

Contact: Cheryl McCants, Impact Consulting, 646-872-2377 or cmccants@eimpactconsulting.com

Unprecedented Innovation Conference for Business Owners and Entrepreneurs

Presented by the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership and the Newark Community Economic Development Corporation

INNOVATE YOUR WAY TO HIGHER PROFIT

Newark, NJ – January 29, 2016 – Today **Brad Benson**, '87 Super Bowl NY Giant turned entrepreneur, **Emmet Dennis**, Sundial Brands Chief Community Officer, **Travis Perry**, Shark Tank Season 3 Winner for ChordBuddy, **Larry Bailin**, Newark-native internet marketing author and Single Throw CEO, **Karin Bellantoni**, business strategist and Katalyst CEO and other successful entrepreneurs are sharing their perspectives on ways to innovate within small businesses. Retailers, service providers, consultants, caterers and other business owners from around the region are participating in a day-long series of keynotes, workshops and competitions where they learn, first-hand, that innovation is a mindset and is not reserved for tech companies. Rutgers Business School's Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development served as host.

The Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IFEL) Next Level Conference, now in its eighth year and presented in partnership with the Newark Community Economic Development Corporation (Newark Community EDC), explores innovative start-up, growth and exit strategies for business owners. Participants started the morning with a charged breakfast where Chris Dessi from Silverback Social paved a roadmap for extraordinary success. They then heard from luncheon keynote speaker Benson about how he leveraged his professional playing skills into innovative marketing tools for his auto dealership - Brad Benson Hyundai in Monmouth Junction, N.J., the number one Hyundai dealership in the country¹. Workshops throughout the day wrap up with a food-expo and a \$10,000 business pitch competition. This unique forum reminds owners that there is no downside to innovation. Attendees received access to first-hand knowledge and experience that small business owners don't usually have.

"IFEL's targets are the everyday businesses, service providers and storefront owners that make Newark and the surrounding areas better communities," said **Jill Johnson, CEO of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership**. "The conference is for owners who want to get to the million-dollar level and for those who want to figure out how to create wealth through an exit strategy. It's a great opportunity for people to learn from the successes and failures of highly successful entrepreneurs. Our theme this year was about practical innovation. When you don't have a lot of resources, you have to take what you have and use what you've got, to get what you want. That's what today was all about."

This year, the City of Newark is partnering with IFEL to ensure that Newark residents are aware of the many resources available to business owners as they work hard to strengthen the city's economic foundation. "Mayor Baraka has made it clear that we are to move the economic needle and help business owners achieve better outcomes by doing things differently," said **Newark Community Economic Development Corporation President & CEO Otis Rolley**. "This conference does just that. Innovation in business ties in perfectly with our goal of doing whatever is necessary to spur economic growth and development in Newark."

¹ The dealership was sold in 2015

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ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The 8th Annual IFEL Food Expo and Best Chef Competition will take place immediately after the conference starting at 4:30 pm. Attendees will sample foods from several chefs who successfully completed a screening process. The participating chefs will be judged in three categories: savory, dessert and product, i.e. sauces. The winner(s) will receive \$1,000 worth of business consulting support from IFEL, feedback on their presentation and exposure.

The conference will conclude with the 8th Annual Next Level Business Plan and Pitch Competition. The six finalists, from 40 entries, who all happen to be female business owners from New Jersey and New York, include Leslie Faulkner of Emerald Advisors & Consultants, Inc., Megan Brenn-White of The Brenn-White Group, Adrienne Fudge of 40 Dreams Catering, Krista Barnett of Boot Band, Yvette Gauff of Dreams Alive and Annie Etheridge of Field and Clover. Each will have the opportunity to give a three-minute pitch as they compete for \$10,000 in cash and other prizes from the conference sponsors. The judges include Travis Perry, a Shark Tank funded entrepreneur.

