



PARKER IS SECURE  
IN HER TEAM  
HANDLING SOME OF  
THE WORK LOAD.

#### MAKING IT

## Letting Go

Expanding management team allows CEO to lead

WHEN CORPORATE DOWNSIZING RESULTED IN A JOB change from manufacturing supervisor to security guard, Mary Parker didn't complain. Instead, she remained upbeat, embraced the new challenge, and quickly earned the moniker "Officer Friendly" in the building where she worked. Now as president and CEO of ALL(n)1 Security Services ([www.alln1security.com](http://www.alln1security.com); 404-691-4915), a full-service security firm in Atlanta, Parker imparts that same commitment to compassionate security to the people she employs: eight full-time office staff and nearly 200 people in the field.

Founded in 2001, the company offers security personnel and technology, traffic control, and law enforcement services primarily in Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama. Its annual revenues reached \$3.2 million in 2008 and 2009 revenues were projected to reach \$8 million, helped by a project in which the company was contracted to monitor the more than 30,000 parking spaces at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

While Parker's business acumen helped her win 2009 Supplier of the Year honors from the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council and Outstanding Achievement Woman of the Year honors from the Atlanta Business League last year, she's also overcome several setbacks, including a demotion from her first security director position in the early 1990s, and the demise of a business partnership in 2000. Prior to founding ALL(n)1, she co-owned another security firm but never took the reins. "I had not really learned how to lead and grow an organization," the 55-year old explains. "I didn't work on developing strategies or implementing a management team or process to grow. We ran the business without a plan to be successful."

The idea to strike out on her own came when her partner moved toward international security consulting and away from the local job creation and relationships that Parker enjoyed. "I wanted to impact local people who we can reach and touch every day," she says. "I wanted to maintain that small business feel with a corporate image."

To get there, she started from scratch. Back then, as the only employee of ALL(n)1 Security, Parker donned a security guard uniform herself for 20 to 40 hours a week and then spent countless hours seeking new clients and building the company's infrastructure. ALL(n)1 was profitable every year but growth flatlined in 2006 because Parker was still doing too much—from acquiring contracts and training employees, to managing client relationships and ensuring quality control.

Two executive business programs helped her break through the wall: the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and Vistage, a CEO membership organization. Parker says both taught her that she couldn't do everything, that she needed to build a brand that sold itself, enhance ALL(n)1's Web presence, and expand her management team. "With [a management team] coming on board, it enabled me to transition from working hands-on in the business to delegating," she says. "I have trained them, imparted my security knowledge to them, and released day-to-day responsibilities and authority to them. That has released me to become a true CEO, and I love it."

—Maya Payne Smart



For more tips from Mary Parker on learning, growing, managing, and marketing your business, visit [www.blackenterprise.com](http://www.blackenterprise.com).