



August 16–19, 2026

The Ritz-Carlton | Orlando, Florida

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

Sunday, August 16

9:00 AM – 6:15 PM

Registration Open

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

A Welcome Reception for New Voices at Prosper Forum (Invite Only)

For those joining Prosper Forum for the first time, this reception is designed to create an immediate sense of connection, clarity, and belonging. Before the conference fully begins, new attendees are invited to step into a relaxed, welcoming environment where relationships can form naturally and the experience ahead comes into focus.

This gathering offers an inside look at how to navigate Prosper Forum, from understanding the flow of sessions to making the most of the conversations and connections that define the event. More importantly, it creates space to meet fellow first-time attendees, engage with returning leaders, and begin building the relationships that make Prosper meaningful.

With a mix of guidance, conversation, and energy, this reception is about more than orientation, it is about helping new voices feel confident, prepared, and excited to fully step into the days ahead.

Presenters:

Meredith James, EVP of Business Development, Prosper Company

Jeremiah Wynn, Content & Marketing Director, Prosper Company

Mia Gamboa, Content & Marketing Manager, Prosper Company

Presented by:

TBD

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

Accelerator Alumni Reception (Invite Only)

The Accelerator experience does not end when the program concludes, it evolves. This reception brings together alumni from across cohorts to reconnect, reflect, and continue building the relationships that have been formed through shared growth and leadership development.

As the industry continues to shift, this gathering creates space for alumni to exchange insights, revisit key learnings, and support one another in the next phase of their leadership journey. It is an opportunity to strengthen an already connected community while welcoming new perspectives and experiences into the conversation.

Grounded in shared experience and forward momentum, this reception reinforces the idea that leadership is not a moment, but a continuum shaped by the people you grow alongside.

Presenters:

Meredith James, EVP of Business Development, Prosper Company

Jeremiah Wynn, Content & Marketing Director, Prosper Company

Mia Gamboa, Content & Marketing Manager, Prosper Company

Presented by:

Jersey Mike's

PG1 Restaurants

Palona AI

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Prosper Accelerator Program + Reception (Invitation Only)

1:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Welcome

This reception welcomes the newest Accelerator cohort into the Prosper community, creating a space to connect, build relationships, and step into the experience ahead with intention. As these emerging leaders gather prior to the opening general session, the moment will be framed by two complementary leadership perspectives, one centered on the responsibility to lead with a people-first mindset and invest in those around you, and the other grounded in the belief that each individual has been chosen for this opportunity and called to step forward with purpose. Together, this reception sets the tone for the journey ahead, inviting the cohort to show up fully, engage deeply, and embrace both the responsibility and possibility of their leadership.

Moderated by:

David Jobe, Co-Founder & CEO at Prosper Company

Presenters:

James Fripp, Chief Culture, Opportunity, and Belonging Officer, YUM! Brands, Inc.

Hattie Hill, CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises & Prosper Company Board Member

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

1:45 PM – 2:30 PM

Insightful Leadership Talks - 5 Minute Presentations On Specific Topics

This high-energy session brings together a series of concise, thought-provoking leadership perspectives designed to spark new thinking in a short amount of time. Each speaker will deliver a focused five-minute talk centered on a specific idea, challenge, or insight shaping today's foodservice and hospitality landscape.

From operational excellence and team development to innovation, culture, and decision-making, these rapid presentations are designed to cut through complexity and deliver clear, actionable takeaways. Each talk offers a unique lens into how leaders are navigating change, driving performance, and building organizations that can sustain growth.

By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives in a dynamic format, this session creates momentum, encourages fresh ideas, and gives leaders immediate insights they can carry into their own organizations.

Presenters:

Angie Huff, Vice President of Human Resources, Specialty Restaurants Corporation

Noah Glass, Founder & CEO at Olo Inc

Greg Keller, EVP, National Sales & Specialty Businesses, Sysco Corporation

Ricky Richardson, CEO, Eggs Up Grill

Betsy Mercado, Chief People Officer, Jersey Mike's Franchise Systems, LLC

Presented by:

Restaurants Connect – California, Florida, and Texas Restaurant Associations

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Networking Reception

Hosted by:

Restaurants Connect – California, Florida, and Texas Restaurant Associations

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Networking Break

Hosted by:

The Cheesecake Factory Bakery®

4:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Opening General Session

4:00 PM – 4:15 PM

Welcome

Presenters:

Hattie Hill, CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises & Prosper Company Board Member

David Jobe, Co-Founder & CEO, Prosper Company

Luke Kircher, Co-Founder & President, Prosper Company

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM

Accelerator Recognition and Toast

Panelists:

James Fripp, Chief Culture, Opportunity, and Belonging Officer, YUM! Brands, Inc.

Hattie Hill, CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises & Prosper Company Board Member

David Jobe, Co-Founder & CEO, Prosper Company

Luke Kircher, Co-Founder & President, Prosper Company

Neil Sudaisar, AVP, Commercial National Accounts, DIRECTV FOR BUSINESS®

Presented by:

Jersey Mike's Franchise Systems, Inc.

PepsiCo

Sysco Corporation

4:30 PM – 5:15 PM

A Voice at the Table — The Decisions That Shape Us

In this opening executive dialogue, Billy Shore, Founder and Executive Chair of Share Our Strength, sits down with Chip Wade, Chief Executive Officer of Union Square Hospitality Group, for a candid conversation about the moments that have shaped their leadership journeys. Together, they will explore the relationships, values, and pivotal decisions that influence how leaders build organizations, navigate uncertainty, and create lasting impact.

