

Celebrating CBCC's 40th Anniversary

THE ACUMEN

May 2025

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A Conversation With
Makisha Boothe

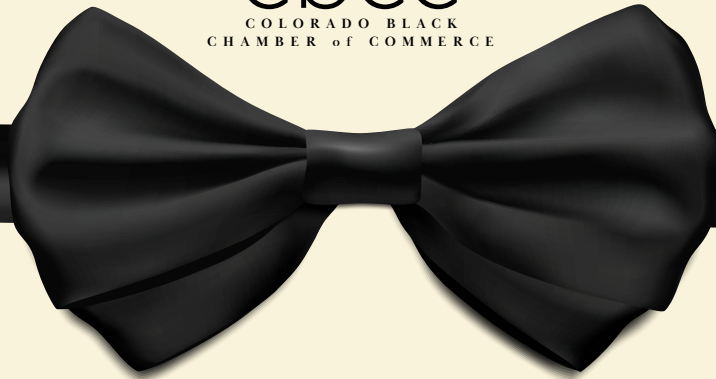
BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

RECOGNIZING
SISTERS IN ENERGY
LASHEITA SAYER

THE BUSINESS OF
SPORTS
DALE R. HUNTER

TAKE CONTROL OF
YOUR BUSINESS SEO
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President's Corner

Empowering Communities: The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce and National Small Business Month

Dear Reader:

The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC) stands as a beacon of empowerment, advocacy, and opportunity for Black entrepreneurs and professionals in Colorado. Its mission is to foster economic growth, connect businesses, and amplify the voices of Black-owned enterprises. National Small Business Month, celebrated annually in May, aligns seamlessly with CBCC's goals, offering a platform to highlight the resilience, innovation, and contributions of small businesses across the nation.

The Role of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 1985, CBCC has been instrumental in driving success through its programs and initiatives. The Chamber provides resources tailored to every stage of business development, from mentorship opportunities to workshops on financial literacy and business strategy. Networking events hosted by CBCC create invaluable connections, fostering collaboration among entrepreneurs, professionals, and corporate partners.

CBCC's advocacy efforts extend to promoting supplier diversity, equitable access to government contracts, and economic inclusion. By championing policies that support Black-owned businesses, the Chamber ensures that its members have the tools and opportunities to thrive in a competitive market.

Celebrating National Small Business Month

National Small Business Month is a time to recognize the vital role small businesses play in



the economy. These enterprises are the backbone of innovation, job creation, and community development. During this month, organizations like CBCC amplify their efforts to support small businesses through events, workshops, and campaigns.

For Black-owned businesses, National Small Business Month is an opportunity to showcase their unique contributions and address challenges such as access to capital and market visibility. CBCC's initiatives during this month often include targeted programs to help entrepreneurs scale their businesses and leverage new opportunities.

Success Stories from National Small Business Month

National Small Business Month has been a launchpad for inspiring success stories. For instance, Me & the Bees Lemonade, founded by Mikaila Ulmer, started as a small venture and grew into a nationally recognized brand. Mikaila's journey from selling lemonade at local fairs to securing deals with major retailers exemplifies the potential of small businesses to make a big impact.

Another example is Altitude Energy, a Colorado-based company specializing in high-voltage power line services. Founded in a garage, the company has grown to employ nearly 100 linemen and operates in 17 states. Their story highlights the grit and determination of small

President's Corner *continued.*

business owners who overcome challenges to achieve remarkable growth.

The Intersection of CBCC and National Small Business Month

The synergy between CBCC's mission and the objectives of National Small Business Month creates a powerful narrative of resilience and growth. By celebrating the achievements of Black entrepreneurs and providing resources to overcome barriers, CBCC exemplifies the spirit of National Small Business Month.

Events hosted by CBCC during this month often feature keynote speakers, panel discussions, and networking sessions designed to inspire and educate. These gatherings not only celebrate success but also address pressing issues such as funding strategies, marketing trends, and the integration of technology in business operations.

Looking Ahead: Building a Legacy of Excellence

As CBCC continues to expand its reach and impact, its role in shaping the future of Black-owned businesses remains pivotal. The Chamber's commitment to advocacy, education, and community engagement ensures that its members are equipped to navigate the complexities of the business world.

National Small Business Month serves as a reminder of the importance of supporting small businesses year-round. By fostering partnerships, promoting inclusivity, and celebrating diversity, organizations like CBCC contribute to a more equitable and prosperous economy.

Here are some statistics:

- Colorado is home to approximately 691,230 small businesses, which make up 99.5% of all businesses in the state.
- These small businesses employ around 1.2 million workers, accounting for 49.6% of private-sector employment.
- Small businesses in Colorado generated over \$225 billion in total economic output in 2020.
- The most prominent industries for small businesses include professional, scientific,

and technical services, followed by construction, health care, and retail trade.

- Women-owned businesses represent 38.5% of all small businesses, while minority-owned businesses make up 16.8%.
- Small businesses also played a major role in job creation, contributing a net increase of 91,997 jobs, which is 73.4% of the total job growth during that period.
- In 2021, banks issued \$2.2 billion in loans to Colorado businesses with revenues of \$1 million or less.

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

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!

Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

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

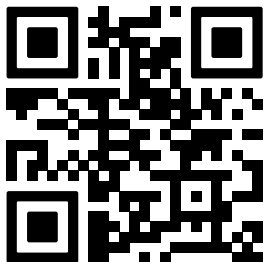
Strategic Partnerships with corporations that strengthen the Black business ecosystem.

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The Business of... **SPORTS**

An LA Dodgers baseball player recently signed a 10-year, \$700 million dollar contract. The LARGEST contract in US sports history. Last month, an NFL quarterback signed a \$330 million-dollar football deal with \$250 million in guaranteed cash, the LARGEST guaranteed money in NFL league history. In 2024 Cristiano Ronaldo, an international soccer phenom, made more than \$200 million in salary and winnings and another \$60 million in endorsements.

The business of sports has become a multi-billion-dollar industry and the players, coaches, student athletes and their schools are just beginning to “cash in” on all the new financial options and opportunities. Period. Full Stop.

According to Deloitte Consulting, the global sports industry reached a value of \$480 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach more than \$680 billion by 2028. The global sports industry is a conglomeration of several complementary markets. When combined, has the potential to directly affect the global economy.

The industry consists of several submarkets including sporting goods, nutritional supplements and sports betting to name a few. Sports betting is expected to grow to a \$245 billion-dollar market with Vegas style gambling and on-line action through companies like DraftKings and BET MGM Sportsbook, where Jamie Foxx is their contracted pitchman.

The playing field for sports is growing and getting bigger by the minute. As the fan base expands, less traditional sports like Formula 1 or pickleball are growing in popularity. New multi-million-dollar ESPN streaming deals for professional teams and players has become the norm. NFL football teams are now going international and European soccer clubs are expanding their footprint in the US with the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL). Denver is getting a new professional women’s soccer team as part of the NWSL expansion. Denver NWSL, in partnership with the City of Centennial and Cherry Creek

School District (CCSD), will build a 12,000-seat temporary stadium for Denver NWSL to play in for the 2026 and 2027 NWSL seasons.

Small colleges to large universities and everything in between are participating with all the new money flowing through sports. From the announcement of countless conference changes to several record-breaking NIL deals the industry is vast and growing like wildfire. The past few years in college sports have been jammed packed with change, with many more changes on the way, will help pay high school athletes to come to your school and then pay them to stay.

The University of Colorado and other in-state institutions are now allowed to provide financial compensation for student athletes. Last month, Governor Polis signed into law House Bill 25-1041 regarding student athletes and their name, image and likeness (NIL). That’s long-term money that can severely alter a family’s future and create multi-generational wealth.

The business of sports has evolved into a global economic force. As a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, I encourage us to examine the business and employment opportunities in the multi-billion-dollar sports industry.

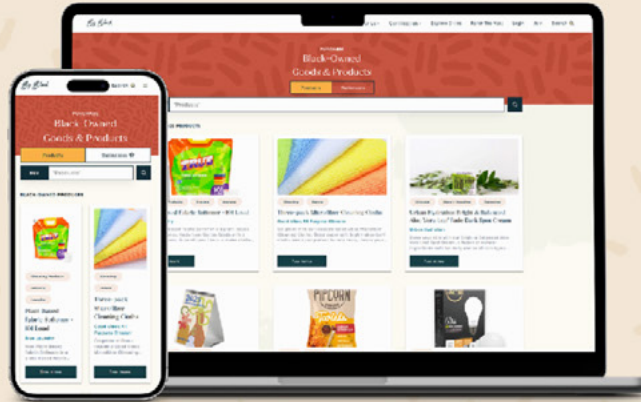
THG is a government relations consulting firm that specializes in water and energy issues. www.thg.consulting



