



With a professional history steeped in agricultural technology and sugar substitutes, Arnold Donald seems an unlikely choice for chief executive of the world's largest cruise ship company.

But it was his history at a variety of companies, nonprofits and executive boards — and his “fresh perspective” — that made him the pick to fill Micky Arison's shoes as Carnival Corp. CEO. Arison will hold on to his role as chairman.

After deciding to step down as CEO as the company split the two roles, Arison suggested Donald, who has been a member of Carnival's board for 12 years. Former colleagues spoke highly of Donald, 58, and said he was fit for the job.

“He's more than capable of running Carnival,” said Ronald Parker, president and CEO of The Executive Leadership Council, which Donald led from 2010-2012.

Parker was a board member of the organization, a forum for African-American CEOs and senior executives at Fortune 500 companies, during Donald's tenure. With his appointment to CEO, Donald joins a small group of black CEOs of major Fortune 500-level corporations. Carnival

Corp. is not on the list because it is incorporated in Panama for tax purposes.

“He has prepared himself for over 30 years, understands businesses are made of people and he’s known for engaging with a broad spectrum of individuals,” Parker said. “He’s a results-oriented leader who’ll drive sustainable change at Carnival.”

At the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, where Donald was president and CEO from 2006-2008, he brought his expertise from Monsanto, an agriculture and biotechnology company where he worked for more than two decades. He was also chairman and CEO and a founder of Merisant, a sweetener company whose products include Equal and Pure Via.

“When he came here, he proposed that we put together a research program working with pharmaceutical companies,” said Marie Davis, an executive director at the foundation who has known Donald for more than 15 years.

Davis said Donald is a delegator, a trait that should serve him well at a company with 10 individual brands.

“He picks leaders and expects them to put a plan together,” she said. “He doesn’t micromanage.”

Donald currently serves on several boards, including Bank of America Corp., Crown Holdings; Laclede Group, Carleton College and several arts institutions in St. Louis, where he lives. He is married with two daughters, a son and five grandchildren.

His time as a board member at Dillard University, a historically black college based in New Orleans, coincided with Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the campus.

Board member Andrew Wisdom said board members considered tough choices, including moving the college to Atlanta. But Donald, a native of New Orleans, was among those who took

action to raise money and rebuild.

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