



Cantrece Jones

Acuity: sharpness or keenness of thought, vision or hearing.—
Dictionary.com

When Cantrece Jones named her marketing and communications business Acuity Design Group, LLC, she could just as well have been describing herself. A longtime client and volunteer mentor of the Jacksonville Women's Business Center (JWBC,) Jones was honored this summer by the City of Jacksonville for her business success and her support of startup entrepreneurs. She was chosen by the city's Small and Emerging Businesses (JSEB) program as July 2015 JSEB of the Month based on her community involvement, online presence, mentoring of fellow small business owners and program participation. Through the program, the city maximizes procurement opportunities with JSEBs and encourages private and public business relationships with them.

In September Jones will partner with the city to facilitate a marketing seminar for JSEB firms and people interested in marketing in general. She recently volunteered to present two Entrepreneurial Certificate Workshops that the JWBC delivered with the Small Business Administration at Edward Waters College.

"These were after-hours evening sessions and her presentation covering marketing basics was a huge success," said Pat Blanchard, JWBC director. "I cannot begin to thank her for her efforts, and I believe this recognition from the city will be one of many."

"Cantrece has done amazing things as a business owner and we could not be more proud to have someone of her caliber in our program," said Nina Salvaggio, communications outreach coordinator for the city's JSEB program. "She is more than willing to continue giving back to her community and fellow business owners, and to lend a helping hand whenever she can."

"People have given back to me. That's how I was raised," said Jones. "I want everybody to be successful. A lot of small business owners can't afford to hire professionals. So any tips and directions I have, I will gladly share."

She made good again on that offer in JWBC's last Marketing Matters class, when she mentored participant Jodi Windsor of Intron Technologies. Jones considers the pairing a perfect fit because her 7-year-old business specializes in the architectural, engineering, environmental and construction industries. "So, a lot of contacts she needed, I already had," Jones said.

Jones' success story started at the University of North Florida, where she graduated in 1999 with a degree in marketing and graphic design. In college she interned with Prosser Hallock, a planning, engineering and renewable energy consulting firm, and worked there seven years. "Now we work together on federal contracts," she said. "We built a great relationship on trust over the years."

She has learned the value of networking and collaboration.

"I pick up the phone every day for guidance," Jones said. "Providing encouragement is so important."

Jones is proud of her JSEB recognition. But when she became involved with JSEB a few years ago as a woman small business owner she wasn't sure she wanted that minority classification. "I wanted people to know I provided a valuable service and was good at what I do, not necessary as a small and emerging business," she explained. "However, it worked out. We increased profits and built great relationships. It was the icing on the cake for our clients."

She strongly advises woman starting out in business to take advantage of JWBC's mentoring programs. "Truly listen. Don't just go. Participate and follow through," she said. "It's so important."

Likewise, she urges qualifying small business owners to consider JSEB. "Use it to your advantage and don't expect just to get a return on your investment," she said. "It's not your ticket to success; it's a small piece of what can assist you in being successful. You still need to be good at what you do."

In addition to JWBC and JSEB, Jones' community involvement includes serving as president of the Society for Marketing Professional Services and as a member of the Society for American Military Engineers. She has three daughters, the oldest of whom is following in her mother's marketing footsteps.