

Celebrating CBCC's 40th Anniversary

THE ACUMEN

August 2025

FINAL ISSUE

TRANSFORMING BLACK PHILANTHROPY

A Conversation With
LaDawn Sullivan

BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

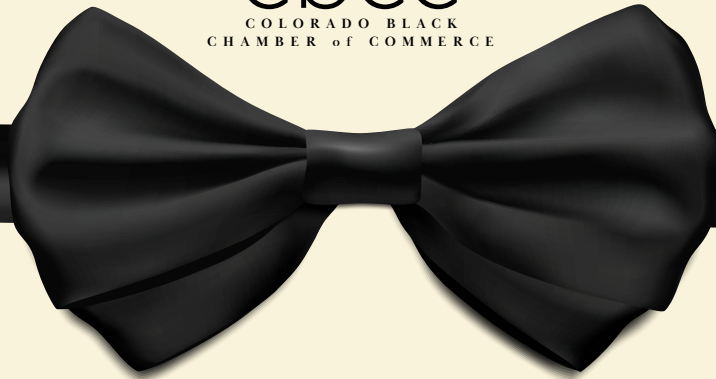
**WEITZ BRIDGES
WORKFORCE GAPS**
KATHY JO FYTEN

**A FAREWELL TO
THE ACUMEN**
DR. ANGELIC COLE

**FLU SHOTS, THE
BRAIN, & DEMENTIA**
JIM HERLIHY

*Black
Resilience*

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



You're invited to the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce's

40th Anniversary Gala



Let's party like it's 1985!

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TODAY**

<https://cbcc.biz/annual-gala>



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How to Strategically Plan the Next Step for Your Business

RTL Network
2900 Welton St., Suite 250
Denver, CO 80205

THURSDAY
September 25, 2025 11 AM - 2 PM

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Topics to include:

- Contracts/Legal
- Staffing Needs
- Finance
- Government Resources
- Marketing

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Contributors

Editor

Alisha Harris, [Original Account Strategies](#)

Photographer

Shameka McBoat, [McBoat Photography](#)

Contributing Writers

Dr. Angelic Cole, Kathy Jo Fyten, Sophie Hayes, Jim Herlihy, Meheran Rana, Hamza Rohtua

Contributing Member Companies



Seeking Submissions

for Article Features



Would you like to share your story with a broader audience? Submit a 2,000-5,000 word article about your business or industry to be included in a future issue of [The Acumen](#), a CBCC monthly e-magazine publication.

**Need more details?
Contact Us!**

TheAcumen@cbcc.biz

President's Corner

The Final Issue: A Farewell to The Acumen

Dear Reader:

In 1985, when the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce was founded, the need for a unified voice to uplift Black businesses and leadership was more than a dream, it was a necessity. It wasn't enough to gather; we had to amplify. We needed a platform that would speak boldly, proudly, and unapologetically about our wins, our challenges, and our vision for the future. The Acumen became that voice.

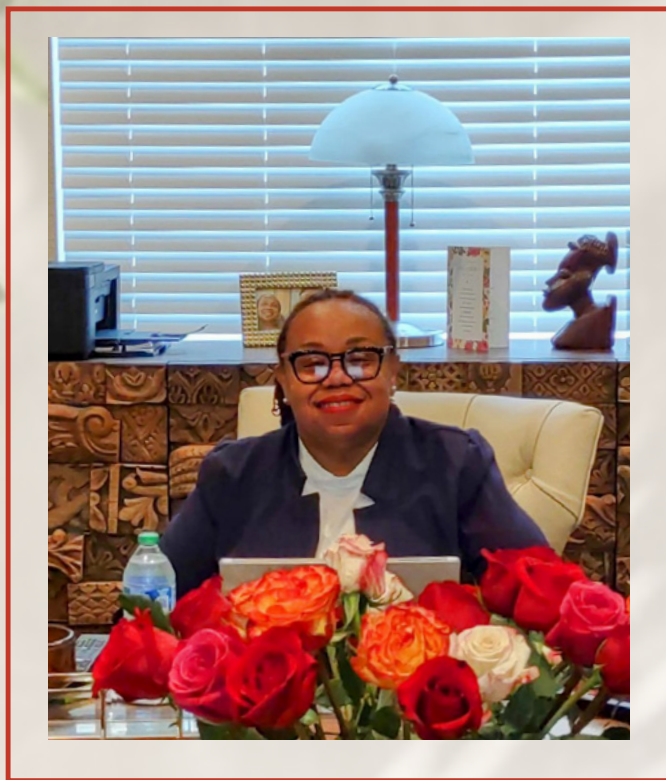
And now, after almost two years of storytelling, advocacy, and elevation, we gather to bid farewell to the final issue of The Acumen—a publication that did more than share information; it helped shape identity.

Rooted in Legacy, Growing Toward Promise

From the beginning, The Acumen was never just a newsletter. It was a communal pulse. Its pages reflected our progress as entrepreneurs, changemakers, educators, and dreamers. Each article bore witness to Black excellence, the kind that doesn't ask for permission and never waits for validation.

We spotlighted creators whose ideas reshaped industries. We celebrated anniversaries, promotions, and personal milestones. We told stories that mainstream narratives overlooked. Our goal wasn't just to document success—it was to fuel it.

Through downturns in the economy, cultural reckonings, political shifts, and social justice movements, The Acumen stood firm. It became a testament to resilience. Not because of glossy formatting or trendy headlines, but because of the people who poured truth into it.



Stories That Mattered

Some editions of The Acumen felt like historical records—capturing moments when Black leadership defied odds. Others were practical toolkits, educating small businesses on navigating loans, marketing strategies, or shifting legislation.

