

Peer Insights

R E P O R T

Q&A with Marcia Nelson

Founder and CEO of Deals & Divas

Principle Series:

Family Office Insights sits down with Marcia Nelson, founder and CEO of Deals & Divas, to talk about the VC community, how her firm supports female-led businesses and where the opportunity lies with family offices.



Family Office Insights is a voluntary, “opt-in” collaborative peer-to-peer community of single family offices, qualified investors and institutional investors.

Learn more at:
FamilyOfficeInsights.com

Q: What is Deals & Divas?

A: Deals & Divas is an educational, networking and event platform that brings together business owners, executives and funding sources. Our common goal is to support and promote women in all areas of business.

Q: Why did you start it?

A: I spent my early career in fashion publishing where women worked in senior roles all throughout the industry. I worked with and was mentored by many smart, successful women who ran each magazine as its own business. Then I went to graduate school for an MBA, started working in finance, and was surprised how few women were in top positions in the community. I learned that the disparity wasn't only in finance and banking, but across corporate America. As I've advanced in my career, I've seen really talented women leave their corporate jobs to start their own businesses because they were frustrated with their roles. They all have similar stories and share with me that "It's lonely at the top" as well as how hard they had to work to get capital to expand. I started bringing groups of women together to share their ideas and resources, and Deals & Divas grew out of those groups.

Q: What do you want to accomplish?

A: I want to change the world! For starters, though, I want to change the dialogue. I'm tired of hearing that women don't support each other; or that they climbed to the top of the ladder and kicked it out behind them. I want women to recognize how powerful we are, and how we can work together to engage men in the conversation. Ultimately, if we work together we can use our voices and our actions to instigate change at the top. There is already a groundswell of support for women businesses and CEOs, and I want to be part of the movement.

Q: How is Deals & Divas different from other women's networks?

A: I have been a member of many of these organizations, and they tend to be very one-sided. There are organizations that support investors or angel networks or investment banking/private equity groups. On the other side, there are organizations for business owners. But where are the groups that bring us all together? Deals & Divas provides a solution.

Q: What size businesses does Deals & Divas attract?

A: It really runs the gamut. During the cocktail reception and networking portion of our events, we primarily showcase entrepreneurs looking for brand exposure and early round financing. These are companies in food and beverage, fashion and beauty, and other consumer products. Our speakers and panelists are from various industries. One recent event was on Women in the Family Business; the speakers were from multi-generational, privately-owned companies. Our attendees ranged from advisors in legal and finance to investors from the Angel, VC and PE community. We are also starting to attract family offices that are seeking impact investment opportunities, particularly those focused on diversity.

Q: Why do you think there is a groundswell of activity and interest in women owned business?

A: From the business owner side, women are starting companies because they can't find what they're looking for in the market. We had Jennie Dundas, the founder of Blue Marble Ice Cream, on one of our panels. She shared her story about starting the company out of her apartment in Brooklyn because she wanted to go organic. Corporations and investors are taking note. For example, Happy Family was started to provide an alternative to processed baby food, and was later sold to Dannon, and Annie's Homegrown was sold to General Mills.

Q: Do you see Millennials supporting women-owned businesses and if so, why?

A: Absolutely. Millennials and women tend to be aligned in their goals. Both groups are looking for sustainable food, health, water, gluten-free and fat-free foods and consumer products. There is a lot of overlap in their desires to change the world. At one end, there are the "seniorpreneurs" stepping out of corporate America to start businesses, and then there is the millennial generation which is sidestepping corporate America all together, and going right to starting a new business.

Q: Are family offices getting behind this?

A: Family Offices are getting involved because they want to bring together and unite multiple generations. And the old paradigm of passing the business down to the son has long been disrupted, so the daughters, wives, and sisters have more of a say. As the wealth changes hands, we're back to that alignment of interest between women and Millennials. When you add in the impact investing space it's even more synergistic. Women are creating businesses that solve issues of lack of education for women and girls worldwide. I recently met with a woman who's starting a company that will educate midwives in rural communities around the globe, and provide local midwives with portable equipment to monitor and support women during pregnancy and child birth in areas where they don't have access to hospitals. I think there are companies like this that family offices are interested in investing in – they want to provide and promote social goods, in addition to getting a return on their investment.

Q: What are your aspirations for Deals&Divas?