Rather than focusing on strategy alone, this conversation examines the human side of leadership: earning trust, carrying responsibility, making difficult choices, and remaining grounded when the stakes are highest. Through personal stories and honest reflection, attendees will gain insight into the mindset required to lead with both conviction and humility.

This conversation sets the tone for Prosper Forum by reminding leaders that the most influential decisions are often shaped long before they reach the boardroom.

Moderator:

Billy Shore, Founder & Executive Chair, No Kid Hungry

Panelists:

Chip Wade, CEO, Union Square Hospitality Group

Presented by:

TBD

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

5:15 PM – 6:00 PM

Every Conversation Counts: Building Extraordinary Relationships in our Changing World of Work

The most pressing leadership challenge today isn't strategy, technology, or talent. It's connection. Disconnection is quietly eroding team performance, client loyalty, and organizational culture. In a hybrid world defined by polarization and distraction, the leaders who win are those who know how to build meaningful relationships at every level.

Drawing from Riaz's years of experience interviewing top executives, innovators, and industry leaders, this keynote gives Prosper Forum leaders a practical framework for making every conversation a competitive advantage.

Executives will leave with strategies to:

- Spark authentic, high-impact conversations that deepen client and team relationships
- Build trust and inclusive cultures by listening with intention and making every conversation count
- De-escalate conflict and drive collaboration through assertive empathy
- Use strategic storytelling to align teams, influence stakeholders, and inspire action
- Ask the right questions to unlock breakthrough moments in any high-stakes conversation

This is a candid, research-informed session for leaders ready to transform how they communicate and turn everyday conversations into a driver of engagement, retention, and growth.

Moderated by:

Riaz Meghji, Keynote Speaker & Author

Presented by:

DIRECTV FOR BUSINESS®

6:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Relationships That Shape an Industry

In a time where technology is accelerating, roles are evolving, and the pace of business continues to intensify, one thing remains constant, relationships are still the foundation of meaningful leadership. This session with Riaz Meghji explores how intentional, human-centered conversations shape trust, influence, and long-term impact inside organizations and across the industry.

Drawing from his work and perspective on connection, presence, and storytelling, Riaz will challenge leaders to rethink how they show up in everyday interactions, from high-stakes decisions to simple, often overlooked moments. As the world of work continues to shift, the ability to build authentic relationships, create belonging, and lead with empathy becomes not just a soft skill, but a strategic advantage.

This conversation will invite leaders to reflect on the quality of their relationships, the consistency of their presence, and the role they play in creating environments where people feel seen, valued, and inspired to grow.

Moderated by:

Riaz Meghji, Keynote Speaker & Author

Panelists:

Dolf Berle, CEO, Nothing Bundt CakesGJ Hart, Chairman & CEO, SPB Hospitality LLC

Presented by:

DIRECTV FOR BUSINESS®

Sunday, August 16 — Continued

6:30 PM – 7:30 PM	Book Signing Presenter: Riaz Meghji Presented by: DIRECTV FOR BUSINESS®
6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Dinner and Reception Presented by: Sysco Corporation
8:00 PM – 10:00 PM	After Hours Reception Presented by: PepsiCo

Monday, August 17 — Continued

Monday, August 17

6:30 AM – 7:45 AM	Networking Breakfast Presented by: First Watch Restaurants
7:30 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration Open
8:00 AM – 9:45 AM	General Session
8:00 AM – 8:20 AM	Conference Welcome Presenters: Carol Dover , President & CEO, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association James Fripp , Chief Culture, Opportunity, and Belonging Officer, YUM! Brands, Inc. Hattie Hill , CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises and Prosper Company Board Member David Jobe , Co-Founder & CEO, Prosper Company Jon McGavin , Area General Manager/Global Leader for The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center, The JW Marriott & Ritz-Carlton Hotel, at Grande Lakes Orlando

Monday, August 17 — Continued

8:20 AM – 8:55 AM

Growing Leaders From Within — Building the Talent That Sustains Great Organizations

The strongest organizations do not simply hire talent. They intentionally develop it. In an industry shaped by labor pressure, turnover, and rapid expansion, leadership development has become a strategic priority for companies seeking consistency, performance, and long-term growth. This session explores how executives design systems that identify potential early, invest in capability building, and promote from within to strengthen culture and execution. Leaders will examine how structured development programs, mentorship, and clear career pathways improve retention, reduce turnover, and create alignment across complex organizations. The conversation will also highlight how cultivating leaders at every level, from frontline operators to senior executives, reinforces accountability, trust, and operational discipline. At its core, this session reframes leadership development as stewardship, building organizations that scale with strength, continuity, and a shared commitment to growth.

Moderated by:

Alissa Partee, CEO, Restaurant Technologies, Inc.

Panelists:

Roland Gonzalez, CEO, Church's Texas Chicken

Joe Guith, CEO, CKE Restaurants

Heather Neary, CEO, Taco John's International Inc.

Presented by:

Restaurant Technologies, Inc.

8:55 AM – 9:30 AM

The Modern CEO Playbook: What We Changed Since 2020 — and What We'll Never Go Back To

The role of the CEO has fundamentally changed. The assumptions that once defined effective leadership have been challenged by unprecedented disruption, shifting workforce expectations, rapid advances in technology, and an increasingly unpredictable business environment. The leaders who have emerged strongest are those who were willing to rethink not just what they do, but how they lead.

