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February 2025

THE FUTURE OF TECH & COMMUNITY

A Conversation With
Richard Lewis

BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

**MANAGING UNDER
STRESS**
KAMLESH BONOMAULLY

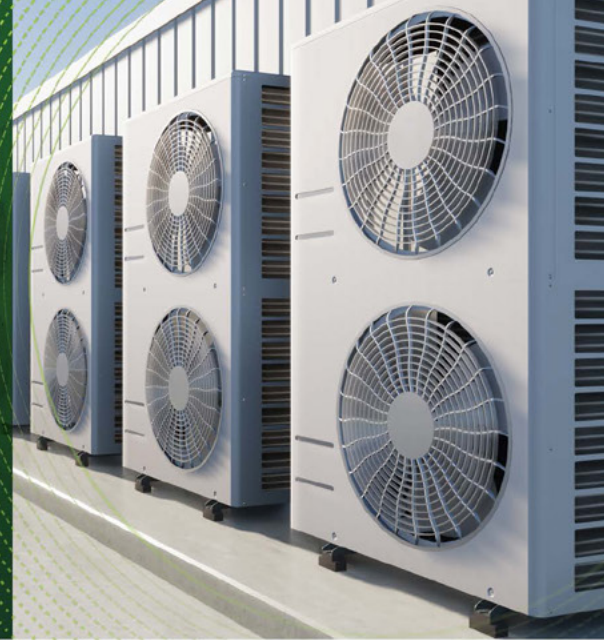
**THE BUSINESS OF
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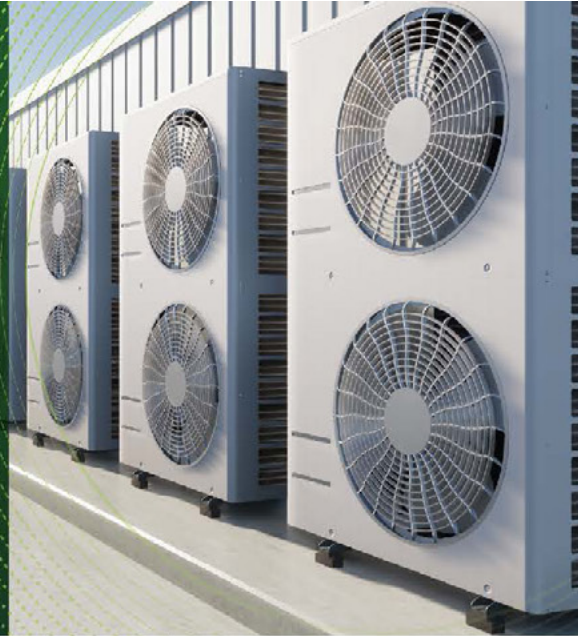
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President's Corner

Martin Luther King Jr. and His Impact on Small Black-Owned Businesses

Dear Reader:

Martin Luther King Jr., a prominent leader in the American civil rights movement, is widely known for his efforts to advance civil rights through nonviolence and civil disobedience. While his contributions to the fight for equality are well-documented, his impact on small Black-owned businesses is often overlooked. This article explores how King's work and legacy have influenced the growth and success of Black-owned businesses.

Early Support for Black Businesses

During the civil rights movement, small Black-owned businesses played a crucial role in supporting the cause. For example, during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Black-owned taxi companies provided transportation for those refusing to use segregated buses. This support was instrumental in sustaining the boycott and demonstrating the economic power of the Black community.

Economic Empowerment

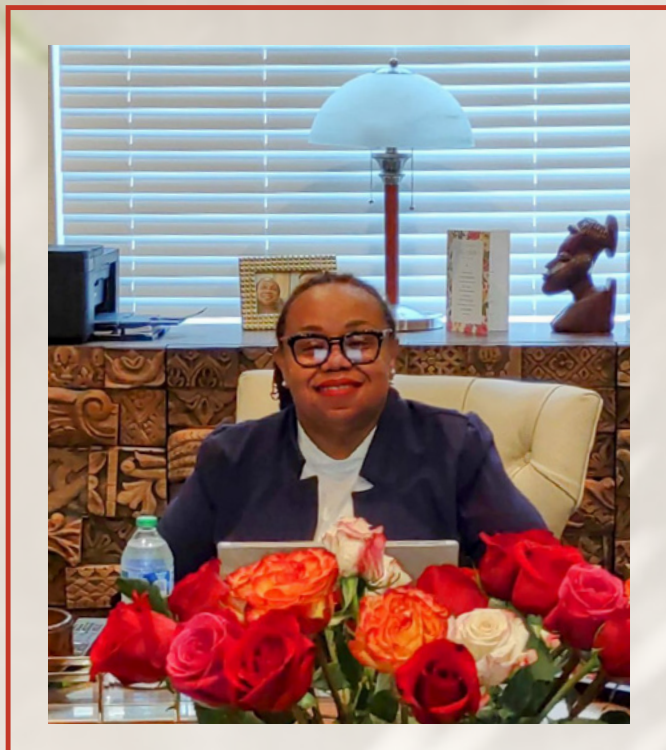
King's vision of economic empowerment was central to his message. He believed that economic independence was essential for achieving true equality. By advocating for fair wages, job opportunities, and access to capital, King laid the groundwork for Black entrepreneurs to thrive. His efforts helped to create a more level playing field for Black-owned businesses.