We did not just tell our readers what was happening, we told them why it mattered. Why it needed their voice. Their action. Their belief.

A Chamber That Reflects the Community

As CBCC, we are in the business of community building. Through economic empowerment, strategic partnerships, educational programming, and cultural celebration, we continue to activate opportunity. The Acumen was one of our most trusted instruments in that mission. It forged connection between our members and their broader network. It gave voice to the voiceless, vision to the unseen.

And while this issue marks an end, it's not the last chapter, it's the start of a new platform. We're evolving in how we reach, teach, and celebrate. Today's digital age offers us new tools to engage, amplify, and inspire. And we're embracing them fully.

(continued on next page)

President's Corner *continued..*

The Future of CBCC Storytelling

Our next phase focuses on interactive storytelling, multi-channel engagement, and dynamic collaboration. From curated video spotlights to impact reports that live in real-time, our members will not only be seen—they will be felt.

The departure of The Acumen gives rise to a living archive of culture and contribution. And with events like our upcoming 40th Anniversary Gala and initiatives such as our AI Strategy Workshop, the Chamber continues to shape and showcase what's possible.

This isn't just about what's next for CBCC—it's about what's next for Colorado's Black business community. We'll keep centering equity, dignity, and growth in everything we do.

Gratitude for Every Contributor

To every writer who labored over a draft. To every photographer who framed our brilliance. To every reader who shared an article that resonated, we thank you.

As We Turn the Page...

We hold the same commitment to our values, our voice, and our visibility. And as we sunset this publication, we invite our community to sunset nothing else. Keep advocating. Keep telling your story. Keep showing up.

Let this final issue serve as a call to action. A call to dream louder. To build with purpose. To honor those who came before us by mentoring those who walk beside us.

Because the essence of The Acumen will live on. Not in monthly editions, but in the impact, we continue to make—together.

*With respect, pride, and boundless optimism,
The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce.*

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



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JOIN A COMMITTEE:

- **Business Policy Cabinet with Senator James Coleman**
First Thursdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 4th
- **CBCC Public Policy Committee**
Second Mondays, 4pm MT. Starts April 8th
- **CBCC Membership Committee**
Third Tuesdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 16th
- **Gala Committee**
Fridays, times To Be Determined



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
contact Dr. Angelic Cole:**

✉ dr.angelic.cole@cbcc.biz

PHONE +303-831-0746

WEBSITE [HTTPS://CBCC.BIZ](https://cbcc.biz)

Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

CONNECT. GROW. THRIVE.

CBCC empowers African American-owned businesses and the communities they serve by providing access to economic opportunities, advocacy, and a strong network of professionals.

Benefits of Membership

Empowering Programs & Services that support business growth, including our signature Special Interest Groups.

Exclusive Networking with Black professionals, entrepreneurs, and corporate partners.

Resources & Advocacy that foster economic development for Black-owned businesses and their communities.

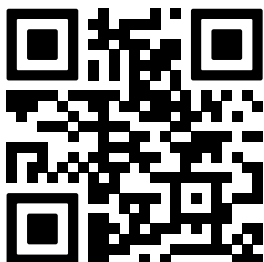
Strategic Partnerships with corporations that strengthen the Black business ecosystem.

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- » Black Construction Group
- » Black Professional Services Group
- » Black Retailer's Group



At CBCC, we're not just a network—we're your partner in building a thriving business and community. For more information, email us: contact@cbcc.biz



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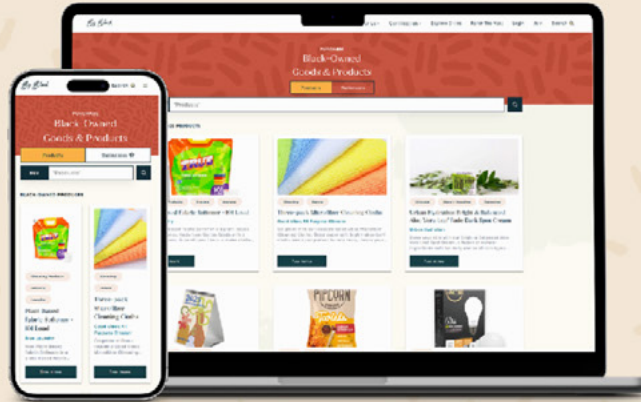
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First graduating class of Weitz University.
Image: The Weitz Company



The Weitz Company Bridges Construction Industry Workforce Gap Through Investment and Focused Solutions

By KATHY JO FYTEN

The Weitz Company, one of the oldest construction firms in the United States, proudly commemorates its 170th anniversary this year. Founded in 1855 by Charles H. Weitz as a modest carpentry shop in Fort Des Moines, Iowa, the company has evolved into a national leader in Aviation, Mission Critical, Industrial, and Commercial construction.

Throughout our history, we have been at the forefront of construction innovation, making us leaders in the industry. No matter the decade or challenges our company has faced, Weitz has always led knowing that our people are our greatest asset. This sentiment starts with our employees, and extends out to our project trade partners, clients, community stakeholders, and beyond, with the core understanding that it takes all of us to run a successful project, business, and ultimately build a better way.



Kevin McClain.
Image: The Weitz Company

“Our longevity reflects the trust our clients place in us and the dedication of our employees. As we celebrate this significant milestone, we remain focused on our mission to provide predictable, reliable, and collaborative

services that exceed client expectations. We will continue to make a positive difference in the communities where we live and build, fostering a culture of problem solving for both our customers and the industry at large,” said Kevin McClain, President & CEO | The Weitz Company

Weitz Colorado Office

Weitz expanded to the Rocky Mountain region in 1952. Our continued success is attributed to our client-focused business practices, elevated standards of quality and safety, and our steadfast commitment to our clients and employees.