This executive conversation brings together CEOs to reflect on the lasting changes they have made since 2020 and the leadership practices they have no intention of abandoning. From culture and talent to decision-making, communication, operational agility, and innovation, the discussion explores how today's leaders are building organizations that are more resilient, more adaptable, and better prepared for whatever comes next.

Rather than looking back, this session focuses on the future of executive leadership, offering candid insights into the lessons that continue to shape how CEOs lead their organizations today and the playbook they believe will define the next generation of leadership.

Moderated by:

Anne Fink, President, Global Away From Home, PepsiCo

Panelists:

Paul Carbone, CEO, Panera Bread

Meg Farren, President, Taco Bell North America

David McKillips, CEO, Topgolf

Presented by:

PepsiCo

Monday, August 17 — Continued

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Networking Break

Presented by:

Main Squeeze Juice Co. and KNOW

10:00 AM – 11:45 AM

General Session

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM

Outlook 2026: Exploring the Macro-Economic, Geo-Political, and Major Commodity Landscapes of the Future

Join industry expert John Barone as he unpacks the critical macro-economic forces, geopolitical dynamics, and big-commodity shifts shaping the road ahead. Gain a strategic vantage point on what to watch, when to act, and how to stay prepared for the mile markers that matter most.

Speaker:

John Barone, President, Market Vision, Inc.

Presented by:

SignalFlare.ai

10:45 AM – 11:15 AM

AI That Strengthens the Customer Experience

As AI reshapes how businesses operate, the most consequential question isn't how much you can automate — it's who you're building for. This session invites executives to examine how AI, when designed around the customer rather than the bottom line, becomes a tool for deeper connection, not just efficiency. It explores how leading companies are deploying AI to anticipate customer needs, personalize experiences at scale, and remove friction at the moments that matter most — without losing the human judgment that builds trust. The conversation reframes AI adoption as a customer experience strategy, challenging leaders to ask not just what their technology can do, but what it should do, and for whom.

Panelists:

Vishwa Chandra, VP, Enterprise Partnerships, DoorDash

Kim Lewis, CMO, Capriotti's Sandwich Shop, Inc.

Presented by:

DoorDash

11:15 AM – 11:45 AM

The Cathedral Within — Leadership, Purpose and Building Something that Lasts

In a world driven by growth metrics, quarterly targets, and operational scale, leaders are often asked what they are building, but rarely why. This session challenges executives to rethink success not as accumulation, but as contribution. It explores how generosity, purpose, and service can strengthen culture, deepen engagement, and build lasting trust with teams and communities. Rather than focusing on charity alone, the conversation reframes giving back as a leadership discipline that shapes decision-making, clarifies priorities, and defines legacy. Participants will examine how aligning personal conviction with professional responsibility influences how leaders show up under pressure and creates organizations that endure beyond individual tenure.

Speaker:

Billy Shore, Founder & Executive Chair, No Kid Hungry

Presented by:

Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry

Monday, August 17 — Continued

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Billy Shore Book Signing

Presenter:

Billy Shore, Founder & Executive Chair, No Kid Hungry

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch

Hosted by:

TipHaus Inc.

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

General Session

Welcome back to General Session

Presented by:

Paradox

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

The Infrastructure of Work: How Restaurants Power the Modern Employee Experience

The organizations attracting and retaining the best talent are rethinking the employee experience from the ground up. They're investing in environments where people feel connected, supported, and equipped to grow—not just productive enough to stay.

In this Prosper Forum conversation, C-suite leaders will explore how the modern employee experience is evolving and where they're investing for the future. From technology and workplace flexibility to learning, leadership development, culture, and moments of human connection, the discussion will examine the systems that help people thrive while strengthening organizational performance.

Rather than focusing solely on retention, this session asks a bigger question: How do organizations create workplaces where employees are empowered to build meaningful careers?

Attendees will leave with practical insights into how leading organizations are developing talent, creating stronger cultures, and designing employee experiences that improve engagement, performance, and long-term growth.

Moderator:

Fred LeFranc, CEO & Founder, Results Thru Strategy

Panelists:

Jason Kidd, Chief Operating Officer, Chipotle Mexican Grill

Nihad Rahman, Chief Executive Officer, ezCater, Inc.

Anthony Valletta, CEO & President, bartaco

Presented by:

ezCater, Inc.

Monday, August 17 — Continued

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Finding the Diamond in the Rough: Seeing Greatness Before Anyone Else

The greatest competitive advantage in any organization is not technology, capital, or strategy. It is the ability to recognize extraordinary potential in ordinary places.

Throughout his career, Jim Bitticks has built high-performing organizations by identifying leaders long before they saw leadership in themselves. From frontline team members to future executives, his philosophy is rooted in a simple belief: every person has untapped potential if someone is willing to discover it.

In this candid fireside conversation, Jim shares the experiences that shaped his leadership philosophy, the personal stories that taught him to look beyond résumés and job titles, and the practical framework he uses to uncover hidden talent throughout an organization.

Moderator:

David Jobe, Co-Founder & CEO, Prosper Company

Panelists:

Jim Bitticks, CEO, Dave's Hot Chicken

Presented by:

TBD

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM

The Confidence to Commit: Trusting the Process When Every Decision Counts

Trust is the operating system underneath every multi-unit growth decision. Leaders ask their teams to “trust the process” before results are visible; partners ask each other to share data, methodology, and risk before either side has earned full confidence. This panel pulls those two threads together with operators and capital allocators who have actually lived it.

