

ASWSUG Inclusion Conference Keynote – Nathan Webster

CHELSEA ROLLINS: Nathan A. Webster is the founder and CEO of NW and Associates, LLC, a marketing and consulting agency in Vancouver, Washington. Nathan has over 20 years of experience in management, mentorship, and education. He has authored three books in these areas and has a successful podcast, "Let's Talk Marketing," which has been on-air for over five years.

He is also an adjunct marketing professor at Clark College and Warner Pacific University, where he teaches business, marketing, and entrepreneurship. At Clark College, he also serves as the faculty advisor for the student program Clark Entrepreneurs. Community involvement includes founding the Connected Trust, specific for BIPOC, veteran, and women-owned businesses. He also serves on the board of directors for Vancouver Public Schools Foundation and Rooted School Vancouver.

When not working, he likes to enjoy the beautiful scenery in the Pacific Northwest. Nathan's joy of finding new things to learn, hanging out with his kids, and giving back to others keeps him going. So let me introduce you to our speaker, Nathan Webster.

NATHAN WEBSTER: Yo! What's up, what's up? Can you all hear me OK?

CHELSEA ROLLINS: Yes.

NATHAN WEBSTER: All right, outstanding.

[CLAPPING]

All right. So I'm going to try to navigate this as fast as I can because I want to see some of y'all chat. So where are y'all at? Tell me where you at.

Where you at? Where you from? What city are you from? Where you at?

What's up, what's up? Where y'all at? Where y'all at?

North Dallas? OK, that's what's up. I got family in Texarkana. What's up?

OK, the 'Couv! Gotta be the 'Couv, baby. Gotta be the 'Couv.

Issaquah, wow. Pullman, Orange County, [? Tri-Cities ?]. Oh! Tacoma!

OK, OK. Oh, from Mexico. That's what's up. That's what's up.

Spokane. Raleigh? Man, I did a 23 and Me. I found out I got some family in Raleigh. So what's up? What's good?

All right. Go Cougs. Hey, I want to say thanks for having me.

I appreciate being here. I'm going to do my best to learn this new platform. I didn't do a trial run, so my apologies if I have any issues, man.

Just don't blame them. Blame me, all right? Blame me, not them.

I do appreciate not using Zoom, because man, how many of y'all are just tired of Zoom, for a show of hands? I know we can't show hands now in this, but for a show of hands, who's tired of Zoom? I know I am.

[LAUGHS] I am so Zoomed out. Even my family members say, hey, let's Zoom. For what? We don't need to Zoom.

As a matter of fact, you got an iPhone. Just please, do you want to FaceTime? Oh no, let's Zoom. Well then it's the same thing!

So anyways, I want to say thanks for inviting me to the folks at ASWSU. Go Cougs. I am excited to hear my girl Rashida talk.

It definitely brings you back in a lot of ways when I hear her talk. It's soothing. It's relaxing. It's educational. And it gets you pumped up in a different way than, say, when I chat with you. It will be certainly different.

But I love her speaking, as I've heard her speak many times. She brings to light-- because we have similar backgrounds. And even when she just said, I don't see color, I don't see your experiences. And so I was like, man, that's fire.

And I was even running late. I'm like, man, I'm going to miss my girl Rashida! I gotta hear her speak!

So I'm glad you had the opportunity to see and listen to Rashida, because she spits fire all day long. So I definitely want you, if you're really interested in talking with her, to learning more, if something piqued your interest, just make sure you get in contact with her. Because she just gave you a little snippet-- a little snippet-- and not even just talking about what she be needing to do with their business.

Because I'm about that business life, as we're about to get into here. So I need to share my screen. And I'm really not quite sure how to share my screen. So--

HEATHER: So at the bottom, there should be a video recorder, a microphone, and then the little screen. You click that screen, and then it'll ask you which screen.

NATHAN WEBSTER: Mm. Got it, got it. So I need to share my entire screen. And I don't know. There we go.

It will let me. All right, so here we go. All right. Thank you for that, Heather. I appreciate it.

So I can't remember who exactly approached me. I know Heather mentioned something to me about it after. I got an email.

