

THE ACUMEN

December 2024

BUILDING SYSTEMS OF EQUITY

A Conversation With
Al Gardner

BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

LAUNCH WITH
DIGITAL MARKETING
DANIEL KHIMICH

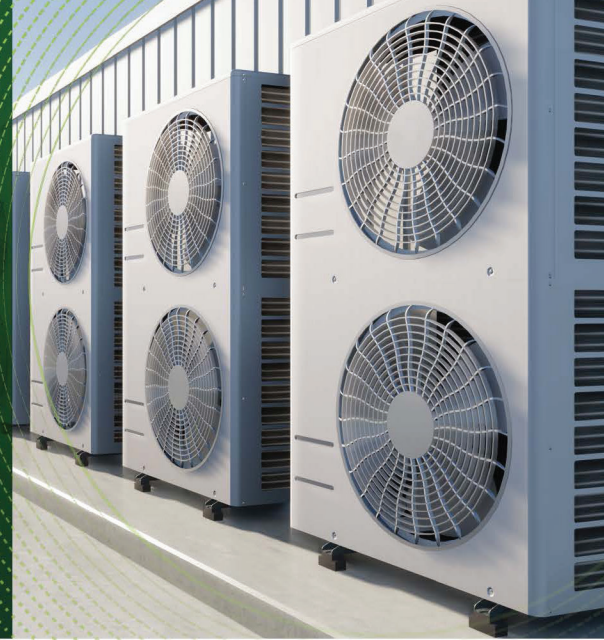
THE BUSINESS OF
POLITICS
DALE R. HUNTER

GENERATE LOW COST
TRAFFIC
STEPHON ANDERSON



GET PUMPED

FOR THE DENVER HEAT PUMP REBATE PROGRAM



Pump up your efficiency and save money when you install a heat pump!

Efficient electric heat pumps cool your building in the summer and heat your building in the winter. Denver is offering rebates* for commercial and multifamily buildings. Save money when you upgrade your air conditioner, furnace, or hot water heater to a heat pump.

Denver offers heat pump rebates for:

- Ducted split air-source heat pumps: \$3,000-\$5,500
- Non-ducted mini-split air-source heat pumps: \$3,000-\$5,500
- Heat pump hot water heaters: \$2,500-\$3,500
- Heat pump roof top units: \$5,000-\$16,000
- Variable refrigerant flow heat pumps: \$2,000 per cooling tonnage
- Packaged terminal heat pumps: \$200-\$500 per packaged unit
- Single packaged vertical heat pumps: \$400-\$1,000 per packaged unit
- Water source heat pumps: \$3,600 per cooling tonnage
- Ground source heat pumps: \$3,600 per cooling tonnage



Equity Priority Buildings can get their rebates doubled. These buildings include deed-restricted affordable housing, naturally occurring affordable housing, and non-profit organizations. Save more when you stack Denver's rebates with rebates from Xcel Energy!

Getting your rebate from Denver is easy:

1. Get your project pre-approved! Use the application on denvergov.org/getpumped
2. When we confirm your eligibility, you will get a pre-approval letter that reserves your rebate
3. Work with a licensed contractor to install the pre-approved equipment
4. When the project is complete, send us your invoices and other documents for review
5. When the review is complete, you will receive an Equipment Rebate Approval Letter and a check in your mailbox

PUMP UP YOUR SAVINGS TODAY.

Learn more about our electrifying rebate deals at denvergov.org/getpumped.

If you have any further questions about the Heat Pump Rebate Program, reach out to DenverElectrification@michaelsenergy.com.



ANÍMATE

CON EL PROGRAMA DE REEMBOLSOS DE BOMBAS DE CALOR DE DENVER



¡Aumenta tu eficiencia y ahorra dinero cuando instalas una bomba de calor!

Las bombas de calor eléctricas eficientes enfrían tu edificio en verano y lo calientan en invierno. Denver ofrece reembolsos* para edificios comerciales y multifamiliares. Ahorra dinero al actualizar tu aire acondicionado, calefacción o calentador de agua a una bomba de calor.

Denver ofrece reembolsos para bombas de calor para:

- **Bombas de calor con fuente de aire dividido:** entre \$3,000 y \$5,500 dólares
- **Bombas de calor minisplit:** entre \$3,000 y \$5,500 dólares
- **Calentadores de agua con bomba de calor:** entre \$2,500 y \$3,500 dólares
- **Unidades de techo con bomba de calor:** entre \$5,000 y \$16,000 dólares
- **Bombas de calor de flujo de refrigerante variable:** \$2,000 dólares por tonelaje de refrigeración
- **Bombas de calor terminales empaquetadas:** \$200 y \$500 dólares por unidad empaquetada
- **Bombas de calor verticales empaquetadas individualmente:** \$400 y \$1,000 dólares por unidad empaquetada
- **Bombas de calor de fuente de agua:** \$3,600 dólares por tonelaje de refrigeración
- **Bombas de calor geotérmicas:** \$3,600 dólares por tonelaje de refrigeración

Los edificios con prioridad de equidad pueden duplicar sus reembolsos. Estos edificios incluyen viviendas asequibles con escritura restringida, viviendas asequibles naturales y organizaciones sin fines de lucro. ¡Ahorra más cuando combinas los reembolsos de Denver con los reembolsos de Xcel Energy!

Obtener tu reembolso de Denver es fácil:

1. ¡Obtén la aprobación previa de tu proyecto! Llena la solicitud en denvergov.org/getpumped
2. Cuando confirmemos tu elegibilidad, recibirás una carta de aprobación previa que reserva tu reembolso.
3. Trabaja con un contratista autorizado para instalar el equipo preaprobado.
4. Cuando el proyecto esté completo, envíanos tus facturas y otros documentos para su revisión.
5. Cuando se complete la revisión, recibirás una carta de aprobación de reembolso de equipo y un cheque en tu buzón.

AUMENTA TUS AHORROS HOY.

Obtén más información sobre nuestras electrizantes ofertas de reembolsos en denvergov.org/getpumped.

Si tienes más preguntas sobre el programa de reembolso de bombas de calor, comunícate con DenverElectrification@michaelsenergy.com.

* Los reembolsos están sujetos a cambios. Encuentra requisitos de equipo específicos en denvergov.org/getpumped.