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

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



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

 dr.angelic.cole@cbcc.biz

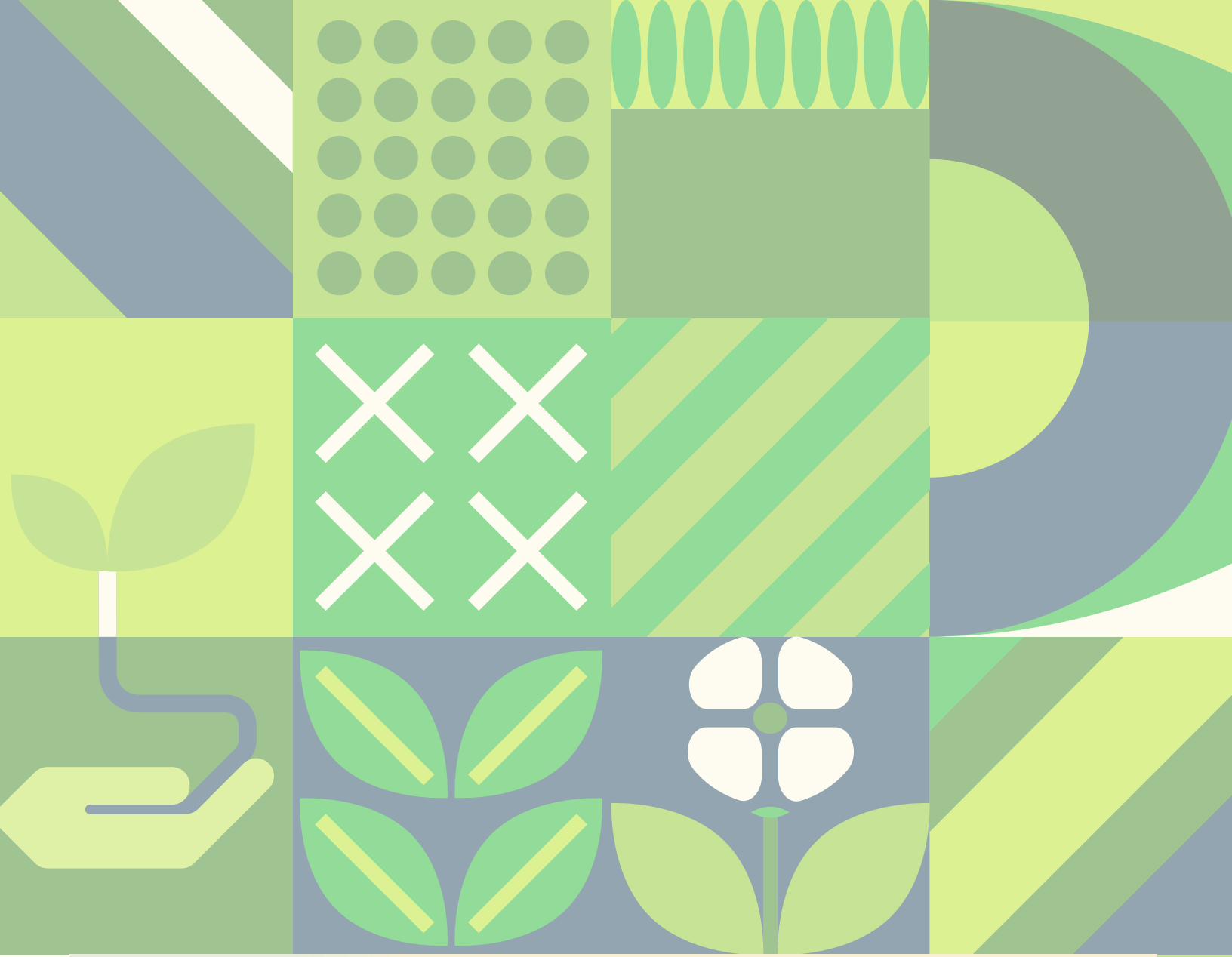
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Women Who Charge Honors Three

“Sisters in Energy”

By LASHEITA SAYER



SISTERS IN ENERGY

AWARD RECIPIENTS

March 12



Shoshone Kendall



Chelsea Gaines



Sade Cooper

WOMEN WHO Charge

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Denver, CO – On March 12, 2025, Women Who Charge celebrated remarkable achievements in the energy sector by honoring three outstanding women with the “Sister in Energy” award. This prestigious recognition highlights the contributions of women of color who are driving innovation, equity, and sustainability within the industry. The ceremony, held in Denver, Colorado, was a vibrant gathering of industry professionals, community leaders, and advocates committed to a more inclusive and sustainable energy future.

Women Who Charge, an organization dedicated to supporting and promoting women in clean energy, building electrification, clean technology policy, workforce development, and solar energy, recognized the following exceptional individuals:

Chelsea Gaines:

Chelsea Gaines, Associate Director of Colorado Solar for All at the Colorado Energy Office, received the “Sister in Energy” award for her dedication to ensuring equitable access to solar energy. Her decade-long commitment to serving marginalized communities has resulted in impactful programs, including the deployment of a \$156 million grant to low-income and disadvantaged areas. Her work highlights the critical intersection of energy efficiency, affordable housing, and renewable resources.

Shoshone Kendall:

Shoshone Kendall, a Fellow with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), was honored for her work in building decarbonization and

her drive for sustainable energy solutions. Her expertise spans government, nonprofit, and private sectors, allowing her to excel in policy administration, community outreach, and program development. At the DOE, she enhances energy efficiency and reliability for K-12 schools and nonprofits nationwide. Her ongoing pursuit of an MPA in Environmental Policy underscores her commitment to creating lasting, positive change.

Sade Cooper:

Sade Cooper, Co-Founder and CEO of CHIC, was recognized for her significant contributions to workforce development. Her organization empowers women through programs in high-earning, in-demand industries. Her work with CHIC, as well as with the Bell Policy Center, and her work that lead to the passage of SB24-53. Which is a racial equity study measure for Black Coloradans, showcases her tireless work to raise up her community.

The “Sister in Energy” awards not only celebrate individual accomplishments but also emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion within the energy sector. These women serve as powerful role models, inspiring future generations to pursue careers in energy and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world.

The event served as a powerful reminder of the importance of recognizing and amplifying the voices of women of color in the energy industry. By highlighting their achievements, Women Who Charge is helping to create a more inclusive and representative sector that benefits everyone.

SISTERS IN ENERGY

Chelsea Gaines— *Solar Energy*

Chelsea Gaines, Associate Director of Colorado Solar for All at the Colorado Energy Office, has dedicated a decade to serving marginalized communities. Her work empowers those on the “margins,” recognizing them as essential contributors.

