

founders



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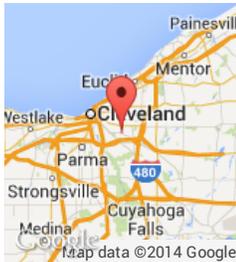


THE AKA TEAM

[AKA Construction Management Team, Inc.](#)

www.akateam.com

15508 Miles Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44128



ariane kirkpatrick

Meet Ariane Kirkpatrick, founder of [AKA Construction Management Team, Inc.](#), a construction company and commercial cleaning company that focuses on providing labor, site maintenance and construction management with 47 employees.

How did you come to be an entrepreneur?

Entrepreneurship was ingrained in me at an early age. I vividly remember being five years old in 1969 and boycotting the neighborhood McDonald's with my family because African-Americans were banned from owning franchises.

I attempted several businesses, from a copy and printing business to a restaurant to a residential rehab business. In between time as a business owner I was chief of housing for the City of Warrensville Heights building department, where I received several accolades.

In 2009, I made the decision to start AKA. My first job was a \$6,000 contract to conduct post-construction cleaning for the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Since then we have worked on several projects such as the [Global Center for Health and Innovation](#) and [Convention Center](#), [Flats East Bank](#) and the [CMHA](#) administration building.

I had the opportunity to sit with President Obama at the Winning the Future Forum in Cleveland in February 2011 and discussed obstacles that affect small businesses. With the advice of the President, I've found ways to increase business.

By taking advantage of economic development programs -- in addition to a lot of hard work -- my firm has generated over \$1 million in the past two years.

What is the biggest struggle or hurdle you had to overcome and how did you overcome it?

Cash flow, cash flow, cash flow. Banks sometimes

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There has been a flood of new businesses that tout the city through an assortment of Cleveland-themed apparel and products or by integrating the city name right into the company's branding. Many point to the recent recession as the dawn of this entrepreneurial movement, which coincided with a newfound pride of place.

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require seven years in business before they give you a line of credit. You have to be creative in running your jobs. You can't outgrow your pocketbook. But you sometimes have to wait 90 days for payment when you have completely financed the job. The only way you can do this is complete and absolute faith. My faith wins out all the time.

What are the advantages of running a company like AKA in Cleveland?

Being involved in the rebuilding of Cleveland. Every project has a historical story behind it for me. I grew up on E. 100th Street and Cedar Avenue and my sister and I went every weekend to the [art museum](#) with my mother. I used to think the [Cleveland Clinic](#) was my own personal hospital. Growing up, it was one building. I enjoyed watching it grow. Now, I am enjoying being part of the continuing growth.

What struggles have you had as a female/minority business owner?

Being a female/minority owner obviously has a lot of benefits as it relates to the diversity and inclusion initiatives available. But many times you are approached simply because of those acronyms and not the experience that you bring to the table as it relates to your trade.

I have walked into meetings with my team and, literally, the client will walk up to the men that work for me and presume I'm the secretary. But we all get a real kick out of it.

What advice would you give to someone starting a company in Cleveland?

Bricks and mortar is not just for building new businesses, but for building new relationships. Being well connected and networking is important. Be diverse in the type of events you go to. Marketing and brand recognition is important. You want people to hear your name and know exactly who you are and what you do.

What do you do to blow off steam or relax?

I love to read. Family events are important to me. I recently started flower and vegetable gardens, which has helped me relax.

I got married last year and my husband is totally my prescription for relaxation. While I am always moving, running and thinking, he brings me back to reality and is definitely the calm in my storm.

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