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Holiday Party

DATE: Thursday, December 12, 2024
LOCATION: 444 N SHERMAN STREET, DENVER, CO 80204
TIME: 5:30-8 PM

Featuring:

DJ: REIJI POLLARD

CATERER & BARTENDER: SMOKE IN THE CITY

PARKING:
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RSVP via QR Code or link below:
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WHEN:

January 9th, 2025

5:30-7:00pm

WHERE:

Green Valley Recreation Center

4890 Argonne Way,

Denver, CO 80249

COST:

\$50* (**goes towards
CBCC membership
cost of \$100*)

BIRTHING A BUSINESS WORKSHOP

All Participants will leave knowing:

- The Basics of Becoming a Small Business Owner
 - Personal/Professional Considerations
- How to start a small business
 - Regulatory Process
 - Licensure/Tax
 - Infrastructure
 - Finance and Financing
- Common Errors of Starting a Small Business
 - Financial Literacy
 - Critical Thinking
- The Basics of Market Research
- Resources Available to New Business Owners



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Contributors

Editor

Alisha Harris, [Original Account Strategies](#)

Photographer

Shameka McBoat, [McBoat Photography](#)

Contributing Writers

Stephon Anderson, Dr. Angelic Cole, Dale R. Hunter, Daniel Khimich

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

National Write a Business Plan Month: Why It's More Relevant Than Ever



Dear Reader:

National Write a Business Plan Month, celebrated every December, is not just a formality on the calendar; it's a call to action for aspiring entrepreneurs and seasoned business owners alike. This month-long observance emphasizes the critical importance of planning in the world of business. In an era where markets are more competitive and volatile than ever, having a well-constructed business plan is akin to owning a reliable compass in a vast, unpredictable ocean.

The Essence of a Business Plan

At its core, a business plan is a document that outlines your business goals, the strategy you plan to use to achieve them, and the timeframe for success. It's a roadmap that helps you navigate the various stages of business development. But beyond the strategic guidance it provides, a business plan serves several other essential purposes.

Attracting Investors and Securing Funding

One of the most critical functions of a business plan is its role in attracting investors. For anyone looking to secure funding, whether from venture capitalists, angel investors, or even banks, a robust business plan is non-negotiable. It demonstrates that you have thoroughly thought

through your business idea, understand the market dynamics, and have a concrete strategy for growth and profitability. Investors need to see that you have a clear vision and a practical plan to make that vision a reality.

Guiding Growth and Managing Risks

For existing businesses, a business plan is a vital tool for guiding growth and managing risks. It helps business owners set clear objectives, identify potential challenges, and outline the steps needed to overcome them. In a constantly changing business environment, having a solid plan can mean the difference between thriving and just surviving. It allows businesses to adapt to changes in the market, pivot when necessary, and stay focused on their long-term goals.

A Tool for Self-Reflection and Evaluation

Writing a business plan also provides an opportunity for self-reflection and evaluation. It forces you to think critically about every aspect of your business, from your value proposition and target market to your financial projections and marketing strategies. This process can reveal potential weaknesses and areas for improvement, enabling you to address them before they become significant problems.

(continued on next page)

The Modern Business Plan: More Than Just a Document

In today's digital age, the concept of a business plan has evolved. It's no longer just a static document stored in a drawer or a computer file. Modern business plans are dynamic, living documents that should be regularly updated and refined. They integrate with various digital tools and platforms, allowing for real-time data analysis and agile decision-making.

Leveraging Technology in Business Planning

The integration of technology in business planning has revolutionized how entrepreneurs and businesses approach their plans. Tools like business plan software, financial modeling applications, and project management platforms enable more detailed and accurate planning. These technologies help in creating more comprehensive and data-driven business plans, which can be crucial in gaining a competitive edge.

The Role of National Write a Business Plan Month

National Write a Business Plan Month serves as a reminder of the importance of planning and encourages individuals to take the time to develop or update their business plans. It's an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day operations and focus on the bigger picture. Whether you're starting a new venture or looking to grow an existing business, dedicating time to work on your business plan can set you on a path to success.

How to Get Started

Getting started on a business plan might seem daunting but breaking it down into manageable sections can make the process more approachable. Here are some key components to consider:

- 1. Executive Summary:** This is a brief overview of your business and your plans. It should highlight the key points of your business plan and grab the reader's attention.
- 2. Business Description:** Here, you outline your business, what it does, and what makes it unique. This section should provide a clear understanding of your business idea.

- 3. Market Analysis:** This involves researching your industry, market, and competitors. Understanding the market landscape is crucial for identifying opportunities and threats.

- 4. Organization and Management:** Detail your business's organizational structure, including information about the ownership, management team, and board of directors.

- 5. Products or Services:** Describe what you're selling or offering. This section should explain the benefits of your products or services to your customers.

- 6. Marketing and Sales Strategy:** Outline how you plan to attract and retain customers. This includes your marketing channels, sales process, and pricing strategy.

- 7. Financial Projections:** Provide detailed financial forecasts, including income statements, cash flow statements, and balance sheets. These projections help demonstrate the viability and profitability of your business.

- 8. Funding Request:** If you are seeking funding, detail your funding requirements, potential future funding needs, and how you plan to use the funds you receive.

The Importance of Regular Updates

Once your business plan is written, it's essential to keep it up to date. As your business grows and the market evolves, your business plan should evolve too. Regularly reviewing and updating your plan ensures that it remains relevant and useful as a strategic tool.

Conclusion

National Write a Business Plan Month is a perfect time to reflect on the importance of business planning. Whether you're launching a new venture or managing an existing business, a well-thought-out business plan can be your guiding star. It helps attract investors, manage risks, and steer your business toward long-term success. So, take this month as an opportunity to create or refine your business plan, setting yourself up for a prosperous future.

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

WINTER SERIES

Black Construction Group Monthly Meeting

Hosted by: Whiting-Turner

Tuesday, January 14, 2025
4:30pm - 6pm

The Whiting-Turner Denver Office
7800 E. Union Ave.



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link below.

<https://tinyurl.com/4csrjym4>

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BCG
Black Construction Group
of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

WT
WHITING-TURNER





MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2025
4:30PM - 6:00PM MT

Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce's **Black Professional Services Group** and **Black Retailer's Group** present a joint virtual meeting of the Winter Series Special Interest Groups.