Community Support and Collaboration

King's leadership inspired a sense of community and collaboration among Black business owners. He encouraged them to support each other and work together to overcome economic challenges. This spirit of unity and mutual support has continued to benefit Black-owned businesses, fostering a strong network of entrepreneurs who can rely on each other for guidance and assistance.

Legacy of Advocacy

King's legacy of advocacy for economic justice has had a lasting impact on Black-owned



businesses. His work to dismantle systemic barriers and promote economic opportunities has paved the way for future generations of Black entrepreneurs. Today, organizations like the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce continue to build on King's legacy by providing resources, support, and advocacy for Black-owned businesses.

Challenges and Progress

Despite the progress made, Black-owned businesses still face significant challenges, including access to capital, discrimination, and economic disparities. However, the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. serves as a reminder of the importance of perseverance and resilience. His message of hope and determination continues to inspire Black entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Conclusion

Martin Luther King Jr.'s impact on small Black-owned businesses is a testament to his vision of economic empowerment and equality. His advocacy for fair wages, job opportunities, and access to capital has laid the foundation for the growth and success of Black-owned businesses. As we celebrate his legacy, we must continue to support and uplift Black entrepreneurs, ensuring that his vision of economic justice is realized.

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

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The Business of...

Leadership Development

Leadership development is a process to help people improve their leadership skills so that they can perform better in their roles. The leadership development business is booming and the outlook for 2025 is even brighter. It is a significant industry with an estimated \$166 Billion annual spend in the US alone and is expected to grow by \$27.7 Billion over the next few years. According to Forbes, leadership development is a \$366 Billion global industry. Period. Full Stop.

Leaders are in great demand. Leadership is defined as the ability of an individual, groups or organizations to lead, influence or guide other individuals, teams or organizations. Local corporations, small businesses, non-profits, public agencies and community-based organizations are actively on the hunt for talent with strong leadership potential.

Actual leaders are in short supply and Leadership Foundations, Leadership Academies, Leadership Conferences and graduate level Business Schools are filling a void and an opportunity in the market. You may have heard the quote, "leaders are not born, they are made". This statement reflects why leadership development is currently in such high demand. Leadership development helps people improve their capacity for guiding teams, inspiring others and getting results in a positive, collaborative manner. It can also be a set of processes and activities that an individual participates in to improve their skills and perform effectively in their current or future leadership role. This is true for new managers as it is for youth soccer coaches because the goal of leadership is to achieve a similar outcome or goal.

Leadership development initiatives are most effective when they focus on performance outcomes that support a key business priority like revenue increases or expanding into new

markets. However, one of the key principles in leadership development is to highlight the difference between power and leadership. Power does not necessarily equate to leadership. The right leadership traits, skills and training can be the "secret sauce" for a company's success in a very dynamic business environment.

As businesses evolve, big or small, they must respond to technological advancements, external events and generational shifts. Today, change can oftentimes feel like the only constant for leaders. They have a much broader scope of priorities than ever before. According to Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends survey, 80% of the respondents rated leadership as the top priority for their organization.

As a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, I encourage all of us to think about our future generation of leaders and the importance of leadership development. "What is our action-plan to leave things in better shape than how we found it?"

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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Dr. Angelic Cole:
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Image: Adobe.



Managing Under Stress

By KAMLESH BONOMAULLY

Managing under stress is a critical skill that influences personal well-being, productivity, and success in various areas of life, from work and personal relationships to physical and mental health. Stress management isn't about eliminating stress; rather, it's about learning how to navigate it effectively. When we understand what stress is and adopt tools and techniques to address it, we can transform stress from a hindrance to a motivator for growth and resilience.

Understanding Stress and Its Impact

Stress is the body's natural response to perceived threats or challenges, activating the "fight-or-flight" response, which releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. This response is helpful in short bursts, enabling quick reactions in emergencies. However, chronic stress—where the body is constantly in a heightened state—can lead to exhaustion and various health problems, including anxiety, depression, cardiovascular issues, and a weakened immune system. Knowing what triggers your stress is crucial.

Triggers can include workload pressures, conflicts in relationships, financial difficulties, or even self-imposed stress through perfectionism. Recognizing these triggers helps in managing stress because once identified, you can begin to control or mitigate them.

