

Bio for Anthony Qaiyum, President of Merz Apothecary (Chicago, IL)

Anthony Qaiyum is President of Merz Apothecary, a specialty pharmacy and boutique retailer founded in Chicago in 1875 that is an anchor business on the North Side of Chicago, sustaining local foot traffic and employment, while carrying hard-to-find grooming, skincare, and wellness brands from around the world.

In 1997, Anthony partnered with his father, Abdul Qaiyum, to launch Smallflower.com, the company's e-commerce division, extending the business's reach to customers nationwide. Over the past 25+ years, he has guided Merz through sustained growth and built deep expertise in specialty retail operations.

In 2022, Merz acquired KOBO Candles and relocated its light manufacturing operations from Upstate New York to Chicago, creating local production jobs and establishing a domestic manufacturing footprint for the company's home fragrance products. Under Anthony's leadership, KOBO has continued to grow as a Chicago-based employer, with an emphasis on domestic and local sourcing.

As a small business owner navigating rising costs and a competitive retail landscape, Anthony has become a hands-on adopter of AI tools across Merz's operations, from e-commerce to marketing to customer service, and brings a practical, on-the-ground perspective to conversations about how AI can support small business owners and their employees.

Anthony lives in Chicago with his wife, two college-age daughters, and their dog Dexter, a short walk from the Apothecary. Outside of work, he enjoys reading, scuba diving, crossword puzzles, and live music.