Special Presentation Topic:
The new state laws and city ordinances (approved November 2024) that may impact your business.



VIRTUAL MEETING

LINK WILL BE PROVIDED TO
THOSE WHO REGISTER.
RSVP VIA QR CODE OR LINK.



<https://tinyurl.com/5n6upjrp>



The Business of... **POLITICS**

Question. Did you get through your Thanksgiving meal without a discussion about politics? More importantly without an argument? Did your favorite candidate, ballot measure or proposed new local ordinance win?

Politics is a multi-faceted word. It means different things to different people. It has a set of fairly specific meanings that are descriptive and nonjudgmental, such as the art and science of government or political principles. Politics may be used positively in the context of a "political solution" which is compromising and ideally a peaceful resolution. However the word 'political' itself is often associated with a negative meaning. The negative sense of the word politics as seen in the phrase "play politics" has been used since at least 1853 when abolitionist Wendell Phillips declared "We do not play politics. Anti-slavery is no half jest with us". Period. Full Stop.

As we begin to close the book on the Year of our Lord - 2024, we are reminded about the business of Politics. Politics is the creation and enforcement of laws, programs and policies that control a governed body like a country, state or county.

Billions of dollars were raised and billions were spent this past election season. That money was spent on educating, encouraging and energizing voters to vote their way. The 2024 election will go down as the most expensive in US history with \$16 billion in spending across all federal races, passing the 2020 record of \$15.1 billion and the 2016 federal spending of just \$6.5 billion.

In just Colorado alone, the final spending numbers may top more than \$100 million dollars this year. At least \$44 million was spent on state ballot issues and local amendments. More than \$23 million was spent by Super Political Action Committees (PACs) to weigh in on local candidate races and a majority of those funds, about \$17 million, were used for negative messaging. If you felt like you were seeing more paid political attack ads than before, you are correct.

PAC's are private interest groups that raise and spend money to support candidates and influence elections. PACs can represent industry groups, labor unions or individual companies. With the emergence of PACS and other outside spending groups, politics has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar industry and the spending is expected to increase in the 2026 election.

Politics can absolutely impact your business. For example, new local laws and regulations can determine how a company operates and how much you pay in taxes and fees. For this reason, new entrepreneurs and small businesses should familiarize themselves with the local and state politics and the effects it could have on your business. Changes in government policies and legislation can sometimes create complex challenges for Black owned businesses as we try to understand how political factors affect our investments, growth and development.

As a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, I encourage you to consider the business of Politics. Politics has existed as long as humans have faced scarcity, have held different beliefs and preferences, and have had to resolve their differences while allocating scarce resources. Like it or not, it will always have a place in our society.

THG is a government relations consulting firm that specializes in water and energy issues.

www.thg.consulting



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

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- **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




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Launching Your Small Business with Google My Business and Digital Marketing

By DANIEL KHIMICH



Image: Adobe

Starting a small business can be an exciting yet challenging journey. With so many things to manage, from product development to operations, one crucial aspect that often gets overlooked is building a strong online presence. In today's digital-first world, having a well-optimized Google My Business (GMB) listing and an effective online marketing strategy is essential for getting noticed by potential customers and growing your new business.

At Steady Slope Marketing, we specialize in helping small business startups lay a solid digital foundation through a combination of Google My Business setup, local SEO, and strategic digital marketing. We help you create an online presence that makes it easy for your target audience to find you, connect with you, and trust your business from the start.

Why Google My Business is Critical for Small Business Success

Google My Business (GMB) is one of the most powerful tools available to small businesses, especially those targeting local customers. A

well-optimized GMB listing ensures that your business appears in Google's local search results and Google Maps, increasing your visibility to potential customers when they're searching for the products or services you offer.

Here's why setting up and optimizing your Google My Business profile is crucial for new businesses:

Improved Local Visibility: A fully optimized GMB listing helps your business rank higher in local search results, making it easier for nearby customers to find you when they search for relevant services.

- **Showcase Key Information:** Your GMB profile serves as a one-stop-shop for important business information, including your address, phone number, website, hours of operation, and customer reviews.
- **Attract Nearby Customers:** With Google's map-based search results, customers searching for businesses "near me" can easily locate your business, visit your location, and make a purchase.

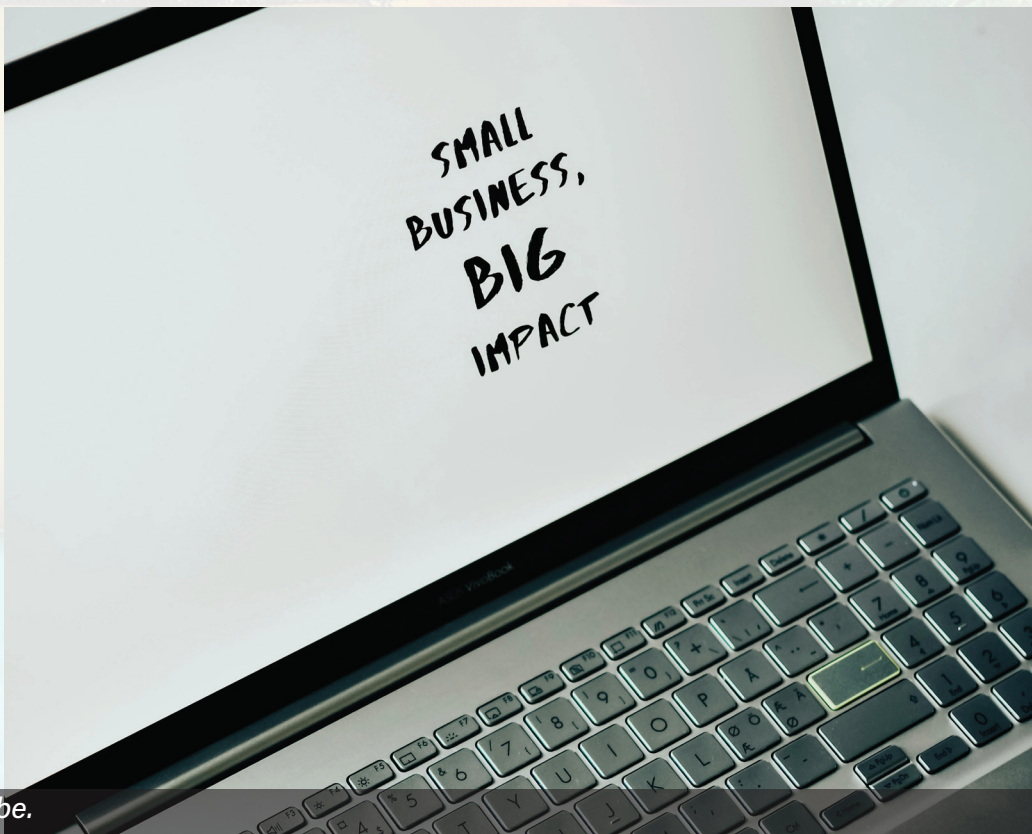


Image: Adobe.

