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Marcus Shaw to lead CO.LAB as new chief executive

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (July 24, 2017) – A comprehensive national search for the next chief executive of The Company Lab (CO.LAB) has successfully concluded, with former Maryland native and new Chattanooga Marcus Shaw assuming the role effective today.

Shaw is the former senior director of business development and partnerships for Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT), a D.C.-based nonprofit that helps build diversity and leadership pipelines for corporate institutions, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. While there, he significantly grew MLT's partnerships with Fortune 500 partners and led the proposal for an entrepreneurship development program focused on women and minorities. Shaw is also the founder of a boutique consulting company that specializes in working with startups and small to medium-sized businesses. Through this enterprise, he has advised a number of companies on commercialization and capital raising.

"Marcus has an extraordinary range of experience dealing with the issues that face entrepreneurs," said Rick Hitchcock, chair of the CO.LAB board of directors. "The board is confident that, under Marcus' leadership, CO.LAB will dramatically increase its capacity to help entrepreneurs imagine, build and grow successful startup businesses."

Shaw's professional background includes 10 years working in equity research and investment management, as well as serving as the head of tech, media and telecom research at a D.C.-based investment advisor focused on policy and regulated industries, among other positions of leadership. His extensive experience working in the investment world will enable him to provide key insights to high-growth startups working to raise capital and commercialize their products regionally, nationally and globally.

The national network of corporations, VCs and government program officers Shaw has cultivated throughout the years is another critical asset he brings to Chattanooga's startup community. In addition, he has dedicated much of his career to talent development and retention, with a particular focus on unlocking the potential of diverse individuals.

"Chattanooga is an extraordinary entrepreneurial environment where Main Street businesses and high growth, venture-backed businesses can develop in tandem," said Shaw. "CO.LAB will help entrepreneurs build businesses that promote inclusive economic growth in Chattanooga and expand the city's impact in the global innovation discussion."

Over the next few months, Shaw will lead a comprehensive strategic planning process to identify key priorities and opportunities to move CO.LAB into its next phase of service to the entrepreneurial community. Working with CO.LAB's board of directors and other stakeholders in Chattanooga's entrepreneurial success, Shaw will steer the organization toward evolving opportunities and needs in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In transitioning into his new role, Shaw will take the reins from Jack Studer, who has served as the organization's interim chief executive since October 2016.

"We are very grateful for the leadership Jack Studer has provided as CO.LAB's interim chief executive while we undertook a national search," said Hitchcock. "Jack has contributed a great deal to Chattanooga's startup community, and we look forward to continuing to work with him to improve opportunities for Chattanooga entrepreneurs."

Moving forward, Studer will continue to support Chattanooga's startup community through various community roles, including by continuing to serve as a partner at Chattanooga Renaissance Fund, which regularly provides guidance and resources to CO.LAB.

"Chattanooga's startup scene will benefit immensely from the leadership and experience Marcus will bring to his new role as executive director of CO.LAB," said Studer. "His background in the investment realm and his track record for helping startups through the various stages of maturity position this organization to meet critical, growing needs in the local startup environment."

Members of the public are invited to connect with Shaw at a Meet & Greet event held on the fifth floor of the Edney Innovation Center Aug. 3. The event will take place from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Light hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served.

Shaw relocated to Chattanooga in the summer of 2016 with his wife – a board-certified dermatologist – and their two children. He earned a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Morehouse College and a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology. He subsequently earned an MBA from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Shaw started his career as a network engineer with IBM and is currently a member of the Minority Alumni Advisory Board at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business.

About The Company Lab

[The Company Lab](#) (CO.LAB) is a nonprofit organization that supports entrepreneurial growth in southeast Tennessee. Established as the region's front door for entrepreneurs, CO.LAB works to increase the viability of startups and strengthen the ecosystem of support behind them. In doing so, the organization helps entrepreneurs refine their business models, test their ideas with customers, pursue capital and partnerships, and connect with a community of mentors, peers and business experts. Additionally, CO.LAB works to create environments that inspire entrepreneurial activity, open doors within the business community and promote job creation. The companies CO.LAB supports range from street-corner mom and pop shops to tech startups scaling into major markets. To learn more, visit colab.co.

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