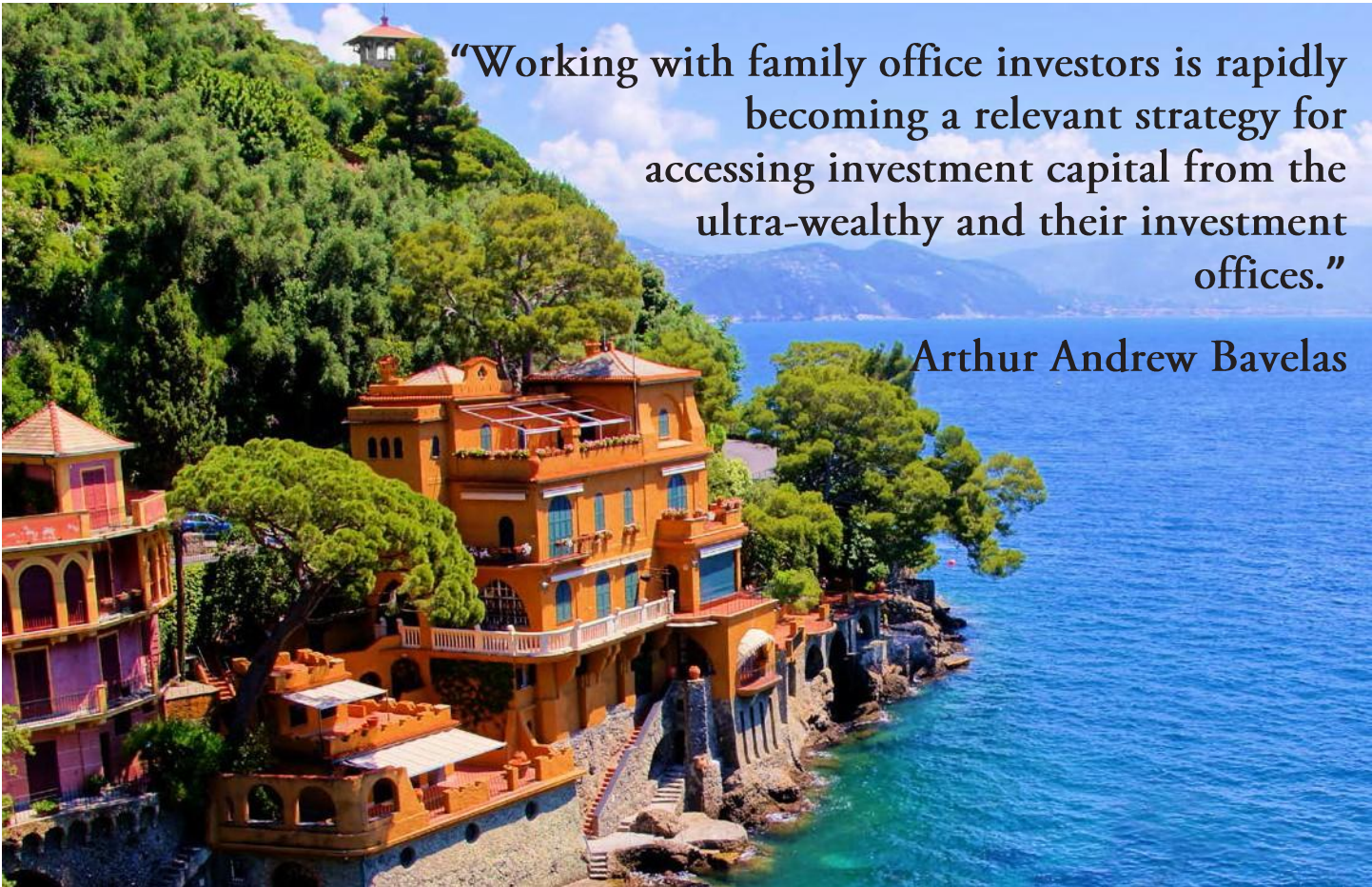
A: We're already targeting brand ambassadors in other cities across the US and starting to speak with a few women internationally. We will eventually have a portal where members can connect with each other online, in addition to the physical events. Our goal is to be a resource provider and a super-connector to bring women and men together across the world to support women owned and operated business. Our community is stronger if we're talking to each other and sharing ideas.



Marcia Nelson

Ms. Nelson is the founder and CEO of Deals and Divas, an educational and networking organization that connects women entrepreneurs and investors. In addition, she recently joined The Alberleyn Group platform, an investment bank and merchant banking firm servicing middle market companies and family office investors. Ms. Nelson has a proven track record of working with family offices and their advisors. She formerly worked for an ultra-high-net-worth philanthropic family and subsequently managed business development and relationship management in the areas of estate planning, finance, and accounting, most recently at Anchin, Block & Anchin LLP. Over the last 20 years, Ms. Nelson has developed a strong network of family offices and advisors who are increasingly seeking access to quality direct deal flow from trusted, experienced partners.

She received her MBA at Fordham, and lives in NYC with her husband, Glen, and children. For more information, please go to <http://www.dealsanddivas.com>.



“Working with family office investors is rapidly becoming a relevant strategy for accessing investment capital from the ultra-wealthy and their investment offices.”

Arthur Andrew Bavelas