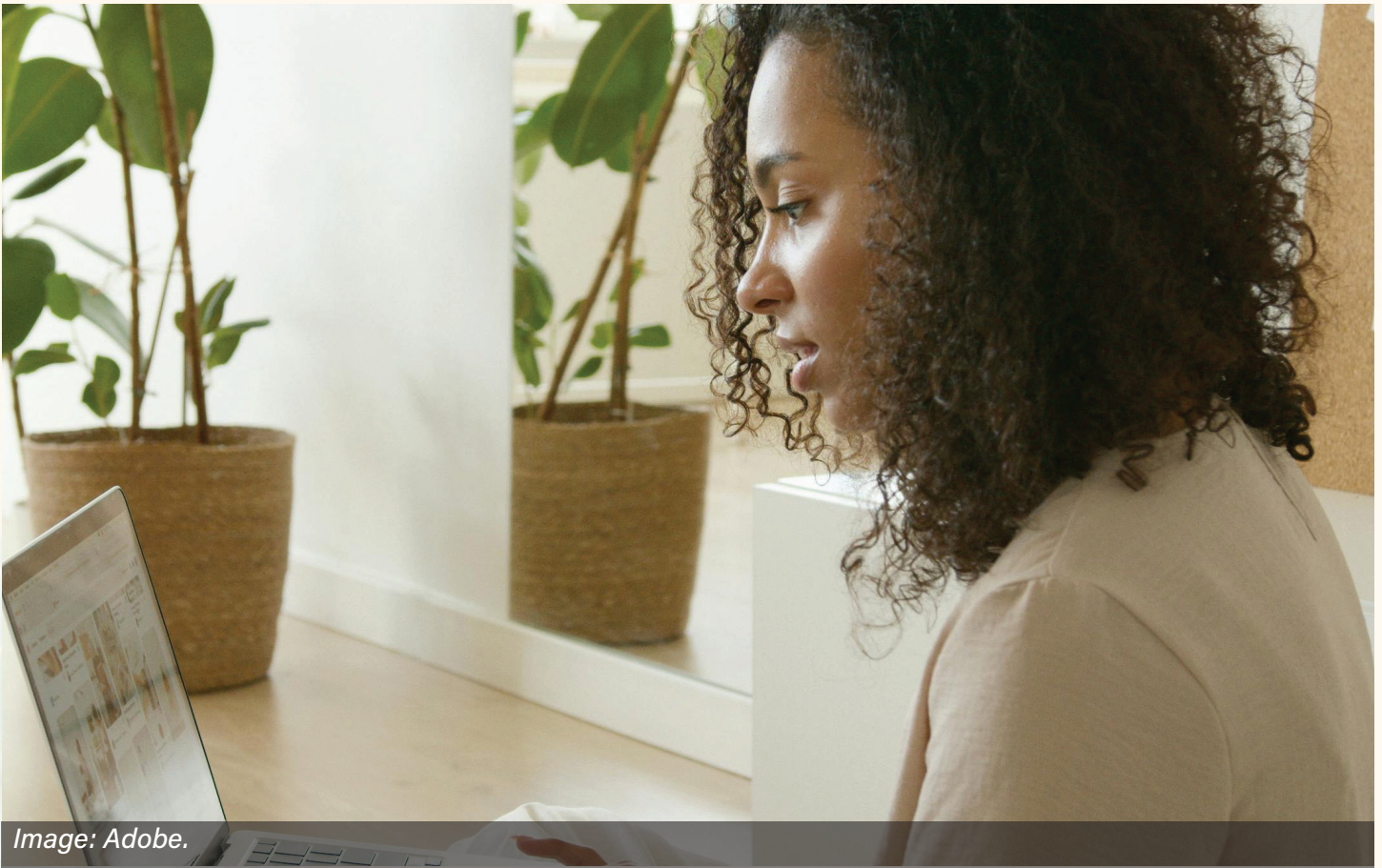


Image: Adobe.

- **Build Trust with Reviews:** Customer reviews play a vital role in building credibility. With GMB, you can manage and display reviews, which helps boost your reputation and build trust with potential customers.

How Steady Slope Marketing Helps Small Businesses Get Started

At Steady Slope Marketing, we know that starting a new business can be overwhelming. That's why we offer a comprehensive range of digital marketing services, including Google My Business setup and optimization, to give your small business the best possible start. Our goal is to make sure that your business gets noticed by the right people, right from the beginning.

Google My Business Setup and Optimization: The first step to getting your business on the map—literally—is setting up your Google My Business profile. Steady Slope Marketing handles every aspect of your GMB setup, from verifying your business with Google to ensuring that all the key

details are accurate and up to date. We optimize your GMB profile to include:

Accurate Business Information: We ensure your business name, address, and phone number (NAP) are consistent across all online platforms, which is critical for local SEO.

Service and Product Listings: We help you list your products and services so potential customers know exactly what you offer and can make informed decisions.

High-Quality Photos: Adding professional images of your business, products, or services can significantly increase customer engagement. We guide you on how to showcase your business visually.

Customer Review Management: We set up a strategy for collecting and managing customer reviews, which not only boosts your reputation but also improves your local ranking in Google search results.

Google Posts: We create and schedule Google Posts, which allow you to promote special offers, updates, or events directly through your GMB listing. This keeps your profile fresh and encourages customer engagement.

By fully optimizing your GMB profile, we ensure that your business is highly visible and easy to find, giving you a competitive edge in your local market.

