

BRITTANY MERRILL UNDERWOOD
FOUNDER & CEO
AKOLA PROJECT



Brittany Merrill Underwood has made an extraordinary impact through her dedication over the past 14 years to transform the lives of impoverished women and families through the Akola Project, a non-profit designed to empower at risk women by offering them training, a work opportunity, and holistic care. Akola Jewelry became the first full-impact brand that gives 100% back to launch in the luxury space through its every store account with Neiman Marcus in 2016. Akola became a top 10 jewelry brand in its first season at Neiman Marcus.

Currently, Akola gives a work opportunity to over 500 women in Uganda and Dallas so they can transform the lives of children in their communities. Akola women are empowered throughout Akola's entire supply chain. Women are given opportunity through making beads, the assembly of the jewelry and even the distribution center is run as a second chance job program. Akola has created a high-impact hybrid model that is paving the way for millennial run businesses that seek to have an impact on the world.

Brittany has been featured on the likes of the Katie Couric Show, CNN, Fox Business and Modern Luxury. Akola jewelry has been featured on the pages of Vogue, Town and Country, Harper's Bazaar, and People Style Watch. Brittany continues her work as the CEO of the Akola Project and is in her fourth year of teaching a course on Social Innovation at Southern Methodist University as an adjunct professor.

Awards:

- 2018: Named one of 25 people reshaping the future of retail by the National Retail Federation
- 2017: Named one of the World's Top 10 CEOs by Inc Magazine
- 2016: Awarded a silver medal from the Business & Interfaith Peace Award given by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation
- 2014: Named the 'Best Person in the World' by Yahoo
- 2014: Honored by clothing manufacturer Levi as one of 50 women around the globe who have changed the political, cultural, and spiritual shape of the future
- 2014: Awarded the Young Leader Award by the Dallas Women's Foundation
- 2013: Awarded the Emerging Leader Award by Southern Methodist University