The Importance of Self-Care

Effective stress management begins with self-care. Self-care is often neglected during high-stress periods, yet it's a fundamental part of maintaining resilience. Here are some essential components:

- **Physical Health:** Regular physical activity has been proven to reduce stress hormones and release endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days. Alongside exercise, getting adequate sleep and eating a balanced diet are crucial for mental and physical stamina.
- **Mental Well-being:** Practicing mindfulness, meditation, or deep-breathing exercises can lower cortisol levels and help create a calm,



Image: Adobe.

clear mental space. These practices help you stay grounded, even in high-stress situations.

- **Social Support:** Having a strong social support network is an essential buffer against stress. Reach out to friends, family, or colleagues when stressed, as sharing concerns with others can offer perspective and provide emotional support.

Prioritization and Time Management

Many people experience stress because they feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of tasks they must complete. Effective prioritization and time management techniques are essential in these situations:

- **The Eisenhower Matrix:** This is a simple tool that categorizes tasks into four quadrants: urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and neither urgent nor important. Focus on tasks in the first two categories. Delegating or postponing low-priority tasks can reduce stress significantly.
- **The Pomodoro Technique:** Breaking tasks into manageable, timed intervals (such as 25 minutes with a 5-minute break) helps maintain focus and prevents burnout. This technique not only improves productivity but also makes large projects seem less daunting.
- **Setting Boundaries:** Learning to say “no” is a valuable skill for managing stress. Overcommitting can quickly lead to burnout, so it’s important to set limits on your workload or personal obligations.

Developing a Growth Mindset

Psychologist Carol Dweck introduced the concept of the growth mindset, which is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed with effort and learning. Embracing this mindset helps you view stressful situations as opportunities to grow, rather than insurmountable challenges. This change in perspective can greatly reduce feelings of stress.

For example, if a project at work is proving difficult, rather than seeing it as a threat to success, view it as an opportunity to improve problem-solving skills. The growth mindset encourages resilience by reframing obstacles and

reducing the pressure to perform perfectly, which can lower stress significantly.

Building Resilience Through Problem-Solving

Effective stress management also involves problem-solving skills, especially in high-pressure situations. Here are a few techniques: **Break Down Problems:** When facing a major issue, break it into smaller parts that can be tackled one at a time. This approach can make overwhelming challenges more manageable and reduce stress.

- **Focus on What You Can Control:** Stress often arises from feeling out of control. Make a list of what is within your power to change and what isn’t. Focus on actionable items to create a sense of control over the situation.
- **Learn from Past Experiences:** Think back to previous stressful situations and consider what helped you get through them. These strategies might be useful in similar future situations.

Practice Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and manage your emotions and recognize the emotions of others. People with high EI tend to be more adaptable in stressful situations and better at navigating complex interpersonal interactions. Key components of EI include:

- **Self-Awareness:** Being aware of your emotional state can help you recognize when you’re feeling stressed and why.
- **Self-Regulation:** This involves controlling impulsive reactions. In stressful moments, instead of reacting immediately, pause and assess the situation. Taking a few deep breaths or stepping away for a moment can help you respond thoughtfully.
- **Empathy:** Understanding others’ perspectives can help alleviate stress in interpersonal conflicts, reducing the strain that can arise from miscommunication or misunderstandings.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

- Mindfulness is a powerful tool in stress management, emphasizing a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. Practicing mindfulness allows you to observe your stress objectively, which can make it feel less overwhelming. Here are a few methods:
- Meditation: Practicing meditation for even five minutes daily can reduce stress and increase mental clarity.
- Deep Breathing: Engaging in deep-breathing exercises, such as the 4-7-8 technique (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8), can activate the body's relaxation response.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tensing and then releasing different muscle groups helps to release physical tension that accumulates from stress.

Acceptance and Letting Go

Sometimes, the best way to manage stress is to accept certain situations as they are, especially when they are beyond your control. This doesn't mean giving up but instead focusing on adapting. Acceptance helps you avoid unnecessary stress that comes from attempting to control uncontrollable situations.

This approach is particularly useful when dealing with difficult people or situations, such as a challenging coworker or a policy change at work that you disagree with but cannot change. By letting go of the need to control every aspect, you can reduce unnecessary stress and focus on areas where you can make a positive difference.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Your environment plays a major role in how you handle stress. A cluttered, chaotic environment can exacerbate stress, while an organized, pleasant workspace can make it easier to stay focused and calm.

- Organize Your Space: Keeping your surroundings tidy and organized can provide a sense of calm and control.
- Personalize Your Space: Add items that bring you comfort or joy, such as plants, photos, or meaningful objects.
- Set up Reminders for Breaks: In high-stress

environments, setting reminders to take short breaks can prevent burnout and give you a chance to reset.

