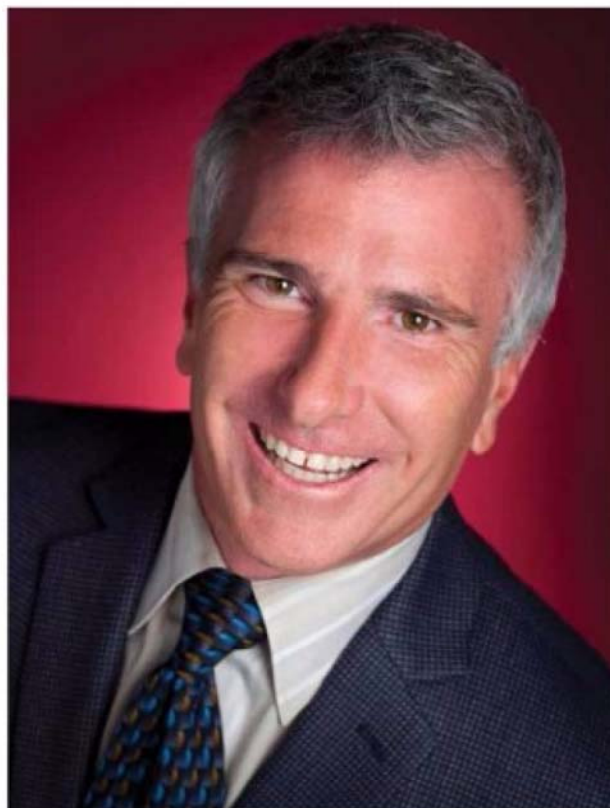


Bob Johnston

CEO, THE MELTING POT



How did you get started in the hospitality industry? Working for my brothers who were one of the first franchisees of The Melting Pot.

Early in your career, what was the most valuable lesson you learned? Being young, and as a newcomer to the business, I felt that others would judge how “sharp” I was by how swiftly I would answer questions. I learned that this was wrong. A quick bad answer is still a bad answer! So I learned early on not to rush to answer questions asked of me, unless I was certain of the correct response.

How has participation in the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association positively affected your business? FRLA has been an outstanding resource and support. During the opening of the Bonnet Creek complex, the Association provided invaluable support in maneuvering through the myriad of regulations, as well as with staff training. I have always appreciated the networking opportunities afforded by

FRLA; I’ve made numerous key contacts and forged many long-term friendships. I look to FRLA when benchmarking key measures within the industry and often as a resource when hiring key positions. In addition, I look to FRLA to continue to be the voice of the industry in matters of legislation within the state of Florida.

What is the single greatest factor in the success of your career?

The ability and willingness to talk to anyone about anything and take away something valuable that helps me. Lifelong learning.

Do you have any mentors who were instrumental in helping you achieve your goals?

Other than my brothers Mike and Mark, I was helped by a number of our vendor partners like Steve McKeon of Roth Kase (now known as Emmi Roth, one of our cheese manufacturers and suppliers). I am also mentored by our board of advisors, which includes Nancy Schneid (former Outback brands marketing executive), Paul Avery (now CEO of World of

Beer) and Joe Bourdow (former president of Valpak and International Franchise Association activist).

How have your philanthropies and giving back to the community affected your business decisions?

The greatest impact of our charitable and community outreach efforts is the impact it has had on our team. They love being a part of something significant and they want to work for a company that gets involved and cares about more than just making a dollar. They take pride in diving in and helping out.

Is there anything you would like to share with Florida’s hospitality industry members?

Take the time to find your own development opportunities after assessing what your needs are. Be honest with yourself about this. Create an open, candid and caring work environment where you can see yourself as others see you. Obtain your success by first helping others to succeed.