


FAMILY OFFICE INSIGHTS
facilitated by The Bavelas Group

Peer Insights

R E P O R T

Q&A with Holly Finigan.

Founder of Nantucket
BLACKbook.

Principle Series:

Family Office Insights sits down with Holly Finigan, Founder of Nantucket BLACKbook, to discuss her modern day guide to Nantucket Island, and her insights on The Nantucket Project, where 500 visionaries and seekers gather every fall on the island to discuss the most thought-provoking ideas of our time.



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The Nantucket Project: Holly's Insights

It all began with the question “**what is it that actually matters most?**” I spent a weekend last month participating in [The Nantucket Project](#) (see right sidebar for link-1) and have spent the last week processing the information on that same island where the event launched. *“Each fall, The Nantucket Project gathers 500 visionaries and seekers to the island to discuss the boldest and most thought-provoking ideas of our time.”* In its seventh year, the 2017 theme was around understanding and creating conversations around what matters most. Since this experience, my mind has been spinning, and I’ve somehow got this idle hand that can’t keep up with all the thoughts pouring out of my head. Thus, here are some quotes and notes from what I heard and what I wrote:

“I built up hidden baggage to protect myself.”

What are we carrying from our past that could be harming us? For [Lee Nadler](#) (2), it was the violent, unresolved murder of his mother. “I had to go back to the highest point on earth to get grounded,” he said and he needed to change his hidden baggage into a manageable backpack. He did that in Nepal with his friend [Karma Sherpa](#) (3) who told attendees “we can only control the air conditioning in our own house.” As Lee said, it’s about finding “The Sherpa Within.”

“My fear is a black lump in my body... and I won’t be eaten alive.”

Are psychedelic mushrooms the new palliative care for cancer patients? [Tony Bossis](#) (4) enlightened us on stage with a talk about science, religion and the transcending of self. He spoke on the benefits of mushroom trips for cancer patients and their ability to reduce depression and anxiety. “We don’t die well in America,” he said and made us continue to question, “what, if anything happens upon death?” Tony had us listen to the audio file of a woman with terminal cancer going through her mushroom trip. “My fear is a black lump in my body... and I won’t be eaten alive,” she said. Was she facing a fear or her cancer during the trip? Regardless, this new type of medicine made me wish my mom had had the chance to look at her hidden baggage through the lens of a mushroom trip. Perhaps to see that her cancer, that black lump inside her, potentially could have been released.

“We’ve hijacked the American mind around food.”

[Dr. Mark Hyman](#) (5) came to Nantucket and all our lives were affected as he told us all to trust our guts. “What is food?” He got on stage on Thursday to tell us that “food is simply information” and we all have the ability to create a healthy garden or a toxic garden in our body based around what we consume. We all had the time last weekend to stop and think about feeding our mind, body and souls. By Sunday, when Dr. Hyman took center stage for his full talk, we had been eating his menu all weekend. During his time on stage he shed light on food and injustice. “We waste forty per cent of the food here in this country ... and our food system is corrupted.” He brought up that if you eat foods that are supported by the government, you could be supporting disease. He discussed how obesity exploded during the low fat movement and it was because “quantity matters less than the quality of the calories,” and that low fat slows your metabolism. “We’ve hijacked the American mind around food,” he stressed. And that it’s high time for more quality information to reverse a century of processed food. Most importantly, we can start right now, with our very own fork.

“So I said, you can take my leg Doc, and turn me into the Terminator!”

We could never understand... or could we? The strength of the human spirit and the power to overcome unthinkable obstacles was at TNP when [Paul de Gelder](#) (6) stood before us. This physically fit Aussie told us the story behind his two biggest fears-- sharks and public speaking. He completely overcame these two things after he lost his leg and hand in a shark attack in 2009 while working in the Navy as a Bomb Clearance Diver. After the attack, his body was rebuilt by science and physical therapy, but it was his mind and his power to choose live that was the real story. In the Navy, he was taught to improvise, to adapt, and to overcome and he taught us to understand that a ten second incident can take everything away... everything except your spirit. What is it that we all want? “It’s so simple... everyone wants a good life,” he said. So when things get tough, you improvise, you adapt and you overcome... and you never ever give up. Paul de Gelder is living proof.