Moderator:

Jim Balis, Partner, Head of Strategic Operations, CapitalSpring

Panelists:

Alex Dunn, CEO Swig / Managing Partner, Larry H Miller Company

Ashley Robinson, CEO & Chief Strategist, The Seaker Group

Todd Smith, President, Swig

Presented by:

Norton Creative

Monday, August 17 — Continued

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Trust Under Pressure — Leading Through Political Shifts, Ownership Change, and Workforce Uncertainty

Across convenience, QSR, hospitality, and hotel organizations, leaders are navigating sustained disruption driven by political and regulatory shifts, private equity investment, economic volatility, rising operating costs, and the long tail of post-Covid workforce and consumer behavior changes. These forces are reshaping where companies locate headquarters, how brands grow, how capital is deployed, and how teams experience stability inside the organization.

This session explores how executives build and maintain trust when uncertainty becomes the operating environment. Leaders will examine how ownership transitions influence culture and decision-making, how policy changes affect strategic direction, and how external instability can create internal fear if not addressed with clarity and conviction.

The conversation focuses on practical leadership behaviors that sustain performance: transparent communication, disciplined execution, cultural consistency during change, and visible leadership presence. Participants will gain perspective on how trust helps organizations retain talent, protect brand integrity, and continue moving forward despite ongoing disruption.

Moderator:

James Pogue, Ph.D., President/CEO, JP Enterprises

Panelists:

Gary Crompton, President & CEO, Workplace Experience Group, Aramark

Scott Drake, CEO, CEC Entertainment

Derek Gaskins, Head of Guest Experience

Presented by:

Workday

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Networking Break

Hosted by:

Sattem Solutions

3:30 PM – 6:00 PM

General Session

Monday, August 17 — Continued

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM

What Separates AI Leaders from AI Laggards in Restaurants? (A CEO Roundtable)

AI is no longer a roadmap item. It's running in kitchens, coaching managers, and identifying guests before they order. The question isn't whether AI will transform restaurant operations; it's whether your organization is positioned to lead that shift or scramble to catch up.

This session cuts through the noise. No hype or vaporware. Just an honest conversation about what's working, what's not, and what separates the brands already seeing results from the ones still in pilot purgatory.

Key Discussion Themes

- **AI Cost Management:** The next AI debate in restaurants is not about adoption; it is about economics, leverage, and who bears the cost as AI infrastructure becomes more expensive. How Edge computing fits in.
- **Execution:** Most organizations don't fail because the technology doesn't work, but because they never get past the pilot and underestimate the change management required for scaling AI.
- **Guest Experience:** The guest experience is being rebuilt from the ground up, and the brands winning aren't doing it with loyalty apps. They're doing it by knowing who their guests are before they swipe a card.
- **Data:** AI is only as good as the data behind it. Real value comes from unified platforms and data where labor, sales, guest, and inventory data is shared in real time.
- **Employee Experience:** Frontline augmentation is the #1 AI investment priority in QSR right now. Morning huddle prep, KPI coaching, real-time task dispatch: these are live. And when it costs \$5K+ to replace a proficient team member, the ROI conversation gets short.

Moderator:

Jen Kern, CMO, Qu POS, Inc

Panelists:

Amir Hudda, CEO, Qu POS, Inc.

Presented by:

Qu POS, Inc.

4:00 PM – 4:30 PM

The Prosper CEO Foresight Project — A Forward-Looking Executive Decision Model

As leaders navigate an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving business landscape, this session will explore how forward-looking insights, consumer intelligence, and strategic forecasting can help executives make more informed decisions about the future.

Bringing together data, industry trends, and executive perspective, this conversation is designed to equip leaders with greater clarity around what's emerging, what matters most, and how organizations can stay ahead in a changing marketplace.

Keynote Speaker:

Megan Lynberg, SVP, Client Strategy, Datassential

Presented by:

Datassential

Monday, August 17 — Continued

4:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Trust Is the Brand — Redefining Value Beyond Price

In today's marketplace, value is no longer defined by cost alone. It is defined by trust. As competition intensifies and expectations rise, leaders recognize that price may drive transactions, but trust drives long-term preference. This session explores how executive teams establish a clear, enterprise-wide definition of value that extends beyond promotions to include consistency, reliability, transparency, and experience. Rather than treating value as a pricing lever, the conversation reframes it as a leadership discipline built through operational integrity and follow-through at every touchpoint. When organizations deliver on their promises, trust compounds, strengthening loyalty, frequency, and brand resilience. In crowded markets, confidence in delivery becomes the most durable competitive advantage.

Moderator:

Megan Lynberg, Client Strategy, Datassential

Panelists:

Lawrence Kim, President, IHOP Restaurants, LLC

Taylor Montgomery, Global Chief Brand Officer, Taco Bell, North America

Presented by:

Datassential

5:00 PM – 5:15 PM

Ted Balestreri Leadership Award

Presenters:

Ted Balestreri, Chairman and CEO, Cannery Row

James Fripp, Chief Culture, Opportunity, and Belonging Officer, YUM! Brands, Inc.

Hattie Hill, CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises and Prosper Company Board Member

David Jobe, Co-Founder & CEO, Prosper Company

Luke Kircher, Co-Founder & President, Prosper Company

Neil Sudaisar, AVP National Accounts, DIRECTV FOR BUSINESS®

Monday, August 17 — Continued

5:15 PM – 6:00 PM

Building a Future People Want to Follow - Leadership in the Artemis Era

What does it take to build a future that your best people — including the next generation of talent your industry depends on — actually want to follow?