Local SEO for Maximum Visibility

Once your Google My Business profile is set up, the next step is to ensure your business ranks high in local search results. Local SEO is key to driving traffic from potential customers in your area. At Steady Slope Marketing, we implement a comprehensive local SEO strategy to help your business dominate local search results. Our local SEO services include:

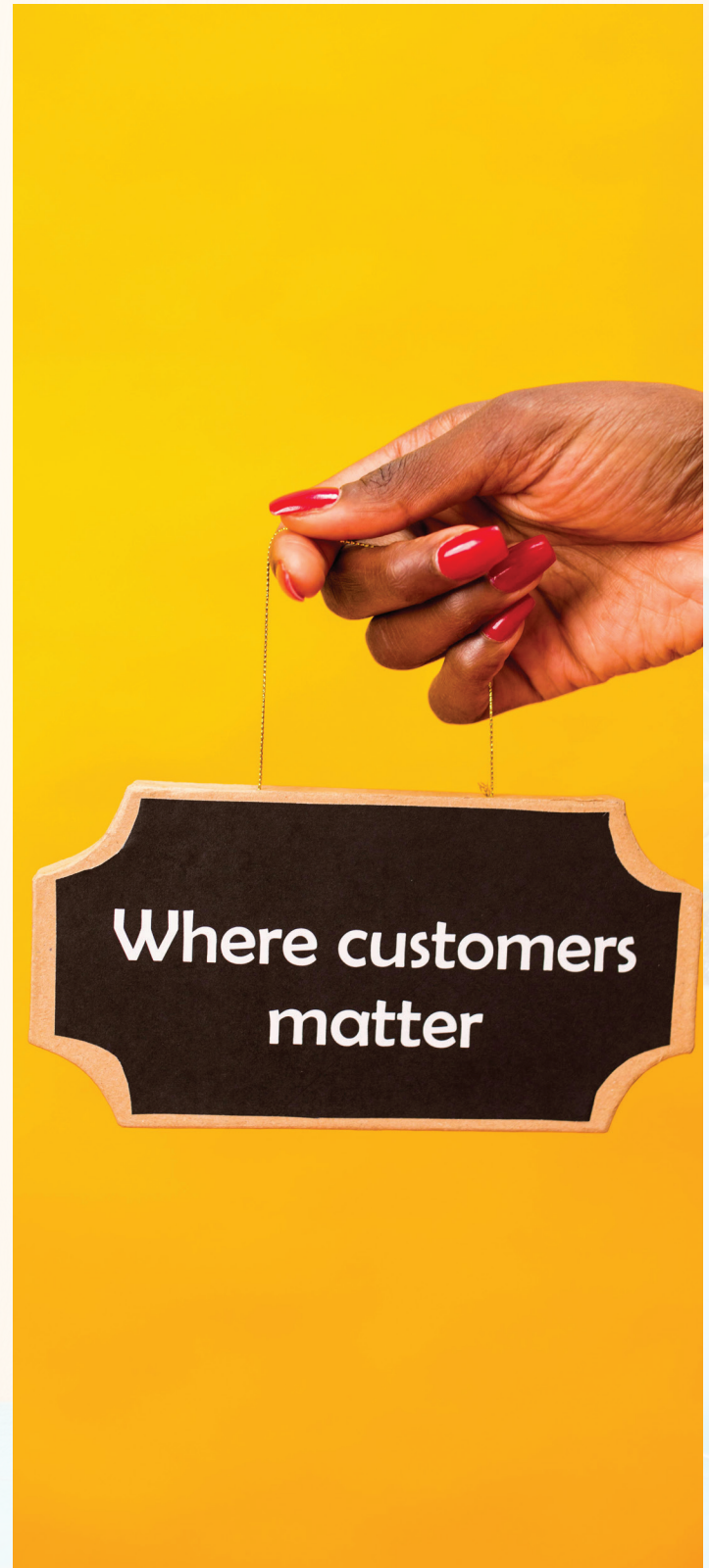
Keyword Research and Optimization: We identify the most relevant local keywords for your business and integrate them into your website content, GMB profile, and other online listings.

NAP Consistency Across Directories: We make sure that your business information is consistent across various local directories like Yelp, Bing, and others, which signals to Google that your business is trustworthy.

Local Citations: We help you build citations on high-quality local directories and websites, which boost your local SEO rankings and improve your online visibility.

Link Building: We work on building backlinks from reputable, local sources that signal to search engines that your website is authoritative and relevant.

With a strong local SEO strategy, we ensure that your business ranks higher in search results, increasing your chances of getting noticed by potential customers in your community.



Website Design and Development

Your website is the digital storefront of your business, and it needs to make a great first impression. At Steady Slope Marketing, we offer custom website design and development services tailored to small business startups. We create responsive, user-friendly websites that are not only visually appealing but also optimized for search engines and conversions. Our website development services include:

Mobile-Friendly Design: Since the majority of local searches happen on mobile devices, we ensure your website looks great and functions smoothly on all devices.

Fast Turnaround: We understand the urgency of getting your business online. Our streamlined process allows us to deliver a fully functional website within 10-14 days.

Conversion Optimization: We design your website with the goal of turning visitors into customers, whether it's through clear calls-to-action, easy-to-use contact forms, or online booking options.

With a well-designed website, your business will have a professional online presence that's ready to attract and convert potential customers.

Social Media and Paid Advertising

To further boost your business's visibility and generate more leads, Steady Slope Marketing offers social media marketing and paid advertising services. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram offer excellent opportunities for small businesses to reach a local audience and build brand awareness. We manage social media campaigns that:

Target Your Ideal Audience: Through demographic, geographic, and behavioral targeting, we ensure that your ads reach the right people who are most likely to be interested in your products or services.

Increase Engagement: We create engaging content and ads that encourage likes, shares, and comments, helping to grow your brand's online presence.

Drive Traffic and Sales: We design ads that drive traffic to your website, promote special offers, and increase sales.

Our team also manages Google Ads and Facebook Ads to ensure your small business reaches its target audience quickly and effectively, generating valuable leads.

Why Choose Steady Slope Marketing for Your Small Business Launch?

At Steady Slope Marketing, we understand the unique challenges that small business startups face. That's why we take a personalized approach to every project, ensuring that your business gets the attention and resources it needs to succeed. Here's why small businesses trust us to launch and grow their online presence:

Tailored Solutions: We create customized strategies that fit your business's specific needs, goals, and budget.

Share Your Story with Us!