Continual Learning and Adaptation

- Finally, managing stress is an ongoing process that requires flexibility and willingness to learn. Stressors evolve over time, and what worked in one situation might not work in another. Stay open to new techniques, and make it a habit to evaluate your stress management strategies regularly.
- Learn from Feedback: Whether it's from a manager, colleague, or even your own reflection, constructive feedback can help you refine your approach.
- Experiment with New Techniques: Try new strategies to see what works best for you. Techniques like journaling, engaging in a creative hobby, or listening to calming music can be great additions to your toolkit.
- Reflect on Your Progress: Regularly take a moment to consider how far you've come in managing stress. This reflection can boost your confidence and encourage continued improvement.

Managing under stress is a crucial life skill that requires self-awareness, intentionality, and adaptability. By understanding stress and recognizing its impact, you can employ a variety of tools and techniques—such as self-care, effective prioritization, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness—to help reduce its effects and improve resilience.

Remember, stress doesn't have to be an enemy; it can be an opportunity for growth and development. With the right mindset and practices, you can learn to navigate life's pressures successfully, transforming stress from a barrier into a stepping stone for personal and professional growth.

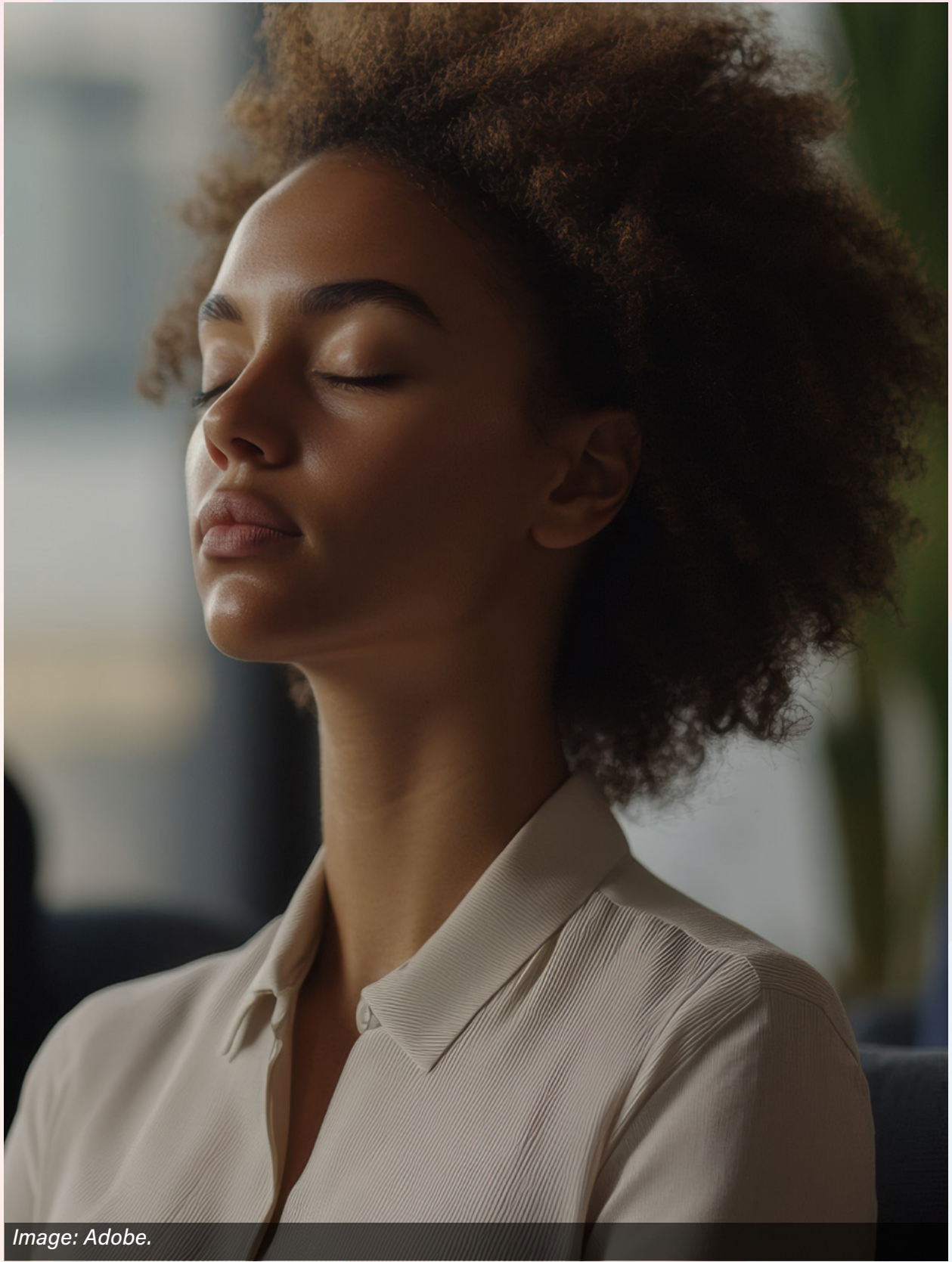


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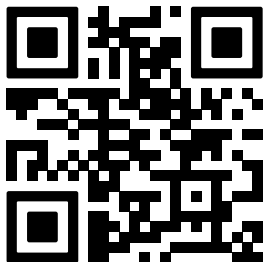
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A photograph of Richard Lewis, a man with a goatee, wearing a dark grey suit, white shirt, and light blue tie. He is standing in front of a wall with two large, vibrant, abstract artworks. The artwork on the left is a colorful, textured piece with pink, green, and blue elements. The artwork on the right is a vertical, multi-colored abstract piece with swirling patterns. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent grey box in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