Chelsea’s career includes case management for refugees, the homeless, and formerly incarcerated individuals, focusing on empowerment and resource navigation. She then addressed housing barriers, recognizing the nexus of energy efficiency, affordable housing, and renewable energy. In the solar industry, Chelsea advocates for these communities, providing free residential solar and paid training. She now leads the Colorado Solar for All Grant, deploying \$156 million to low-income and disadvantaged communities, a historic win for equitable energy access.



SISTERS IN ENERGY

Shoshone Kendall— *Building Decarbonization*

Shoshone Kendall, a Building Decarbonization Fellow with the US Department of Energy, is dedicated to creating equitable and sustainable energy solutions. With a background spanning government, nonprofit, and private sectors, she brings expertise in policy administration, community outreach, and program development. At the DOE, Shoshone enhances energy efficiency and reliability for K-12 schools and nonprofits nationwide. Her Alaskan upbringing instilled a commitment to public service and addressing fundamental human needs. Currently, she is pursuing an MPA in Environmental Policy at the University of Colorado Denver, further solidifying her expertise in fostering sustainable progress and ensuring community access to vital resources.



SISTERS IN ENERGY

Sade Cooper— *Workforce Development*

Sade Cooper, Co-Founder and CEO of CHIC, empowers women through workforce programs in high-earning, in-demand industries. A Bell Policy Center Board Member, Sade was honored by The Women's Foundation of Colorado for CHIC's exemplary work, particularly in improving opportunities for young Black women. She spearheaded the passage of SB24-53, a racial equity study measure for Black Coloradans. With a background in finance at US Bank, Sade transitioned to community service, founding CHIC in 2017. CHIC's programs, including Impact Youth-Educational Programming and Women at Work, focus on mindfulness, career readiness, and economic empowerment, reflecting Sade's commitment to building thriving communities.



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Images: McBoat Photography

A wooden bookshelf with several books and a small green plant. The books are arranged on two shelves. The top shelf has a black book with a green plant on top. The bottom shelf has several books, including 'The Business of Expertise' by T.D. Jakes, 'Lean Office and Service Simplified' by Locher, 'Beyond the Leavitt Model' by David Leavitt, 'Scaling Up' by Jeff Hilderman, 'Systemology' by Mike Michalowicz, and 'Clockwork' by Mike Michalowicz. The background is a light-colored wall.

Reclaim, Rebuild, and Rise: A Vision for Leadership That Heals

A Conversation with
Makisha Boothe

Founder, Sistahbiz Global Network

By DR. ANGELIC COLE

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

Boothe: So at my core, my values are purpose, growth, and accountability. I believe we're all here with divine assignments—and I wake up each day trying to honor mine. Leadership, for me, is about becoming the highest version of myself so that I can live with purpose and impact. It's about asking, Who did God create me to be? What did God send me to do? Who did God send me to help or serve? —and not being passive about that answer. I work daily to grow into that vision. Not just for myself, but for God, for my ancestors, and for the people who count on me every day. I truly believe that everyone is here for a purpose—and when you're aligned with it, you're not just leading ... you're showing up in service of something bigger. That's what motivates me: knowing that how I live and lead has ripple effects far beyond me - and across generations.

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

Boothe: I've had many role models, but I'll share two who have deeply shaped how I lead and live.

First, my aunt. Her influence runs deep. She's always been committed to excellence and authenticity, and she never accepted anything less from me. She didn't let me skip the details, make excuses, or fake my way through anything. And because of that, I learned to value being honest with myself. If I'm real about where I am and how I'm showing up, I can transform anything. That standard of self-accountability has stayed with me throughout my life.

The second is Patricia Barela Rivera, a former SBA Colorado District Director, and the first woman of color I witnessed in a powerful federal leadership role—and she let me in close enough to see the truth behind the title. I watched how



Photo: McBoat Photography

she navigated being labeled and misunderstood, but also deeply respected. I saw what it meant to lead as a woman of color inside a predominantly white institution. Watching her use her power, voice, and influence to challenge systems and advocate for women and people of color taught me so much about the kind of leader I wanted to be. She showed me what it means to be strong and strategic—and to never forget the people you're fighting for.

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

Boothe: I wanted other women to get free. To be liberated. To use their gifts to build something they owned—instead of spending their lives being labor for someone else's dream.

Sistahbiz is actually my first long-term leadership role in the nonprofit world. I come from the for-profit startup space, with a background in politics and education. I've worked at the Small Business Administration, helped pass landmark legislation at our state capitol, and launched businesses of my own. I started Sistahbiz because I saw so many Black women leaving corporate jobs seeking entrepreneurial freedom—only to encounter struggle and systemic barriers.

We are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs in the country, but we're also the lowest earning. That's not because we're not capable—it's because we're underfunded, undercoached, and systemically excluded. Still, for me, this work goes far beyond coaching or training. I'm on panels. I'm in boardrooms. I'm meeting with mayors and elected officials. Sistahbiz is not just a coaching org—it's an advocacy organization.

It started with one woman asking me for a coaching session—just to learn how I started my business. Then 10 more came. Then 150. And today, our team has supported thousands across 28 states. It wasn't a planned nonprofit journey—but it was always a purpose-led one.