Our projects in Colorado encompass a range of product lines, including Industrial, Aviation, Mission Critical, Commercial, and Multi-Family. Building these sectors requires a deep understanding of each market’s unique demands, while maintaining the ability to deliver complex, large-scale projects with precision and efficiency.

This broad expertise allows us to approach each project with the necessary technical knowledge and industry-specific insights to achieve our clients’ most important goals. Whether it’s providing infrastructure for advanced manufacturing or creating spaces that foster innovation, we customize our solutions to address the changing needs of each industry. We recently completed a design-build project for our client’s Manufacturing Center of Excellence in Colorado Springs. This new facility supports the production for their Micro Contamination Control and Advanced Materials Handling divisions, which develop critical products that support the semiconductor manufacturing process.

Our Multi-Family Skyline at Highlands project won NAIOP’s Multi-Family Development Project of the Year in 2024. This project encompasses an



Manufacturing Center of Excellence.
Image: The Weitz Company



Skyline at Highlands.
Image: The Weitz Company

entire city block and consists of two multi-family towers. With 93 short-term rental units and 533 apartments, this 15-story high-rise is one of the largest in the Denver area.

teams consist of individuals from many different backgrounds and projects bring together diverse perspectives, this value is not just aspirational; it's vital. Respecting people means acknowledging and appreciating the unique experiences, viewpoints, and skills that each person offers. It's about fostering a culture where everyone feels seen, heard, and empowered to succeed, both on the jobsite and in the office.

Our Commitment to Inclusion

Across our Colorado office and throughout the entire company, we are dedicated to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. At the heart of this commitment is one of our core values: Respect for People. In the construction industry, where

Encouraging and supporting diversity in construction is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity. With workforce shortages persisting across market sectors, ABC estimates the need to recruit around 439,000 new workers this year, and changing demographics are key to closing that gap. We will continue to see larger and more complex infrastructure projects in the years ahead to meet growing demands in areas such as airport construction, power generation, clean energy, data center construction, and other related fields. This only emphasizes the need for us to work together and address the industry's looming workforce shortage to ensure success in the decades ahead.





Weitz University

In 2023, Weitz University was established. The program aims to expand contract opportunities for emerging and underrepresented business enterprises by offering training and resources that provide participants with the practical knowledge and tools needed to grow and succeed with Weitz. This university seeks to remove barriers to success in construction procurement for these businesses through a series of modules covering five key topics: Quality Control, Safety, Contracts & Bonding, Cost Control, and Schedule Management. Participants will:

Gain Industry Knowledge: Participants will receive an overview of each topic, including document templates and real-world examples, to illustrate the application of each concept and its relevance to their future work on a contract.

Build Strong Networks: The instructors of these courses are highly skilled, providing an opportunity to build relationships and mentoring opportunities amongst professionals with decades of experience in their field.

New Opportunities: Graduates of the program will receive a Weitz University Certificate of Completion, a guided Weitz Company prequalification process opportunity, and will be added to future communications of upcoming job solicitations.

Beyond any stated goals, we understand that intentionally doing business with small/diverse businesses is a good practice and essential for future growth. We're committed to working with small and/or diverse businesses and maximizing economic impact. Last year, we started with more

than \$45M in diverse supplier spend and are working to grow that number year after year. Sustaining a culture of belonging is essential to our industry's growth. A strong sense of belonging is foundational to effective teamwork. This sense of psychological safety is critical in driving innovation and improving project outcomes.

Throughout 2024, Weitz hosted dozens of DBE, MBE, and WBE outreach events across the country to grow our industry and help these businesses through the prequalification process for large-scale local [projects](#).

Future Opportunities - DEN ConRAC

Currently, Weitz and Austin Industries are in a joint venture pursuing the DEN ConRAC project, along with Demattei Wong Architecture and Fentress. This team is the most experienced and innovative ConRAC/APM Design-Build team currently working on the project.



If you're interested in the opportunity to be a part of this team on the DEN ConRAC project, sign up at the link below for more information. You'll also find updates and notifications about upcoming outreach events posted here.

<https://denvercontracteam.com/about-the-team.html>

Prioritizing diversity in construction not only aligns with principles of equity and workplace fairness but also directly supports industry sustainability through broader recruitment pools, enhanced innovation, improved retention, and safer job environments. By focusing on equity, access, and workforce development, The Weitz Company is helping reshape what a sustainable construction industry looks like, and we encourage our peers in the construction industry to follow suit.

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BLACK CONSTRUCTION GROUP

Meets every second Tuesday at 4:30 pm.



Networking Opportunities



Policy Advocacy and Representation



Resource and Information Sharing



Industry Specific Insights

... and more!

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For more information,
contact Dr. Angelic Cole
[Dr. Angelic.Cole@cbcc.biz](mailto:Dr.Angelic.Cole@cbcc.biz)





Reimagined Leadership: Centering the Community & Sharing Power

A Conversation with

LaDawn Sullivan

By DR. ANGELIC COLE



Images: McBoat Photography



As we celebrate Black Philanthropy Month this August, it's a powerful time to reflect on the role of Black leadership, giving, and community investment. LaDawn Sullivan—Denver native, mother, and a 30-year veteran in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector—embodies that commitment. As Executive Director of the Black Resilience in Colorado (BRIC) Fund and a trusted community leader, LaDawn has dedicated her career to advancing racial equity, strengthening Black-led organizations, and reshaping philanthropy to truly serve community needs. In this conversation, she shares insights from her leadership journey, lessons learned, and her vision for the future of philanthropy, leadership, and community power.