In this research-grounded, cross-industry keynote drawn from his latest research from the State of Working America – Thriving in Resilience & Brilliance, Simon T. Bailey delivers a masterclass for C-suite leaders at the intersection of the future of work, organizational culture, and the emerging science of hope as a leadership discipline.

Drawing on behavioral research from healthcare, retail, SAAS, financial firms and luxury hospitality — and translating those cross-industry insights directly into the foodservice context — Simon reframes the conversation that too many CEOs are having internally but not saying out loud: How do we lead an organization through complexity, keep our best people, and build a culture that the next generation of leaders actually chooses?

This is not a motivational talk. It is a strategic briefing for leaders who understand that the future of their enterprise depends on their ability to build — right now — the kind of culture that makes talent want to stay, grow, and lead.

Speaker:

Simon T. Bailey, Executive Advisor, Researcher, Keynote Speaker

Presented by:

Kraft Heinz Company

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Book Signing

Presenter:

Simon T. Bailey, Executive Advisor, Researcher, Keynote Speaker

Presented by:

Kraft Heinz Company

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Networking Reception

Presented by:

Restaurants Connect – Presented By: California, Florida, and Texas Restaurant Associations

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Strolling Networking Dinner

Presented by:

Kraft Heinz Company

Restaurants Connect – California, Florida, and Texas Restaurant Associations

8:30 PM – 11:30 PM

After Hours Reception

Presented by:

Branded Strategic

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

Tuesday, August 18

6:30 AM – 7:45 AM

Networking Breakfast

Presented By:

Altametrics and Georgia-Pacific LLC

7:30 AM – 6:00 PM

Registration Open

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

General Session

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM

Leading Through Change in 2026

This fireside chat featuring National Restaurant Association Chair Mike Axiotis and a TBD industry leader will focus on how the industry and its leaders can reduce structural costs and build a stronger workforce pipeline to sustain future growth. The conversation will examine how economic pressure, technology adoption, and shifting consumer expectations are reshaping how restaurants operate and grow. Drawing on Mike and TBD's experience, the discussion will ground these shifts in today's leadership decisions and tradeoffs. The session will also connect those realities to the Association's policy priorities through the lens of reducing structural costs and building a workforce pipeline. It will conclude with a CTA to encourage the audience – including c-suite leaders and up-and-coming accelerators – to support and join the Association's advocacy work.

Questions This Presentation Will Answer

- What forces are reshaping the restaurant industry right now, and how are operators experiencing them day to day?
- Why are structural costs and workforce availability the two defining challenges for sustained growth?
- What decisions are operators making to manage these pressures, and where do their limits begin?
- How is the National Restaurant Association addressing these challenges?
- What role should current and future industry leaders play in advancing these solutions?

Presenter:

Michael Axiotis, President & CEO, Lehigh Valley Restaurant Brands/Red Robin & Wingstop Franchisee
Sean Kennedy, Chief Public Affairs Officer, National Restaurant Association

Presented by:

National Restaurant Association

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM

Global Growth Unpacked: Risks, Rewards, and Realities

Global growth offers opportunity, but it demands discipline. This session explores what it truly takes to scale internationally in today's complex environment. Leaders will examine how to identify the right markets, structure partnerships, navigate geopolitical volatility, and adapt supply chains while protecting brand standards. The conversation also addresses how organizations balance speed with sustainability, assess readiness, and avoid overextension in pursuit of expansion. Beyond operational mechanics, the session highlights the human dimension of global leadership, including building local trust, respecting cultural nuance, and maintaining enterprise alignment. Participants will gain perspective on how global growth can diversify risk, unlock revenue, and strengthen long-term brand resilience.

Moderated by:

Ray Blanchette, Founder & CEO at Sugarloaf Holdings, LLC

Speakers:

Christian Gurria, CEO, Alsea

Presented by:

Alsea & Sugarloaf Holdings, LLC

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Carrying the Cost — Leadership, Care, and the Decisions That Define Us

Leadership is often measured by results. The cost behind those results is rarely discussed.

This session explores the role of care as a defining leadership discipline — care for self, care for teams and communities, and care for the broader industry. In environments shaped by pressure, health challenges, and constant disruption, leaders are often required to make decisions that protect the organization while carrying personal and relational cost.

The conversation examines how executives sustain organizations through adversity while maintaining commitment to values, culture, and brand identity. Leaders will reflect on how they earn trust and buy-in from their teams and communities, even when decisions are difficult and outcomes uncertain.

At its core, this session asks a deeper question: what is the true cost of leadership, and is the sacrifice worth it? Participants will explore how purpose, resilience, and service shape decisions, and what it means to lead in a way that endures beyond the moment.

Moderated by:

Sarah Lockyer, Chief Brand Officer, The Elliot Group

Panelists:

Lance Trenary, President & CEO, Golden Corral

Shelley Wolford, CPO, Golden Corral

Presented by:

Elliot Group

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Beyond the Plate — The Science of Sensory Experience in Foodservice

Guests do not just remember what they ate. They remember how a place made them feel. This session explores the science of sensory experience and how foodservice and hospitality leaders intentionally design ambiance to influence behavior, emotion, and loyalty. Executives will examine how sound, scent, lighting, temperature, and spatial design shape perception, dwell time, spending, and repeat visits, often more powerfully than menu or price. The conversation reframes ambiance as a strategic system that communicates brand identity and supports operational goals. Drawing on neuroscience, behavioral psychology, and real-world execution, leaders will gain insight into how intentional sensory design can strengthen trust, differentiate experiences, and drive long-term performance.

