

Apr 2, 2015

Transfer of Power: Michael Burcham On His Entrepreneur Center Successor

Eleanor Kennedy

Michael Burcham is a creator. Stuart McWhorter is a scaler.

That's Burcham's take, at least. The founding president and CEO of the Nashville Entrepreneur Center will officially hand the baton to his successor, Clayton Associates' McWhorter, April 9. From the sound of it, Burcham couldn't be happier with the choice.

"I think he's an excellent choice," Burcham said in an interview Thursday afternoon. "Stuart has been involved in the center for years. ... He's coming from an entrepreneurial family and has run a company or two of his own. ... I think [he] is going to have a skill set that really takes this to scale."

In early February, Burcham talked with the *Nashville Business Journal* about the attributes needed in his successor. That person would need "the personality that makes Nashville cool," he said, along with entrepreneurial experience of their own and the ability to lead differently on a day-to-day level than a serial entrepreneur like him could do, that is, someone with a strong operational background.

McWhorter fulfills that checklist, Burcham said Thursday. While the search for the EC's next leader had national reach (and some high-profile names were bandied about early on) Burcham said "passionate love of Nashville is sort of an essential ingredient."

"He loves the city the same as I do," Burcham said. "He's been here for a long time, so he knows the city by more than reputation."

That's not to say Burcham doesn't see McWhorter growing the center's reach. Within Nashville, Burcham said, McWhorter has connections to different stakeholders than Burcham, and he also has investment experience and relationships throughout Tennessee and the region.

“I think he will get [the] Entrepreneur Center deeply cemented into a large ecosystem, not just in Nashville, but across the state and across the Southeast,” Burcham said.