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

Sullivan: My leadership is rooted in my belief in the power of community—especially Black communities—to transform systems and shape our future. My leadership is fueled by a deep sense of responsibility to honor those who came before me, share and hold space for those working alongside me, and to open doors wider for those coming after.

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

Sullivan: My grandmother, Ruth Cousins Denny, is at the top of that list. She showed me



that courage isn't the absence of fear but the decision to show up anyway. I'm also shaped by the amazing community leaders—both seen and unseen—who have fought for justice, built institutions, and poured into our communities with love and grit. From them, I learned that leadership means service, sacrifice, and strategy. They taught me the power of building trusting relationships, that real change comes through collective work, and that both vision and heart are non-negotiables.

Cole: How do you ensure that others benefit from the life-changing knowledge you gained from your mentors?

Sullivan: I pay it forward. I share the lessons, the hard truths, and the unpolished stories in rooms where folks don't always expect transparency. I open doors, make connections, and try to be the mentor I needed when I was coming up. I also create space for others to shine—sometimes that means stepping aside and letting them lead. That's why in 2011, I founded the Executive Directors of Color Institute (EDCI), where peer-to-peer learning and a trust-based network help leaders build on shared lessons and lived experiences. It's a space for sharpening skills, building relationships, and growing together. EDCI is now one of the cornerstones of the Black Resilience in Colorado (BRIC) Fund.

Cole: What advice do you wish someone had given you earlier in your career?

Sullivan: That your humanity is not a liability in leadership. You don't have to shrink or shapeshift to fit into systems that weren't built for you. Also—rest is not earned; it's required.

Cole: What inspired you to pursue a career in philanthropy, and how did you get started?

Sullivan: I didn't set out to work in philanthropy. I set out to serve my community. Over time, I saw how decisions about resources shaped outcomes—and how too often, Black



Photo: McBoat Photography

communities and communities of color were left out of those decisions. I got my start in community engagement, first in Governor Romer's Office and later through The Denver Foundation. Elevating community leadership and advancing racial equity—especially in communities of color—became my focus. I stayed because I knew we needed people at the tables where resources are allocated—and sometimes, we needed to build entirely new tables. I've also been committed to disrupting the myth that Black folks don't give or only give a little. Black philanthropy has always been about more than money—it's about our 5Ts: Time, Talent, Treasure, Testimony, and Ties.



Photo: McBoat Photography

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

Sullivan: Know when to get out of the way. Leadership isn't about holding the mic—it's about making sure the right voices are amplified and that a collective vision drives the work, not just your own. It's about knowing when to step up, when to stand beside, and when to step back entirely. The best leaders create space for others to grow, lead, and sometimes even challenge the status quo—including you.

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

Sullivan: I've learned that balance isn't about equal time—it's about intentional time. Sometimes that means choosing rest, saying no,

or pausing to protect your peace. For younger professionals: boundaries are a leadership skill. Start practicing early.

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

Sullivan: Being underestimated—and then having to manage the tension between proving people wrong and staying true to myself. There's often an unspoken expectation that Black women in leadership have to overperform to be seen as credible, especially in spaces not built for us. When I helped launch the Black Resilience in Colorado (BRIC) Fund, some doubted whether a fund dedicated to investing in Colorado's Black communities could last, much less thrive. Five years later, we've invested over \$6 million directly into Black-led organizations and initiatives—and

we're just getting started. BRIC is growing into the perpetual resource we envisioned, proof that when Black women lead with vision, strategy, and community, we don't just meet expectations—we redefine them.

Cole: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the philanthropic community today, and how do you see ways to overcome them?

Sullivan: The national climate—rising racial tensions, economic instability, and immigration debates—is stretching the nonprofit sector thin. Communities are turning to nonprofits for critical support, yet many are already overextended, operating on budgets that don't match their impact. Philanthropy must move from short-term grants to long-term, trust-based investments that fund leadership, infrastructure, and sustainability. We also need to shift power—sharing it with the communities closest to the work. Supporting efforts like BRIC, which walk the line between community, nonprofit, and philanthropy, is key to building trust and ensuring resources reach



Photo: McBoat Photography

where they're needed most. The solutions are here—we just have to invest in them, boldly and consistently.

Cole: In light of those challenges, how do you see movements like Black Philanthropy Month contributing to a more equitable philanthropic landscape?

Sullivan: Movements like Black Philanthropy Month are critical because they center our history, heritage, and culture in conversations about giving and power. They remind the world—and sometimes ourselves—that Black generosity isn't new, nor is it marginal. We've always invested in our communities through our time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties. Black Philanthropy Month honors that legacy while pushing the philanthropic sector to move beyond performative gestures toward real equity,



Photo: McBoat Photography

accountability, and shared power. It's about reclaiming the narrative, elevating community-led solutions, and making it clear that philanthropy must include—and be shaped by—the voices, leadership, and brilliance of Black communities.

Cole: How clear is your vision for what the future of community responsibility should look like in Denver?

Sullivan: Crystal. Community responsibility in Denver means centering Black leadership, investing in grassroots solutions, and dismantling systemic barriers—not as a one-time project but as a long-term commitment. It's a future where community wealth, power, and voice are non-negotiable.

Cole: What do you see your legacy looking like?

Sullivan: I hope my legacy is that I helped make philanthropy more accountable, leadership more accessible, and community power more visible and viable. That I created space for others to thrive—and that I stood on the shoulders of giants, worked arm in arm with my peers/ community while lifting others. A big part of

that legacy is the BRIC Fund, which I helped build as a lasting resource for Colorado's Black communities. My vision is for BRIC to be a perpetual force—investing in leaders, organizations, and movements for generations to come. I want my legacy to reflect the change I led and the change I helped sustain.

