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Christopher Fuller, Chief Communications and Impact Officer, Inspire Brands



Christopher Fuller serves as Chief Communications and Impact Officer of Inspire Brands, a multi-brand restaurant company whose portfolio includes more than 32,000 Arby's, Baskin-Robbins, Buffalo Wild Wings, Dunkin', Jimmy John's, and SONIC Drive-In restaurants worldwide.

Fuller leads communications for Inspire and its brands, including internal and external engagement, meetings and events, creative services, government relations, community relations, and corporate communications, as well as the company's impact initiatives.

Fuller also serves as executive sponsor for the organization's "Good Citizen" pillar within the "People First" platform. In this role, he has led the creation of the Inspire Foundation and the expansion of the Foundation's purpose to 'ignite and nourish change for good.' In 2022, Inspire and its brands raised more than \$22 million for philanthropic causes. In 2022, Fuller oversaw the publication of Inspire's first impact report.

While at Inspire, Fuller has overseen communications for four brand acquisitions and integrations, beginning with the \$2.9 billion acquisition of Buffalo Wild Wings in 2018 and most recently with the \$11.3 billion acquisition of Dunkin' Brands in 2020. Fuller has 25 years of communications, PR, and government relations experience for organizations including restaurant brands, global ad agencies, and the United States Congress. Fuller serves on the Leadership Council and co-chairs the Advisory Council for Dine for No Kid Hungry, is a board member of the Perimeter Chamber of Commerce, is a board member of the Georgia Music Accord, and is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society.

Fuller also serves on the Leadership Communication Council at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business and on the board of the International Franchise Association. He also chairs the Inspire Foundation Board of Directors. Fuller is an



alumnus of West Texas A&M University where he received a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications. He also received an MBA from the University of Dallas.

Robin Gagnon, CEO/Co-Founder, We Sell Restaurants



Robin Gagnon is the Co-Founder and CEO of We Sell Restaurants, a brand that has carved an unparalleled niche in the industry as the nation's leading and only business broker franchise focused on restaurants. Under Robin's leadership, We Sell Restaurants has grown to 45 states where it dominates the restaurant space for sale marketplace and franchise resales, delivering on the founder's vision to Sell More Restaurants Than Anyone Else. We Sell Restaurants was named one of the most influential suppliers and vendors in the country by Nation's Restaurant News and

has earned a position on INC 5000's list of fastest growing privately held companies. Franchisees of We Sell Restaurants surveyed by Franchise Business Review placed it 25th in the nation in franchisee satisfaction.

Robin has been in the franchise industry for more than 10 years and has strived to help other women in the industry by serving on various boards and forums. Robin is the Chair of the International Franchise Association's (IFA) Women's Franchise Committee. She also is an executive Member of the Women's Franchise Network – Atlanta Chapter.

She is also an MBA and Certified Franchise Executive (CFE) in addition to her CBI (Certified Business Intermediary) designation from the International Business Brokers Association. She co-authored *Appetite for Acquisition*, a small business book award winner in 2012 and contributes frequently to industry press appearing in *Forbes*, *QSR*, *Modern Restaurant Management*, *Franchise Update*, and recently was on the *Today Show* as a restaurant industry subject matter expert. *Entrepreneur* has named her to their list of the "Top Influential Women in Franchising."

Michael Gonda, Senior Vice President, Chief Impact Officer, North America, McDonald's



Michael Gonda is the Senior Vice President and Chief Impact Officer of North America for McDonald's. In this role, Michael leads efforts to drive one holistic brand strategy across Communications, state and local Government Relations, Sustainability & ESG and Philanthropy in the U.S. and Canada. Together, the teams he oversees work to engage stakeholders and communities to protect and enhance the McDonald's brand.

Prior to his current position, Michael served as McDonald's Global Chief Communications Officer, where he was responsible for increasing brand trust and communicating the vision and values of the business. In this role,

Michael developed strategies and creative content to make McDonald's one of the most admired brands in the world, contributing to an unprecedented increase in positive brand sentiment, employee engagement and business growth.

Before joining McDonald's, Michael held the role of Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs at Chobani, where he solidified brand identity and recognition, earning certifications like "Great Place to Work," Fortune's "Change the World," and Fast Company's "25 Brands that Matter Now". Michael began his career as a reporter and earned a BA with Honors from Brown University.

Michael has been consistently recognized for his personal leadership and the accomplishments of the teams he oversees. In 2023, PRWeek recognized him as Global Professional of the Year and named him on their list of the 50 most powerful leaders in the industry. He was also recognized as one of the 100 most influential in-house corporate affairs professionals by PRovoke Influence in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Michael currently serves as the co-executive sponsor of McDonald's African American Council (MA2C) where he is committed to driving representation, equity and inclusion throughout McDonald's by putting action to allyship.

He lives in Chicago with his wife, Emma and two children, Lazlo and Indie.

Jon Hixson, Chief Sustainability Officer and VP, Global Government Affairs, Yum! Brands



Jon Hixson is the Chief Sustainability Officer and Vice President of Global Government Affairs at Yum! Brands. In this role, he leads Yum!'s ESG and sustainability strategy, implementation, and investor-driven disclosures across the organization in partnership with the brands, franchisees and suppliers. Additionally, he oversees U.S. and international government relations activities.