Moderated by:

Stephani K. A. Robson, Senior Lecturer Emerita, School of Hotel Administration, Cornell University

Panelists:

Josh Kern, CEO, Snooze, an AM Eatery

Brad Newberger, President & Co-Founder, Ambiance IQ

Presented by:

Ambiance iQ

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Networking Break

Hosted by:

Ambiance iQ

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

General Session

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Building the Next Generation of Foodservice Relationships

The future of foodservice will be shaped by organizations that are able to strengthen partnerships, elevate decision-making, and build more agile, insight-driven operations. As the industry continues to evolve, leaders across the ecosystem are redefining how operators, suppliers, and partners work together to create greater value, improve performance, and respond with confidence to a rapidly changing environment.

Explore how forward-thinking organizations are fostering deeper collaboration, leveraging data with greater precision, and implementing technologies that enhance efficiency, transparency, and long-term strategic alignment. From modernizing workflows and improving margins to equipping teams for new ways of working, the session will examine the capabilities and relationships that will define the next era of foodservice leadership.

Moderator:

Jeff Dorr, Division President, SaaS, Buyers Edge Platform

Panelists:

John Davie, CEO, Owner, Buyers Edge Platform

Stacy Peterson, President and COO, Jersey Mike's

Presented by:

Buyers Edge Platform

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Decoding the Black Box: The Best of the Best Do This (According to Real Data)

The best-run restaurants aren't outperforming their competitors by accident. They're executing smarter — on the floor, in the kitchen, and with their teams — in ways that show up directly in their numbers.

In this session, Victor Fernandez of Black Box Intelligence breaks down five data-backed trends that separate thriving restaurant units from struggling ones. Drawing on proprietary data from across the industry, this session gets specific about what actually differentiates the top quartile of operators from the bottom — and what you can do about it starting Monday morning.

You'll walk away understanding how small, targeted adjustments — a sharper onboarding process, a tighter shift structure, a more consistent guest touchpoint — compound into real financial results at the unit level. More importantly, you'll see how the highest-performing operators build a connected system where engaged employees drive loyal guests, and loyal guests drive a healthier P&L.

This session is built for operators who want to stop guessing and start benchmarking — using real data to identify the performance gaps hiding in plain sight and the practical levers to close them.

Presenter:

Victor Fernandez, Chief Insights Officer, Black Box Intelligence

Presented by:

Black Box Intelligence

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM

The State of Sysco and the Future of Foodservice

As the foodservice industry continues to evolve, so too must the partners that power it. In this candid fireside conversation, Sysco's CEO shares a strategic update on the company's vision, priorities, and continued evolution as a comprehensive foodservice solutions provider. From supply chain innovation and digital capabilities to customer partnerships and long-term industry trends, the discussion offers an inside look at how Sysco is strengthening its role as a one-stop partner for operators navigating an increasingly complex marketplace. More than a company update, this conversation provides executives with perspective on where the industry is headed—and what it will take to succeed in the years ahead.

Moderator:

Hattie Hill, CEO, Hattie Hill Enterprises & Prosper Company Board Member

Speaker:

Kevin Hourican, Chair of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, Sysco Corporation

Presented by:

Sysco Corporation

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch

Hosted by:

Buyer's Edge Platform

1:15 PM – 3:30 PM

General Session

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

1:15 PM – 1:45 PM

Why the Country's Biggest Franchisees Are Buying Brands

The country's most accomplished franchise operators are moving up the value chain—acquiring entire brands they once franchised, and in some cases, brands they never operated at all. As shifting market dynamics, ownership transitions, and undervalued assets create new opportunities, experienced operators are leveraging their deep operational expertise to unlock value where others see risk.

In this candid discussion, leaders who have successfully made the transition from franchisee to brand owner share what drives their acquisition strategies, how they evaluate opportunities, and what separates a promising investment from one they walk away from. They will explore what they see in brands that the broader market often overlooks, the realities of integrating an acquired business, and the leadership decisions that shape the critical first months following a transaction.

Acquiring a restaurant brand means inheriting far more than restaurants and financial performance—it means taking responsibility for a brand's culture, customer relationships, and long-term growth. This conversation offers a rare look inside the strategic thinking behind some of the industry's most significant acquisitions and what it takes to create value beyond the deal itself.

Moderator:

Zach Goldstein, CEO, Thanx

Panelists:

Anil Yadav, Chairman & Chief Transformation Officer, Yadav Group

Presented by:

Thanx

1:45 PM – 2:15 PM

Winning in a Changing Market: Strategic Insights for Foodservice Leaders

Every restaurant organization ultimately competes on one essential outcome: delivering great food in a way that creates lasting preference. In today's environment, growth is shaped by how leaders define value, evolve the guest experience, and expand strategically across markets. In this proprietary perspective, Bain & Company explores the high-level decisions influencing brand momentum and long-term competitiveness.

The session examines how leadership teams are anchoring growth in the fundamentals of the food business — delivering compelling quality, consistent execution, and clear value that resonates with today's customer. It explores how brands are using menu strategy, limited-time offers, and targeted personalization to create relevance, stimulate demand, and strengthen guest loyalty. The conversation also addresses how the definition of experience is evolving and what organizations must do to remain meaningful as expectations shift.

Finally, leaders will gain insight into what it takes to win internationally, how development strategies must evolve, and how organizations can grow share while expanding the overall market opportunity.

