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SPOTLIGHT ON: ANTONIA ROBINSON
HOW EMERGING BUSINESS LEADERS HELPED ME STOP DREAMING AND START
DOING



I used to think dreaming big was the most important part of being a leader. And in a way, it is. But the thing no one tells you about big dreams is how easy it is to get stuck in them. To get caught up in an endless loop of potentials and what-ifs. That was me: full of ideas, full of vision, and stuck.

That realization hit hard and honestly, a little embarrassingly. I was overwhelmed, paralyzed by possibility. And the harsh truth? No one was coming to save me or magically turn my ideas into action for me. If I wanted to move, I had to move. So, I made a decision: I would get unstuck. I would find ways to be present, to start, even if it was imperfect.

Enter: the Emerging Business Leaders (EBL) Program. When I came across it, something in me knew this could be the thing. The spark. The jolt I needed to shift from thinker to doer. And from the very first session, I knew I'd struck gold. I walked into a room where the conversations I'd been having alone in my head were suddenly happening out loud, around tables, with other driven, curious leaders. It was electrifying.

Almost like magic but really, like intention, I started to change. My time from idea to execution got shorter. My confidence climbed. People began to comment on my presence, how I carried myself, how my ideas didn't just fill a room—they landed planes

and set folks at ease. And just as I was leveling up internally, the universe responded externally. Projects landed on my plate. Teammates sought out my perspective. Leaders I'd never worked with before were suddenly turning to me. The dreamer was finally doing.

At the start of the cohort, I dreamed up an extra challenge: show up to every EBL session dressed as the highest version of myself. The official dress code? Business casual. My interpretation? Business iconic. Each month, I walked in like the session was my personal runway: tailored suits, statement dresses, flawless makeup, and accessories to match. It wasn't just style; it was strategy. A way to become the woman I envisioned, confident, capable, and unshakably herself.

At first, it felt like a fun monthly dress-up experiment. But the universe responded, again, and then came the real invitations: galas, luncheons, out-of-state conferences. More and more, I found myself not just wearing the dress—but needing to.

And with all that fabulousness came a little fear.

I remember getting ready for a team retreat, slipping into this white linen number with gorgeous, big bell sleeves and a bold floral print. It was utterly stunning. I looked in the mirror and instantly froze. Was it too much? Too loud? Too extra? I paced. I posed. I twisted back and forth searching for an unflattering angle that would talk me down. But maybe, just maybe... it wasn't too much. Maybe it was just right.

Was I afraid it didn't fit me or was I afraid it did? That I finally looked like the woman I'd imagined for so long? That I was becoming her, fully and without apology. With that conclusion I had only one option: wear the dress.

And that's when it hit me: "wear the dress" is so much bigger than fabric. It's about saying yes. To the event. To the challenge. To the opportunity. To yourself. It's about showing up as the version of you you've dreamed of—boldly, beautifully, and without waiting for permission.

So, here's what I'll leave you with: put yourself in the way of good things. Dream, yes. But also execute. Say yes. Wear the dress. Send the email. Pitch the idea. Apply for the Emerging Business Leaders program. And when you do show up, scared if you have to. Because the version of you on the other side of that action? They're waiting for you and they're worth meeting. Trust me.

Antonia Robinson serves as Strategic Operations Manager for Consumer and Social Impact at Advocate Health where she develops key messaging for high-visibility, enterprise initiatives in clinical, social and community health. Antonia is passionate about supporting social-good organizations with communication strategies that grow improve community-wellbeing. You can connect with Antonia [on LinkedIn](#).