And I was like, OK, what do I talk about when it comes to inclusion of the title of this presentation? And she was like, well, we don't know of a title just yet, but we're coming up with one. I'm like, OK, well, I would like to know the title of this presentation so I can figure out, what am I going to talk about?

And then she said, OK, we're going to be focused on inclusion. And I can't remember if it was the leadership or if it was Heather. And I'm like OK, bet.

Let's go. Let's do this, OK? So we're going to talk about inclusion.

But I want to talk about inclusion in my own way. And I'm going to share my screen for a moment. I know this is really weird to see it this way.

Don't get lost. Don't get lost. I promise I'll stop. I promise I'll stop.

Don't get lost please. Don't get lost. OK.

So I'm going to show you my messy desktop, and you're going to see some other things. There's some of my ass. Sorry. I didn't close this stuff up. My bad.

There's my COVID certification. I'm dealing with a lot of things right now. My apologies.

This is all the things that I'm doing. I was making sure I listen to my Drake, you know? All that stuff. My bad, my bad.

I wanted to show you this right here. This is really what I wanted to show you. And I have two computers open. So it didn't help.

I have my computer open over there. I wanted to show you this right here. So it's not in my original presentation, but this morning, when I was thinking about, what did I want to start with inclusion? Initially, I really just did not figure out how I'm going to do this icebreaker.

Because when I was growing up here in the 'Couv-- Vancouver, Washington. I'm born and raised here. I went to Crestline, Wy'East, and then Mountain View, for those folks that are familiar with there.

They are all part of white suburbia. And I've always been, in some case, the token Black guy, right? Well, for me, I didn't believe I could be more than just what I am now.

So my goal was to be a Marine. Go into the Marine Corps, do 20, potentially 30, years. Because this was the epitome, the iconic view that I saw myself as being what I would say successful-- a Marine.

And obviously, I became a Marine, as you see in this picture. I'm going to stop screen-sharing. And let me stop sharing here and put it back on myself.

So I showed you that because, for me, it was super important that I did become a Marine. Because I knew, if I became a Marine, I was going to become somebody. And you don't have to put it in there, but maybe you can say "me--" how many people thought that you could never achieve the things that you wanted to do unless you had somebody else's swag, you had someone else's shine?

For me, I wanted to use the Marine Corps as my shine and my swag so, basically, I wouldn't need to do any work, so to speak. So for me, this was really important that I wanted to talk about-- [LAUGHS] "LOL Drake is everything." I wanted to talk to you about what really needs to happen in regards to what I want to talk to you today about, which is, keep winning.

So let me bring up my stuff again. Oh, I can't do that. Give me one moment here.

Oh, here we go. I can do this so y'all won't get lost. All right. So can everyone see my screen here? Heather, can you just tell me if you see my screen?

HEATHER: Yes, we can see it.

NATHAN WEBSTER: Perfect. All right. So today, my title is "Keep Winning."

Because I want to let you know that you're a winner. I'm not just telling you you're a winner. I'm going to tell you why I need you to keep winning.

And don't get caught up in, oh, I'm this and that. Let's not get caught up with that. So as a business owner running a marketing agency for the last-- we're going on six years now-- there's a lot of things that I have to tell even myself. Nathan, I need you to keep winning.

When I started school back in 2001, it was the last possible thing that I ever wanted to do, was go to school. I didn't read not one single book in high school, because I didn't think I was smart enough. Plus I didn't care. I was going to the Marine Corps.

I even had scholarships to go to college, but I didn't do it. I didn't even pursue it. I had a full-ride scholarship to Alcorn State University.

For those that don't know, it's an HBCU in Mississippi. And I was like no, I'm good. I didn't believe in myself.

So for me, school was the absolute start for me to find who I was. And so I'm grateful to be part of Washington State University-- I should put "Vancouver--" class of WSU. But we all Cougs, right?

I graduated in 2007, but I started school in 2001. So I've changed my major a couple of times, because there was a couple of things that I was like, you know what? This ain't for me.

So today, I want to talk to you about opportunity. So when we say "opportunity," or when you think of opportunity, or when you may hear "opportunity," you may think of a lot of different things. And so I was

like, how can I go about making sure I give you some visuals, as you can also possibly see my face, right?

