

# Col. Nicole Malachowski, USAF (Ret.)

**First Woman Thunderbird Pilot; Combat Veteran; Fighter Squadron Commander; White House Fellow & Adviser; Indomitable Spirit**

Please contact a GDA agent for information.

## Topics

- Healthcare
- Inspiration & Achievement
- Military & Veterans
- Navigating Change & Uncertainty
- Teambuilding & Collaboration
- Women's Empowerment

## About Col. Nicole Malachowski, USAF (Ret.)

Col. Nicole Malachowski, USAF (Ret.) defies stereotypes. Yes, she was a jet fighter pilot, but if you think you know her based on that, you'd be wrong. A leader, a combat veteran, the first woman pilot on the Thunderbirds Air Demonstration Squadron, a White House Fellow, and an inductee into both the National Women's Hall of Fame and the Women in Aviation International Pioneer Hall of Fame, Nicole's distinguished 21-year Air Force career exceeded her wildest dreams. But the dream came to an end when a devastating tick-borne illness left her struggling greatly to speak or walk for almost nine months. An indomitable spirit, Nicole fought back against overwhelming odds and prevailed. Drawing on stories from her career and personal life, Nicole inspires audiences to rethink the challenges they face every day. She urges them to go beyond resilience and become resurgent. Nicole's message empowers people with three key beliefs: failure and risk is the price of entry for achieving something great; sometimes you need to yield to overcome; and her personal mantra – "Nobody wants to lead a scripted life."

Nicole brings her experience to the stage and holds audiences spellbound with an easygoing authenticity of someone who's achieved greatness. She's been a member and leader of exceptional teams. She has faced overwhelming challenges and adversity and has come out on top.

While other high school students were practicing for their driver's license, Nicole was accumulating flight time. She was sixteen years old when she took her first solo flight and from that point on there was no stopping her. While in high school, she joined the Civil Air Patrol and participated in Air Force Junior ROTC. Nicole's professional story began when she earned her commission from the United States Air Force Academy in 1996. Following graduation, she attended Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) at Columbus AFB, MS and began her career as a pilot. Competitively selected to fly combat aircraft, she was among the first group of women to fly modern fighter aircraft. As a career pilot, she served in combat as an F-15E Flight Commander, Evaluator, Instructor Pilot and Flight Lead. Over her 21-year career, Nicole achieved the rating of Command Pilot with over 2,300 flight hours in six different Air Force aircraft. She was also selected to fly as Thunderbird #3 with the USAF Air Demonstration Squadron – the first woman to fly on any Department of Defense military jet demonstration squadron. Colonel Malachowski has served as a mission ready fighter pilot in three operational F-15E fighter squadrons and has flown over 188 combat hours, including her proudest moment as a fighter pilot: leading the first fighter formation to provide security for Iraq's historic democratic elections in 2005.

On the ground, Nicole was a White House Fellow, class of 2008-2009, where she served on the Presidential Transition Support Team (PTST) while assigned to the U.S. General Services Administration. The White House Fellows Foundation and Association awarded Nicole the 2019 IMPACT Award for demonstrating both remarkable achievement and transformational contributions in her field, as well as a sustained commitment to the White House Fellows program. Nicole also served two high-level staff assignments at the Pentagon – one in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD P&R) as well as the Secretary of the Air Force Office of International Affairs (SAF/IA). She also served as the Executive Director of the White House's national 'Joining Forces' initiative where she directly advised former First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden on all topics relating to service members, veterans, and military families to include employment, education, mental health, veterans' homelessness and more.

Nicole's operational F-15E assignments include two tours of duty at RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom as well as one operational assignment to Seymour Johnson AFB, NC. She has also served alongside the United States Army 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Red Cloud, Republic of Korea, as an Air Liaison Officer. During her second assignment to Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, she had the honor of commanding the 333rd Fighter Squadron, leading an elite cadre of F-15E Instructors in the training of the next generation of combat aviators. Further, she was responsible for resources totaling over \$1.1B and



the execution of a \$119M annual flying hour program.

Nicole earned a Master of Arts, with honors, in National Security Policy from American Military University and a second Master of Arts, with highest distinction, in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College. While there, she earned the Admiral Stephen B. Luce Award as the class honor graduate, the first Air Force officer in the history of the Naval War College to do so. Nicole has been recognized with several honors for her consistent contributions to community service. As Nicole continues to recover from her neurological tick-borne illness, she embraces any opportunity to educate others about her medical journey and gains energy from educating others about this growing epidemic. She is on the Board of Directors at the LivLyme Foundation and is a Patient Advisory Board Member of The Dean Center for Tick Borne Illness.

Colonel Nicole Malachowski, USAF (Ret.) was born in Santa Maria, CA and graduated high school in Las Vegas, NV. She and her husband Paul have twin children; son Garrick and daughter Norah. Paul is a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and former F-15E Evaluator Weapons Systems Officer.