Resilience, Responsibility, & Reinvention

**A Conversation with
Richard Lewis
RTL Networks, Inc.
RTL Foundation**

By DR. ANGELIC COLE



Images: McBoat Photography

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

Lewis: I believe most leaders are motivated by one or more personality and skill factors. Some leaders are instinctive, others are intellectuals. Some leaders are motivated by a strong command posture, while others prefer collaboration or empowerment. I believe the strongest motivators behind my leadership style are innovation and altruism. I am constantly thinking of new ways to do things or searching for niches that no one is serving and developing new and unique methods to deliver a product or service to meet the needs. I am at my happiest, when I find a new way to help a client reach their goals... and then get paid for it!

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

Lewis: As a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and a former Air Force officer with 10 years of service, my leadership philosophy has been shaped by individuals who exemplify discipline, resilience, innovation, and a commitment to service. These role models have influenced my journey—both in the military and as an entrepreneur—helping me navigate challenges, take calculated risks, and build a successful IT company.

During my time in the Air Force, I had the privilege of learning from exceptional leaders who taught me that true leadership is about service, accountability, and unwavering commitment to your mission and your team. Additionally, my





Photo: McBoat Photography

transition into corporate America—working with industry leaders like Qwest (now Lumen), Cisco Systems, and Avaya—taught me the discipline and strategic execution necessary for sustained business growth. These experiences provided invaluable insight into scaling operations, driving innovation, and leading teams in highly competitive environments, further sharpening my ability to build and sustain a thriving enterprise in the IT sector.

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

Lewis: I was very fortunate; in that I always knew that I wanted to work in the technology career field, because I have always enjoyed and excelled in math and science. My passion for science led me to Major in Computer Science at the United States Air Force Academy. After graduation, I served in the Air Force for ten years as an IT

Communications Officer; designing, installing and testing IT and Communications systems all over the world and in a variety of environments, including, aboard a United States Navy aircraft carrier cruising down the Suez Canal to the Persian Gulf. The ever-evolving nature of the IT field continues to inspire me, and I look forward to many more years of innovation and growth in this industry.

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

Lewis: For any leader, or entrepreneur, or organization, or family... setbacks are inevitable. This is why my advice to anyone determined to lead is to be Resilient! Remove defeating thoughts from your mind and words from your vocabulary. I was laid off twice before starting my own business. The second time I was laid off was just months after being awarded full custody of



Photo: McBoat Photography

my then 3-year-old son, and purchasing a home. After each layoff, I had a choice: dwell on the loss or use it as motivation. True leadership is about pushing forward, learning from failures, and turning obstacles into opportunities—not just for yourself but for those who follow and look up to you.

I also stress the importance of clear and authentic communication. Effective communication fosters trust, motivation, and alignment within the team or organization. Furthermore, a great leader doesn't just give orders without thought and consideration and their words are neither harsh or tyrannical. A true leader inspires, guides, and connects with people, rousing them to deliver their best work to move the team or organization forward.

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

Lewis: As a leader and entrepreneur, I believe that inspiration is a two-way exchange—it's about motivating others while also drawing continuous energy and purpose from the mission that drives us forward. At RTL Networks, our commitment to innovation, excellence, and service keeps me inspired, and in turn, I strive to pass that same passion and dedication on to those around me.

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

Lewis: Honestly, I don't maintain a strong work-life balance, and that's because I am deeply committed to the success of my business, supporting and operating the newly minted RTL Foundation, and caring for my family. These demands often extend beyond traditional working hours and the line between work and life is often blurred. I've accepted that long hours, missed social events, and minimal downtime are part of the journey.

That said, while I may not have a conventional work-life balance, I find fulfillment in what I do. The excitement of solving challenges, seeing my company grow, and being engaged in the community keeps me motivated. I recognize that balance is important and will take breaks when able.

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

Lewis: One of the biggest hurdles was breaking free from corporate instability. Despite my skills, experience, and work ethic, I realized that my future would always be uncertain if I relied on traditional career paths.