If you're lucky, you might be getting yourself something to eat. Because it is lunchtime. I feel you. I don't want no one to be "hangry."

But when we think of opportunity, for a lot of you, especially, I will say-- and I'm assuming. So I'm not saying this is the shoe you've got to wear, or that I'm pigeonholing you in, because that's the last thing I want to be. But when I think about opportunity, I think of something that's going to give me something, right?

That's for me. I'm not saying that's you. And that was for me back then.

So you have achieved some pretty awesome opportunities, right? You're in school. You are attending this event.

Because not everybody up in here-- you're also pursuing a career. So you're winning. These are opportunities that we might not think are opportunities. But they're opportunities, and you're winning.

I wanted to use this image right here that I use for my consulting, what the sales pipeline would look like. And I use it as a funny joke and whatnot. And you see all the prospects.

We call this the funnel. At the top of the funnel, you have all these people coming out. But at the bottom of the funnel, there's no new customers.

They're like, what's going on in the middle? And like I say, I wish I knew best. It's a literal joke, right?

But in this image, I stopped using it. Why? No one looks like me.

Some of those little subtleties, once you get yourself immersed in the industry, when you get immersed in the things that you're doing, you start finding yourself to looking around and saying, hmm, there's something off here. Even though you see the sales pipeline is centered, they are trying to tell you the story, you are starting to notice, man, how come there ain't no Black or brown folks up in there? I don't see me up in there.

So we start seeing what we might call an opportunity not an opportunity, because we're not familiar with it. But until we get familiar with it, we can start to see, something's off, but I can't put my finger on it. And then you start to say, mm, now I can pinpoint it. Mm, now I can see what's up.

And so everyone is different, but I have no problem with calling things out. And sometimes it's to my own detriment, But I gotta be me. This is where some of you may say, I am not ready yet, or, I don't feel comfortable yet.

And this is where, even in your own position, you feel like, oh, I just need just a little bit more. And you say, I have this imposter syndrome. For what?

Look at all that you have achieved in this way, for you to get right here. This is what happens when we have tried to appease so many other people. And when we're looking at ourselves, we don't look at ourselves as winning, because we say we're not there yet. We're not looking at ourselves as our accomplishments, as these things that-- man, these could be medals, or trophies, or whatever you need as that swag, or that intrinsic benefit, or tangible item that you need to say, I've done it.

And so this imposter syndrome is hanging over your head to say, I'm just not there yet. Why? Why?

You've already done it. You've taken an opportunity, and you've seized it. So what are you imposing from? What have you not achieved that didn't qualify you to be here?

I tell people all the time, especially my clients that are scared to move forward, Jeff Bezos don't know what he's going to do tomorrow. But guess what. That don't take him off the Forbes list.

Jeff is making billions of dollars-- millions of dollars. Let's just say what homeboy-- Bernie Sanders-- said. Just count to 10, and he has now grossed the average median salary of the average American. Just count to 10 seconds.

But do you think he's posing? (STAMMERING) I'm not quite sure. Oh, I don't know why I'm-- should I be here-- should I be-- no, he ain't doing that. So we have to get rid of this imposter syndrome, especially when we're talking about, let's help each other out. Help yourself out.

Help yourself out by removing these two words out of the dictionary whenever you want to do something you want to do or you believe that's the next step in your journey. If you've got to break some glass or some limbs, or if you've got to pave your way, pave the way. But don't ever believe that this is not for you.

Because at the end of the day, you're winning. You're doing all the things you should be doing. So don't get upset because someone might say you're not qualified.

Don't get mad because someone says you're not ready yet. Don't get upset because they say, why are you here? Well, tell them, I will be here.

And make sure those two words that we said-- and I haven't said another word that I'm not going to say. It starts with an L. But we're just going to say you're learning instead of that other word.

Because we have to realize that we are telling ourselves messages. And then we not only tell ourselves, we might tell a friend. We might tell a colleague.

What's worse is, we tell a boss. Why are you saying to your boss that you're not good enough? What you need to be saying is that you're winning, and you're winning all the time.