Photo: McBoat Photography

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

Boothe: Model what you hope to see. As a leader, your actions speak louder than your words. They shape the culture of your organization and set the tone for how people show up.

If you welcome feedback and hold yourself accountable, you'll create a space where others feel safe to do the same. If you lead with candor, transparency, and authenticity, you build a culture where the truth is safe. If you challenge the status quo, you invite innovation—and your people will gain the confidence to think creatively and build boldly alongside you.

And most importantly, remember this: you want to send people off better than they came to you—stronger, wiser, more healed, more skilled,



Photo: McBoat Photography

and more whole. That's real leadership. Not just growing a team or a business, but helping grow people.

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

Boothe: I believe that Black women business owners are one of the most powerful levers we have for breaking generational curses and cycles of injustice. Sistahbiz exists to grow ownership and wealth in the Black community—because there is no real fight against white supremacy or racial injustice without those two things. Our bloodlines are counting on us.

I'm inspired daily by the legacy of our ancestors. When I feel tired or think about giving up, I remember my great-grandmother—a Black

woman owning a brownstone and running a business in Harlem in the 1940s. I think about our enslaved ancestors who endured the unthinkable. There is nothing we can't overcome.

And I think what inspires the women in Sistahbiz is the clarity they gain when we work together. When they engage with our frameworks, they start to see it—the vision, the path, the roadmap to success. They see their liberation. They see their legacy. They remember their elders, they think about their children, and they keep going.

And every time I witness that—whether it's a Sistah crossing the six-figure mark, hitting half a million, taking her first sabbatical, bringing her kids to the office, or hiring a team to buy back her time—I'm reminded of why I do this. Their wins inspire me to keep building. Their freedom fuels mine.

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

Boothe: I'll be honest—for a long time, balance wasn't something I achieved... or even valued. I wasn't chasing success, exactly—I was chasing progress and equity, pouring everything into big fights and bold visions for our people. And I burned the candle at both ends.

The wake-up call came when I was fired from a six-figure job I had completely overextended myself for. That's when I realized I was disposable to a system I'd been sacrificing myself for. That moment changed how I saw work—and more importantly, how I saw myself.

So I gave myself a gift: I take off every July. It's symbolic—and necessary. It reminds me that my time, health, and peace matter.

These days, I'm more intentional. I listen to my body. I spend time in my prayer room. I'm turning my home into a sanctuary. I've made space to grieve what I've lost—relationships, deferred dreams, old versions of myself. I'm learning who I am outside of titles and missions. And that process requires space. It requires some version of balance—even if I'm still learning what that looks like for me.

For junior professionals—especially those on a mission, grinding hard, chasing the next level—I want you to know this: This game you're in... is life. You don't "win" or "finish" and then rest. You rest along the way. Because there's always going to be another milestone, another higher goal.

So take the time now to be present in all the parts of your life. Explore who you are beyond your career. Because that time won't be returned to you.



Photo: McBoat Photography



Photo: McBoat Photography

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

Boothe: As a Black woman in leadership, one of the most persistent challenges I've faced—and seen countless others face—is being misunderstood and targeted for showing up with candor, holding people accountable, or challenging the system. What others call “leadership” or “strategy” in one body, gets labeled “aggressive” or “disruptive” in ours.

I've also been underresourced and over-loaded—expected to do more with less, and given less time to produce results. There's a pattern I've seen over and over again, not just in my own journey, but in the stories of the thousands of Black women I've coached:

We're handed the mess after the talent and treasure have already been burned through. We're brought in and expected to “make a dollar out of 15 cents.” We show up, unpack the misalignment between an organization's values and its actions, and try to create real change. Then we get labeled the problem—for naming the problem.

This isn't just my story—it's a well-documented pattern. I've facilitated over 1,000 coaching sessions with Black women leaders, and I've heard the same story again and again. And it's exactly why so many of us are choosing entrepreneurship. We're not running—we're reclaiming. We're building our own tables because we're tired of being handed broken ones.

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

Boothe: One of our biggest challenges is cracking the code on profitability in what's become a saturated market of “business-in-a-box” and set-it-and-forget-it startup culture. We're not interested in quick wins or surface-level programming. We're building real

infrastructure—and that takes time, intention, and innovation.

Right now, we're focused on building a turnkey operation that's free of key-man risk and bottlenecks. That includes raising the next round of funding for our Suite App, scaling our licensing and certification program to deploy a network of top-tier Black business coaches, and helping our founders move past the six-figure ceiling and toward scalable, million-dollar models.

Another challenge is helping founders find patient capital—the kind that respects steady, sustainable growth with real margins, instead of chasing unicorn fantasies that often crash and burn. We're designing for longevity, not just velocity.

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

Boothe: For me, corporate responsibility at Sistahbiz isn't just about how we show up as an organization—it's about who we're empowering to lead and how they'll show up in the world once they have power.

Our vision is rooted in building a world where Black women lead—and lead differently. We know what to do with power. We don't forget the whole. When Black women have the resources, the seat, and the mic, we lead with justice in mind—not just profit.

I see our community of founders building companies that decolonize work standards, reject patriarchal and eurocentric workplace norms, and reintroduce ancient wisdom and common sense about how to treat people, care for the environment, and grow in ways that are sustainable and sacred.

