

# the BottomLine

Dear Fellow Business Owners and Supporters,

I hope this note finds you in good health and high spirits.

Have you ever encountered a problem or challenge in your business that you just couldn't see a solution? What did you do in that situation? Who did you surround yourself with?

There are times in business (and in life) that you will meet a challenge that, at first glance and sometimes up until the tipping point, just seems unsurmountable. You are not alone.

If you ever get an opportunity, study the ant. According to a new study in the open-access journal eLife, ants use their collective brainpower to navigate obstacles. Why don't we study the ant and come together more as a community to navigate complex problems?

Success does not depend on numbers alone. As business owners and leaders, we all know that managing by the numbers is critical to knowing the fiscal health of our organizations. However, that is only one aspect of the solution to our impediments. I invite you to look at challenges from the collective.

You are part of a strong collective. NJAWBO wants to hear from you. What challenges have you squarely looked at in the face and waved goodbye to? How can we serve you better to position your business for greater success?

Join us as we offer meet-and-greet style programming to mentor businesswomen who want to scale their business over the next 12 months, in-person events to get contract ready, and lunch & learn events showing where your business might fit in the offshore wind industry supply chain. Visit our calendar of events.

Reach out to me at [president@njawbo.org](mailto:president@njawbo.org) to personally let me know what your wins are. We want to celebrate you this March during Women's History Month and every day.

I also want to know how we can help you with your specific obstacles that may seem unsurmountable. Join us to build your relationships, referrals, and revenue.

*Bertha*

Bertha Robinson  
NJAWBO State President  
[president@njawbo.org](mailto:president@njawbo.org)

**2-6-24 in Somerset**



## New Members

**Cris Amato**

Grace Concierge, Morristown

**Shakyrrah Covington**

SCAI Legacy Group LLC, Livingston

**Patricia Hydock**

Local Labor Helpers, LLC, Egg Harbor City

**Amanie Kaur**

Fastline Cargo LLC, Cinnaminson

**Arlene Simon**

Amparo Enterprises - Columbus Drive LLC,  
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**1-25-24 In Woodland Park**



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## NJAWBO Member News

### Melanie Cunningham Exhibited and Presented at 2023 IGNITE Women's Empowerment Summit

Melanie Cunningham, Esq., founder of Melanie Cunningham Law Office P.C., attended, presented, and exhibited at the conference, 2023 IGNITE Women's Empowerment Summit, which was held in Wilmington, Delaware. Women from across the nation gathered for three empowering days of inspiration, connection, and empowerment.

"This is my second year attending the IGNITE conference," notes Melanie, "and once again I've come away invigorated, inspired, and motivated. It also gives me the opportunity to discuss *Striking Business Gold* with those who visit my vendor table, and this year I was also able to deliver a workshop for entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, which was positively received."

To learn more about Melanie, her business, or her book, connect with her at 646-832-2670, [melanie@mcunninghamlaw.com](mailto:melanie@mcunninghamlaw.com), or [www.mcunninghamlaw.com](http://www.mcunninghamlaw.com).



Left to right: Melanie Cunningham, Esq., with Danielle Dixon, founder of Bridging Visions Coaching & Development, and co-author Sasha Lalite, Meta Viable Solutions



Left to right: Melanie Cunningham, Esq., with Tanya Jones, co-owner of Enjoy a Bowl LLC in Philadelphia, and Marquita Williams, a health-care professional and aspiring entrepreneur



"Striking Business Gold" co-authors, Melanie Cunningham (right) and Sasha Lalite

### 1-17-24 in Montclair



## Taryn Abrahams Presented “Engaging a Multi-Generational Workforce” at 2023 National Conference on EMS in Atlantic City



A presenter at the 2023 National Conference on EMS, Taryn Abrahams, MFT, SHRM-CP, of Empower Behavioral Services, in Cedar Grove, offered a Learning Lab on “Engaging a Multi-Generational Workforce.” This conference on emergency medical services (EMS) provides a unique learning experience for those involved to improve the quality of care delivered in New Jersey. The conference offered 100 cutting-edge presentations or workshops designed to expand knowledge, promote diversity, acknowledge struggles, and foster a climate of encouragement and healthy exchange.