“If you want to be more forgiving, start with your own self.”

[Nadia Bolz-Weber](#) (7) is not your traditional Lutheran pastor. (Her Instagram account [@SarcasticLutheran](#) (8) is a great place to start.) “Christianity has completely lost the plot,” she began and moved into giving TNP attendees a deeper understanding of forgiveness. She had us question everything around the topic like, “what about starting with a forgiving God?” and continued on to say, “there’s nothing that the universe can’t make right.” She reminded us how “evil is not more powerful than good” and how “free people are not controlled by the past.” So what do we do when it comes to forgiveness? We look inward. “If you want to be more forgiving, start with your own self,” she said. Because in the end, “forgiveness is God’s source code of grace.”

“Will you have mercy?”

Speaking of forgiveness, [Glenn Beck](#) (9) got on stage twice, potentially winning best dramatic performance for both sessions. “People do change,” he said and added that everything that we think has meaning is worthless. “My life is a blank piece of paper and I am the only author,” he said and went on to discuss how we attach happiness to things. We wait for things to make us happy and then we feel fulfilled. He made us ponder that “heaven could be right now if we choose to say that this is glorious...that the struggle I have is really good.” Back on stage on Sunday, Glenn continued the tale about how the last seven years have transformed him. How he regrets the role that he played in the media. “I have nothing to gain from you people,” he said of the audience but also stressed that we truly have more in common than we disagree on and how he would like to connect with everyone. Can people change? It was up for discussion throughout the before and afters of the GB hour. “Fame is the most coercive drug out there,” he said. You go to extremes and ratings go up. You go middle? You go down. Nantucket Project CoFounder **Tom Scott** read aloud one of the letters that he had been sent after announcing that Glenn Beck would be at the Project. “Glenn Beck is a liar and the only reason Glenn Beck is doing this is because he is losing money.” So is it an act? Or do we have to have empathy? It is, after all, deeds not words in the end that make the difference. “Will you forgive me? Will you have mercy?” He pleaded. And for what I understand, the jury is still out.

“We’ve got to listen to the Cassandras. These people help us to see the future.”

[RP Eddy](#) (10) came to the Project with a mission and a message. He gave us the inside track on Cassandras, the people that forecast catastrophes and are ignored. He stressed, “don’t ignore your own data.” From 9/11 to

tsunamis to the crash in 2008, he took us down a dark path and the Cassandras who had shined light on what was coming. Could we have been saved? The future safety of mankind and this planet could depend upon these people. And if anything, RP Eddy awakened us to some truth in hindsight, which is after all, always 20/20.

“I was becoming a better football player but I was becoming a worse person.”

Ray Rice. The elevator. The incident. The crushing blow [in the video](#) (11) seen around the world. The pro football player was on the stage asking for forgiveness without making excuses. “I used to tell kids to live your dreams and I would warn them. You’re only one or two bad decisions from your dreams becoming your nightmare.” With his wife in the audience he touched on the topic of domestic violence with two choices. “You can flee everything and run,” he said. “Or you can face everything and rise.”

“Nothing will happen until it’s personal.”

[Katie Hood](#) (12) came on stage right after Ray Rice. Apparently they were on the same plane and in the same cab en route to the same hotel. It must have been an interesting ride, since Katie is the CEO of [One Love Foundation](#) (13), a network to raise awareness to dating violence and to inspire change in the relationships of today's youth. Katie’s involvement with the foundation stemmed back to her personal connection to [Yeardly Love](#) (14), a University of Virginia senior and lacrosse player, who was beaten to death by her ex-boyfriend just three weeks before they graduated. The One Love Foundation was formed to help young adults see the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships through powerful videos and social media campaigns. “You can take your personal crisis and use it to help others,” she said. That is the One Love Foundation. Understanding that love is one thing and helping to address *what’s not love* and doing so with the #ThatsNotLove movement.

“Forgiveness is a difficult thing... frankly I would say it is a miracle.”