One of the most difficult obstacles I faced was overcoming setbacks and the systemic barriers that often limit opportunities for Black professionals in corporate spaces. Before launching my own company, I was laid off twice in a two-year period. These experiences were both humbling and frustrating. Each time, I found myself questioning my next move while also recognizing the deeper challenges that African Americans face in career advancement, job security, and leadership opportunities. The second layoff was particularly difficult. It was hard walking out of the office, with the dust not quite settled on my latest Employee of the Quarter award, and knowing how much I had contributed to my company's bottom line. It was after this second layoff, I decided that instead of seeking another job where I could face the same challenges, I would build something of my own—where I controlled my destiny.

Through resilience, strategic networking, and an unwavering belief in my abilities, I turned these setbacks into stepping stones. Today, my IT company is thriving, and I make it a priority to support and mentor others who have faced similar struggles. My journey taught me that setbacks aren't the end—they're often the beginning of something greater. Sometimes, losing a job is the push you need to build the life and career you truly deserve.

Cole: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the technology industry today, and how do you see RTL Networks overcoming them?

Lewis: The technology industry is evolving at an unprecedented pace, but it faces several critical challenges that companies must navigate to stay competitive. Some of the biggest challenges include: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cyber Security and a shortage of skilled IT professionals in the market.

AI is reshaping industries and the world as we know it. AI is also creating ethical dilemmas, workforce displacement, and regulatory uncertainty. Companies that fail to integrate AI risk falling behind, while those that rely on it too heavily may fail the Human-In-The-Loop test that many customers and employees apply. Cybersecurity is also a threat to industry



Photo: McBoat Photography

1792 Construction of the White House is completed, utilizing enslaved African American workforce
 1793 1st Fugitive Slave Act enacted
 1793 Richard Allen & Absalom Jones co-founded the Free African Society in Philadelphia, PA
 1800 Construction of the US Capitol is completed, utilizing enslaved African American workforce
 1808 US bans slave trade; smuggling continues
 1800 Compromise of 1850
 1851 Sojourner Truth delivers "Ain't I a Woman?" speech
 Uncle Tom's Cabin published
 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act
 1857 Dred Scott vs. Sandford, decides enslaved people were not citizens of the United States
 1859 John Brown raided the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, VA
 1859 Abraham Lincoln elected President
 1861 Civil War starts
 1863 New York draft riots
 1863 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry charge Fort Wagner
 1864 Congress passed a bill authorizing equal pay, army
 American Union troops
 1865 Civil War Ends
 1865 Federal troops arrive in Galveston, TX on June 19, 1865
 "Juneteenth"
 1865 Confederate land earmarked for former enslaved southerners by President Andrew Johnson



AFRICAN AMERICAN



1900 Grandfather Clause* outlawed by U.S. Supreme Court
 Great Migration begins as some six million African American southerners migrate north and west
 Over 25 Race riots and lynchings over the summer, killing hundreds of African Americans
 Tulsa Oklahoma was the site of one of the worst race massacres in US history; at least 300 killed (unofficial) and 35 square blocks of African American owned homes and businesses destroyed
 Shuffle Along, a musical by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, opens on Broadway as the 1st musical written and performed by African Americans
 Bessie Coleman makes 1st appearance in an American Airshow
 A. Philip Randolph founds the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters as 1st successful African American trade union
 Dr. Charles Drew discovered blood plasma and became the 1st African American to receive a Medical Science degree from Columbia
 1932 U.S. Public Health Service examines untreated syphilis in African American men without telling them (Tuskegee Experiment)
 1935 Jessie Owens wins 4 Gold Olympic medals in Germany, humiliating Nazism on a world stage
 1940 Hattie McDaniel is 1st African American to win an Oscar
 1940 Booker T. Washington is 1st African American to appear on a US postage stamp
 1941 War Department forms the all-African American 99th Pursuit Squadron known as Tuskegee Army
 1947 Jackie Robinson joins Brooklyn Dodgers as 1st African American to play major league baseball
 1948 Armed forces integrated
 1950 Gwendolyn Brooks became the 1st African American to win a Pulitzer Prize for her book Annie Allen
 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision
 1955 Lynchings continue in South with slaying of a 14-year-old Emmett Till 1955
 Rosa Parks ignites 381-day Montgomery bus boycott organized by Martin Luther King, Jr.
 1956 Southern Manifesto urges resistance to desegregation efforts
 1957 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) founded
 1957 Little Rock Central High School desegregated with Federal troops to escort nine African American children into the school (Little Rock Nine)
 1960 Ruby Bridges was the 1st African American to integrate a white southern elementary school
 1960 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) founded in Raleigh, North Carolina
 1961 Albany Movement was a desegregation and voters' rights coalition formed in Albany, Georgia
 1961 Freedom riders oppose segregation despite bus bombings and beatings
 1962 James Meredith enrolls at the University of Mississippi with federal troop escort
 1963 Gov. Wallace stops desegregation of the University of Alabama
 1963 Southern Christian Lead Birmingham lunch count
 More than 200,000 people march
 African Americans
 1963 Bombing of Birmingham
 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, desegregation champs
 1963 Medgar Evers, head of addresses nation on racial inequality
 1964 Civil Rights Act passed national origin
 1964 24th Amendment passed
 1964 Mississippi Summer
 1965 Watts Riots result in 54 deaths
 1965 Bloody Sunday, Tur
 1965 Voting Rights Act



and individuals, in the form of increasing cyberattacks, data breaches, and growing concerns over user privacy.

