

Voting Works



<http://www.100urbanentrepreneurs.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/VotingWorks.500width.jpg>



<http://www.100urbanentrepreneurs.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/HansGoff.500height.jpg>

Founder: Hans Goff

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Voting Works (<http://www.votingdoeswork.com>) is a consultancy that aims to increase participation in the political process of voters from underserved communities, often through the use of celebrity “surrogates” who appear at events and lead discussions of issues of critical importance to such communities.

HOW MENTORING WILL HELP: “I’ll benefit from the resources 100 Urban Entrepreneurs provides, as well as from having access to a larger network of business leaders.”

HOW \$10,000 WILL HELP: “I’ll use the money to revise the Voting Works Web site, publish marketing materials and create social-media tools for campaigns to use alongside the surrogates we bring on.”

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DON’T EVER TELL Hans Goff that the personal isn’t political. For him, it’s personal and, increasingly, professional, as he builds **Voting Works** (<http://www.votingdoeswork.com>), the Trenton, New Jersey–based consultancy he founded in 2010.

Politics have been in Goff’s blood since he was 16, when he spent time working for the mayor of Trenton, his hometown. Now 28, Goff has since worked for the **Democratic National Committee** (<http://www.democrats.org/>) and for former governors Mark Warner (of Virginia) and Jon Corzine (of New Jersey); been a paid staffer for several Congressional and gubernatorial campaigns; and was a policy volunteer for **Obama for America** (<http://www.barackobama.com>) in 2008.

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Such work tipped him off to a truism: People are keener to discuss politics, and get involved in the process, if the messenger is compelling. So Goff founded Voting Works to help bring voters in underserved communities into politics, using celebrity “surrogates” to appear at events and discuss issues important to people in those communities.

Among his first moves was to tap the Rolodex of his famous godmother, Patti LaBelle. He’s also been able to use his own nationwide network — built through his work on all those campaigns — to recruit such celebs as the Roots’ Questlove and Michael K. Williams (who played Omar Little on *The Wire*) to spearhead Voting Works’ efforts. “There were people coming out of apartment buildings to talk to him,” Goff remembers of a New Jersey event he hosted with Williams. “I couldn’t walk down the street with an elected official and get those results.”

Looking ahead to next year, Goff will be working hard to keep engaged the legions of Obama voters from 2008, and using his business’s growing clout to make a difference in races across the country. “I want to be involved with all campaigns,” he says, “from the presidential down to local races.”

And although he won’t be eligible for the presidency himself until the election of 2020, does he ever envision himself on the hustings, managing his own campaign? “I get asked that a lot,” he says, laughing. “I used to say no, but as I get older, I play with it in my head. I still live in the community I grew up in, in Trenton. If I see the need, [running for office] might be something I’d be interested in.”

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