“For the first time in U.S. history, we have five generations working together, and there is no playbook for this,” explained Taryn. “It is important for companies to develop a generational empathy and understanding to help foster a work environment that is based on consideration and respect,” she added. And to take it a step further,” Taryn recommended “all companies and organizations make this part of their Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion conversation and to invest in training to help overcome generational sticking points.”

Taryn Abrahams, MFT, SHRM-CP, is president at Empower Behavioral Services, in Cedar Grove, is a workplace behavioral specialist and human interaction expert who helps companies implement behavioral best practices to improve workplace interpersonal relations and holistically strengthen corporate culture. Leveraging her experience as a psychotherapist, Taryn’s workplace workshops are designed to enhance employee morale, foster collaborative and productive workplace environments, and nurture employee loyalty and ambassadorship. She can be reached at [info@empowerbehavioralservices.com](mailto:info@empowerbehavioralservices.com), 973-803-8276, or <https://www.empowerbehavioralservices.com/>.



*Our business is energized by more than just electric and gas. PSEG knows that maintaining a diverse and talented network of suppliers makes good business sense. Strong relationships with our minority, women, veteran, service disabled veteran & LGBT-owned business partners can help us provide more options, better solutions and, in the long run, superior products and services. For more information about becoming a member of PSEG’s supplier network, log on to [pseg.com/supplierdiversity](https://pseg.com/supplierdiversity).*

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## Growth for Dream Vacations ~ Escape Artist Holidays Translates into New Opportunities for Travelers



Christy Mahon (left) with Denise R. Lees, the Scenic+Emerald Regional Sales Director, Eastern U.S.

Christy Mahon, owner of Dream Vacations ~ Escape Artist Holiday Travel Group, has recently expanded her ranks and their repertoire. Bringing in new associates and developing her team has long been something Christy had desired to do.

“I thoroughly enjoy mentoring people into their careers, and onboarding and training a team of travel agents is very exciting,” said Christy. As part of her expansion and growth plans for her business, “having a team who are located across the country will have a positive impact on our ability to promote travel to new clients who are hoping to expand their horizons through exploration.” Christy’s team is taking root in Florida, Maryland, and upstate New York.

Christy’s business has always been a mix of land-based and cruise travel; in fact, she specializes in European vacations in both areas. To that end, she attended Dream Vacations’ annual Land Summit in Cancun, Mexico during September. Here she was able to share her knowledge and expertise to other franchise owners, connect with varied vendor partners

old and new, and expand her knowledge in new ways. Sessions included myriad travel styles (resorts, independent and escorted touring, etc.), trends in travel management, up-and-coming destinations, and technology. Touring several all-inclusive resorts further added to her first-hand experience in this beautiful destination.

Dream Vacations ~ Escape Artist Holidays focuses on leisure travel. Its motto is: “Travel changes your perspective of the world, of yourself, and of yourself in the world. Make it a journey you’ll never forget.” To learn more about the services provided visit [www.EscapeArtistHolidays.com](http://www.EscapeArtistHolidays.com) or call Christy Mahon at 862-354-8448 to discuss your travel aspirations.

Also, in November, Christy attended in-person continuing education sessions sponsored by Emerald and Scenic Cruises. These luxury river cruise and yacht travel companies round out her ability to serve an expanding clientele who are interested in unique destinations as well as high-touch/high-end experiences all around the globe—taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary.

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### 11-29-23 Offshore Wind Lunch & Learn in South Orange



# The Power of a Guiding Word for Empowered Entrepreneurs

by Francine Esrig

As we enter the second quarter of 2024, it is a good time to pause and reflect on our journey so far this year and visit our progress toward our business, personal, and professional goals for the year. While I am a believer in setting annual and even quarterly goals, I have found a different approach that guides my day-to-day actions throughout the year. This approach is less about the destination (the achievement of the annual goals), and more about the process taken to reach the destination. The process focuses on the intentional steps we take each day that shape how we see ourselves, how we show up to others, how we achieve and celebrate achievements, and how we learn from our experiences along the way.