RTL Networks has always and will continue to overcome the challenges related to the rapidly evolving technology industry by playing a leadership role in the application, and ethical use of these technologies and tools. Our clients come to us because they know we have the necessary expertise to provide them with confidence in the security and availability of their critical systems, and the certainty they need to operate their business and stay focused on their bottom lines.

Cole: How clear is your vision for what the future of community responsibility should look like at RTL Networks?

Lewis: My vision for the future of RTL Networks is crystal clear. Three years ago, at RTL Networks' 20th anniversary celebration, we launched the RTL Foundation.

RTL Foundation's mission is to serve historically underserved BIPOC communities in Colorado through education and support in the areas of capacity building, technology, history and entrepreneurship. The education



AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE TIMELINE

and history component is addressed via the African American Experience Timeline (www.africanamericantimeline.org), and the community support and capacity building component is addressed via the creation and launch of the BIPOC Nonprofit Development Center (BNDC).

Many nonprofit organizations face growth and operational challenges such as lack of office and meeting space, insufficient staffing; inadequate IT infrastructure; minimal fundraising, minimal organizational, board-building and strategic planning training; lack of mentoring and leadership development and networking

and partnership opportunities; lack of high-level business and organizational operational experience - all of which pose barriers to success, sustainability and scalability - and which greatly diminishes their ability to deliver on their mission and reduces their impact in BIPOC and systemically underserved minority communities.

To address these challenges, the RTL Foundation has created the BIPOC Nonprofit Development Center (BNDC), a first of its kind incubator for BIPOC-led and serving start-up, emerging and select established nonprofit organizations, to remove these barriers to success, to build up

Photo: McBoat Photography

their capacity, to elevate and transform these organizations, and to amplify their impact serving BIPOC communities throughout Colorado.

Cole: In what direction does RTL Networks see itself going?

Lewis: RTL Networks has established itself as a premier provider of IT and cyber services and we will continue to monitor the rapidly evolving technology landscape in order to maintain our position of trust and leadership in the industry. We will continue to embrace challenges and be resilient in the face of difficulty and setbacks. Many people only see the finished product, in the form of awards and recognition. We will remain focused the hard work and commitment to our craft and other the behaviors that lead to those outcomes, whether we actually receive them or not.

Cole: Let's switch gears and end with you as former Board Chair of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce providing a positive and forward-looking statement about the Black Chamber's future.

Lewis: There is never a dull moment in the DEI domain. Current events, politics, lawsuits, the economy and other factors are constantly changing the narrative and moving the goalposts and organizations like the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC) must continually adapt, adjust and predict the future to remain relative and continue adding value to its members. The CBCC has historically done a phenomenal job of this and with what I know of the organization's current leadership from the CBCC Executive Director, Dr. Cole and the Board Chair, Malcolm Evans, I am confident the CBCC will continue to overachieve in that mission. I look forward to the CBCC's upcoming gala on October 25th, 2025! Thank you for all you do in the community and for the honor of being featured in this month's Acumen!



Photo: McBoat Photography



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Image: Adobe.

What is Customer Relationship Marketing?

By PETER RIVETT-JONES

Customer Relationship Marketing is all about building customer relationships that increase customer retention and growing customer value through strategies and communications driven by optimizing customer data and insight. It is based on the idea that a brand using their knowledge about a customer can create a deeper emotional bond which results in increased order value or frequency.

Customer Relationship Marketing is about getting, growing and keeping customers by enhancing engagement across all touch points to build deep, lasting and profitable relationships.

It involves segmenting and targeting customers with relevant communications to create strong brand engagements. It must have content driven by customer wants, needs and interests with the right balance of emotional and rational messaging.

It is about building long term relationships rather than just seeking single transactions to increase customer lifetime value (CLV). A customer is not just a sales target, they are people, just like you or I and respond better if you treat them as such. Understanding the differences between the kinds of customers you have and the relationship

they want or have with your brand is essential to making sure you know how to engage with them.

And just like our own circle of friends or acquaintances, how we engage, will be based upon our depth of relationship. Customer Relationship Marketing, like personal relationships, requires understanding and hard work. You need to get to know the customer in order that your CRM activity can be targeted, relevant, add value and avoids meaningless contact. Through on-going interactions with customers, the brand can learn how they want to be treated making it progressively more convenient and beneficial to deal with the brand.

Why Does Customer Relationship Marketing Matter?

