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Michael Burcham On What's Needed in Entrepreneur Center's Next CEO

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Michael Burcham — CEO of the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, a successful serial health care entrepreneur and the co-chair of National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship — may be a tough act to follow when he steps down from the EC role later this year to return to the private sector.

Back in December, when Burcham's departure was first announced, there was plenty of early speculation on who that replacement might be and what type of background that person needed. Now, after the dust has settled slightly, but while the identity of the next CEO remains a mystery, I asked Burcham himself: What does the Entrepreneur Center need next?

"It needs a different kind of day-to-day leader than me to take it to its next level," Burcham said.

Burcham doesn't have much of an opinion on where that leader comes from. For him, it's not important whether the next CEO is a Nashvillian or an outsider, but it is vital that they bring the right attitude.

"I think it's important they have the personality that makes Nashville cool," he said, which is, above all, a "collaborative spirit."

They'll also need the qualities of servant leadership and to be entrepreneurial themselves, Burcham added, as startups need coaches and mentors who have "walked in their shoes. I think those kinds of skills are far more important than a ZIP code," Burcham said.

Although Burcham, who said he's shared his perspective with both the EC board and specifically the CEO search committee, couldn't give an exact number of applicants, he

did say there's been " a whole lot of interest" from a "world-class" group, and he's confident whomever the committee selects will be "an awesome individual."

And though he's excited about the fresh ideas that will stem from fresh leadership, Burcham said he has no intention of withdrawing from the happenings over at the Trolley Barns.

"I'm not going away," said Burcham, who still plans to mentor startups, offer his feedback to the center's leadership and otherwise be a part of the EC's continued development.

"This has been five of the most wonderful years of my life," Burcham said.