## Select Keynotes

### • **Harnessing Headwinds – Successfully Navigating Change & Adversity**

Leaders across every industry and experience level share one thing in common: To be successful they need to effectively navigate failure, organizational change, and the unknown. Like headwinds to a pilot, these perceived barriers can force you to change direction, cost you momentum, and even take away options. These headwinds can feel confusing, disorienting, and downright uncomfortable. In this talk, Nicole Malachowski uses the aviation-based idea of headwinds as a metaphor to show how with the right mindset, individuals and teams can learn to harness the energy of these headwinds in their advantage.

Nicole inspires individuals and organizations and bolsters their ability to:

- ◊ Overcome personal and professional failures
- ◊ Effectively navigate organizational and cultural change
- ◊ Endure the discomfort of the unknown
- ◊ Increase resilience, reinvention, regroup, and adaptability
- ◊ Have courage to rise above self-doubt and cultural paradigms
- ◊ Support and mentor others on the team

### • **Pushing the Envelope: Being the Best When It Counts**

To be successful, leaders from every industry and experience level need to effectively navigate moments of self-doubt, master the role of a trustworthy team player, and embrace moments of personal and professional vulnerability. Using the idea of an aircraft performance envelope as a metaphor, this elite fighter pilot and military leader will share inspiring personal stories and practical tools to ignite individuals and teams to reach beyond commonly-assumed limitations to achieve their maximum capabilities and impact.

Nicole Malachowski's presentation will bolster the ability of individuals and teams to:

- ◊ Overcome self-doubt that often inhibits personal and professional growth
- ◊ Model the selfless trust needed to be an effective teammate
- ◊ Practice vulnerability and transparency to build trust and galvanize teamwork
- ◊ Build accountability, dependability and reliability that drive performance
- ◊ Break down silos to unleash creativity and adaptability

### • **Breaking Barriers: Conquering Self-Doubt and Cultural Paradigms**

Everyone faces barriers, both personal and professional, that may appear to place limits on what's possible. When people pursue only what is expected, accept cultural norms that hold them back, and view barriers that appear unsurmountable, their personal and professional lives become limited—scripted. A powerful trailblazer herself, Nicole Malachowski reminds audiences to not let others draw their boundaries, and to break tradition with grace and purpose. She inspires people to see obstacles and challenges as opportunities to grow—a chance to reach new levels of personal and professional excellence.

Nicole delivers actionable insights for pursuing dreams, making choices, and living an unscripted life.

- ◊ Define your own possibilities and overcome self-doubt
- ◊ Reevaluate traditions, paradigms, and overcome limitations
- ◊ Welcome challenges to the status quo
- ◊ Why having the courage to ask for help is key to, reaching your potential
- ◊ Acknowledge the work-life balance myth

### • **The Mach 2 Mindset: Decision-Making in a High-Speed Environment**

One popular pilot saying is "speed is life," because without enough speed, an airplane is nothing more than an expensive rock. In the business

world, especially when technology is involved, speed can be just as crucial. The organization that moves the fastest often realizes the most success. Having flown a high-tech fighter aircraft that can reach speeds of up to twice the speed of sound, Nicole Malachowski offers principles that keep any organization functioning smoothly, efficiently, and at high speed, even when chaos and the unexpected occur.

Nicole's insights help leaders create a culture where decisions get made quickly.

- ◊ Assess the dynamics that slow your organization down
- ◊ How turmoil in your operating environment slows you down
- ◊ How does a need for speed impact decision-making
- ◊ Trust, clear roles, and communication are vital to navigate the unknown at speed
- ◊ Practice, planning, and preparation underpin organizations that move quickly

#### • **Conquering Fog and Friction: Leading Through Times of Crisis**

"No war plan survives first contact with the enemy" is a truism. In the military, leaders must acknowledge and address the fog (things we can't see, know, or predict) and friction (the forces which impede progress) of war. In such times, effective leadership is more crucial than ever. Using the challenges and uncertainties of combat as a metaphor for organizational challenges, Nicole stresses perspective, priorities and positive leadership as she provides tools for leaders to use in times of crisis—or anytime—to keep their organizations successfully moving forward.

Nicole Malachowski offers leaders a framework to lead through fog and friction in times of crisis.

- ◊ How to proceed regardless of the unknowns your organization facing
- ◊ How to maneuver around or through impediments to your organization's progress
- ◊ Understand the leadership challenges that are unique to times of crisis
- ◊ Keep focused on your purpose; perspective is critical to manage risk and adapt
- ◊ Positivity and calmness are essential. Instill confidence; don't add to the chaos

#### **Select Articles**

- ["Yield to Overcome": 3 Mantras to Live By](#)

A Conversation with Col. Nicole Malachowski, Retired US Air Force

- [Nicole Malachowski – Landing Page](#)

Drawing on stories from her career and personal life, Nicole inspires audiences to rethink the challenges they face every day. She urges them to go beyond resilience and become resurgent. Nicole empowers people with three key beliefs: failure and risk is the price of entry for achieving something great; sometimes you need to yield to overcome; and her personal mantra – "Nobody wants to lead a scripted life."