Sponsors of the 8th Annual Next Level Conference include: City National Bank, Elite Strategies, Lime Energy, State Farm, Plus Packaging, Inc., Phone.com, PSE&G, C&A Financial Group and DCH Millburn Audi. Marketing partners include Newark Regional Business Partnership, Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce, My Business Plan Book, Single Throw Internet Marketing, WIBO, New Jersey Tech Council, A&J Management, American Entrepreneurship Today, the County of Essex, NJ, Score NJ, Essex County Latino Chamber of Commerce and the City of Carteret, NJ. Media sponsors include The Circl Small Biz Network, The Positive Community and Impact Consulting Enterprises. Many of the sponsors are offering conference attendees special promotions such as employee pricing for cars and free phone service for 12 months. For a complete list of offers and details, go to <http://www.nextlevelstartsnow.com/sponsor-offers/>.

The Newark Community Economic Development Corporation (Newark Community EDC), founded in 2007, is the primary economic development catalyst for Newark - New Jersey's largest city. It is organized to retain, attract and grow businesses, enhance small and minority business capacity, and spur real estate development throughout the City's 20 diverse neighborhoods. As a business development company whose sole client is the City of Newark, Newark Community EDC collaborates with the Newark Department of Economic & Housing Development to initiate and execute economic development activities that produce and sustain economic growth, generate jobs and create wealth for the citizens of Newark.

The Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IFEL) was founded in 2002 with a planning grant from The Prudential Foundation. IFEL launched pilot program services in 2004 with a group of five Newark-based clients. In 2015, the IFEL Family of Programs served over 1,800 entrepreneurs in New Jersey, New York City, Connecticut, Maine, Missouri, Virginia and Bulgaria.

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8th Annual Next Level Conference Schedule: #NXTLVL16

8:00 – 10 A.M. POWER BREAKFAST, FEATURING CHRIS DESSI, FOUNDER & CEO OF SILVERBACK SOCIAL

Topic | JUST LIKE YOU: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Extraordinary Success

Based on the Success book: Just Like You: 24 Interviews of Ordinary People Who've Achieved Extraordinary Success. Success and personal branding speaker Chris Dessi will share the secrets he uncovered in his book. Chris regularly appears on CNBC, CNN, Fox News, Good Day New York, & FOX BUSINESS's Varney & Co. He has been quoted in Mashable, & has delivered a keynote to the United States Marines aboard the Intrepid Sea Air & Space Museum. His event the Westchester Digital Summit has been featured in Forbes Magazine. His creative personal branding has been featured in Fortune Magazine. He's an editorial contributor on Inc.com.

10:30 A.M. – 10:40 A.M. WELCOME

10:40 A.M. – 11:15 A.M. OPENING KEYNOTE , FEATURING LARRY BAILIN, FOUNDER & CEO OF SINGLE THROW INTERNET MARKETING

Topic | INNOVATE TO WIN: Developing an innovators mindset

Larry founded Single Throw in 2001. Under his leadership, Single Throw has grown to be one of the top Internet marketing companies in the nation, as well as provided Internet marketing services to some of the top companies in the world. Larry is the bestselling author of the marketing book, Mommy, Where Do Customers Come From? and is a renowned professional keynote speaker, speaking 20 times per year to leading organizations and fortune brands across the country.

11:20 A.M. – 12:10 P.M. PLENARY SESSION

Topic | GETTING YOUR WEBSITE TO MAKE MONEY: Learn about innovative ways to create a user experience that gets your website making money. We'll discuss how to develop a sale cycle and sales process that produces reliable digital lead flow, as well as a process for developing and proposing products/services to the buyer. You'll walk away with new ideas about how to use your website to prospect buyers and build your sales pipeline as a result of the user experience.

12:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. KEYNOTE & LUNCH, FEATURING BRAD BENSON, FOUNDER OF BRAD BENSON HYUNDAI

Topic | INNOVATE YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS: Going from bust to boom to get to #1

Brad retired from the NY Giants at the top of his game, winning the very first Super Bowl in NY Giants history. He's played alongside legends such as Lawrence Taylor, Phil Simms and Hall of Fame coach, Bill Parcells. After football Brad started his business career, and as an entrepreneur, he built a business empire. How did he do it? What did he learn in professional sports that helped him succeed? Did he fail, and how did he overcome it? Join us to hear how Brad innovated his way to success to become the #1 Hyundai dealership in the country!