So yes, we have a vision for corporate responsibility—but more than that, we're multiplying leaders who carry that same vision into their own enterprises. We're not just creating impact—we're creating a new standard.



Photo: McBoat Photography

Cole: In what direction does Sistahbiz see itself going?

Boothe: We're leaning fully into modeling what we want for our founders—to build something scalable, sustainable, and rooted in impact. With our new app now live, our focus is on bringing thousands of Black women into a powerful learning community where they can grow, learn, and scale their businesses with real support.

This year, we're also launching our Sistahbiz Coaches Network, a certification program designed to train business coaches who are both trauma-informed and culturally responsive. These certified coaches will become the backbone of our growing national network, ensuring our community is led by people who truly understand their experiences.

And long term, we're working to grow our margins and capacity so that we can fund a \$1M annual giveaway through the Sistahbiz Foundation—offering grants, resources, and services directly to Black women entrepreneurs. That's the direction: scale with purpose, build with care, and create an ecosystem where Black

women thrive—not just survive—in business.

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

Boothe: Over the next 40 years, I hope to see the Colorado Black Chamber grow stronger with every decade—expanding its resources, increasing its assets, growing its membership, and deepening its cultivation of Black business leaders across the state.

I envision the Chamber not only supporting entrepreneurship, but also driving landmark policies, protections, and opportunities that increase Black business participation and power in the Colorado economy. I want to see Black businesses not just survive, but be central to the economic engine of this state.

My hope is that the Chamber continues to be a home and launchpad for Black leaders, and a force that ensures economic equity, visibility, and generational wealth for our communities across Colorado.

COLORADO BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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Take Control of Your Online Presence with Search Engine Optimization

By ANDREW PARKER

Image: Adobe.



A blue rectangular panel with a white circular icon in the center. Below the icon, there is some faint, illegible text and three small circular icons at the bottom.



Are you tired of getting lost in the vast online world, struggling to make your mark? Take control of your online presence and become an expert in search engine optimization (SEO). By mastering the art of SEO, you can improve your website's visibility, attract more organic traffic, and establish yourself as a trusted authority in your industry.

In this article, we will uncover the secrets to optimizing your online content, mastering keyword research, and understanding the algorithms that determine search engine rankings. With step-by-step guidance and real-world examples, you will learn the tactics and strategies that top SEO experts use to dominate the search results.

Whether you're a seasoned marketer or just starting your online journey, this article is your comprehensive guide to taking charge of your online presence. From understanding the importance of high-quality backlinks to optimizing your website speed and performance, we will equip you with the knowledge and tools to propel your website to the top of search engine results pages.

Don't let your online presence be left to chance. Start learning SEO today and become the master of your digital domain.

The Importance of Online Presence

In today's digital age, having a strong online presence is more important than ever. With millions of websites and online businesses competing for attention, it's crucial to stand out from the crowd. A well-optimized website can help you achieve just that.

Having a strong online presence not only increases your visibility but also builds credibility and trust with your target audience. When people search for products or services related to your industry, you want your website to appear at the top of the search results. This is where SEO comes into play.

What is SEO and Why is it Important?

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the process of optimizing your website to improve its visibility in search engine rankings. When someone searches for a particular keyword or phrase, search engines like Google use complex algorithms to determine which websites should appear at the top of the results page.

By implementing SEO techniques, you can improve your website's chances of ranking higher in search engine results pages (SERPs). This increased visibility can lead to more organic traffic, higher conversion rates, and ultimately, more revenue.

The Benefits of Becoming an SEO Expert

Becoming an SEO expert can have numerous benefits for your online presence and business. Firstly, you will have the knowledge and skills to optimize your own website, saving you money on hiring external SEO agencies. Additionally, you will have the ability to analyze your website's performance, make data-driven decisions, and adapt to changes in search engine algorithms.

Furthermore, by mastering SEO, you can position yourself as an industry expert and build credibility with your audience. People are more likely to trust businesses that appear at the top of search results, and by consistently delivering high-quality content and optimizing your website, you can establish yourself as a trusted authority in your industry.

Understanding Search Engine Algorithms

Search engine algorithms are complex mathematical formulas used by search engines to determine the relevance and quality of websites. While the exact algorithms are closely guarded secrets, there are certain factors that we know influence search engine rankings.

One important factor is the relevance of your content to the search query. Search engines

analyze the keywords and phrases on your website to determine its relevance to specific search queries. By conducting thorough keyword research and incorporating these keywords into your content, you can increase your chances of ranking higher in search results.

Another important factor is the quality and authority of your website. Search engines consider factors such as the number and quality of backlinks pointing to your website, the overall user experience of your site, and the loading speed of your pages. By focusing on these factors, you can improve your website's authority and increase its chances of ranking higher in search results.

Keyword Research and Optimization

Keyword research is a crucial step in the SEO process. By understanding the keywords and phrases that your target audience is searching for, you can optimize your website to appear in

relevant search results.

Start by brainstorming a list of relevant keywords and phrases related to your industry. Use tools like Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, or Ahrefs to research the search volume and competition for each keyword. Aim for a balance between high search volume and low competition to maximize your chances of ranking well.

