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Business League reaching for new members

Atlanta Business Chronicle - February 1, 2002 by [Erin Moriarty](#) Contributing Writer

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Edward Brown is just what the Atlanta Business League is looking for. He's smart, enterprising and passionate about building black-owned businesses.

Brown joined the league last year and was recently appointed to its board of directors. As the vice chairman for membership development, his job will be to educate people about the benefits of joining the league and encourage them to sign up.



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The Atlanta Business League is embarking on a major membership drive to reach out to more professionals like Brown. Brown had worked in Atlanta for many years, but didn't know about the league until last year when a colleague invited him to one of the meetings.

The league's ambitious goal is to increase membership by 25 percent this year, said Leona Barr-Davenport, president of the league. Brown, who will serve a two-year term as membership chairman, has been asked to lead that charge.

League organizers say there is an untapped pool of black professionals who could benefit from the opportunities the league offers for

networking, business development and business education.

"It has been growing, but in terms of market share, the number of members we have out of the number of African-Americans out there who could benefit from the league [shows] there's a lot of potential to grow," Brown said.

Though the league was established in 1933, its membership base is still relatively small. It has about 425 members, Barr-Davenport said.

"While that is a good number, it's not a great number, when you compare it to the memberships of the various chambers," said Barr-Davenport, who first got involved with the league as a volunteer in 1984.

For example, the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce has more than 8,000 members and the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has about 1,200 members.

Indeed, the group faces competition from the local chambers of commerce, especially at a time when businesses may be trimming expenses. It costs \$100 for an individual membership to the league.

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Barr-Davenport says Brown is up to the challenge of adding more than 100 new members this year.

"He has the energy and the talent for it, and he has the personality and the capability," she said. "He's an excellent speaker and an excellent presenter."

A graduate of Howard University, Brown, 38, was an Atlanta police officer for eight years before joining the corporate world. He is currently a principal at The Core Edge Image and Charisma Institute Inc., which helps companies with publishing, training and personalized coaching.

He is originally from New Haven, Conn., but has lived in Atlanta since 1987.

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