1:40 P.M. – 2:30 P.M. WORKSHOP SESSION ONE

Start Up | Start with the End in Mind: Does the concept of selling your business on the very first day you open sound strange to you? It doesn't if you're an innovator. Believe it or not, running your business as if you are going to sell it tomorrow, is one of the most innovative ways to grow a stable and profitable business.

Growth | Reinvention through Innovation: Innovators know when things need to change, when it's time to correct the course or switch gears. Learn to identify the signals and take appropriate action to maximize the profitable output of your company.

Exit | Innovative Prospecting: As much as we'd like to think so, not everyone needs our products and services. Innovators know that the right prospects equal the right profits. There are numerous ways to find potential customers but only innovators look to maximize connection with everyone they touch. We'll discuss innovative ways to find the right customers and maximize every connection. You'll learn how to identify the cornerstone traits of your most profitable prospects and how to find more like them.

2:40 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Workshop Session Two

Start Up | Creating a Culture of Innovation: Imagine the power of a company full of innovators. Finding the right people is hard enough, but developing a total culture of innovation seems near impossible! Well it's not. Learn to create a company culture that thrives on innovation and grows your business exponentially in the process.

Growth | Antiquated Financial Management Could Be Holding You Back: We'll discuss why the Sales – Expenses = Profit formula actually prohibits profitability and keeps the vast majority of businesses, throughout the world, struggling to survive check-by-check. The change is in the new formula: Sales – Profit = Expenses. This seemingly subtle change, empowers you to grow your profitability immediately and permanently, because when profit comes first it always happens.

Exit | Innovative Exit Strategies: Whether you are ready to think about it or not, exit is inevitable. Going public, selling, succession, or just shutting down...one way or another there will be an end. Time for you to learn to exit like an innovator. The innovators mindset helps you maximize your value, get what you deserve and move on your terms.

3:45 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Recipe for Entrepreneurial Success Panel Discussion: *The Real Deal from Real Entrepreneurs*

We all wish that we could find a simple formula or checklist for entrepreneurial success, but just throwing all of the ingredients in a bowl is not going to bake the cake. It's important to understand what has fueled the achievements of successful entrepreneurs, so that you can see what applies to your own business. Our panelists are examples of successful entrepreneurs who survived the ups and downs of being in business. Listen as they discuss what has led to their success, how they stay motivated, and the "Aha!" moments that made the difference!

5:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. FOOD EXPO & COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Join us for this networking cocktail reception to meet and connect with other conference attendees while sampling culinary delights from area food entrepreneurs. You'll sample food in three categories (sweet, savory and products) and then vote for your favorites. One will be crowned the Best Chef!

**7:00 P.M. – 7:50 P.M. KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
FEATURING SHARK TANK ENTREPRENEUR TRAVIS PERRY, FOUNDER OF CHORDBUDDY**

Travis developed the Chord Buddy to teach his daughter how to play the guitar. It was so easy for her, Travis knew he had a new hit product and in a single month, he had a \$150,000.00 in sales confirming he was on to something BIG. More confident than ever of the future success of the Chord Buddy, he was ready to take his deal to the Sharks. Join us to learn about what made four Sharks offer Travis a deal and how he has grown his revenue 10x since his deal using his innovator's mindset.

7:50 P.M. – 9:00 P.M. BUSINESS PLAN & PITCH COMPETITION FINALE

Selected from a pool of over 40 entries in the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership Next Level Competition, our finalists will give their three minute pitch as they vie for \$10,000 in cash and other prizes. They've worked really hard and have come a long way. Join us to learn about their businesses, hear comments from our judges (including Shark Tank funded entrepreneur Travis Perry) and support them as they put it all on the line!