When I saw Sheryl Sandberg's TED Talk about 10 years ago, she said that women-- and I know this is also for BIPOC folks as well-- don't lean in. They don't take a job because they don't feel qualified or competent. So that means they don't get or even apply for the job.

But us guys, we be applying because we're confident. We don't need to feel competent. We just get the confidence, which is why she was saying, women, I need you to lean in.

And for you, I don't know what your skin color is. I don't know what your gender is. But I do know you're here, and you're here for a reason. And that means you're winning.

So whatever has, right now, those messages telling you that you're not winning, you need to have a little one-on-one to that individual telling you that. I'm saying individual as, maybe it's your mama. Maybe it's your dad.

Maybe it's a friend that said, no, you know you ain't supposed to be here. You know you can't do it. Oh, keep dreaming.

Ah! I need to cut you off. Because you need to tell yourself you're winning and have these real conversations. So I wanted to provide some other information to give some context here to say why you're winning and why some people aren't winning.

And I will say, I work with all different types of clients. And let me just back up real fast to just say, for those that are not listening-- because I know you're hearing me, but you're not listening-- in my last thing that I was saying, to tell that person-- or maybe it's yourself-- you need to have a one-to-one conversation. Because maybe this is a conversation you need to have with yourself at Starbucks, to say, I need to stop this self-deprecation.

And I'm not telling you, go start no fights. I'm not saying that. I don't know what y'all did not hear.

But what I want you to understand is, when I'm saying, you're winning, you should be saying, absolutely, I'm winning! I'm winning. No doubt about it.

So when I wanted to move to this slide, I wanted to bring up some other things to why we don't believe we're winning. But I also wanted to use some other visuals to show that you are winning. And for some of you, maybe you have a house or you didn't have a house.

I got this stat. And I wanted to go someplace with this, but I'm going to switch it up, even though my slides are already in order. We have, in American society, an infatuation with materialistic things.

But we all need a home. We all need someplace to lay our head down at night. And so when it comes to this graphic here that you see, it's talking about the wealth gap.

And on the right, you see the Black wealth is at \$17,000. The white wealth says it's \$171,000. But when you look on the left and the income gap, it's not that bad in regards to, OK, it's only 42%.

But what happens over time, you go to the right side of that image, and you see the 90%. You can say, income-wise, OK, it's not that bad. But over the long-term, you do not have the same assets.

So this is basically saying, Black folks have \$17,000 worth of assets when white folks have \$171,000 worth of assets. Now, you can be saying, look, I'm white. I ain't got that. [LAUGHS]

And some Black folks say, hey, I don't got 17. I got a lot more than that, right? So this is just what the data is saying.

And so when I read the article, they were saying there are three things that anyone that wants to learn how to get the income where they take themselves to the next level to where they have wealth-- number one, they were finding that a lot of folks don't have bank accounts. And I can attest, when I come to the financial component to my Business 101 classes, there's seems to be always one person that doesn't have a bank account because they keep their stuff in Mason jars. And I'm like what? It never fails.

Number two, higher education. Now, I'm talking to the choir here. So this is not anything new.

But I will say one thing that has always boggled me with some folks is-- and let me first focus on the folks that are mid-30's, mid-40's, and they're complaining about everything. But I'm like, where did you hear that from, or, why is that? Did you look into this?

And they're like, nah. I'm like, well, you're going to have to spend some-- nah, I don't want to. You will need to learn, right? Well, why do I have to?

They don't want to learn. So there is a sense of, yes, you need formal education. I'm not saying everything needs to be formalized. But what's quintessential is, you can never stop learning if you want to get ahead, especially if you want to build wealth.

Number three is, they're saying pursuing a career. Now, bank accounts ain't no big deal. Education is like, eh, we know how the form lies, especially pre-COVID. But post-COVID, pursuing a career-- whew! We know that is a totally different subject.

Post-COVID, there's a whole lot of stuff going on. But as my man ET says, never waste a good crisis. And I think this is the time where this is the opportunity to seize on-- man, this is the time!

And I think, unfortunately, some of you-- I would say even myself. Let me just talk about me. I pursued a career when that wasn't me. As a matter of fact, here is a good example.

Someone just sent me a job application for this high exec position. And they're like, hey, this would be great, and I'm like, oh, OK, I thought of you. And I'm like, bro, I'm not trying to go work for nobody. I'm working for myself.