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

Sullivan: The future of the Black Chamber is bold, visionary, and rooted in the brilliance and resilience of Colorado's Black communities. I see the Chamber continuing to lead as a powerful advocate for Black business, economic justice, and community advancement. What excites me most is the Chamber's intentional expansion of the tent—creating space for all who are committed to building thriving Black communities in Colorado. Over the next 40 years, I believe the Chamber will drive economic growth and strengthen connections across sectors, amplify Black leadership, and be a cornerstone of collective prosperity and progress. When we build together, we rise together.



Photo: McBoat Photography



JOIN THE CONVERSATION BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY

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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JOIN TODAY



Can a flu shot protect your brain from dementia?

By JIM HERLIHY

Flu season is in full swing and as people consider getting a flu shot, it's important to realize that, in addition to protecting you from the flu, the shot may also help protect your brain.

A study released several years ago – which remains very relevant today – found that getting an annual flu vaccination was associated with a decreased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease of up to 40% over the next four years. The same researchers, who are from The University of Texas' McGovern Medical School, conducted an earlier study presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference that found that a single flu vaccination could reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by 17%, and additional vaccinations in a lifetime reduced it even more.

"Our study suggests that regular use of a very accessible and relatively cheap intervention—the flu shot—may significantly reduce risk of Alzheimer's dementia," said Dr. Albert Amran, who was involved in the research at The University of Texas.

The newer study included more than two million people over age 65. Previous studies were smaller and often focused on people with chronic health conditions. By including a more general group of older adults, the new study's results add weight to the idea that a flu shot could reduce Alzheimer's risk.

Your Memory & Infections: Know Your Risk

Prior studies have found that infections, including the flu, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, gum disease and COVID-19, are associated with the onset and worsening of memory and thinking problems.

It's not surprising then that researchers have also found an association between vaccinations and a decreased risk of dementia. A study at Duke University's Social Science Research Institute found that getting a vaccination against pneumonia between the ages of 65 and 75 reduced Alzheimer's risk by up to 40%. Similar results have been found in recent studies of people who received tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap), hepatitis, or shingles vaccinations.

"These findings are important because anything we can do to decrease the number of people with Alzheimer's has vast benefits," said Jim Hammelev, executive director of the Alzheimer's Association of Colorado. "Reducing the risk of developing Alzheimer's or slowing its progression lowers the burden on family caregivers, and on our states' health systems."

To learn more about risk factors for Alzheimer's and ways to reduce your risk, visit the Alzheimer's Association website (www.alz.org) or call the Association's free 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900.

Alzheimer's By The Numbers

- » More than 7 million people in the U.S. are living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia in 2024 – 55 million people around the world
- » About 1 person in 9 (11.3%) in the U.S. age 65 and older has Alzheimer's dementia
- » Nearly 91,000 Coloradans are living with dementia
- » Approximately two-thirds of those living with Alzheimer's are women
- » People of color are more likely to develop Alzheimer's: Black Americans are twice as likely as whites while Hispanics are 50% more likely than whites

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- AND MORE!

For more information,
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Dr.Angelic.Cole@cbcc.biz



The Essential Guide: Why Every Small Business Must Have a Website in 2025

By MEHERAN RANA

Introduction: The Digital Imperative for Small Businesses

In 2025, the question is no longer whether small businesses need a website, but how quickly they can establish a professional online presence. With 87% of consumers researching businesses online before making a purchase (Bright Local, 2024), operating without a website means losing customers to competitors who are visible and accessible 24/7.

This comprehensive guide explores the critical reasons why a website is non-negotiable for small businesses in 2025, backed by current data and emerging digital trends.

1. The 24/7 Digital Storefront: Always Open for Business

Why Availability Matters More Than Ever

- Consumer Behavior Shift: 68% of consumers expect to find business information outside normal operating hours (Google, 2024)
- Global Reach: Even local businesses benefit from expanded visibility
- Automated Sales: Process orders, bookings, and inquiries without staff present
- Real-World Impact: A local bakery increased after-hours orders by 40% after launching an e-commerce enabled website.

2. Credibility & Trust: Your Digital Handshake

The Psychology of Online Trust

- First Impressions: 94% of first impressions are design-related (Stanford Web Credibility Research)
- Verification Tools: Customer reviews, SSL certificates, and professional design establish legitimacy
- Competitive Benchmark: Businesses without websites appear 53% less trustworthy (Small Business Trends, 2024)

3. Search Engine Visibility: Being Found in 2025

SEO Fundamentals for Small Businesses

- Local SEO Dominance: 76% of mobile searches result in offline purchases (Search Engine Land)
- Voice Search Optimization: 55% of households will use voice assistants for local searches by 2025 (ComScore)
- AI-Powered Search: Google's SGE (Search Generative Experience) rewards comprehensive, authoritative content
- Pro Tip: Partnering with the best web development company ensures your site is built with future-proof SEO foundations.

4. Beyond Social Media: Owning Your Digital Real Estate

The Limitations of Social-Only Presence

- Algorithm Dependence: Organic reach on Facebook has dropped to 2-5% (Hootsuite)
- Platform Risk: Account suspensions or policy changes can erase your presence overnight
- Data Ownership: Websites allow direct customer relationships through email lists and first-party data



Images: Adobe.





5. E-Commerce Evolution: Selling in the Digital-First Economy

2025 E-Commerce Trends Small Businesses Can't Ignore

- **Micro-Personalization:** AI-driven product recommendations
- **AR Shopping:** Virtual try-ons and product previews
- **Instant Checkouts:** One-click payments reduce cart abandonment
- **Stat Alert:** Small businesses with e-commerce capabilities grew 32% faster in 2024 (Shopify Annual Report).

