

2025 National Women's Leadership Conference

Conference Event and Session Descriptions

November 12–November 15

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER

12

2:00 PM–3:30 PM

Connect to Belong Business Networking Meet-up | *Eastland Ballroom*

Register for this light-hearted and engaging opportunity to get to know other ABWA members and businesswomen! This networking event will kick-start your conference by introducing you to attendees from all over the country who want to learn from each other, identify shared challenges, and support each other through mentorship, expert services, and solution strategies.

2:00 PM–5:00 PM

Track A: Modules 1–2 | What the Science Says

What truly drives us to act—and how can we make better decisions when the path isn't clear? In this session, you'll explore the science of motivation and judgment. Module 1 will help you break down proven theories of motivation, so you can inspire both yourself and others. Then, in Module 2, you'll take a closer look at how cognitive biases affect decision-making, especially under pressure. Together, these modules offer a practical foundation for making intentional, informed choices in any setting.

5:00 PM–6:00 PM

Meet the Candidates Reception | *Eastland Ballroom*

Join the 2025 candidates for the National Board of Directors to learn more about their history with ABWA, why they want to join the NBOD, and how they would serve the membership.

6:00 PM–8:30 PM

General Session: Opening Keynote & Accolades | *Eastland Ballroom*

Reimagine What's Possible: *Flip Your Script & See Your Life and Work in a Whole New Story.*

Kelly Swanson kicks off the 2025 National Women's Leadership Conference with a brand-new show developed just for ABWA members! This powerful and hilarious experience is designed to entertain, inspire, and get under your skin in all the right ways.

Kelly will encourage you to flip the script you've been living in, especially the one that says you're not enough, not ready, or not that special. Her story will encourage you to reimagine what's possible, shift your perspective, and walk out of that ballroom seeing your life and work in a whole new light.

Because sometimes the story didn't change—we just stopped seeing the magic in it. Get ready to laugh loud, think deep, and maybe even tear up just a little. This isn't your average motivational speech, it's a heartfelt, funny, soul-stirring invitation to write your next chapter on purpose.

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THURSDAY
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8:30 AM–9:30 AM

General Session: Brand Reveal & Member Recognition.
Hear about the big changes happening at ABWA National!

10:00 AM–2:00 PM

Track A: Modules 3–4 | What the Science Says

In this engaging session, you'll dive into the science-backed strategies that fuel effective negotiation and powerful communication. Module 3 focuses on how to ask for more—confidently and clearly—while strengthening professional relationships. In Module 4 you'll explore how to listen with intention and communicate with clarity by building frameworks for deeper understanding. Regardless of your leadership experience, you'll leave these sessions better equipped to connect, influence, and collaborate.

1:00 PM–4:00 PM

Track B: Becoming When the Rules Keep Changing | Natalie Brown

In today's fast-moving world, the rules often shift without warning. This timely session focuses on how to thrive, not just survive, through change. You'll explore how to stay centered in your purpose, navigate uncertainty with confidence, and turn disruption into opportunity. There's always someone who rides the wave of change forward. This session will help you envision how that someone can be you.

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

Young Professionals Meet-up | Eastland Ballroom Balcony

This meet-up is for ABWA members under 35 who would like to get to know fellow young professionals, identify how ABWA can support the next generation of leaders, and discuss future opportunities for young professionals within the organization.

6:00 PM–8:00 PM

General Session: Annual Meeting of the Members & National Board of Directors Elections.

Don't miss this opportunity to decide the next crop of ABWA Leaders! In this important evening session members will hear from the out-going President, and elect the 2025–2026 National Board of Directors/SBMEF Trustees.

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8:00 AM–10:00 AM

Top Ten Business Women's Award Breakfast | *Eastland Ballroom* | *(ticketed event)*

Celebrate with the best! Join fellow attendees to recognize the most prestigious honor bestowed on an ABWA member. Every year, the Top Ten Business Women are selected for their career and academic achievements, their engagement in the Association, and their contributions to the betterment of their community. Who will be the class of 2026?

10:30 AM–12:00 PM

Track B: Our Superpower: Leading in the Feminine | **Natalie Brown** | *Eastland Ballroom*

This session explores the unique strengths of feminine leadership, including authenticity, inclusiveness, and purpose-driven impact. Together, we'll examine how embracing your full self can elevate your leadership and create a deeper sense of belonging for those around you. It's about leading with intention—and recognizing the power in showing up as who you truly are.

1:00 PM–2:30 PM

Track B: We are All Becoming | **Natalie Brown** | *Eastland Ballroom*

This powerful session invites reflection on the ongoing journey from effectiveness to greatness. Participants will explore what it means to find and trust their own voice, and how to inspire and empower others to do the same. It's a call to lead with clarity, courage, and authenticity as we each continue to grow into who we are becoming.

1:00 PM–5:00 PM

Track A: Modules 5–6 | Leadership Construction, Attribution, and Frameworks. Great leadership isn't born—it's built. This dynamic session begins with Module 5, where you'll rethink what leadership means by exploring attribution bias, the balance of power and influence, and the role of authenticity and vulnerability. You'll challenge outdated assumptions and reframe leadership as a shared, evolving process. In Module 6, the focus shifts to team dynamics: how to motivate, coach, and lead under pressure. You'll gain practical tools for building trust, designing effective teams, and navigating professional challenges with clarity and confidence.

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Continued

3:00 PM–4:30 PM

Track B: Beauty in Branding | Natalie Brown | *Eastland Ballroom*

This session invites participants to clarify their personal purpose and passion, the heart of their unique brand. When you're grounded in your gifts, it becomes easier to discern what deserves your "yes" and where to confidently say "no." That clarity fuels alignment, and alignment fuels momentum. Discover how embracing your authentic brand can become a powerful driver of both personal and professional growth.

7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Best Practices in League Management Awards

The Best Practices model is built on a set of core values respected and expected in business today. Leagues participating in this award must meet rigorous criteria in five different areas including: Strategy, Operations Management, Annual Curriculum, Brand Compliance, and Strength and Vitality.

Congratulations to this year's recipients!

After the awards ceremony, stick around to dance the night away with the Dave Macklin Band!

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER

15

9:00 AM–11:00 AM

Closing Keynote, Apex Award Recognition &

ABWA-KU Graduate Recognition | *Eastland Ballroom*

The Courage to Care: *Company Culture & Transformative Leadership*

True leadership extends beyond decision-making—it's about genuinely caring for and uplifting those you lead. **Deshauna Barber**, an accomplished trailblazer and leader, draws on her journey as the youngest and only Black female company commander in her battalion in 2014. Faced with rebuilding a fractured unit, she transformed it into the top-performing team through compassion and empathy. As the youngest President of the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), Deshauna continued to redefine leadership by prioritizing care, resilience, and collaboration. This inspiring talk demonstrates how fostering a caring environment can drive meaningful change in any organization. Deshauna's story challenges audiences to embrace empathy as a powerful leadership tool in the workplace and beyond.