#### **Select Testimonials**

We have been fortunate to have over 30 speakers over the few years present at our sales conference. Based on survey results, your session was the highest ranked ever! You have a great message and more significantly, an incredible way to connect with the audience. I personally loved the way you weaved in our values and our message with your message of Pushing the Envelope.

— *CEO, Extra Storage Space*

Everyone...I mean everyone...left raving about your message. As you can imagine being in healthcare as executive, I hear a lot of people speak. You are an exceptional speaker and have an incredible message to share with anyone that's looking at ways to be motivated to improve themselves. So yes, count me in as a card holding member of your fan club.

— *Chairman, Board of Directors, National Association of Specialty Pharmacy (NASP)*

We had the best conference on Friday and that was in large part due to Nicole's talk. She was amazing and I have heard so much positive feedback from the crowd.

— *Colorado Children's Hospital*

Nicole Malachowski shares a powerful message of perseverance and resilience. She is able to connect with her audience by being deeply authentic and vulnerable in her story telling. We related to her on a personal level even though our individual stories and experiences differ

greatly from her own. We all have challenges in our lives and how we choose to face those headwinds of change will be a little less daunting by taking Nicole's lessons and putting them into practice.

– *Director of Operations, Memorial Hermann Healthcare System*

Nicole exceeded our expectations! Her keynote left our leaders energized.

– *Executive Vice President, People, Magid*

An inspiration...one of the most approachable, down-to-earth humans I have ever had the pleasure of meeting.

– *Georgia Association of Community Hospitals*

Nicole...is a true treasure...leaving our attendees feeling empowered and inspired.

– *Global Events Director, Lifewave*

I can't convey the degree of impact you had on our team.

– *Head of Business Area Talent & Organizational Capability, Lockheed Martin*

Not only did she receive a standing ovation, but the line of attendees seeking to talk with her after the meeting was the longest I had ever seen at such an event – and she took the time to meet all of them.

– *Law Firm Vendors Association*

The best keynote I have heard in 45 years of going to conferences. I have never seen anyone better prepared to connect with the audience and Alera's goals and objectives. Truly the height of professionalism.

– *Managing Partner, Alera Group*

Nicole left our entire audience in AWE and for the remainder of the conference she was a reference point for conversations and motivation in how we could develop plans to overcome challenges of our own. If you ever have the opportunity to see or hear Nicole speak it is a must see event that will not disappoint!!

– *Member, Board of Directors, National Consumer Telecom & Utilities Exchange, Inc. (NCTUE)*

"Colonel Nicole Malachowski recently spoke to the senior leaders in my company and did an outstanding job. In fact, I cannot recall another speaker where there was such high universal praise. She is inspiring, authentic, energizing, and a true American hero. More than a week later, there is still abuzz in the organization and I have zero doubt her remarks will leave a lasting impression on our team to embrace headwinds and navigate change more successfully."

– *President and CEO of Strayer University, Inc.*

I'm sure you won't be surprised to hear that Nicole was an absolute homerun. I know her message made a profound and lasting effect on many of my colleagues, including me. Plus, she is just so nice and human. It's really special. I'm not sure how I will top her for future events!

– *PURE Insurance*

Colonel Malachowski is an inspiring, authentic speaker and leader. She speaks from the heart as she tells a story of determination, grit, attention to details and service to others.

– *Raymond James & Associates*

Nicole was phenomenal. Her strength and determination are so inspiring...really incredible.

– *Senior Director of Franchise Support, The Human Bean*

A very special thank you for your incredible keynote at our team meeting this week. You touched my team with your brilliant and meaningful storytelling and have inspired them with your leadership and very practical tips on how to manage headwinds. You captivated their hearts and minds—and it was exactly the kind of closing I wanted to end our week of planning sessions. I know you are going to have an amazing career as a speaker as my team, like me, was thinking of how and where we need to have your message in our programs and will be recommending you to their network of colleagues and friends in the industry.

– *SVP, CMO | Marketing and Sales, Best Western Hotels & Resorts*

Col. Nicole Malachowski took our financial professionals by storm - three weeks later, people are still talking about her. She has a unique gift of being able to relate her very interesting and exciting professional and personal life experiences to a diverse audience in a completely different profession. Her genuine conversational style made each attendee feel she was talking directly to them.

– *Treasury Management Association of New York (TMANY)*

Nicole was exceptionally well received. She—truly—did a magnificent job. Connected with the audience, inspiring, thought-provoking, funny, real, open. Our colleagues couldn't stop talking about it. Was the highlight of our event.

– *UnitedHealth Group*

Nicole was amazing and stole the hearts of every woman in the room. She got 2 standing ovations and there were lots of tears shed. She took questions and stayed through the break to take photos and gave hugs to many of the women who lined up to meet her. You can't imagine how impactful it was in a room of 100 professional economic development women.

– *Women in Education*