6. Customer Experience & Relationship Building

Website Features That Drive Engagement

- **AI Chatbots:** 24/7 customer service with 85% satisfaction rates (Drift)
- **Personalized Content:** Dynamic displays based on visitor behavior
- **Loyalty Programs:** Integrated reward systems increase repeat purchases

7. Data-Driven Decision Making

The Power of Website Analytics

- **Customer Insights:** Track demographics, behavior flows, and conversion paths
- **Performance Metrics:** Measure ROI on marketing efforts
- **Continuous Optimization:** A/B test elements for maximum conversions

8. Competitive Advantage in Your Market

The Website Gap: Small Business Edition

- **Market Research:** 42% of small businesses still lack websites (Clutch, 2024)
- **Differentiation:** Professional sites help stand out in crowded markets
- **Perceived Value:** Businesses with websites are seen as more established

What to Look for in Web Development

- **Mobile-First Approach:** With 63% of web traffic coming from mobile (Stat Counter)
- **Core Web Vitals:** Google's ranking factors for speed and usability

- **Scalability:** Infrastructure that grows with your business
- **Security:** Essential protections against evolving cyber threats

Implementation Roadmap: Getting Started

- ▷ **Define Your Goals** (Brand awareness? Sales? Leads?)
- ▷ **Choose Your Platform** (WordPress, Shopify, custom CMS)
- ▷ **Design for UX** (Mobile-responsive, intuitive navigation)
- ▷ **Develop Core Content** (Clear messaging, strong CTAs)
- ▷ **Optimize for SEO** (Keyword strategy, technical setup)
- ▷ **Launch & Promote** (Social integration, local listings)
- ▷ **Analyze & Iterate** (Continuous improvement)

Conclusion: Your Digital Future Starts Now

In 2025, a website isn't just another marketing channel, it's the foundation of your digital identity and the hub of all your online activities. Small businesses that invest in professional web development see an average ROI of 250% within the first year (Forrester).

The question isn't whether you can afford to build a website, but whether you can afford not to. With solutions from leading providers and web development companies for small business growth, establishing your digital presence has never been more accessible or more critical.

In 2025, the question is no longer whether small businesses need a website, but how quickly they can establish a professional online presence. With 87% of consumers researching businesses online before making a purchase (Bright Local, 2024), operating without a website means losing customers to competitors who are visible and accessible 24/7.

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Image: Adobe.

Strategies For Building A Positive Workplace Culture In 2025

by HAMZA ROHTUA

Workplace culture has always been a defining factor in business success, but in 2025, it is more critical than ever. Employees now expect more than just competitive salaries—they seek workplaces that prioritize well-being, diversity, flexibility, and transparency. A strong workplace culture is necessary to attract and retain top talent, boost productivity, and strengthen employer branding.

As organizations navigate a rapidly changing work environment, understanding the key drivers of workplace culture and implementing strategies to enhance it will be essential. Let's explore the trends shaping workplace culture in 2025 and the strategies companies can use to foster a positive and thriving work environment.

Key Trends Shaping Workplace Culture in 2025

The definition of workplace culture is evolving to match the expectations of modern employees. Here are the most significant trends shaping culture in 2025:

» **The Rise Of Remote and Hybrid Work Models**
Companies are embracing flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to balance

in-office collaboration with remote work autonomy. A strong workplace culture must accommodate and engage both in-office and remote employees.

» **Employee Well-Being as a Top Priority**
Mental health, work-life balance, and holistic well-being are at the forefront. Organizations are investing in wellness programs, stress management initiatives, and paid mental health days to support employees.

» **The Role Of AI in Employee Engagement**
Artificial intelligence is helping businesses measure sentiment, gather feedback, and personalize employee experiences, improving workplace satisfaction and engagement.

» **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as a Business Imperative**
Employees demand inclusive work environments. Companies are not just talking about DEI—they are actively implementing policies to ensure fairness, representation, and equity.

» **Employee-Driven Cultures and Transparency**
Employees expect open communication, authentic leadership, and a voice in company

decisions. Businesses that embrace transparency and involve employees in shaping workplace culture will stand out.

Foundational Strategies For Creating A Positive Workplace Culture

1. Building strong leadership and a clear vision

Leadership sets the tone for workplace culture. When executives and managers communicate a clear vision, support employees, and lead by example, they foster a culture of trust and engagement.

2. Encouraging transparent and frequent communication between leadership and employees

- ◇ Implement open-door policies to ensure employees feel heard.
- ◇ Provide leadership training to cultivate empathetic and supportive management styles.

3. Prioritizing employee well-being

A positive workplace culture prioritizes the physical, mental, and emotional well-being

of employees. Organizations must create environments where employees feel valued and supported.

- ◇ Offer mental health resources, therapy support, and wellness initiatives.
- ◇ Encourage flexible work hours and remote work options to improve work-life balance.
- ◇ Provide financial wellness programs to help employees manage stress related to financial security.

4. Encouraging open communication and feedback

Employees thrive in workplaces where they can express their thoughts, concerns, and ideas without fear. Creating a feedback-rich environment fosters continuous improvement and stronger engagement.

- ◇ Use employee review platforms to gather authentic feedback and track workplace sentiment.
- ◇ Conduct regular employee engagement surveys and act on the insights gained.
- ◇ Hold town hall meetings to promote transparency and address employee concerns.



Image: Adobe.

5. Fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

A diverse and inclusive workplace culture benefits both employees and the organization. Companies must go beyond DEI policies and integrate inclusivity into daily operations.