Prior to joining Yum! Brands in 2017, Hixson was an executive with Cargill for 12 years where he served in various roles in government relations, sustainability, and communications. This included leading Cargill's government relations team for North America, as well as international roles including living and working in Asia Pacific for three years, leading Corporate Affairs in Latin America and engaging in government relations in the European Union.

Prior to that, Hixson spent nine years on Capitol Hill working for members of Congress including Senator Pat Roberts, Senator Nancy Kassebaum and as Chief of Staff for Congressman Jerry Moran. He began his professional career with ConAgra Flour Milling in Denver, CO and continues to maintain an active interest with his family farm in Kansas.

Hixson has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture from Kansas State University and a Master's in Business Administration from George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Lillian Kirstein, Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary for 7-Eleven, Inc.



Lillian Kirstein is Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary for 7-Eleven, Inc., the largest convenience chain in North America, which operates and franchises more than 13,000 7-Eleven, Speedway, Stripes, Laredo Taco Company, and Raise the Roost Chicken and Biscuits locations.

In her role as General Counsel and Secretary, Lillian is responsible for the company's legal and compliance functions and for matters relating to the Board of Directors. She joined 7-Eleven in 2012 and most recently served as the Vice President and Deputy General Counsel. During her tenure, the company has consistently ranked as a top-10 franchisor for

Entrepreneur Magazine and ranked #2 in the Franchise Times Top 400 Brands. Prior to her career at 7-Eleven, Lillian served as senior in-house counsel at Lennox International Inc., Oxy and Atlantic Richfield Corporation. She has more than 30 years of experience.

Sarah Powell, EVP, General Counsel, and Secretary, Focus Brands



Sarah Powell joined Focus Brands in January 2015 as Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary. With more than 20 years of experience in practicing law in the public and private sectors, she leads the company's corporate legal function, provides strategic advice and counsel to the CEO and executive leadership and oversees a legal team responsible for board governance and compliance matters, mergers and acquisitions, risk management, franchising, real estate, contracts and more. The Focus Brands portfolio includes seven iconic brands – Auntie Anne's®, Carvel®, Cinnabon®, Jamba®, Moe's Southwest Grill®, McAlister's Deli® and Schlotzsky's,® with more than 6,000 locations around the globe.

Before joining Focus, Sarah worked for Fortune 500 company Advance Auto Parts, where she spent 12 years rising from Senior Attorney to Vice President to Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary from April 2009 to January 2015. Previously, she was the Assistant General Counsel for grocery retailer Food Lion, LLC and engaged in the private practice of law.

She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and received her Juris Doctor from Washington and Lee University School of Law and is a member of the University's Law Council.

Christine Son, Senior Vice President, Legal, General Counsel and Secretary, Dine Brands Global



Having worked at Dine Brands for more than 12 years, Christine Son has developed a reputation as being a brand-focused attorney with a keen knowledge of the restaurant business. In April 2021, Son became Senior Vice President for legal, general counsel and secretary of Dine Brands Global, based in Glendale, CA. In addition to legal, Son oversees risk management, franchise administration, government relations and

internal audit at the company. Son has a long and successful track record with Dine Brands, working with both the IHOP and Applebee's leadership teams. Prior to her roles within Dine Brands, she previously served as a Senior Counsel for nearly two years at Roll Law Group in Los Angeles, and as an Associate for seven years with Sidley Austin.

John Teza, CEO & President, Hand & Stone Franchise, LLC



John Teza, CFE is the Chief Executive Officer for Hand and Stone Franchise Company, the franchisor of Hand and Stone Massage and Facial spas and Massage Experts clinics. As CEO, John is responsible for driving the company's brand strategy and performance across its 500+ spas and clinics throughout the US and Canada. John is a passionate brand builder and is committed to Hand and Stone's mission to make high-quality spa, wellness, and beauty experiences more accessible, affordable, and professional for

its clients and team members.

Prior to joining Hand and Stone, John was a Principal at NRD Capital Management, a private equity firm focused on multi-site consumer hospitality businesses, including the restaurant, franchise, retail, and retail service industries and restaurant/retail technology.

Prior to NRD Capital, Mr. Teza served in senior executive management roles for several national restaurant companies including Corner Bakery Café (Roark Capital), Jersey Mike's Subs (privately- held), and Quiznos Sub (CCMP.) Over the course of his career, John has led several significant brand expansion campaigns. John has also served in senior level capacities in marketing, operations, IT, legal, and training.

During John's tenure, Jersey Mike's Subs was named the fastest growing restaurant company by NRN for three straight years ('14-'16.)

John is an active member of the franchising and restaurant leadership communities and previously served as Trustee of the IFA Foundation and Board Member for National Restaurant Association. John is a board member of the Franchise Leadership and Development Conference and was the 2021 conference Chairperson.

Mr. Teza earned a business degree from the College of William and Mary (VA) in 1997.