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How Supporting Black Businesses Took My Company To 7-Figure Success

And why shattering the stereotype is so important



by Tomika

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Photo Credit: Photo: Dave Wells

I'll admit it: I get a little sad when I hear Black folk talk about their reluctance to support Black-owned businesses – whether due to a perceived lack of quality or adequate customer service. Not only is it unfair, usually they have no idea how much they're missing out.

With a whopping 2.4 million Black women-owned businesses in the U.S. in 2018 – mine being one of them – what I know for sure is that I could not have achieved the success I have without other Black businesses.

I started my travel company, Up in the Air Life in 2013 because, despite the number of Black travel groups cropping up back then, there were none catering to Black people like me who craved affordable luxury travel. I simply didn't see myself in the advertisements, commercials and magazines I felt we deserved to be in, living our best lives, like other Americans abroad.

Most of my fellow business owners and friends didn't either which is why from the very beginning of my journey, I chose to work almost exclusively with other small Black-owned businesses. From an economic perspective, it was important to me to take Black dollars and spend them with other Black-owned businesses and consultants. It was also important for me to help shift the narrative of what true value and quality in Black businesses look like. My strategy has literally paid off in ways I did not initially foresee: Black businesses have helped my company gross a couple million dollars and counting.

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