Moderated by:

Lisa Koetter, Partner, Bain & Company

Presented by:

Bain & Company

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

2:15 PM – 2:45 PM

From Insight to Impact: Turning Intelligence Into Measurable Performance

As foodservice and hospitality operations grow more complex, leaders need more than insights and dashboards; they need intelligence solutions that produce meaningful results. This session explores how operators can harness data from across the operation and convert it into meaningful action through a powerful combination of digital intelligence and disciplined unit-level activation. The conversation focuses on strengthening food safety and brand protection, unlocking labor productivity, accelerating workforce capability, increasing operational consistency and throughput, and expanding unit-level profitability. The discussion will highlight how to synthesize operational data by leveraging digital support with the human touch. Together, this approach helps brands and franchise groups operate with greater discipline, move with more agility, and build sustainable competitive advantage.

Panelists:

Scott Salstrand, Vice President & General Manager, Commercial Digital and Food Safety Solutions, Ecolab

Maarten Potjer, Executive Vice President Innovation Growth Strategy, Ecolab

Presented by:

Ecolab

2:45 PM – 3:15 PM

Where Capital Meets Growth: Navigating the Next Era of Investment and Expansion

In a market shaped by shifting capital, evolving ownership models, and an increasingly complex consumer landscape, the ability to see what's coming next is a true competitive advantage.

In this session, Morgan Stanley brings a strategic lens to the forces driving growth across restaurant and hospitality. From public market pressures to private equity activity and founder-led monetization strategies, the conversation will explore where investor appetite is moving and what it means for operators at every stage.

Leaders will gain a clearer understanding of the current capital markets environment, emerging M&A trends, and the strategies shaping expansion across the industry. Grounded in real-time economic insight and consumer behavior, this session connects macro trends to practical decision-making.

At its core, this is about perspective. Not just where the market stands today, but where it is heading next, and how to position your organization to move with clarity and confidence when opportunity shows up.

Presenter:

George Mooradian, Executive Director Morgan Stanley

Presented by:

Morgan Stanley

3:15 PM – 3:45 PM

Networking Break

Presented by:

Toast, Inc.

3:45 PM – 6:00 PM

General Session

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

4:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Leadership That Outlasts the Leader

Titles change. Cultures remain. This conversation explores how executives build organizations that thrive beyond their tenure by investing in people, trust, and shared belief systems rather than relying on individual authority. The dialogue examines how leadership decisions today shape succession, cultural continuity, and long-term resilience. Instead of viewing legacy as personal reputation, the session reframes it as organizational strength that endures through transitions. Leaders will reflect on whether their systems empower others to lead with clarity once they step aside. This forward-looking discussion challenges executives to consider what will remain because they led and what will be tested when they are no longer in the room.

Moderator:

Reggie Stover, Chief People Officer, Henny Penny Corporation

Panelists:

Kevin Buchler, CEO at Henny Penny Corporation

Steve Kislow, CEO, Firebirds Wood Fired Grill

Steve Sturm, COO, Firebirds Wood Fired Grill

Presented by:

Henny Penny Corporation

4:15 PM – 4:45 PM

Imagination vs. Inertia — Leading the Shift to an AI-Driven Operating Model

Artificial intelligence is not simply a technology upgrade. It is redefining how organizations operate, scale, and create value.

This session explores the strategic shift required to move from fragmented systems and incremental adoption to treating AI as a foundational operating platform. As cost structures evolve and productivity expectations increase, leaders are being challenged to rethink how work gets done, how decisions are made, and how organizations grow.

The conversation centers on the two forces that will define success: imagination and inertia. The ability to envision new possibilities for the business, and the discipline to overcome resistance to change. Leaders will examine how to align systems, clarify ownership, and build the infrastructure needed to unlock value at scale.

At its core, this session is about leadership responsibility. Organizations that act with clarity and urgency will shape the next phase of the industry, while those that hesitate risk falling behind.

Moderated by:

Carl Orsbourn, SVP GTM Enterprise, Invisible Technologies

Rich Faltot, Vice President, Restaurants & Hospitality at Point B

Panelists:

Dawn Gillis, SVP & CIO, Golden Corral

Chris Tebben, CEO, Checkers Drive-In Restaurants, Inc.

Presented by:

Invisible Technologies and Point B

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

4:45 PM – 5:15 PM

Thriving in a Changing Consumer Environment: How to Turn Disruption into a Competitive Advantage

The distribution landscape in the United States is rapidly transforming as consolidation, rising costs, supply chain volatility, and evolving operator expectations reshape how food moves from producer to restaurant. This session explores the strategic forces redefining distribution across the foodservice ecosystem. Leaders will examine how distributors are adapting through technology integration, logistics optimization, and more collaborative partnerships with operators and manufacturers. The conversation highlights the shift from transactional relationships to data-driven, strategically aligned planning that improves transparency, speed, and resilience. Participants will gain perspective on how forward-looking distribution strategies can strengthen supply stability, support innovation, and create a competitive advantage in an increasingly complex operating environment.

Moderator:

Emily Williams Knight, Ed.D., President and CEO, Texas Restaurant Association

Panelists:

Tom Bené, President & CEO, Breakthru Beverage Group

Maureen Oskielunas, Chief Sales Officer, Kraft Heinz Company

Hugh Roth, Chief Customer Officer, PepsiCo

Presented by:

Breakthru Beverage Group

5:15 PM – 6:00 PM

You Are the Change: Brain-Hacking Your Leadership for the Evolving Workplace

The workplace is shifting faster than ever. Traditional business norms have been replaced by constant change, increasing complexity, and a workforce that spans multiple generations and cultures. Add in trends like “The Great Resignation” and “Quiet Quitting,” and it's clear that leadership today requires a whole new approach. The question is—can leaders keep up?