He was like, oh, no, no, no, no, no. I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that. I meant for you to share it with your network.

I was like, oh. Don't come at me like that. I ain't about to go work for nobody.

I work for myself. I'm building my own brand. I need to build my own company.

As I'm hiring people because I need to do X, Y, and Z, I want people to come work for me. I don't want to go work for anyone except for my clients. So we have that opportunity today to do that.

And I know some of you might be saying, hm, hm, I don't know. I don't know. Because there are some things that I just can't do-- I just can't do.

Well, I'll tell you, I've learned to fail forward on so many things. And you hear me say "fail forward." Everything that I've learned from my own thought leaders-- and let me help you out.

So when I say "my clients," "my business," my goal is to help clients that make \$5 million or less. And also, when you go with banks, whether you have small business bankers or you have large business bankers, that's their threshold too. It's \$5 million.

Well, I'm working with several companies and individuals whose net worth is more than \$5 million. I'm not going to say, no, I can't work with you because you exceed that amount. But that's what some people do.

I had one student talking to a multimillionaire. My multimillionaire dude was trying to get this person a job. And that student was like, oh, I can't do this.

Oh, I can't do that. Oh, I don't want to do that. I'm not good at this.

My multimillion-dollar friend, they were trying to rack their brains, saying, I really want to help you as a student. But that student wasn't even understanding that they had an opportunity in front of them, and all they had to do was ask. But they were all up their head and their feelings like, aw, man, I just can't do it. I just can't do it.

I don't know what I can do, because this is in my own comfort zone. And the problem is, you're still up in your head. But when I'm telling you that you're winning, you're still thinking, well, I'm winning if I can just get here.

Well, how come right here right now isn't that you're winning? So this is what I say to that conversation, especially if it's someone that told you that. Well, you probably need to look at them and say, hey, look, we gotta figure out if we still gonna be homies. This is what we need to talk about.

So you're winning in that regard. And so let me bring you back to the main title here, inclusion. We can't get ahead if we can't bring everybody to the table.

If we're just saying I'm here, well, what about the other folks? What about what about everyone else? Because we say "we here," but you're really saying "I'm here." I'm here. So winning creates opportunity.

And that's one thing I really wanted to get across. Because the beautiful thing when you win-- and I was just telling this to my kids yesterday. I said, I hate being late, and I hate to lose. And when they say, Dad, well, you do play games. Only games I know I'm going to win.

So if I know I'm going to lose, I'm not going to play. Nor am I think about even learning it, because I don't want to lose. Winning creates the opportunity for you to go to the next level. But the beauty about that is, it creates someone else the opportunity to go to the next level.

The other piece that it does-- when you are winning, it is the opportunity that has a cost to it. Right now, you are here, sitting on this Hopin platform, learning about how to be inclusive of others because there is an expense. As I tell my marketing clients, you can get yourself out there. You can spend a lot of time in putting yourself and going to every single network session. And they say, well, how much do I need for a marketing budget?

Well, because you need to understand your ad spend. And I say, about \$500 to \$1,000. Because the first question is, well, it all depends what you want to do.

And they're like, well, just tell me a ballpark figure. I'm like, well, \$500 to \$1,000. They're like, oh, my god. That's a lot.

Well, that's 30 days. And if you do 30 days with \$1,000, that's around \$30 a day. You can then drive around town, empty out your gas tank every single day, tell everyone and their mama who you are and what you do, and see if they want to buy your product.

Or you can just buy an ad, put it on Google, and you can see how many people are clicking on it. And it's working smarter, not harder. But people don't want to think of that as an expense or a cost that's going to give them the opportunity for them to win.

And this is why marketing is an investment in you. And when you say you're winning, you will continue to do the things that you need to do to continue to make the investment in yourself. That means, for me and my company, it's my brand, right?

Or for you, if it's someone you work for-- I'm not hating on employees, because I need employees too. You're trying to put the company's best foot forward so that they can seize on the next opportunity, or dominate with their already existing client, or sell something, whatever that looks like. And so there is a dollar amount that you should not be scared to invest in yourself and not just say it's for me, myself, and I.

