

Kelly O'Brien is an Imaginative, high performing senior leader with 20+ years' experience growing organizations and initiatives. She has an impressive track record of fostering mutually beneficial collaborations and driving change.

The CEO of Ideaction Corps, Kelly founded this full service social change agency that works exclusively with clients who seek to make a social impact. From large-scale, high-level campaigns to the brass tacks strategy and tools needed to get there, Ideaction mobilizes the collective teams of talent needed to make a difference. Ideaction Corps is a certified B Corp and a legal Benefit Corporation entity in the State of Illinois. Kelly is also the founding Executive Director of The Kennedy Forum Illinois, a powerful initiative led nationally by former Congressman Patrick Kennedy that is advancing mental health and addiction equity, fighting the opioid crisis and building a network of influencers to push for urgent attention to our nation's suicide and addiction epidemics.

A change catalyst, Kelly's unique combination of leadership, strategy, community engagement, partnership development, project management, sales/fundraising, and communications skills has resulted in an impressive record of raising the profile and impact for many organizations and initiatives. Examples include building a board and leadership council of 85 influencers in business, health and policy for The Kennedy Forum, convening thousands of leaders annually in service of advancing mental health policy (including Michael Phelps, David Axelrod, Common, Brandon Marshall, Patrick Kennedy, and scores of other high profile leaders), raising millions for impactful projects, leading significant policy advocacy campaigns resulting in new laws and increased funding, crafting innovative, integrated marketing efforts with demonstrated ROI, and cultivating creative external partnerships in the service of good programs, policy and people.

Her service history includes leadership positions in the public, nonprofit and private sector, including public health advisor to Senator Richard Durbin, Senior Legislative Aide to Congressman Jerry Kleczka, Director of Government Affairs for Partnership for Prevention, Associate Executive Director for the American Public Health Association, Congressional Liaison for the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vice President at Wilhelm & Conlon Public Strategies, Executive Director of Girls on the Run Chicago, VP of Corporate Partnerships and Marketing at United Way of Metro Chicago.

Kelly has a Masters in Public Administration (Policy Analysis) from the George Washington University School of Business and a B.A. from St. Mary's College at Notre Dame in History and Government. She has a curious nature, and is always taking new classes, feeding her podcast and book obsession or embarking on travels.

An avid athlete and adventure seeker, Kelly has completed nearly one hundred running and triathlon events including Ironman Wisconsin. She's a certified scuba diver, Sea Scout leader, a graduate of surfing camp and adventure racing camp, and trains each summer with Chicago Endurance Sports. An avid meditator and seeking, she recently completed a 10-day silent Vipassana meditation course in Sri Lanka.

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