Are you a Black business owner in Colorado making an impact? We're seeking submissions for our "Black Businesses on the Move" section! In 500-1,000 words, tell us what sets your business apart, your contributions to the community, and any challenges you've overcome. Please include relevant photos and/or bios to accompany your story.

Send your submissions to:
TheAcumen@cbcc.biz

Let's celebrate your achievements and inspire our community together!



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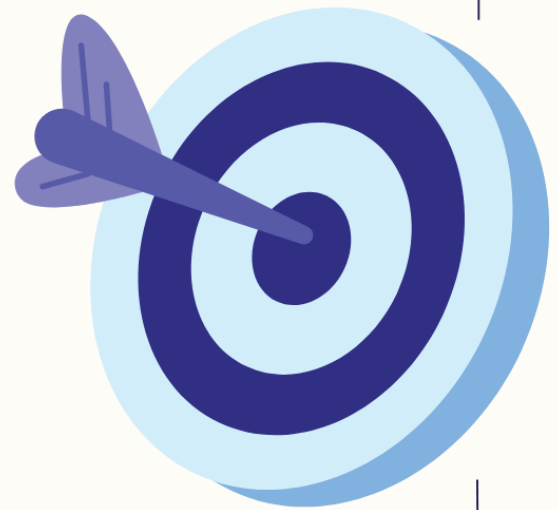
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Empowering Through Authenticity: A Leadership Blueprint

**A Conversation with Al
Gardner**

By DR. ANGELIC COLE

Images: McBoat Photography



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

Gardner: The driving force behind my leadership is a genuine desire to foster growth and opportunity for others. I believe leadership is not about authority, but about creating an environment where individuals can thrive, reach their potential, and feel empowered to contribute meaningfully. At every step of my career, my focus has been on building systems and cultures that prioritize people, authenticity, and equity.

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

Gardner: I am inspired by individuals like my late father, grandfather, and James Farmer Jr. These are the men that lead with integrity and treated everyone with dignity, regardless of their

position or influence. My father had a work ethic that I admired deeply and was successful as a businessman because of it. My Grandfather was a very successful businessman and pillar of the community in Houston TX where I was raised. Well known for his philanthropy and ability to connect with anyone which is another quality that I admired deeply and try to emulate. There is a quote that says “you know when you have been in the presence of great men because you leave them larger” that is how people felt about my grandfather. I met James Farmer Jr. while a student at Wiley University, a Historically Black College & University (HBCU), founded in 1873 in Marshall Tx. Mr. Farmer, also a Wiley Alumni, was a American civil rights activist and leader in the Civil Rights Movement who pushed for nonviolent protest to dismantle segregation, and served alongside Martin Luther King Jr. He was the initiator and organizer of the first Freedom Ride in 1961, which eventually led to the desegregation



Photo: McBoat Photography



Photo: McBoat Photography

of interstate transportation in the United States. I was fortunate to spend the day with him as an undergraduate and that one day impacted how I view my responsibility to my community on a whole, and the Black community in particular. My role models focus on authentic relationships, not transactional ones. They have taught me that respect, transparency, and accessibility are the cornerstones of trust and effectiveness in leadership. From them, I've learned to prioritize being accessible, empathetic, and grounded in every interaction.

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

Gardner: I prioritize mentoring, sharing insights, and providing platforms for others to shine. Whether it's through structured mentorship programs or informal guidance, I actively pass

on the lessons I've learned about resilience, authenticity, and excellence. I strive to create a culture of continuous learning and collaboration where everyone feels empowered to grow. I enjoy my role as an adjunct instructor at the University of Denver graduate school of IT sharing my experience with the next generation of leaders. At General Services (GS) I began a program called "GS Works" in which we partner with several trade schools in the front range to expose students to opportunities in the skilled trades at the City of Denver. Generous GS employees take the time to share their stories and broaden their scope of what a career in the trades could be.

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

Gardner: I was drawn to public service because of its unique ability to impact communities at scale. My journey began with a passion for solving problems and ensuring equitable access