But guess what. I'm going to start bringing others. And I'm going to say that this is a lot of work.

And at the end of the day, you're going to be tired, bro. I'm going to tell you, if you're doing it right-- let me rephrase that. When you're doing it right, you're going to be tired. You're going to be tired.

Me and Rashida, we be talking sometimes. And she be like, mm. And I'm telling some of Rashida's business. But she be saying, Nate, I'm tired.

But I be telling her, Rashida, because you're doing the work. Not everyone's doing the work. And when you're doing the work-- and it doesn't matter what color you are. When you're bringing people to the left

and to the right of you, and saying, let's come, let's go do this, then man, it's a beautiful thing. That means you're winning.

So inclusion doesn't mean it's just, hey, we need to have more people at the table. Because people ask me, can we get some more Black folks at the table? I'm like, yeah, but don't just look at me to do the work. When are you going to start bringing some more Black folks to the table?

Just because I'm a Black male don't mean I know all the Black people in Vancouver. When are you going to do it? That means you're-- mm, that one word. I'm not going to say it, right?

I know my time is almost over. But I want to use this example here where I created a podcast about five years ago. And it was for me to take my non-profit to the next level, build a community center.

And it just turned out, man, that I did not like hearing myself talking. I did not like doing the things I was doing. Basically, when I was saying something, I'm like, man, I just sound horrible, blah, blah, blah.

I'm like, man, I'm going to stop it. I'm going to stop. I'm going to stop, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And then it just turned out to be, oh, man, I'm just going to quit. Well, then someone reaches out to me from Europe. I'm like, oh, OK, cool, cool, cool, cool, cool.

Then the next person reaches out to me from Texas. I'm like, oh, you found out from the podcast? What?

She was like, yeah, yeah, we're teachers, and we want to know how to help or how to build this, da, da, da. I'm like, oh. I was like, OK. Well, that was like six months, maybe a year. I'm like, all right, no one's listen to me.

Someone reaches out to me from Australia. I'm like, people are listening to me? Oh, OK, OK.

That imposter syndrome? I was just doing it for this when I needed to go here. But it's because I wasn't seeing this as an opportunity. I wasn't winning.

That's what I was telling myself, until I said, Nathan, you're winning, bro. You're winning. Now we gotta make something.

Let's get serious about it. Let's get intentional. So this is when it's time for you to find your why.

And you can do a whole lot of mediocre stuff, but that doesn't mean it's going to make you happy. I know lot of people doing a whole bunch of stuff, and they're not happy. So this is where it's easier to say I'm winning, and you're enjoying your winning, your progress, even your struggles, when you know your why.

So if you haven't heard anything else, if you need a sign, or if you need something to show you that you're making progress, I need you to open the door for others to come in behind you. Because this is how we know that we're winning in inclusion, when we leave the door open, not just a little crack. But we

have left the door open long enough and wide enough where we can see other people coming in behind us to help us in our own journey, to help us with these challenges and opportunities that are happening.

So we need to make sure that not only can they come in the room-- they're looking. They might be shy. But you give them a seat at the table.

When you give them a seat at the table, now allow them to chat. Allow them to talk. Allow them to enjoy the-- how can I say this-- success that you all will achieve.

And when that happens, I can't tell you a greater feeling. Because you know you started from here. As Drake says, you start from the bottom, now you're here, right? Because you now went to here.

But you've got to open the door. And you can only open the door if you're winning. But you don't open the door if you don't have that mindset of winning. So please, please, win. Because we gotta include "errbody" up in here. Because we can't do this by ourselves.

And so with that, if you want to reach out to me, feel free to reach out to me on one of my channels. And that is it. Oh, wait. This is my marketing plug.

If y'all don't have a LinkedIn account, you should be ashamed of yourselves. Y'all need to get that LinkedIn account and stop playing. You know you need to be on LinkedIn.

And if you're not on LinkedIn, shame on you. But let's fix that. Reach out to me.

Holler at your boy. Say, what up? And get everything popping, OK? But I'm on Instagram, and I'm also on Twitter.

So I want to say thank you. And food for thought-- what do you need for you to do to say, I'm winning? Just food for thought.