

Dame Neslyn Watson-Druée wins Influential Women in Business Award 2024



Making your mark in the world of business has always been difficult but it's fair to say for women in the business world it's an even more complex challenge. In this edition of the magazine we are celebrating the achievements of the women that have broken through those barriers and the glass ceiling they are often faced with to make an impact in the industries they work in. One woman that has really made her mark over the years is founder of Beacon Organisational Development, Dame Neslyn Watson-Druée DBE. Dame Neslyn's impressive achievements have been well documented in our recent editions so many of our readers will need no introduction to the impact that she has had.

It's been a remarkable journey that started in Jamaica where she was born and grew up before moving to the UK aged 19 with 5 O Levels. In the years since she's made a real name for herself and had the kind of impact that perhaps even she couldn't have imagined in those early days. She's enjoyed a long and distinguished career that has spanned several decades. She has been an incredible role model and an inspirational leader that has made such a tangible difference to the lives of those that she's worked with.

In recognition of those achievements we are delighted to announce that Dame Neslyn Watson-Druée DBE is the latest recipient of our E2 Media Inspirational Women in Business Award for 2024. The award adds to the plethora of accolades she has received over the years including being given one of our Lifetime Achievement Awards earlier this year and being recognised with a Damehood in His Majesty King Charles' Birthday Honours. So what is it about Dame Neslyn that makes her so unique and how has she managed to achieve so much?

It's been quite a story that actually began with her training and working as a nurse when she first came to the UK starting what would become a lifelong association with the NHS which is still going strong today. Despite facing considerable prejudice and discrimination as a young black woman she refused to be held back and became the first Caribbean woman to be appointed to the UK Central Council for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting now known as the Nursing and Midwifery Council. She has performed multiple roles with the NHS including being a nurse, midwife, health visitor, health promotion officer, deputy director of nurse education and non executive director in the NHS for 21 consecutive years including 10 years as the chair of NHS Kingston.

In 1989 she first founded Beacon Organisational Development which provides executive coaching. The story behind the launch of Beacon is certainly interesting and says a great deal about the kind of person that Dame Neslyn is and why she's achieved so much. Prior to starting Beacon Dame Neslyn was told by her then manager that she felt threatened by her because she was, "A black woman, and intelligent." It was this incident that provided Dame Neslyn with the spark to launch Beacon and to go on to achieve her aim of providing leadership development and coaching that would transform leaders. Describing in her own words the unique approach that has given her so much success she says, "I focused and leveraged my strengths, applied solutions to the gaps that I saw in leadership and service development. I thought about my former boss who told me she was going to block me. I wondered if she would have related to me differently had she had leadership training."

Dame Neslyn's achievements despite the obstacles that she has faced provides a wonderful example of what can be achieved with the right mindset and a determination never to be held back. Her inspirational story is one that should quite rightly be used to inspire the next generation of female business leaders.



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