Once you have identified your target keywords, it's important to strategically incorporate them into your website's content. This includes optimizing your page titles, meta descriptions, headings, and body text. However, it's important to use keywords naturally and avoid keyword stuffing, as this can negatively impact your rankings.

On-Page SEO Techniques

On-page SEO refers to the optimization of elements on your website itself. This includes

Image: Adobe.





Image: Adobe.

optimizing your page titles, meta descriptions, headings, URLs, and internal linking structure.

Start by ensuring that each page on your website has a unique and descriptive title tag. This title should accurately represent the content of the page and include your target keyword. Similarly, meta descriptions should be concise, compelling, and include relevant keywords.

Headings, such as H1, H2, and H3 tags, should be used to structure your content and highlight important information. Use headings to break up your content into logical sections and include relevant keywords where appropriate.

URL optimization involves creating clean and user-friendly URLs that include relevant keywords. Avoid using long strings of numbers or irrelevant characters in your URLs, as these can

confuse both search engines and users.

Finally, internal linking is an important on-page SEO technique that helps search engines understand the structure and hierarchy of your website. By linking relevant pages together, you can distribute link equity and improve the overall visibility of your content.

Off-Page SEO Techniques

Off-page SEO refers to activities that take place outside of your website but still contribute to its overall visibility and authority. The most important off-page SEO technique is building quality backlinks.

Backlinks are links from external websites that point to your website. Search engines consider

backlinks as “votes of confidence” for your website, indicating that other websites find your content valuable and trustworthy. However, not all backlinks are created equal.

Focus on building high-quality backlinks from reputable and relevant websites. This can be done through techniques such as guest blogging, influencer outreach, and content promotion. Additionally, ensure that your website is listed in online directories and social media profiles to increase its visibility and attract more backlinks.

Building Quality Backlinks

Building quality backlinks is an essential aspect of off-page SEO. To build high-quality backlinks, start by identifying authoritative websites in your industry. Look for websites that have a strong online presence, high domain authority, and a significant number of backlinks.

Once you have identified these websites, reach out to them with personalized and compelling outreach emails. Offer to contribute guest posts or collaborate on content that adds value to their audience. By providing high-quality content and building relationships with other website owners, you can increase your chances of earning valuable backlinks.

Remember, building quality backlinks takes time and effort. Focus on creating valuable content, building relationships, and consistently promoting your website to attract natural backlinks.

Measuring and Tracking SEO Success

To measure the success of your SEO efforts, it's important to track key metrics and analyze data. There are several tools available that can help you monitor your website's performance, keyword rankings, organic traffic, and more.

Google Analytics is a free tool that provides valuable insights into your website's performance. It allows you to track metrics

such as the number of visitors, bounce rate, average session duration, and conversion rates. By analyzing this data, you can identify areas of improvement and make data-driven decisions.

Additionally, there are several paid SEO tools available that provide more advanced analytics and insights. Tools like SEMrush, Ahrefs, and Moz can help you track keyword rankings, analyze backlink profiles, and conduct competitor research.

Regularly monitor your website's performance and make adjustments to your SEO strategy as needed. SEO is an ongoing process, and it's important to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and algorithm changes.

Resources and Courses for Learning SEO

There are numerous resources and courses available that can help you learn SEO and master the art of optimization. Whether you prefer self-paced online courses, in-person workshops, or reading industry-leading blogs, there is a wealth of knowledge at your fingertips.

Some popular online platforms for learning SEO include Udemy, Coursera, and Moz Academy. These platforms offer courses taught by industry experts and cover a wide range of SEO topics, from beginner to advanced.

Additionally, there are several influential SEO blogs and websites that regularly publish informative and up-to-date content. Some notable examples include Moz, Search Engine Journal, and Backlinko. These resources provide valuable insights, case studies, and best practices that can help you stay ahead in the ever-changing world of SEO.

Don't wait any longer to take control of your online presence. Start learning SEO today and become the master of your digital domain. With dedication, persistence, and the right knowledge, you can optimize your website, attract more organic traffic, and achieve online success.



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For more info, contact Dale Hunter. Dale.Hunter@cbcc.biz



Image: Adobe.

How to Grow Your Small Business - From the Garage to the Warehouse to Retail

By DAVID DENKE

Do you have a home business? Do you have a great idea and want to get started? One of the first major challenges you may face is having enough space. Stepping up to the space you need, while maintaining a budget can be a huge challenge for small businesses. Let's look at how some small businesses dealt with space and growth.

Melissa Mercado-Denke started Campanula Design Studio in a two-car garage. Growing from a garage to a thriving online and retail business has been a floral adventure. Melissa delivers something unique to the gifting community in Seattle. Campanula sells wooden baskets that hold both florals and gift offerings. The baskets are custom and made at home. This required a separate space to isolate the sawdust from the flowers. The local government required that Melissa store alcohol in a secure location. This

meant having a special place in the garage for these items.

As sales grew, the neighborhood was not thrilled with the noisy power tools used to make baskets. The planer's rhythmic hum as it danced on old fence boards was not a welcome noise to neighbors. Seattle's variable temperature added another layer of challenge. Designing flowers in the garage was a labor of love, but success brought its own set of challenges.