- ◇ Implement bias-free recruitment processes to attract diverse talent.
- ◇ Support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to create safe spaces for underrepresented employees.
- ◇ Regularly assess pay equity and promotion fairness to ensure inclusivity.

6. Leveraging technology to strengthen workplace culture

AI-powered HR tools help organizations understand and enhance their workplace culture by analyzing employee sentiment, engagement trends, and feedback.

- ◇ Use AI-driven employee sentiment analysis tools to detect trends in morale.
- ◇ Implement AI chatbots for HR support, making information accessible 24/7.
- ◇ Personalize employee learning and development programs using AI insights.

With hybrid and remote work here to stay, digital collaboration tools play a key role in maintaining a strong culture.

- ◇ Invest in engagement platforms like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Asana to keep teams connected.
- ◇ Host virtual team-building activities to build relationships across remote teams.
- ◇ Use gamification strategies to encourage participation and engagement.

7. Recognizing and rewarding employee contributions

Appreciation goes a long way in fostering a positive workplace culture. Employees who feel valued are more likely to be engaged and committed to their organization.

- ◇ Implement structured employee recognition programs that reward achievements.
- ◇ Encourage peer-to-peer recognition, allowing employees to celebrate each other.
- ◇ Provide monetary and non-monetary incentives, such as bonuses, additional

time off, and professional development opportunities.

Measuring And Sustaining Workplace Culture

A workplace culture strategy is only effective if it is measurable and continuously improved. Businesses must track key culture indicators to sustain positive environments.

- Monitor Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) to gauge overall workplace satisfaction.
- Analyze employee reviews and feedback trends to identify culture strengths and weaknesses.
- Set up quarterly culture check-ins to reassess and refine workplace strategies.

Final Thoughts

A thriving workplace culture is not built overnight—it requires intentional strategies, leadership commitment, and continuous evolution. In 2025, organizations that prioritize employee well-being, transparency, inclusivity, and engagement will create environments where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute.

By integrating AI-driven insights, well-being initiatives, open communication, and strong leadership, companies can cultivate a culture that not only retains talent but also enhances their employer brand. Investing in workplace culture today ensures long-term success, innovation, and a stronger, more engaged workforce in the years ahead.

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Image: Adobe.

Why Does Your Business Need eCommerce Product Listing Services?

By SOPHIE HAYES

For your product to stand out in a competitive marketplace, it takes more than merely listing it. You need accurately listed details, competitive prices, and high-quality images to convert visitors. But here's the catch - creating, uploading, and managing these listings is an ongoing process, often challenging. Do you have the time and resources to monitor your online store consistently while still focusing on other business activities?

This is where an eCommerce product listing service provider can help you save time and effort.

In this article, we will explore the challenges faced by eCommerce businesses in creating and managing product listings and how a product listing service provider can help overcome them.

What are some challenges eCommerce businesses face when creating product listings?

The process of creating and maintaining product listings for eCommerce has many facets. It requires a thorough investigation of product specifications, aggressive pricing tactics, and comprehension of the subtleties of various eCommerce platforms. This can pose substantial problems for business owners who are already managing many other business chores. Let's take a closer look at some of the common challenges:

» **Updating Product Listings**

Maintaining up-to-date product listings is an ongoing challenge. It requires you to have a steady eye on the market, competitor adjustments, seasonal patterns, new product launches, and even changes to current items calls for continuous attention to detail. These challenges are further made difficult due to technical hiccups and a lack of dedicated team or expertise, resulting in data inaccuracy that disappoints customers and reduces sales.

» **Managing Listings Across Multiple Channels**

Each marketing channel, whether a marketplace or social media platform, has its unique data structures, formatting requirements, and listing limitations.

Additionally, all platforms have different audiences. Hence, simply replicating listings across all channels is not optimal.

Optimizing product listings for each platform requires a thorough understanding of these variations. Especially with an extensive product catalog, manually optimizing listings while handling other core business activities can be error-prone and time-consuming. This is why many business owners opt for eCommerce product listing services to maximize ROI.

» **Managing Complex Product Structures Like Serialized Items Or Kits/Product Bundles**

Data inconsistencies while listing complex products can lead to order fulfillment errors and customer frustration. This is especially true when you deal in serialized items or bundles/kits.

Serialized items, each with unique identifiers such as SN (serial number), model number, and IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) number, require continuous maintenance and tracking within the inventory management system.

Similarly, when selling bundled products, it's crucial to specify the composition and nature of the products, ensuring all component SKUs are linked accurately.

Listing such products might require professional eCommerce product listing services as inefficient product listings can be a potentially costly undertaking for an eCommerce business.

How can an eCommerce product listing service provider help you overcome these challenges?

eCommerce product listing service providers improve your listings and overall online presence. They can do the following:

» **Update Product Catalogs**

An eCommerce product listing service provider can help you keep your listings updated by ensuring that your product catalogs always show the latest information. These providers assist in fine-tuning products to reflect real-time changes in prices, new product availability, stock status, promotions, and other relevant updates.

» **Synchronize Inventories Across Various Marketplaces**

They ensure all your inventories are updated with the most recent data is crucial to avoid overselling and customer dissatisfaction. These providers also offer product data entry services that help businesses manage product availability and monitor stock levels across multiple marketplaces.

» **Tailor Content Specific To The Platforms**

These providers assist in creating and optimizing product listings, ensuring consistency and accuracy across different channels like Amazon, eBay, Walmart, and more. For instance, Amazon product listings are more standardized and experience a greater degree of control by Amazon. On the other hand, eBay product listings are more flexible, allowing sellers to customize.