In addition to setting set goals at the beginning of the year, I have also adopted the tradition of choosing one guiding word each year. This one word serves as my beacon, my guiding light. It shapes the decisions I make, the opportunities I consider, and the approach I take to handling professional and personal challenges. This one word has worked to ground me and ensure I focus on what matters most each and every day.

By way of example, in 2017, my word was “GOAL.” Amid loss and triumph, honoring my father’s legacy, I set, trained for, and achieved a challenging goal—a Spartan Sprint. I am not a runner and do not consider myself an athlete per se, but I trained for three months to take on this five-mile run

with 20 obstacles, most of which I never imagined I could conquer. I enjoyed the process of training and executing the Spartan, a true accomplishment for me. I admittedly, still pride myself in setting, sticking to, and completing this unlikely goal.

In 2018, the word “COURAGE” guided me as I left the corporate world after more than 25 years to start my own consulting practice. I was leaving a world I knew well—a visible and strategic role with a manager, team, and colleagues I loved working with. Although I would still be working in the field I have always been so passionate about, I was certainly taking a risk shifting from an internal to external role. It took an enormous amount of courage, but it was great to find it within myself.

In 2023, “SHAPE” was my word for the year. It represented my desire to reshape my environment, marked by selling my home, which served me and my family well for over 25 years in the town where I spent the first two decades of my life. I moved to a new community not far from my former home. However, it required me to take time to make my new house feel like a home. I’ve found new places to shop, dine, and drive, and it has all been very refreshing.

For 2024, I chose the word “YES.” Inspired by a recent fitness and yoga retreat, I identified with our leader’s invitation to say *yes* to new opportunities we have not before considered, even when they are

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disguised as challenges. It is a small word that carries with it great power and vast possibilities if we are willing to confront discomfort and uncertainty with open hearts and minds. Growth often lies just beyond our comfort zone. I recall my mother saying, “You only regret the things you don’t do, not the things you do.” Similarly, a former coach of mine often said, “Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.” Whatever saying resonates with you, I encourage you to just say **yes**.

So, I began 2024 by committing to saying “Yes”—to embracing unforeseen opportunities, to taking what may seem at first to be risks. I encourage you to join me in letting the spirit of **yes** unlock your untapped potential and growth. Consider choosing a word that will guide the rest of *your* 2024!

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**Francine Esrig**, founder, principal consultant, and executive coach at Francine Esrig & Associates, is a seasoned talent advisor, executive coach, and industrial & organizational psychologist. With over 20 years of experience as an internal HR and talent executive, she understands

firsthand the challenges her clients face. Together with her extensive external consulting experiences and coaching successes, Francine has a proven track record of helping global organizations and individual business leaders meet their unique organizational and professional objectives. Her clients span industries, sectors, sizes, and levels of maturity, including middle market and high growth companies in financial services, pharmaceutical, media/entertainment, and tech industries, among others. Francine earned her Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut. She can be reached at 201-962-0700, [francine@francineesrig.com](mailto:francine@francineesrig.com), or at [www.francineesrig.com](http://www.francineesrig.com).



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# Make Your Big Idea Actually Happen!

by Nicole Lohrbeer

You know what you need to build and grow your business. In fact, you have so many ideas, it can be hard to know where to start!

Whether you want to refine your client onboarding system, rework your social media marketing plan, update your website, or launch a new product or service, you need a simple, repeatable strategy you can rely on to get those big things done.

Although overwhelm often feels like a default mode, it *is* possible to make consistent, sustainable progress on your big picture goals by following this simple process.

## Choose a Single Big Idea

Business mogul Gary Keller makes a compelling argument in his book, *The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*, that trying to focus on even two or three big things at a time makes us significantly less effective in achieving any of them.

Make a list of all the projects swirling around in your head—the big ones and the small ones, your most audacious dreams and the projects that feel more mundane, the things you are actively working on and those you started but never quite finished. Chances are each of these projects falls into one of three categories: things that can be completed *Now* (in the next few weeks or months), *Next* (sometime this year), and *Later* (a year or more out).

Go through your *Now* list and ask yourself:

- Do the results you seek justify your undivided time and attention?
- Do you have the time, energy, and resources available to make it happen?
- Is now the right time for you to make that investment?