Now more than 23 years post genocide, the country of Rwanda and its people took stage on Saturday while discussing what happened to their country in 1994, where nearly a million people were lost and half a million were displaced. “The thing is everybody lost. The question became... how can an entire population of a country work towards something better?” [Suzanne McGill](#) (15) cofounder and president of the [Rwanda Girls Initiative](#) (16) shed light that Rwanda is now the 9th safest country in the world... and the US? It is 84th. Rwandan [President Paul Kagame](#) (17) came on stage to discuss how his country had been able to turn around in the past two decades. The audience seemed to be in agreement that it is astounding what this country has been able to make happen since the genocide. (Especially since Rwanda is a landlocked country with very little natural resources.) Investing in Rwandan women was a huge part of it. He had us question as a country, “What will we gain by losing our differences for the common good?” A perfectly phrased and oh so poignant question for us Americans to ponder right now.

5 More Quotes To Note

“Consider the earth a spaceship. The spaceship provides a crew. Humans? We are the passengers. And the crew? We’re killing them.” [Captain Paul Watson](#) (18) on we treat the natural marine resources of the world today.

“People can recover from mental health conditions and I am living proof,” [Katherine Switz](#) (19) said

during her talk around mental illness and how we need to create less silence and shame around the disease and offer more open dialogue and support for those in need.

“Where do you go to get inspired? You don’t have to go out... you can go *in*.” Artist [Shantell Martin](#) (20) said on creativity. “What happens if you make a mistake? And I say, it is all a big magical mistake and I just learn to enjoy the process.”

“Embrace what you don’t know,” Media mogul [Casey Neistat](#) (21) said while discussing the lack of understanding in today’s media. We watched his fresh and powerful [video](#) (22) with a message to today’s disruptors. “Keep creating. Keep doing the work. DO WHAT YOU CAN’T.”

“I’m unwilling to look back,” [Chelsea Manning](#) (23) said on the stage during her first interview since serving seven years (of a 35 year sentence) in prison for handing U.S. secrets to WikiLeaks. “I did what I thought was the right thing to do... that’s all I can do.”

Q: Tell us about your background and your company, Nantucket BLACKbook.

A: I’ve lived on Nantucket Island for the past 13 years after being introduced to it by a sorority sister from the University of New Hampshire. After we graduated in 2005, I arrived to the island for one summer... and I’ve been here ever since. The lifestyle and seasonality of Nantucket allows me to work hard all summer and travel all winter. I used to work from April ‘till December, and globe trot for four months every off-season. I spent the entirety of my 20s traveling the likes of the Caribbean, Hawaii, New Zealand, Argentina, and Uruguay. However, in 2010, I moved back permanently to Nantucket to be closer to home after my mom’s cancer returned.

As an unattached female living on Nantucket, I decided to start a blog about being single on the island. (They say that when you’re single on Nantucket and a female that the odds are good but the goods are odd!) In 2011, my boyfriend convinced me to morph my blog into an online travel magazine, which became my company, Nantucket blackbook. (FYI: ‘ACK’ is the airport code out here.) The Nantucket blackbook is the modern day guide to the island showcasing the best in restaurants, retail and real estate. Over the past 5 years, I’ve really come to understand how people vacation and spend their money here. I currently have over 40 blackbook members, and a strong social media following (47K followers) that I engage heavily with. What makes me different from most media companies is that I believe in advocacy, not advertising. I’ve never had to pay to advertise my company, which is the beauty of understanding social media marketing and having a genuine, consistent relationship with my target audience. I also have the retail arm of my brand called “Happy Place.” In the near future, I plan on opening Nantucket’s premier holistic health and self care retreat center focused on connecting through disconnecting in honor of my mom, Ruth who passed away in 2014.

Q: Who is Nantucket BLACKbook’s target audience?

A: One of the many wonderful things about Nantucket is that it’s a place of healing and peace. My ideal demographic sees Nantucket as a place to rest, rejuvenate and really get away from it all. When you arrive

here, it's by ferry or plane, and you're 30 miles out to sea. That truly makes it a place for anybody who wants to experience what a modern day vacation could possibly look like away from everything. Of my 47K followers on Instagram, 75% are females between the ages 25-44, and predominantly live in the New York, Boston and DC areas.

Q: How are you different from other travel blogs and online magazines?