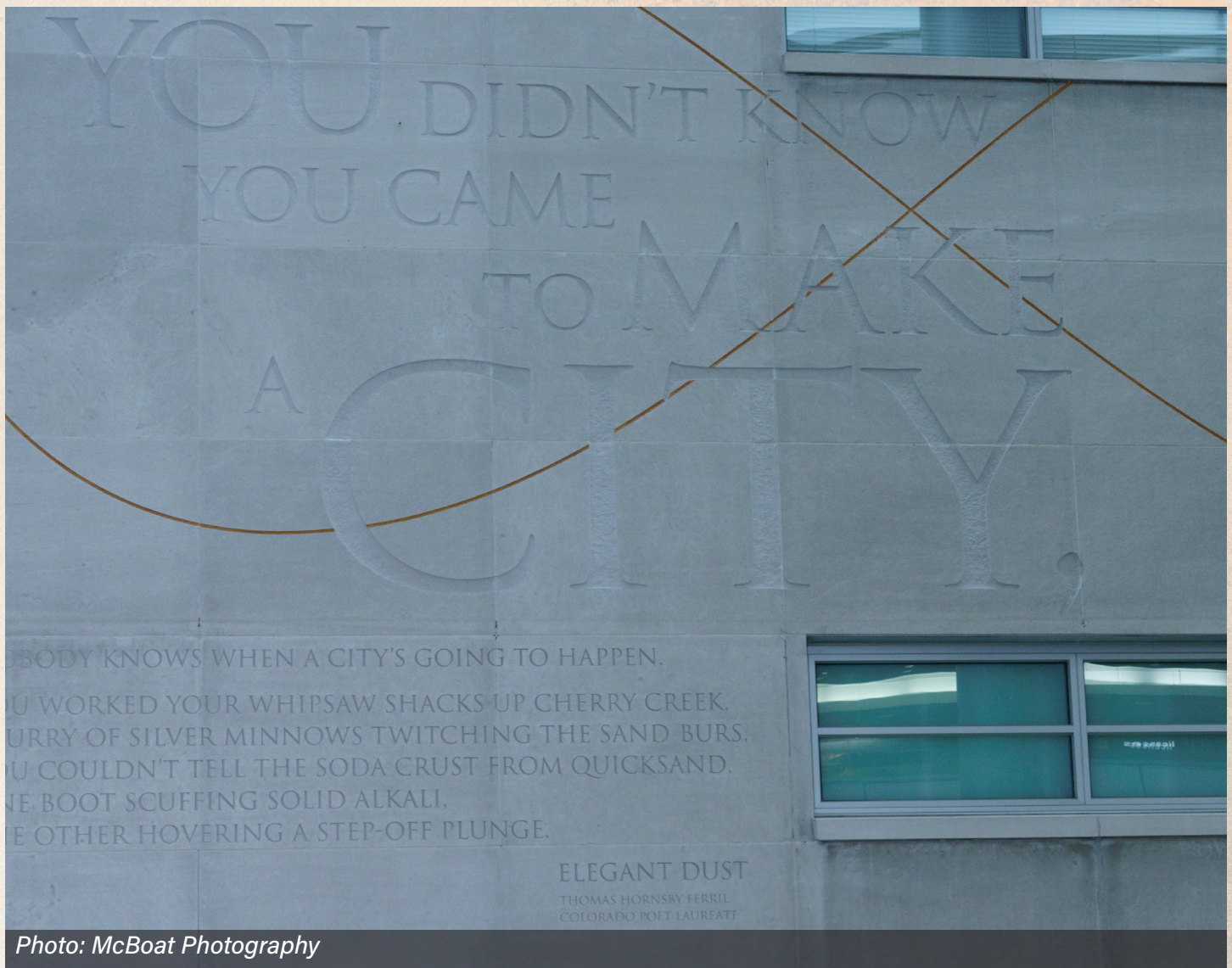


Photo: McBoat Photography

to resources. Early on, I realized that working in government allowed me to align my personal values with initiatives that create meaningful change, especially for underserved communities..

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

Gardner: Be authentic, be authentic, be authentic. People follow leaders who are genuine and consistent. Embracing vulnerability and staying true to yourself not only builds trust but also sets the tone for an inclusive and transparent culture. Authentic leadership fosters collaboration and encourages everyone to bring their whole selves to their work. Lastly, be approachable and understand that every member of the team is important. Remember that everyone deserves

a “good morning” from you every day which is important not only for what it communicates to the team member, but also because it psychologically and emotionally reinforces this habit.

Cole: What are the most important lessons you’ve learned in your career, and how have they influenced your leadership style?

Gardner: One of the most critical lessons I’ve learned is that leadership is a journey, not a title. Starting my career as a hands-on IT contributor taught me the value of understanding the foundational work that supports organizational success. As I progressed into senior leadership, I carried those lessons with me—emphasizing empathy, respect for expertise, and the

importance of clear communication. I've learned that the best leaders empower their teams by listening, providing guidance, and removing obstacles. My leadership style is collaborative, authentic, and grounded in the belief that every individual can make a meaningful impact. If I am the smartest one in the room than I am in the wrong room.

Cole: How can you inspire others while also maintaining that you continue to be inspired by the City and County of Denver's Department of General Services' mission?

Gardner: I inspire others by leading with purpose and demonstrating a clear commitment to our shared mission. At General Services, I ensure that every team member understands how their work contributes to the larger goals of the City and County of Denver. This clarity fosters a sense of

ownership and pride. At the same time, I remain inspired by the collective brilliance of my team and their dedication to service. Their creativity, resourcefulness, and determination drive me to continually innovate and push boundaries. Keeping that focus has allowed us to reach some impactful milestones this year such as efforts to ensure even more (minority /women owned business enterprises) MWBE participation providing pathways for more business to partner with the city, creating a pipeline for skilled trades, and innovating the way City agencies become more efficient.

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

Gardner: In full transparency, I am very much a work in progress in this area but what I try



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my best to do is prioritize work-life balance with intentionality. I try to set clear boundaries, delegate effectively, and recognizing that rest is as critical as hard work. For junior professionals, my advice is to define your non-negotiables—whether it's family time, exercise, or personal growth—and schedule them with the same priority as work commitments. I also encourage them to find mentors who model balance and to remember that taking care of yourself ultimately makes you more effective in your role.

Cole: What things you do in your spare time enable you to be a more effective leader in your professional life?

Gardner: In my free time, I prioritize activities that restore my energy and broaden my perspective. From mentoring emerging leaders, photography, and teaching graduate courses in technology leadership at the University of Denver to serving on boards and City Commissions, I find immense fulfillment in giving back. These commitments, along with cherished moments spent with family, keep me grounded and deeply connected to what matters most.

Spending time with my two granddaughters has been transformative in ways I never anticipated. They remind me not to take myself too seriously and to embrace adaptability—both of which feel incredibly liberating. Inspired by these interactions, I've brought that same sense of freedom into my professional life. It's led to more smiles at work and a greater openness to new ideas.

Joy, I've learned, can be fleeting if not intentionally nurtured. That's why I make it a priority to keep my "joy cup" full through meaningful activities and relationships. I also dedicate time to reading and staying informed on leadership trends and strategies. This commitment to continuous learning keeps me adaptable, forward-thinking, and authentic in my leadership.

These experiences outside the office don't just enrich my life—they sharpen my ability to lead

with clarity, empathy, and authenticity. As I evolve, I'm reminded that vulnerability and joy are not just personal virtues but also professional strengths that enhance the way I show up for others.

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

Gardner: One of the most profound challenges I've faced is navigating spaces where my authenticity as a Black leader was neither fully accepted nor understood. Early in my career, I felt an unrelenting pressure to conform—to code-switch, suppress emotion, and project an unshakable calm.

The fear of being seen as "too emotional" or having my anger misconstrued became a suffocating burden. This fear of simply being fully human was a painful realization that moved



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me toward a journey of healing. I began to recognize how deeply these stereotypes stifled not only my individuality but also my ability to lead authentically. Over time, I discovered that my greatest strength lay in embracing every part of who I am—not just as a professional but as a person. By challenging these harmful narratives, I’ve worked to create space for others to show up fully as themselves, without fear of judgment or restriction.

This journey has taught me the power of inclusivity and the importance of ensuring everyone has both a seat and a voice at the table. True leadership thrives on authenticity and fostering an environment where people can lead with their whole selves isn’t just empowering—it’s essential for innovation.

Cole: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the Government today, and how do you see the Department of General Services overcoming them?