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8th Annual Next level Conference: Speakers

POWER BREAKFAST: Chris Dessi, Author, Speaker, CEO, @Inc Contributor and Personal Branding Expert
Chris' savvy marketing acumen has propelled his personality into the national media landscape. He regularly appears on CNBC, MSNBC, CNN, Fox News, Good Day New York, & FOX BUSINESS's Varney & Co. In 2012, Chris was selected by the Business Council of Westchester's 40 Under 40 for exemplifying leadership, foresight and a vision for the future of Westchester County, where he currently resides with his wife Laura and two daughters Talia & Olivia. @chrisdessi

OPENING SPEAKER: Larry Bailin, Best-Selling Author, Marketer & CEO of Single Throw
Larry Bailin is a best-selling marketing author, digital marketing pioneer, entrepreneur and CEO of one of the most respected digital marketing companies in the nation, Single Throw. As well as being a highly sought after speaker, Larry has been featured in *Entrepreneur* magazine, *Forbes*, *USA Today*, *CNN Money*, *CEO Magazine*, *The Street* and many others highly regarded publications. He has been called "One of the Top Minds in the Business" by Yahoo's marketing team. Larry works with global and leading brands, helping them develop innovative ways to grow and connect with customers.

KEYNOTE LUNCHEON SPEAKER: Brad Benson, Super Bowl Champ and Founder of Brad Benson Hyundai
Brad Benson is a world-class entrepreneur and arguably the most innovative marketer in the automotive business. Brad retired from the NY Giants at the top of his game, winning the very first Super Bowl in NY Giants history. After football Brad started his business career, and as an entrepreneur, he's built a business empire. Brad innovated his way to success to become the #1 Hyundai dealership in the U.S.

PITCH COMPETITION SPEAKER: Travis Perry, Shark Tank Entrepreneur Behind the ChordBuddy
After watching his daughter struggle to learn guitar, Travis devised this one-of-a-kind system. His product and method earned him a spot on the hit TV show *Shark Tank* where he received an investment from shark Robert Herjavec. Since then, Travis has rolled out other products in the ChordBuddy suite that helps just about anyone learn guitar chords, as well as tune, hold and maintain their guitars. Music teachers, children, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and people with debilitating arthritis are using ChordBuddy to enjoy guitar playing.

Karin Bellantoni, Founder of Katalyst Agency

Karin Bellantoni is an experienced entrepreneur whose first company became a multi-million dollar business with 18 employees in less than two years. She works closely with company founders and business leaders to increase profits via a holistic, 360-degree approach. Experienced at rapid growth and the sale of her own start-up, Karin's approach develops a strong foundation for a company's infrastructure. *Speaking at 1:40 – 2:30*

Jeanne Omlor, Business Breakthrough Coach

Jeanne Omlor is a Business Breakthrough Coach whose passion and expertise is strategizing and guiding leaders to grow vastly profitable businesses that stay true to their original vision and mission while creating the lifestyle they want and deserve. She has a background as an executive recruiter of top Wall Street executives, and as a filmmaker and actress. *Speaking at 1:50 – 2:40 @jeanneomlor*

Erin Moger, Member Support Specialist and Profit First Professional

Erin supports the implementation of Profit First with over twenty five member accountants, bookkeepers, or coaches. A specialist in proprietary cash flow tools, branding and marketing materials, and constantly expanding set of resources, Erin is the "go to" expert on the Profit First Professionals team when it comes to giving her clients the advantage over the competition. *Speaking at 2:40 – 3:30 @ProfitFirst*

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Cheyenne Bostock, Author, Life and Relationship Expert

Cheyenne discovered his passion for inspiring others to find their voice while living in a homeless shelter. From there, he went on to create a brand, www.askcheyb.com, that focuses solely on helping others find their passion and pursue their purpose in life. He is a writer for The Huffington Post, a regular contributing Expert on The Bill Cunningham Show, his work has been featured on ABC's Here & Now, Fox 4 Good Day Dallas, WLBS Quiet Storm w/Lenny Green, Chasing New Jersey, Fusion TV, Arise TV and many more. More than 100,000 supporters follow @AskCheyB for daily inspiration via social media. @AskCheyB

