

AS SEEN IN
Forbes & Fortune

HOUSTON'S EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN
DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

Power in the Data

Houston-born communications firm FordMomentum! radically transforms how data is collected and analyzed through a new methodology that foregrounds people, not profits.



Communications expert and native Houstonian Maya Ford says she was used to being the only person of color in her office and that she was often the only one on her team looking for data on minority communities. “I realized that people like me were never included or portrayed in communications,” Ford says. “When you create without our voices, you’re at best excluding people and at worst causing real consequences for the fabric of our nation.”

As she rose to executive-level roles, Ford’s inclusive communications approach was highly profitable, but taken for granted. “I was a huge asset to the organizations and companies I worked for because I brought inclusion, but I was never paid for it,” Ford says. In 2014, she converted a \$400,000 grant into \$5 million for her previous employer. “At the time, I wasn’t even making \$100,000,” Ford says. “I realized I needed to be doing this on my own.”

Ford established FordMomentum! in 2015, a data-informed communications firm with the mission to deliver sustainable communications strategies using a mix of data science, culture integration, and creative process. The firm has worked with government and private industries to create a unique strategy for effectively and ethically collecting and using data to restructure the systems in our society that weren’t created with every American in mind, such as legislation and city planning, to bring everyone closer.

“FordMomentum! is about helping individuals recognize that they have inherent assets. People often talk over others, especially if

a problem isn’t affecting them directly. That’s why authentic, radical listening is crucial to ensuring every American’s voice is heard and acted upon.”

Revolutionizing Data Collection and Analysis

At the core of FordMomentum!’s approach is the Standard of Love (STOLO), a methodology system informed by MIT’s Data, Economics and Development Policy program. “STOLO offers a way to collect, analyze, and actionize data using five pillars: literacy, values, economic power, self-esteem, and justice. We use this information to drive equitable results that are true to what people want and need—not simply to benefit those in power,” Ford explains.

The STOLO system marks a departure from a typical communications approach and data collection point. It starts by seeking to understand the core values of the companies the firm works with, then uses that to develop an informed communications strategy. This values-informed approach allows for more authentic relationships and faster trust building, helping companies move forward in a way that honors their personal ethics and increasing leadership buy-in.

“Historically, communications and marketing data has been used to confirm a theory instead of being used as a point of departure for new ideas,” Ford says. “We’re looking to separate from the top-down approach that has traditionally failed people. We start with understanding what people want and then work to strategize how that can be converted.”



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Investing in Cultural Currency

FordMomentum! helps organizations and municipalities figure out their ‘why’ so they can better serve their communities.

Business owners can rely on FordMomentum! to help bridge cultural gaps and improve professional outcomes. The firm works with government, developers, transportation, tech, and other private industries to create a strategy unique to each client’s needs.

“We use communications as a science,” says Maya Ford, principal of FordMomentum!, a data-informed communications firm. Launched in 2015, the Houston-based firm has redefined sustainable communications strategies using a unique blend of data science, culture integration, and creative process. “Our goal is to help organizations and the people they serve to develop trusting relationships based on proven outcomes, not assumptions. We’ve layered the scientific method and our own methodology called the Standard of Love (STOLO) to create authentic communications products that companies and government agencies can use as a roadmap.”

Inspired by groundbreaking author bell hooks’ critical writing on historical trauma and healing, Ford developed the STOLO method over her 20 years working in marketing and communications. “Our methodology comprises five pillars: literacy, values, economic power, self-esteem, and justice. We are uniquely able to collect information authentically from each area to drive equitable results that are true to what people want and need—not simply to benefit those in power,” Ford explains.

“My Home is Here” Study

In 2019, FordMomentum! worked with The Kinder Institute for Urban

Research at Rice University to successfully carry out a landmark housing study for Harris County, one of the largest and most diverse counties in the nation, meaning the study would have to take several different native languages into account—something STOLO was uniquely prepared for. Their goal was to assess the county’s affordable housing needs and make recommendations based on projected population growth and current housing affordability gaps.

The firm employed a series of 12 different communications channels to collect responses, including digital marketing, outdoor billboards, television commercials, radio, ads, and gamification. “We went in using our STOLO methodology and used culturally diverse visuals in multiple languages,” Ford says.

The study’s results, drawn from over 17,000 residents, will inform over \$1 billion of spending on infrastructure improvements like safer housing and increased transportation access.

In addition, the process identified ways the county can better connect with the community. “The outcomes exposed details that the municipality hadn’t considered, like how they communicate with their constituents,” Ford says. “For example, a third of the county does not identify as English-speaking, and there is a huge Spanish-speaking population. Rather than host a conference or a town hall in English with Spanish translators, we hosted it in Spanish with English translators. It’s by focusing on what your audience knows and wants that you’ll get real results.”

While some organizations worry working with FordMomentum! will lead to revenue loss, the opposite is often true. “It is a cost savings because you’re



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getting the variables right from the beginning,” says Ford. “You’re also building more trust with the communities involved because they feel you are listening and invested in their needs.”

To schedule your consultation call with FordMomentum! and reach your audience authentically, head to thefordmomentum.com.



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