Marketing efforts to reach new customers and win them over can be costly. Maintaining existing customers through Customer Relationship Marketing, however, can be highly cost-effective. With higher repeat purchase and customer retention numbers, the costs of customer acquisition decrease, providing you with a higher ROI in your overall marketing activity. By building long-lasting, profitable relationships, existing customers will be purchasing more over time than new customers, they spend more per visit and tend to purchase more expensive products or services. Acquiring new customers can be profitable but getting them to buy again will benefit the business more. Repeat purchase is the key step towards creating high-value customers. It is significantly cheaper to get existing customers to buy again than finding new customers. In fact, the probability of selling to an existing customer is 60-70%, while the probability of selling to a new prospect is only 5-20%.

Business analytics and reporting

Every time a customer re-purchases, the likelihood of them coming back and becoming a loyal customer will increase. So, whilst only 32% of first purchasers will make a second purchase,

53% of customers that make a second purchase will make a third.

Customer Relationship Marketing is not a targeted email or a triggered activity from your website. It is a carefully orchestrated ongoing program of interactions developed to optimize the lifetime value of your customers to your business. It requires you to focus your thinking around the customer groups that you serve. Getting this right will mean you grow your share of wallet with each customer and reduce the chances of them spending elsewhere or leaving you altogether.

The focus of Customer Relationship Marketing should be developing a relationship rather than the number of initial sales generated. Sales will come as a result of building the relationship. So, you need to ensure you are measuring Customer Relationship Marketing properly. To do this you will need long-term customer level sales, retention and loyalty tracking broken down by different customer segments or key demographics. In addition to transactional measures, you should also look to track at a customer level things like brand perception or likelihood to recommend your brand to a friend. Customer Relationship Marketing is one of the most important keys to achieving customer-centricity.



Image: Adobe.



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

Black Business ON THE MOVE



Image: Rohan Herbert.

Rohan began his Real Estate career in 2003 in New York City (Member of the Brooklyn Board of Realtors), where he won numerous awards for being a Top Producer. A consummate Professional who always puts his clients interest first. Rohan has unparalleled work ethic, and he implements state of the art technology and marketing tools to sell your home, which leads to a smooth successful experience. Rohan has sold lots of Brownstones & Multi Unit properties, also Mixed-Use & Commercial Real Estate over the years, giving him a vast knowledge of how Real Estate works, which he uses to help Sellers, Landlords & Investors navigate the maze of Real Estate. He was also a Sales Trainer, where he supervised multiple Top Producers. In 2007-08, in the Market downturn, Rohan represented numerous Banks as a Listing Broker, which also added to the depth of knowledge that he brings to the table as a Professional.

In 2010, Rohan moved to the Denver Metro area, where he joined the Colorado Association of Realtors and continues his service as a Realtor. This service includes, representing first time Sellers, Investors, & Buyers. Rohan also represented HUD/Asset Managers as a Listing Broker, which gave him further insight & knowledge into the local Denver market. He now uses this insight and knowledge to assist

Clients in the Denver Metro. in addition, Rohan has vast knowledge & experience in representing Buyers & Sellers in Land Deals which includes Water Rights & Mineral Rights. In the summer of 2018 Rohan decided to open his own Brokerage Firm. As Broker/Owner of his Franchise he continued to advocate for his Clients. After running a profitable company, Rohan decided to join Weichert, Realtors[®]-Professionals as VP of Career Development. Weichert, Realtors[®]-Professionals is a full service firm with dedication to extensive marketing & modern technology to ensure client satisfaction.

After years of traditional Real Estate, Rohan continues to expand his career by delving into the investment side of the business even further where a huge portion of his practice focuses on assisting Real Estate investors in purchasing and renovating investment properties nationwide. Having access to private capital as a Private Money Lender Affiliate, Rohan not only finds off market and corporate owned deals for his clients but also funds the purchase and renovation of these properties. After decades in the Real Estate Industry Rohan Herbert has been Inducted into the Prestigious Marquis Who's Who[®] Biographical Registry on August 24th, 2023 for his commitment to excellence in serving his clients and the general public. Rohan's commitment to the community continued as he saw the need to become even more involved, he decided to run to become a Member of the Board of Directors for the South Metro Denver Realtor Association and on November 14, 2024 Rohan was elected and inaugurated as a Member of the Board of Directors. Immediately after joining the Board of Directors, Rohan became the Chair of the Leadership Academy Advisory Committee for the [South Metro Denver Realtor Association] where he is able to assist in developing the new leadership in the Realtor Association.

As a Real Estate Professional, Rohan is still passionate about the industry and really enjoys

not only assisting other realtors but helping buyers and sellers navigate the Maze of Real Estate. Rohan's company Herbert Realty Advisors, Inc., is a boutique real estate company that specializes in residential and commercial transactions while assisting the investment community in finding/funding and/or reselling said properties.

All Images Courtesy: Rohan Herbert.



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!

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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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
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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

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



ATTENTION ALL CBCC MEMBERS!

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

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

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

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

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