Barry Cohen, Advertising Expert, Strategic Planning and Media Liaison

Barry Cohen has devised effective advertising & PR campaigns for clients all over the U.S. He has been featured in: *Radio Ink*, *Radio Business Report*, *Radio & Records*, *Performance*, *Pollstar*, The Wall Street Journal's Startup Journal.com, *Entrepreneur*, *The Bergen Record* and *Tiempo de Mercadeo*. He has authored two business books, co-authored a novel and edited and/or promoted over a dozen books for other authors. Barry is principal of AdLab Media Communications in Fairfield, NJ. www.adlabcreative.com

Frank Congilose, Author, Financial Service Expert and CEO of the C&A Financial Group

Frank began his career in the financial service industry in 1981. C&A Financial Group is an innovative and progressive financial services organization dedicated to helping individuals build and protect wealth. Frank is a Certified Financial Planner, Chartered Financial Consultant and Chartered Life Underwriter.

Emmet Dennis, Sundial Brands Chief Community Officer

Emmet is a partner in Sundial Brands, the makers of Shea Moisture and Nubian Heritage. He leads the strategy for Community Commerce, the company's purpose-driven business model. Previously, Emmet served as the company's Chief Marketing Officer where he was responsible for communicating the brand promise, core values and product efficacy through marketing strategies, brand management and channel management.

Ebong Eka, CPA, author and Small Business Champion

Ebong was named by Money Tips as a Top 30 Social Influencers. He was also named by Business News Daily as One of the Top 15 People to Follow on Twitter for Entrepreneurship.

Ebong is the author of the bestseller "Start Me Up! "The No-Business-Plan, Business Plan" published by Career Press, Inc. @ebongeka

Ari Rabbam, CEO of Phone.com and IP-Communications Industry Expert

Ari is a veteran of the IP-communications industry. He served as president and advisor for two VoIP companies that were acquired. Ari currently serves on the boards at the NJ Technology Council and the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership. Ari will be a part of the Pitch Competition Panel Discussion.

Bert Roling, Website Usability Expert

Bert Roling has spent his entire career developing user experiences that transform casual window shoppers into loyal, brand champions. As Google and other search engines were coming of age, Bert was immersed in a world comprised of bounce rates, session usages, and eye tracking behavior. In understanding how users consume website content, Bert is able to craft thoughtful, accountable strategies to acquire digital buyers.

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8th Annual Next level Conference: \$10,000 Pitch Competition Finalists

Leslie Faulkner

Emerald Advisors & Consultants, Inc. is dedicated to providing financial, social and environmentally sustainable solutions to small and medium-sized businesses. Founder and CEO Leslie A. Faulkner developed a methodology for Emerald that uses process-analysis, strategic thinking, and quantitative research to increase efficiency and drive sustainability within these firms. The methodology is based on her academic background and professional work of over a decade in a variety of industries. www.emeraldsustainability.com

Megan Brenn-White

The Brenn-White Group works with higher education institutions, cities, states or regions who want to communicate better with international students, researchers, and universities. Services provided are editorial and writing, marketing and recruitment, strategy and research, and training. Megan Brenn-White, Managing Director, founded The Brenn-White Group in 2010. www.brenn-white.com/

Adrienne Fudge

When she was downsized from her corporate position and caught in a bleak job market, Adrienne chose to use this as an opportunity to pursue her passion. She founded 40 Dreams Catering in 2009, and has been cooking ever since. She says: "I've catered for a host of agencies, corporations, celebrities and many Joes and Janes. As my business evolved, I was continuously drawn to baking. So why fight the feeling? I love to bake, so I delved into my first love and changed 40 Dreams Catering into 40 Dreams Cakery." www.40dreams.com

Krista Barnett

A native of South Carolina, Krista moved to New York City in 2000. She built a successful career in NYC, but decided to leave it behind and become a stay-at-home mom and devoted wife. But then divine inspiration came and Krista began designing and developing Boot Band, a product that enables women who have calves that are wider than 15 to 16 inches to walk into any store and purchase boots right off of the shelves. The Boot Band is an attachment that provides the extra width needed for women to fit their boots. Women can now purchase the more fashionable mainstream footwear. www.bootband.com