A: My golden egg and Achilles heel is that I am not super competitive. I believe there's enough sunshine for everybody if one does what one does right. With that said, I have yet to see a media company, in the resort world, do advocacy over advertising. It's usually all about the bigger you spend on advertising and marketing, the better you're positioned in the travel space. I have strong connections here on Nantucket with spectacular hospitality groups, including, Lark Hotels, the White Elephant, Harborview Nantucket, The Wauwinet and more. With Airbnb and VRBO being a major player in travel accommodations, I also work with The Copley Group, which has a collection of 11 island rental properties, which have recently become a hot way for people to stay out here.

Q: What are some challenges you face in this market?

A: The challenge in this space is for people to fully understand the term, wellness. It is such a hot word these days, but it's been so overused that it doesn't seem to really mean anything anymore. I believe that the new word for wellness is *self*—self-care, self-love, self-awareness. It's about understanding your habits and tapping back into your creativity and doing so by taking the time to disconnect in an overly connected world.

Q: How are you changing the landscape of your industry?

A: I run everything through social media so I am able to get all of my messaging out incredibly fast. While we have a local newspaper out here, it only comes out on Thursdays, and people will not wait a week for their news. Through my digital platforms, I am able to reach a targeted 20K people in less than 12 hours. I also have the opportunity to speak to the 1% of the population that everyone wants to reach. I don't need 2M Instagram followers; I just need the right 47K.

I truly believe that people aren't going to pay for information anymore. If you can't provide it, they will find another way to get it for free. So now it's all about adding value without asking for anything in return, because the end goal is to build up the trust. We live in a trust economy now, and that trust can easily be broken... but once you have it, and they follow you, they like you, and they listen to you, well, then you're set. Over the past five years, I've built up the trust from my followers so now the opportunities have become endless. Time is also the currency we're trading on. In today's marketing and media, we're all simply vying for everyone's time and attention. If you're able to capture people's attention and you can consistently keep it, then that's marketing golden ticket. The real challenge I see for brands and businesses on social media these days is that they may be persistent but they are not consistent. There is a huge disconnect out there, and it is of the utmost importance to become aware of it.

Q: What's next for you and how much are you looking to raise?

A: I had this massive awakening after the Nantucket Project. It can be a frightening moment when you realize what you've been working so long on may not be your end game and you're scared, but ready, to pivot. My next focus is to take this "self care center" to the next level. I am in community with many natural healers, therapists, and energists out here who do not have the finances for the spaces in which to give their services. I want to create a place for health experts and energists to give treatments and provide healing. What they say about Nantucket is that on this island, you better have hobbies and not habits. I want to develop a space that also offers a place to gather and create community and to offer creativity and more hobbies for the people that live here in the summer and year round. Being 30 miles out to sea, it can be desolate without the right outlets. The ultimate goal is to create genuine relationships and provide a place to disconnect for those who have lost it. I am not actively raising funds for my company right now, but when I embark on the next chapter of this retreat space, I will need at least a minimum of \$12M to get it going.

Q: What's your mission?