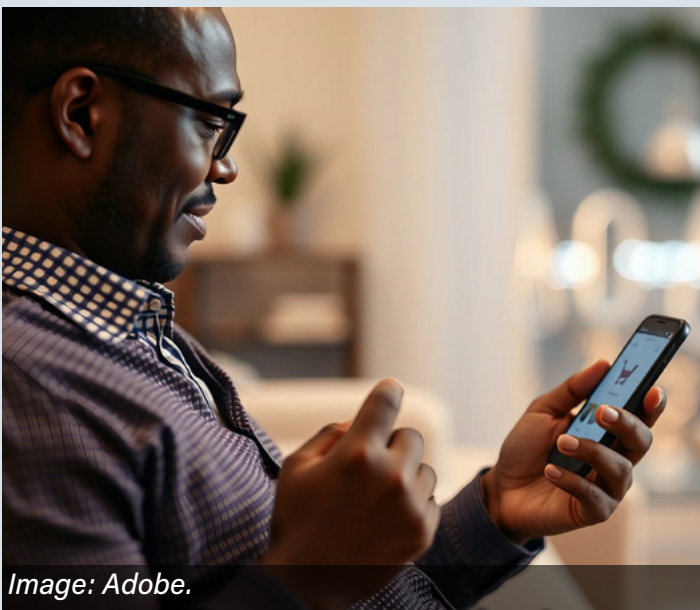


Image: Adobe.

eCommerce product listing service providers adhere to such platform-specific advertising guidelines and ensure your product listings convert more visitors into customers.

» **Optimize Product Listings For Better Visibility**

They conduct thorough keyword research to identify relevant search terms with high traffic potential and lower competition. Further, they integrate these keywords throughout product titles, descriptions, category placements, and even image alt tags. eCommerce product listing experts also understand the potential of long-tail keywords that reflect specific customer queries. By incorporating these, they attract highly relevant traffic genuinely interested in purchasing your products.

» **Verify Data For Complex Product Listings**

By choosing professionals, you can verify product information for complex listings (for example serialized items) and ensure each unique identifier is recorded correctly. They can also specify the components within a bundle to ensure all associated SKUs are linked correctly. Moreover, their human-guided yet automated data feeds can synchronize this product information within your system and across multiple listings. This minimizes errors and ensures accurate product tracking from inventory to fulfillment.

How does this boost your business ROI?

Outsourcing eCommerce product listings offers many benefits in the long term. Some of these are:

» **Increased Visibility And Traffic**

eCommerce product listing service providers ensure your products are placed in the most relevant categories on your chosen platform, improving their discoverability. This attracts more visitors and increases the conversion. Moreover, the easier it is for them to find your products, the less you need to spend on marketing to reach them. This combination of increased discoverability and decreased marketing costs impacts your overall ROI.

» **Reduced Errors And Customer Attrition Rates**

Customers who receive products that don't match the listing description are more likely to initiate returns. Listing service providers employ a variety of data validation methods to verify the accuracy of product descriptions, specifications, pricing, and inventory levels. This ensures clarity and builds customer trust in your brand's ability to deliver what it preaches, ultimately reducing attrition and return rates.

» **Improved Conversion Rates**

Compelling product descriptions and high-quality images created by listing service providers can create a more engaging shopping experience for potential customers. This can result in higher conversion rates as more visitors get attracted to your products, enhancing your ROI.

» **Reduced Costs**

Outsourcing reduces the need for you to recruit and manage an in-house team dedicated to product listing management. This saves you on salaries, benefits, and onboarding costs.

Moreover, many service providers offer a flexible pricing structure depending on your specific requirements (in terms of volume and complexity). This can further save you from straining additional resources and hence, reduce your overall cost.

Conclusion

While eCommerce product listings can be a game changer for your online business, you can only see the results when they're created, uploaded, and optimized accurately. This is where a reputed eCommerce product listing service provider comes into play. Their expertise and strategies streamline listing creation and allow you to harness the full potential of your online presence. Partnering with them allows you to focus on core business activities while elevating your listings into powerful sales and conversion tools.

Editorial and Deadline Calendar

Featured Topic Space Reservations Materials Due

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

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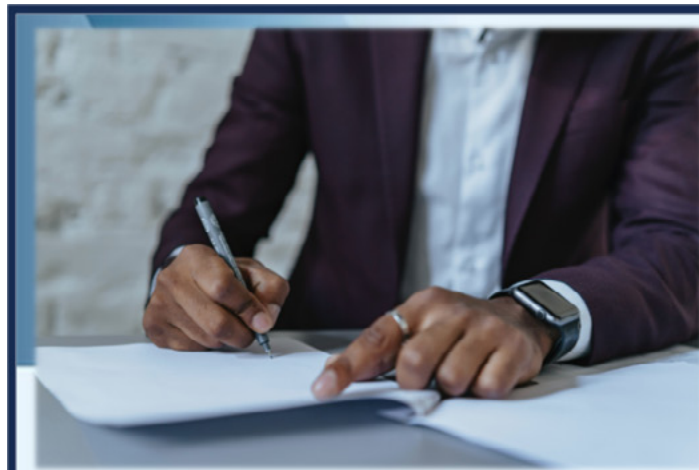
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Junior Page	\$750.00	\$675.00	\$600.00	\$525.00	\$450.00
Half Page	\$500.00	\$450.00	\$400.00	\$350.00	\$300.00
Quarter Page	\$250.00	\$225.00	\$200.00	\$175.00	\$150.00
Eighth Page	\$125.00	\$112.50	\$100.00	\$87.50	\$75.00
Sixteenth Page	\$62.50	\$56.25	\$50.00	\$43.75	\$37.50

Advertisement Sizes

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

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