If the answer is no to any of these questions, move that project to the *Next* list where it can wait for the right time. Keep refining your list until you have identified a single *Big Idea* that you are ready and excited to act on.

## Create One Place

Now that you have your focus, choose *One Place* where everything related to your *Big Idea* can live.

In her book, *The Creative Habit*, dancer/choreographer Twyla Tharp devotes a whole chapter to the simple file box she uses for every dance she creates. “Anything can work,” Tharp says, “so long as it lets you store and retrieve your ideas.”

Your *One Place* can be anything you want—a project management app, a spreadsheet, a notebook, a shoebox—as long as it makes sense for you and is convenient. Use it as a container for all the research, notes, ideas, and plans related to your *Big Idea*.

## Build Your Big Picture Plan

A *Big Picture Plan* serves as the overall framework for how to make your *Big Idea* actually happen.

Identify four to six milestones that are small enough to guide your process but big enough not to bog down your plan with too many details. For example, if you want to start a newsletter, you might need to:

- build a landing page to collect email addresses
- create a welcome series to introduce yourself and your business
- find an email provider to ensure your emails are delivered
- write a certain number of finished emails that are ready to send out

How you create your *Big Picture Plan* is less important than you having a clear structure to help track your progress and maintain your focus.

## Choose a Starting Step

Now that you have a *Big Picture Plan*, choose a *Starting Step* that feels authentic and manageable to you.

Begin by narrowing your focus to a single milestone. It can be one that makes the most obvious sense to the process, but it can also be the easiest, the most complicated, or whatever excites you the most.



The important thing is to write down all the steps you need to make it happen.

For our newsletter example, the steps to create a bank of finished emails might look like this:

1. Create a running list of content ideas.
2. Draft one or two emails a week.
3. Revise one or two drafts a week.
4. Polish and review each finished email for grammar, spelling, and clarity.

Your *Starting Step* will be the first thing on your list, and as you finish each step, you will always know exactly what your *Next Step* is.

### Cultivate a Sustainable Habit

If all this feels too intimidating, try building a *Sustainable Habit* into your day. Habits fuel your process and help you stay focused, but they do not have to be big or hard—try identifying what is keeping you stuck and breaking it down into something manageable and sustainable.

In the case of our newsletter, the research, brainstorming, and drafting might have gone well, but revising brings up a lot of anxiety. Instead of working on a whole email at once, try making micro-revisions to one paragraph each time you sit down at your desk.

Your *Sustainable Habit* will grow as your confidence does. Until then, you will be making sustained progress on your *Big Idea* without burning yourself out.

### Make a Simple System

When our plans and habits are working well, our gremlins often do their best and loudest work! Imposter Syndrome tells you that you are not ready and need more time. Doubt wants you to do something safe to eliminate uncertainty. Distraction has you chasing the high of starting something new.

Creating a *Simple System* to track, evaluate, refine, and reflect on your process can help quiet those voices. Whether posting notes on your mirror, adding reminders to your phone, or checking in with an accountability partner, your *Simple System* reminds you to revisit each of the steps above and ensure you

have the habits, support, and resources you need to make your *Big Idea* happen.

### Celebrate Your Wins

Finally, if you choose one *Big Idea* as your priority, identify a *Single Place* for your process to live, build a *Big Picture Plan* to stay focused, begin with your *Starting Step* and go from there, create a *Sustainable Habit* to fuel your process, and cultivate a *Simple System* to reflect on and refine it all, you will wind up with many, *many* wins.

Make a habit of recording, reviewing, and celebrating each of them—everything from finding your voice in a daily writing practice to getting your first subscriber to a year of consistent emails and the increased sales that follow.

Whatever your *Big Idea* is, start small, be specific, get consistent but most important—get started!

### References

Keller, G., *The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*, Bard Press, Portland, OR, 2013.

Tharp, T., *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2006.

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**Nicole Lohrbeer** founded Change inSight Coaching to support creative women entrepreneurs who have *all the ideas* but struggle to stay focused long enough to implement them. Drawing on close to 20 years of teaching experience, Nicole designed her signature coaching program, *From*

*Chaos to Consistency*, to help creative women build confident, consistent foundations for their business—without bullying themselves, burning out, or selling out. Visit [www.changeinsightcoaching.com](http://www.changeinsightcoaching.com) or find Nicole on LinkedIn for more information.