Gardner: Government faces the challenge of balancing innovation with fiscal responsibility while maintaining public trust. At General Services, we tackle this by driving transparency, leveraging data-driven decision-making, investing in our talent pipeline, maintaining clear cross functional communication, and focusing on efficient resource allocation. We also prioritize cultivating a workforce that reflects the diversity and creativity of the community we serve. By aligning our mission with the needs of the

people, we continue to deliver impactful solutions that address today’s challenges while preparing for the future.

Cole: How clear is your vision for what the future of community responsibility should look like at the Department of General Services?

Gardner: My vision for community responsibility is rooted in collaboration and equity. At General Services, we ensure that every decision—whether it’s procurement, infrastructure management, or employee development—reflects our commitment to serving all communities equitably. This includes creating opportunities for local businesses, prioritizing sustainability in our operations, and investing in our workforce to ensure long-term community impact.

Cole: In what direction does the Department of General Services see itself going?

Gardner: General Services is committed to becoming a model of operational excellence, sustainability, and inclusivity. We’re embracing innovation to modernize processes, enhance efficiency, and deliver exceptional service to the City and County of Denver and its residents. Our focus remains on empowering our workforce, fostering collaboration, and implementing technologies that align with our long-term vision. By maintaining our core values of service, integrity, and teamwork, we are poised to set new standards for public service excellence.

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Top 5 Ways To Generate Low Cost Website Traffic

By STEPHON ANDERSON

There is one hard and fast rule in generating income for your website: A steady flow of website traffic. If no one goes to your site, it hardly bares a chance of generating an income. Many sites have tried and failed in doing so, and these results to the sites demise. It takes money to maintain an income generating site; it also takes money to make money.

BUT it doesn't take a whole caboodle of cash to generate website traffic for your site. Ever wonder how does big hit sites drive traffic top their site? Most of them are spending tons of money to drive the traffic to their sites, investing in many advertising campaigns and different forms of marketing schemes and gimmickries.

This is all worthwhile because, well, they are what they are now, high earning, big hitting websites. You don't have to do this if you don't really have

their resources. There are many ways to generate low-cost website traffic without having to spend what you don't have or can't afford. Many people have banked on high-cost methods and have ended up losing their shirt over it.

Here I present to you the Top five ways to generate low cost website traffic that could help your site a whole lot. Even if you only get a small percentage of successful visitors in to client ratio it still works, especially if you get a high number of website traffic.

Exchange Links

This is a sure and proven method. Rarely would you see a site where there is no link to another site. Many webmasters are willing to exchange links with one another so that they could produce more public awareness about their sites. You'll soon see and feel the sudden upsurge of the traffic coming in to your site from other sites.

A major prerequisite in exchanging links with other sites is having the same niche or content as

the other site. They should share a common subject so that there is continuity in the providing of service and information to what interests your target traffic.

Exchanging links also boosts your chances of getting a high-ranking in-search engine results. It is common knowledge that search engines rank high sites that have inbound and outbound theme-related links. With a good ranking position in the search engines, you will generate more traffic in your website without the high costs.

Traffic Exchange

This is like exchanging links but on a different higher level. This may cost a bit more than exchanging or trading links but could be made cheaper because you get to earn credits. You can use those credits when viewing others traffic, while you earn credits when someone views yours.

Traffic exchange services are the viewing of another's site or page. This is done vice versa where a site can use your site's contents and so can you to his or her site. You both benefit from each other's efforts to generate traffic. Visitors from other sites visitors can go to your pages and know more about your site as well as theirs. Once again, the public awareness of your site's existence is boosted.

Write and Submit Articles

There are many e-zines and online encyclopedias in the internet which provide free space for articles to be submitted. If you want to save costs, you can do the articles yourself. There are many freelance writers who are willing to write for you for a small fee, but to save money, it is wise to do those articles yourself.

Write articles that are themed along with the niche of your site. Write something that you have expertise on so that when they read it, they can feel your knowledge about the subject and will be eager to go to your site. Write articles that produce tips and guidelines to the subject or niche your site has.

Include a resource box at the end of your article

that can link them to your site. Write a little about yourself and your site. If you provide a light, information-laden and interesting article, they will go to your site for more.

Make a Newsletter

This may sound like hard work because of all the articles you may need to use to build a newsletter but on the contrary, this is not so. There are many writers and sites that are willing to provide free articles as long as they can get their name in on your newsletter. This will also provide free advertising for them as well.

As your newsletter gets passed around, you can widen your public awareness and build an opt-in list that can regularly visit your site.

Join Online Communities and Forums

This only requires your time and nothing else. You can share your knowledge and expertise with many online communities as well as your website. You can get free advertising when you go to forums that have the same subject or niche with your site.

Share your two cents and let them see how knowledgeable you are with the subject. As you build your reputation, you also build the reputation of your site, making it a reputable and honest business that could be frequented and trusted by many people.



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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Editorial and Deadline Calendar

Featured Topic Space Reservations Materials Due

January 2025

A Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Tuesday December 10	Friday, December 13
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February 2025

Black History Month	Tuesday, January 14	Friday, January 17
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March 2025

International Women's Day	Tuesday, February 11	Friday, February 14
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April 2025

Black Women's Month	Tuesday, March 18	Friday, March 21
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May 2025

National Small Business Month	Tuesday, April 15	Friday, April 18
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June 2025

Juneteenth	Tuesday, May 13	Friday, May 16
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July 2025

International Day of Cooperatives	Tuesday, June 17	Friday, June 20
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August 2025

National Black Business Month	Tuesday, July 16	Friday, July 19
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September 2025

911 Memorial	Tuesday, August 13	Friday, August 16
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October 2025

Health	Tuesday, September 16	Friday, September 19
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November 2025

Youth Entrepreneurs	Tuesday, October 14	Friday, October 17
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December 2024

National Write a Business Plan Month	Tuesday, November 11	Friday, November 14
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Advertisements

Boost your business's visibility by advertising with the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce in **The Acumen**. Connect with a wide, engaged audience that supports local enterprises and gain unparalleled exposure within the community. Don't miss this opportunity - contact us today to place your ad and expand your reach!

Advertising Rates

Listed in cost per ad placement.

	1X	3X	6X	9X	12X
Full Page	\$1000.00	\$900.00	\$800.00	\$700.00	\$600.00
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

To purchase advertising space, or to request more information, please contact TheAcumen@cbcc.biz.



ATTENTION ALL CBCC MEMBERS!

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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.

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