarity and conciseness.
3. Ensure that all staff members are aware of and competent in using the processes.
4. To make sure the procedures are still effective, test and review them frequently.
5. be ready to adapt as your company expands and changes.

Every firm needs operational processes and procedures to maintain seamless operations. When followed correctly, they can also assist you avoid making expensive mistakes.

### **Regularly review and modify your company's goals and objectives.**

To make sure you're on the right route to realizing your long-term vision, it's critical to periodically review and modify your business goals and objectives. You can prevent making blunders that

are common and can halt your advancement by doing this.

Even though it's crucial to have ambitious goals, they should be achievable. One error that organizations frequently make is setting goals that are too lofty or impractical. Otherwise, all that will happen is disappointment and demotivation.

Failure to modify your goals as your firm expands and evolves is another error. What made sense for your company when you initially started may no longer be applicable a few years later. Your objectives should change as your business does. Another typical error is to exclude your staff from the goal-setting process. The people working for you to accomplish your goals are your employees, therefore it's critical to gain their opinion and support.

You'll be well on your way to defining and achieving goals that will support the success of your business if you bear these items in mind.



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The Colorado Black Chamber is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact Black business owners. Your success is our success.

### At the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce we:

- **Create** programs & services to support our Black-owned businesses
- **Connect** Black-owned businesses with each other
- **Collaborate** with corporate partners and other organizations to support Black-owned businesses

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# Editorial and Deadline Calendar

## Featured Topic                      Space Reservations                      Materials Due

<b>February 2025</b>		
Black History Month	Tuesday, January 14	Friday, January 17
<b>March 2025</b>		
National Women's History Month	Tuesday, February 12	Friday, February 14
<b>April 2025</b>		
Black Women's Month	Tuesday, March 18	Friday, March 21
<b>May 2025</b>		
National Small Business Month	Tuesday, April 15	Friday, April 18
<b>June 2025</b>		
Juneteenth	Tuesday, May 13	Friday, May 16
<b>July 2025</b>		
International Day of Cooperatives	Tuesday, June 17	Friday, June 20
<b>August 2025</b>		
National Black Business Month	Tuesday, July 15	Friday, July 18
<b>September 2025</b>		
911 Memorial	Tuesday, August 12	Friday, August 15
<b>October 2025</b>		
Health	Tuesday, September 16	Friday, September 19
<b>November 2025</b>		
Youth Entrepreneurs	Tuesday, October 14	Friday, October 17
<b>December 2025</b>		
National Write a Business Plan Month	Tuesday, November 11	Friday, November 14
<b>January 2026</b>		
A Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Tuesday December 9	Friday, December 12

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## Advertising Rates

Listed in cost per ad placement.

	<b>1X</b>	<b>3X</b>	<b>6X</b>	<b>9X</b>	<b>12X</b>
<b>Full Page</b>	\$1000.00	\$900.00	\$800.00	\$700.00	\$600.00
<b>Junior Page</b>	\$750.00	\$675.00	\$600.00	\$525.00	\$450.00
<b>Half Page</b>	\$500.00	\$450.00	\$400.00	\$350.00	\$300.00
<b>Quarter Page</b>	\$250.00	\$225.00	\$200.00	\$175.00	\$150.00
<b>Eighth Page</b>	\$125.00	\$112.50	\$100.00	\$87.50	\$75.00
<b>Sixteenth Page</b>	\$62.50	\$56.25	\$50.00	\$43.75	\$37.50

## Advertisement Sizes

	<b>Without Bleed (inches)</b>	<b>With Bleed (inches)</b>
<b>Full Page</b>	8.500 w x 11.000 h	8.750 w x 11.250 h
<b>Junior Page</b>	5.000 w x 7.750 h	5.250 w x 8.000 h
<b>Half Page - Horizontal</b>	7.500 w x 4.875 h	7.750 w x 5.125 h
<b>Half Page - Vertical</b>	3.625 w x 10.000 h	3.875 w x 10.250 h
<b>Quarter Page - Horizontal</b>	4.875 w x 3.625 h	5.125 w x 3.875 h
<b>Quarter Page - Vertical</b>	3.625 w x 4.875 h	3.875 w x 5.125 h
<b>Eighth Page (business card) - Horizontal</b>	3.500 w x 2.000 h	3.750 w x 2.250 h
<b>Eighth Page (business card) - Vertical</b>	2.000 w x 3.500 h	2.250 w x 3.750 h
<b>Sixteenth Page</b>	1.750 w x 2.375 h	2.000 w x 2.625 h

**To purchase advertising space, or to request more information, please contact [TheAcumen@cbcc.biz](mailto:TheAcumen@cbcc.biz).**



## ATTENTION ALL CBCC MEMBERS!

Want to share your story with fellow members?  
Submit an article about your business or industry to be included in **THE ACUMEN**, a Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce monthly publication.

## Are you a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce?

The CBCC is a thriving business community that is driving success for Black-owned business. We create programs and services for business assistance and support; we connect Black-owned businesses with each other for networking and visibility; and we collaborate with corporate partners and other organizations to support the community as a whole. The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact us.

Our membership offers unparalleled networking opportunities, exclusive access to business resources, and strong advocacy for your business interests. Elevate your business with our educational workshops and events that keep you at the forefront of industry trends. Connect, grow, and succeed with a community that champions your success. Take the first step towards unlocking your business's full potential.

**Join today and be part of a network that drives growth and innovation!**

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