## NJAWBO News

### NJAWBO Joins New Jersey Diverse Business Advisory Council as Founding Member

NJAWBO has joined the New Jersey Diverse Business Advisory Council (NJDBAC) as a founding member. NJDBAC is a coalition of leading New Jersey business organizations dedicated to promoting the inclusion and advancement of diverse businesses in the New Jersey's economy. Other founding members include NJ State Veterans Chamber of Commerce, NJ Business and Industry Association, NJ State Chamber of Commerce, Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, African American Chamber of Commerce, Women Business Enterprise Center East, Punjabi American Chamber of Commerce, NY/NJ Minority Supplier Development Council, Eastern Minority Supplier Development Council, Asian Indian Chamber of Commerce, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Business Association of Montclair.



Robin Tabakin

“As a past president of NJAWBO and current Public Policy Leader, I am proud that our organization is a founding member of NJDBAC, along with many other great chambers and advocacy groups representing thousands of diverse businesses in New Jersey,” notes Robin Tabakin. “Working collaboratively, we will encourage the Legislature to pass legislation requiring a 30% set aside for capable diverse New Jersey businesses. This will provide greater opportunities for economic growth within the diverse business community.”

NJDBAC aims to cultivate an environment where diverse businesses can thrive and contribute meaningfully to New Jersey's economic landscape. NJDBAC's members advocate for fair and equitable access to government contracts, resources, and opportunities for minority, women, LGBTQ+, veteran-owned businesses, and those with disabilities. For more information, visit <https://diversechambers.com>.

### Mamie Tolbert Featured Panelist at Rutgers-Newark Offshore Wind Energy Community Engagement Event

NJAWBO President-Elect, Mamie Tolbert, was among the featured panelists at the Rutgers-Newark Offshore Wind Energy Community Engagement Event held on January 26 from 9:00am to 1:00pm. Approximately 50 community members from academia, government, nonprofit organizations, and industry came together to discuss the business of offshore wind energy.

The panelists for The Business of Offshore Wind Energy panel discussion included Mamie Tolbert, CEO, MST Mediation Solutions LLC; Eric C. Henry, Head, Regulatory and External Affairs, Bluepoint Wind; Favio German, Community Engagement Manager, Attentive Energy; and Sahil Jain, Director, Strategy & Partnerships, Newlab. The panel was moderated by Kevin Lyons, Rutgers Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency. A roundtable discussion on the Challenges and Opportunities for Newark, New Jersey, and the region followed.

“It was a privilege to participate on this panel,” says Tolbert. “I’ve attended many offshore wind (OSW) events to learn all I can about this industry. It will provide many business opportunities for entrepreneurs and business owners to become suppliers as the OSW initiative develops in New Jersey.”

With funding from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, offshore wind energy community engagement events have been conducted at all three Rutgers campuses: Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark. These in-person events help to build community surrounding offshore wind energy across the state.





Left to right: Mamie S. Tolbert, CEO, MST Mediation Solutions LLC; Eric C. Henry, Head, Regulatory and External Affairs, Bluepoint Wind; Favio German, Community Engagement Manager, Attentive Energy; and Sahil Jain, Director, Strategy & Partnerships, Newlab



Mamie S. Tolbert, NJAWBO President-Elect



Bertha Robinson, NJAWBO President

A promotional banner for Bluepoint Wind. The top half has a blue background with the Bluepoint Wind logo (a stylized wave inside a circle) and the text "BLUEPOINT WIND" in white. Below this, the text "POWERING A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE FOR ALL" is displayed in large, bold, white and yellow letters. The bottom half of the banner shows a photograph of a beach with waves crashing against rocks. The website address "www.bluepointwind.com" is written in white at the bottom.

# NJAWBO BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2023–2024

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The New Jersey Association of Women Business Owners is the longest-standing statewide organization of women business owners in New Jersey. Its primary objective is to support and encourage business ownership by women.

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[www.NJAWBO.org](http://www.NJAWBO.org)

### *The Bottom Line* Newsletter

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*The Bottom Line* is the official publication of the New Jersey Association of Women Business Owners, Inc.

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