In this speech, trailblazer and former Wheels Up executive Stephanie Chung boldly challenges you to rethink leadership in a hands-on way. Through personal stories and actionable takeaways, you'll learn how to harness the power of brain science to evolve into the leader your team needs.

Takeaways:

- How to be a better communicator and leader by actively creating positive brain chemistry
- How to respond to the complexities of leading today's modern workforce
- How to build trust with your team and elevate your company culture
- How to use your power, your voice, and the science of conversation to transform your leadership

In this experiential keynote, Stephanie will show you how to apply practical brain science to gain a competitive edge and make leadership easier.

Are you ready to elevate your leadership? Join Stephanie Chung and experience the power of brain chemistry at work—LIVE and in real time. Then, take what you learn and apply it the moment you return to the office.

Speaker:

Stephanie Chung, Author, Keynote Speaker, Former Aviation Executive

Presented by:

Mars Foodservices

Tuesday, August 18 — Continued

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Book Signing

Presenter:

Stephanie Chung, Author, Keynote Speaker, Former Aviation Executive

Presented By:

Mars Foodservices

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Networking Reception (Heavy Hors d'oeuvres)

Hosted by:

Data Delivers, LLC

7:00 PM

Dinner On Your Own

Presented By:

Kraft Heinz Company

Wednesday, August 19 — Continued

Wednesday, August 19

6:30 AM – 7:45 AM

Networking Breakfast

Hosted By:

Savi Solution

7:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Registration Open

8:15 AM – 10:00 AM

General Session

8:15 AM – 8:45 AM

Never Finished: The Art of Reinvention

The world's most enduring brands share a common trait: they never stop evolving. Throughout its history, Pizza Hut has repeatedly reimagined the customer experience, product innovation, and the role it plays in consumers' lives—proving that relevance is earned through continuous reinvention. In this fireside conversation, Kaylen Thornton shares how leaders can honor their organization's legacy while embracing change, challenging assumptions, and preparing for what's next.

Moderator:

Luke Kircher, Co-Founder & President, Prosper Company

Speaker:

Kalen Thornton, Global Chief Brand Officer, Pizza Hut

8:45 AM – 9:15 AM

Frontline and Corporate: Why One AI Rollout Won't Ready Both

AI is moving faster than most organizations can absorb it, and the technology is rarely what holds them back. People are. A tool only delivers if the workforce is ready to trust it and change how they work around it.

Rarely do enterprises consist of one workforce archetype. Within the Prosper context, it's critical to examine two very different employee stakeholder groups: the crews in the restaurants and out in the field, and the teams in corporate functions. They work under different pressures, on different schedules, with very different access to time and training, so readiness can't be a single program pushed out to everyone. To extract maximum benefit and necessary adoption, the approach must be tailored to each: how you train a shift crew is not how you develop a corporate team, and what you now recruit and screen for is changing for both. Running underneath all of it is the balance every restaurant brand has to strike, infusing technology without eroding the very hospitality that defines this industry.

This session brings together people and operations leaders to get specific about how they've done it: the different training and recruitment strategies for each group, where adoption stalled, and how they kept the guest experience human while the technology moved in. Attendees leave with a clear view of who should own this inside their own organization and the first move to make.

Moderator:
Adam Dumey, Global VP – Retail, World Wide Technology

Panelists:
Lois Collins, Chief People Officer, Field Operations, Chipotle Mexican Grill

Presented by:
World Wide Technology

Wednesday, August 19 — Continued

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM

Boxed In How the smartest leaders turn limitations into their greatest competitive advantage

Everything is moving way too slow.

Your team is talented. Your strategy is sound. But somewhere between the C-suite and the bottom line, execution stalls. Decisions take too long. Innovation feels forced. And the results never quite match the ambition.

Maybe the problem isn't your team. Maybe they have too many options, too many priorities, and not enough urgency.

It turns out the fastest-moving, highest-performing teams aren't the ones with the most resources. They're the ones who know how to use constraints to force faster decisions, accelerate execution, and deliver results that far exceed expectations. The truth is that constraints don't slow great leaders down, they're what great leaders use to win.

In this exhilarating 47-minute session, Andrew Davis will introduce you to a powerful six-sided leadership framework. A framework that eliminates the unnecessary, aligns your team around a single outcome, creates unstoppable urgency, and raises the stakes so your people show up ready to execute at the highest level.

You'll learn how one non-profit turned a shutdown into millions of dollars in donations. Andrew will reveal how an underdog executive turned around an entire company in 3 quarters by adding constraints. You'll learn how one business beat the odds by snooping through old SEC filings. You'll even learn how an intern transformed a multi-million dollar business in less than twelve hours. (Hint: all of them thought inside the box.)

More importantly, you'll walk away with a repeatable leadership framework you can put to work immediately, one that transforms your team's limitations into rocket fuel for faster execution and outsized results.

Are you ready to stop waiting for more, and to start winning with what you have?

Presenter:

Andrew Davis, Keynote Speaker & Author, Monumental Shift

Presented by:

Vivid Ink

10:00 AM

Conference Wrap-up and Highlights

10:30 AM

Lunch on your own and Departures