



WE CHANGE COMMUNITIES:

SELF-IMPROVEMENT IS THE WAY TO GROW

Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses-Greater Philadelphia

Ken Carter said he enrolled in the Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses-Greater Philadelphia* program at Community College of Philadelphia because, "Our company philosophy is based on self-improvement. You have to get outside of your business to learn things about your business. What attracted me to the program was that Goldman Sachs really targets your growth plan, and that was especially important to our management team." He is a 2014 graduate of the program.

Carter is president and chief operating officer of Supra Office Solutions, Inc., located in West Philadelphia. As a successful African-American business owner, his skills in the financial management, growth and development of his office products company helped propel Supra atop the prestigious Philadelphia 100 in 2016 as the fastest-growing emerging business in the city.

Started in 1988 by the Entrepreneurs' Forum of Greater Philadelphia, the *Philadelphia Business Journal* and the Wharton SBDC, the Philadelphia 100 has recognized companies like Urban Outfitters, Kremer Laser Eye Center and Forman Mills as they were emerging.

Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses-Greater Philadelphia* at the College helps small businesses expand and create jobs by providing them with a practical business education, access to capital and business support services. More than 300 business owners have benefited from the program in the region, which began at the College in 2013. In April, 21 entrepreneurs graduated from the program in a ceremony at the Main Campus.

The program's alumni have made significant impacts locally and nationally. The Maryland-based company net. America, owned by Clare Razaq-Hines, a graduate of the program, was awarded a \$25 billion, 10-year contract with the federal government in February. In 2015, graduate Erin Reilly's firm, Pop! Promos, was ranked in the top spot on the Philadelphia 100 list.

Supra Office Solutions was founded in June 2011, and is the result of more than 100 years of the diverse business experience of its founders and key associates, said Carter, 52, a New York City native who lives in Philadelphia. Along with Carter, Lin Thomas, Ismail Shahid and Derrick Suswell have cultivated a combined 60-year working relationship with major companies, suppliers and trade associations in the vast office products industry.

"In 2011, we began by pounding the pavement," Carter said. "We started with four people and decided to grow the company organically. We put a lot on the line. We had the knowledge and we had the contacts, but it was a lot of work. Supra is really the outgrowth of a lot of business ventures we have been involved in."

Soon after Carter graduated from the program at the College, Supra acquired EMSCO Scientific Enterprises, Inc., a 35-year-old medical equipment company. Today, the companies have combined annual sales of \$20 million, Carter said, and they operate from the same facility in West Philadelphia. They are good corporate citizens as well, as EMSCO recently donated \$100,000 worth of laboratory equipment to Lincoln University.

Supra employs a staff of 16 full-time workers, Carter said. "There is no way we could have done this without them, plain and simple," he said.

A graduate of Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business and the Minority Business Executive program, Carter's business is an outlier in Philadelphia. Pew Charitable Trusts reported recently that four out of five businesses in the city are owned by whites. Less than one in 40 businesses are owned by African-Americans. Asian-Americans own about 10 percent.

"This program was a great experience for me and worth the investment of my time," Carter said. "I learned a great deal about sustaining my business and planning for growth."

Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses-Greater Philadelphia at Community College of Philadelphia is open to business owners across the Greater Philadelphia region. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Learn more at www.ccp.edu/10KSB.