

# Marc Parham

*Director of Entrepreneurship with the Urban League*

## SMALL BUSINESS IS HIS BUSINESS



By LaKeisha Fleming

**M**arc Parham wants to see your small business succeed. He exudes his passion for entrepreneurialism in every arena of his life. He serves as a managing partner with CAPBuilder Network Group, as Director of Entrepreneurship with the Urban League, and is an Author, Speaker, and Radio Show Host. But his titles aren't important – it's what he does with them that makes the difference. Parham educates and coaches people to start taking more control of their lives through small business ownership.



Parham has been working for over 25 years to help people start and grow businesses.

*"I wear many hats but they are all focused on the same mission – helping people to understand that they can start and grow their own small businesses to support their families and communities," he states.*

According to the Georgia Department of Labor, more than 75% of Georgia businesses employ fewer than 10 people. The state is fertile ground for small business development. Parham encourages such growth through his work with the Urban League. "My role at the Urban League is to develop and implement small business development training and coaching programs that meet the needs of our clients from where they are today," Parham states.

He considers his role vital to the economic landscape of Atlanta, especially for people of color. "Although the unemployment rate may be below 3% for some, the unemployment rate for African Americans is 6.6% - almost double. This means that we as African Americans need to establish more ways to increase wealth in our communities." This city is a prime place to do just that. Atlanta was named the third top city in the nation for startups, according to FitSmallBusiness.com.

Parham's passion was born out of personal experience, beginning with a father that challenged him to buy half of his own bicycle. Once that goal was achieved, his dad pushed him to complete the purchase. An entrepreneurial mindset was born. Parham started a network engineering

company in 1989 and learned lessons from that experience. He has gone on to share what he learned, teaching others valuable insights to achieving success.

"Your customers are your first investors," he explains. "The smartest thing to help your small business grow is to focus on your customers." He outlines a detailed plan for success in the marketplace. "The first step is to develop and evaluate a business idea that solves a problem that people are willing to pay to be solved." This is critical. An interesting idea that's not useful may also fail to be profitable. "The second step is to write a business plan to make it happen." And finally –

just do it! "Many people have great ideas and great plans, but never take the third step and just get out and take action to do it," Parham admonishes.

Launching the company is just the beginning. Neighborhood involvement is vital. "People don't realize that every time they cross county or city lines to shop, they are taking money away from the tax base for their community." Parham continues. "This affects all services including public schools, public services, and small businesses."

Parham's advocacy for small business owners has been recognized on a national level. "One of my most exciting highlights was getting invited to meet with President Obama at the White House in 2013 during the government shutdown, to discuss the effects of the shutdown on small business. It was one of those defining moments that lets you know that you are on the right track and walking in your purpose."

Marc Parham is purpose-driven, results-oriented, and passionate about his mission. He knows what it takes to achieve success when birthing a vision, and what intrinsic characteristics make a difference. "The most important quality to me is fearlessness. You must learn to step outside of your comfort zone and trust the process. The next quality is being coachable." Coaching can be received from organizations like the Urban League, the Small Business Administration, the Atlanta Business League, Chambers of Commerce, and of course people like Marc Parham.