The Quest for Space

As demand soared Melissa moved into a dedicated workspace. Enter SaltBox, a solution tailor-made for small businesses like Melissa's. Saltbox is a co-warehousing and 3rd party logistics company.

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Image: Adobe.

Co-warehousing companies exist around the country. They offer amenities like:

- Shared kitchen spaces
- Sound-proof phone rooms
- Shared meeting rooms
- Photo studios
- Shipping stations
- Package pickup by major carriers
- Shared restrooms
- Shared office equipment
- Wi-Fi networks

Shopping for the Right Co-Warehousing Space

Try researching warehouse space leasing companies like ReadySpaces, WeWork, CubeWork, Room2Work, and Saltbox. See what companies have a presence in your city. To find a shared warehouse space you need to ask some important questions:

1. Do you need ground-level shipping and receiving? If not now, will you soon need dock access?
2. How much space do you need and what is the cost per square foot of each option?
3. Do you have specific electrical needs? Melissa had a floral cooler which is best kept on its

own circuit. Will your landlord allow for such custom installations?

4. What sort of lighting is available in your space? Will you be taking product shots there and having to set up a photo station? Does the landlord have a photo studio as an amenity?
5. What about meeting rooms? Do you meet with customers or vendors?
6. Budget: Can you afford this space at the sales level you are at now? If not, are you on a growth trajectory to afford it soon?
7. Will the landlord's amenities help you save on some costs? If you don't have to pay a Wi-Fi provider or buy a refrigerator, can those costs help justify the space?
8. What about privacy? Does the space have floor to ceiling walls? Will you be subjected to your neighbor's terrible taste in music?
9. Look at all the options in and around your city. Consider commute time – how accessible is this to your home, your vendors, or your customers?

Co-warehousing options are popping up all over – some are part of larger chains and some are local.



Image: Adobe.

Investing in Growth

Success has a way of outgrowing its confines, and soon, the need for a retail space became clear. The warehouse space was just not good enough for servicing Melissa's customers or attracting drive-by business. Watching your local real estate market can be critical to a business owner. Melissa had priced the rental of retail spaces, but hadn't found the right space at the right price. One day, she found a commercial condo unit for sale that worked out to less of a per-month cost than renting. This was surprising for the Seattle market, and serves as a reminder to always keep your options open. Historically, an investment in real estate has been the lifesaver for some companies. It's always good to know what is out there, even if it is out of reach for now.

No Budget? Try Pop-ups!

There are still options if renting, or purchasing are not in your budget. Sarah Herbert of Toadstool Flower Club has found a creative

answer in Pop-up retail. Pop-up retail allows you to set up a temporary store for a short period of time. This allows you to take advantage of seasonal demand. This can take place in a farmer's market style setting with other retailers. There are also other options for pop-ups. Study the neighborhood. See if you can find a non-competitor who might be willing to share some space. Some businesses will be happy to have an event like a plant sale, or craft sale to draw in more customers. Sarah has sold houseplants and Christmas wreaths at donut shops and neighborhood cafes. If you have a product that attracts attention, chances are you can find a business willing to lend you some space, even if it's on the sidewalk outside.

Most Importantly, Don't Give Up!

You'll never succeed if you don't try. You'll never get rewarded if you don't take risks. Try one of our ideas or find one of your own that suits your business. Take a chance and prepare for growth!



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- **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

February 2025

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

National Women's History Month	Tuesday, February 12	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 15	Friday, July 18
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September 2025

911 Memorial	Tuesday, August 12	Friday, August 15
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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 2025

National Write a Business Plan Month	Tuesday, November 11	Friday, November 14
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January 2026

A Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Tuesday December 9	Friday, December 12
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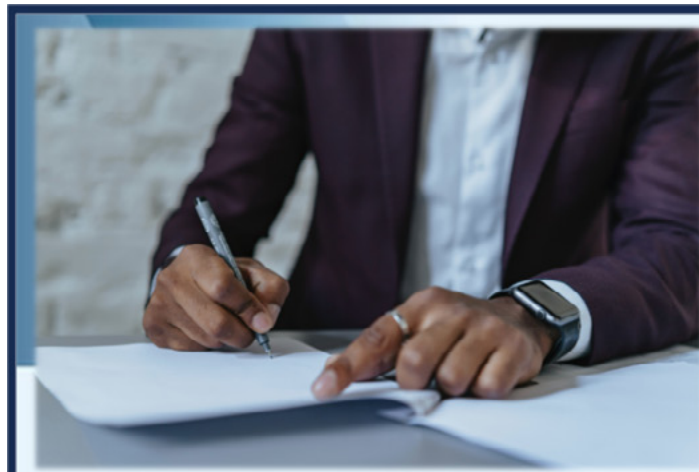
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	1X	3X	6X	9X	12X
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Half Page	\$500.00	\$450.00	\$400.00	\$350.00	\$300.00
Quarter Page	\$250.00	\$225.00	\$200.00	\$175.00	\$150.00
Eighth Page	\$125.00	\$112.50	\$100.00	\$87.50	\$75.00
Sixteenth Page	\$62.50	\$56.25	\$50.00	\$43.75	\$37.50

Advertisement Sizes

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

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