Yvette Gauff

Dreams Alive

Yvette Wright Gauff is an entrepreneur, vocalist and actress best known for A Bit of Forever (2012) and A Glimpse(2014). www.youtube.com/user/yvettesmusic

Annie Etheridge

Field & Clover brings you traditional handmade biscuits using the finest ingredients sourced from regional suppliers. All biscuits are made in small batches and baked to order from an original Virginia family recipe. Located in New York City Field & Clover was founded in 2014 by Annie Etheridge. Annie, who was born and raised in Southern Virginia, has twelve generations of family members before her, all of whom descended from the 1614 union of Englishman John Rolfe and Pocahontas, legendary daughter of Chief Powhatan. Annie became a photographer which took her all around the world until settling in Harlem, NYC. Always in hot pursuit of the perfect biscuit, she was inspired to take the family recipe and make it her own. www.fieldandclover.com

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8th Annual Next level Conference: Sponsors

All Next Level Conference attendees will receive special offers from these four sponsors, Phone.com, C&A Financial Group, DCH Millburn Audi and Plus Packaging, Inc.

C&A Financial Group provides the most advanced and up-to-date financial information and services to their clients. Their philosophy is based upon wealth accumulation, protection and preservation for families and privately held business owners. To conference attendees they are offering free corporate or personal financial assessment. www.ca-strategy.com

DCH Millburn Audi will offer employee pricing to attendees just by mentioning the Next Level Conference. They have an extensive selection of new, used, and certified pre-owned Audi inventory. Their conveniently located Audi dealership is designed to reflect the elegance and style of the Audi vehicles. Attention to detail has distinguished the dealership as an Audi dealer NJ drivers flock to for the experience alone. www.dchmillburnaudi.com

Plus Packaging, Inc. offers top quality plastic bags, printed tape, mailing and shipping bags, bubble bags and associated packaging and shipping merchandise at competitive prices and reasonable lead-times. All conference attendees will receive special discounts on all products. www.pluspackaging.com

Phone.com, whose mission is to be the world's most convenient self-service communications platform for entrepreneurs and small businesses, is offering attendees free Business Phone Service for 12 months, a \$120 value. The offer includes: Base Plan for 365 days, local or a toll-free number, use a new number, or keep an existing number, device or software upgrade, user extensions, ie. forward to mobile and pay-per-minute; 50+ phone features manageable from one intuitive web interface and 100 free minutes local and toll free. www.phone.com

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Elite Strategies

Lime Energy – Less is More
www.lime-energy.com

NRBP – Newark Regional Business Partnership
www.newarkrbp.org

Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce
www.asburyparkchamber.com

My Business Plan Book: New Venture Starter Kit
www.mybusinessplanbook.com

Single Throw Digital Marketing
www.singlethrow.com

WIBO - Workshop in Business Opportunity
www.wibo.org

New Jersey Tech Council
www.njtc.org

A&J Management
www.aj-mgmt.com

American Entrepreneurship Today
www.americanentrepreneurship.com

SCORE NJ– For the Life of Your Business
<https://www.score.org>

Essex County Latino-American Chamber of Commerce
www.eclacc.com

Essex County Office of Small Business Development and Affirmative Action
www.ecbizcenter.com

City of Carteret, NJ
www.ci.carteret.nj.us

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The Circl is the social network created to amplify the voices of millions of small businesses everywhere. Small business owners can find other small business owners near and around the world. It helps to create opportunities for members to buy and sell their products and services. <https://thecircl.io>

The Positive Community

The Positive Community is the only faith-based lifestyle magazine targeted to the African American market in the New York/New Jersey area. www.thepositivecommunity.com

Impact Consulting Enterprises

Impact is a minority, woman-owned, strategic communication, marketing and public relations firm that helps small businesses, public agencies, non-profits and Fortune 500 companies tell their stories. www.eimpactconsulting.com