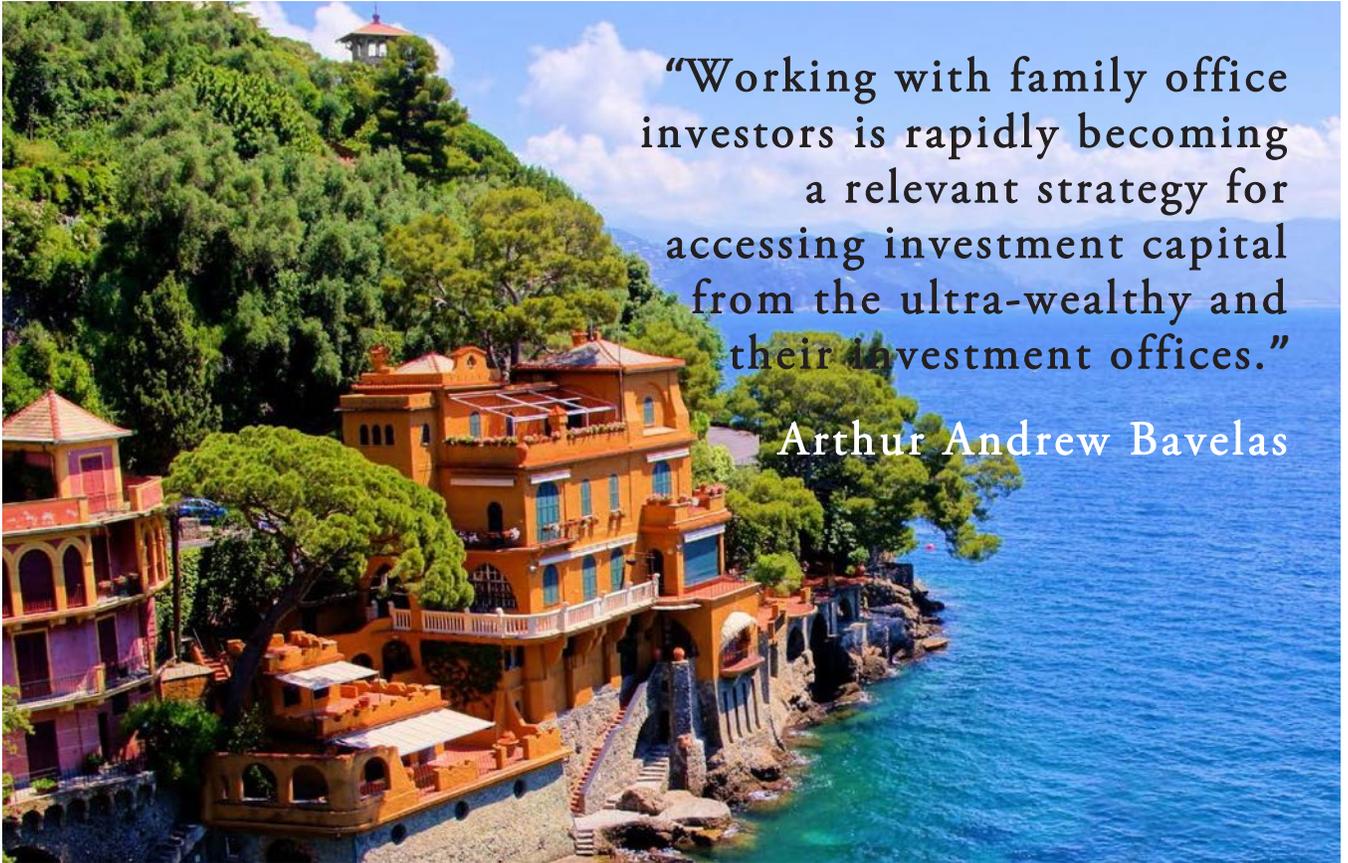
A: Over the past half decade, my mission has been around advocating for Nantucket. I give out the most trusted information on the best ways to sip, shop and stay on the island to a clientele that has the money to spend and want to be specific about spending it. I do a lot of work with nonprofits on the island to identify how they can market themselves better. I'm on the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce, and serve on various other marketing boards that aim to create a better Nantucket for everybody, regardless if you live here seasonally, year-round, or just come for vacation. Now, after years of watching the changing luxury vacation market and seeing how people go about creating their ideal lifestyle here, my mission has evolved to creating an opportunity and place for people to help and heal themselves here on Nantucket.

I'll end with this-- the only thing that makes you on Nantucket is time. So when you invest your time on ACK and put your heart and soul into the bettering of the community, you become ingrained in this most special island. I feel so grateful to have the ability to call this place home and I want to keep it preserved and a place of peace for the generations to come.



Holly Finigan excels at connecting people and brands with the best that Nantucket Island has to offer. Over the past five years, her lifestyle guide, Nantucket bLACKbook, has reinvented the ways for businesses to market and brand on the island. Holly runs the entirety of her platforms around advocacy, not advertising. From producing and hosting events to travel scouting in resort destinations to creating entrepreneur retreats on island and off, Holly has a true passion for curating quality content and connections in fresh and exciting ways. Holly is incredibly well connected and has a serious love for hospitality. She spent nine years tending bar on the island at various hotspots like LoLa 41, Dune and Ventuno. As a social media strategist, Holly teaches small classes as well as personal sessions on building brands genuinely by using Facebook, Instagram and email marketing more effectively. Holly lives on Nantucket year round and is currently writing her first book.

For more information, please reach out to Holly at holly@nantucketblackbook.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