

## Profiles

As a child, Ephren Taylor laughed at his friends who wanted to be pro athletes. He didn't want to play for a team, he wanted to own a team. Now Taylor is the youngest CEO of a public company.

### Young Entrepreneur Develops Communities

When his friends longed for the riches of professional athletes, Ephren Taylor Jr. called that “chump change.”

“I figured I probably wasn't going to go to the NFL,” Taylor said. “I needed to find a way to own the team.”

That attitude made Taylor a millionaire, on paper, by age 16 and today, at age 24 likely the youngest African-American chief executive officer of a publicly traded company.

A native of Overland Park, Kan., Taylor started his first business, a video game development company, when he was 12 years old.

“My parents weren't shelling out \$50 for video games, so I had to figure out how to program them on my own,” says Taylor, who grew up in Overland Park, Ks. “I sold them to different students underground and on the Internet.”

After receiving business training at the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership in Kansas City, Mo. Taylor at age 16, co-founded GoFerretGo.com, an online job-search resource that helped students find positions. The company, with a value estimated at more than \$3 million by YoungBiz magazine, had 13 employees, including one of Taylor's former history teachers.

Soon after, the teenage millionaire's interest shifted to real estate. Taylor started the Christian Capital Group when his father became a minister five years ago and needed help raising money. The company helps churches and community organizations obtain capital for their ministries and educates their constituents about finances. His current company, AmoroCorp., is a 29-employee real estate investment firm. The company is working on several major development deals, including a \$16 million project to build 214 condominiums in Kansas City, Mo., a 400-home subdivision in Kansas City, Kan., 310 affordable homes outside of Memphis estimated at \$12.4 million and residential and commercial construction in Cleveland.

Taylor sees economic development as a way to provide jobs and impact communities by building in areas where others won't.

“A lot of guys go up and never come back for anyone else,” says Taylor, who was named Kansas Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2002.

In May, City Capital Copr. a business development company based in Mendota Heights, Minn. elected Taylor CEO and acquired one of his companies.

“He is very knowledgeable about his mission,” said Gary Borglund, a City Capital board member. “His integrity is very high.

Emerson Brantley, 49, the chief communications officer at AmoroCorp. Agrees. After decades working around the globe in marketing and consulting, he has no qualms about his boss being half his age.

“He has a vision for growth and greatness that 99% of the companies I’ve worked with don’t have and will never have,” Brantley said of his new boss.

Taylor, who is married with two children, plans to retire in his 30s to pursue ministry or politics. “I’d like to change the block and change the world as well,” he says.

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