



2006 *Chain Leader LIVE* Operator Testimonials

Billy Downs
CEO and President
BD's Mongolian Barbeque

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

Chain Leader LIVE has been great and definitely worth the time. The networking has been awesome! Just spending the time hearing Phil Hickey talk about his business so candidly was worth everything. He did a great job. If you can take one or two things back with you from a conference like this I think that's great. I'm going back with five or six great ideas, so it's been great.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference?

I've already mentioned the networking, which is awesome. People are able to really share in an easy forum. It's great. It's intimate. It's not a huge conference, which I think makes it much more comfortable for operators, not having hundreds of vendors chasing them. With a limited number of vendors, it makes it easy to maneuver and talk with the other operators. (I added back because it's something Ray is trying to emphasize, and he'd appreciate that Billy is emphasizing it too.)

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

The food has been interesting. I think your food has been great here.

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

Yes, I would, definitely. If I was unable to come, I would want to send somebody from my company for sure. I think this is just an excellent forum.

Keath Hance
Chief Financial Officer
M Crowd Restaurant Group Inc.

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

I've really enjoyed it. I haven't been in the restaurant business very long. I came out of a retail container store, so I am shifting over into the restaurant industry. I'm learning new faces, learning new people and what they do. It's interesting to see how we stack up with our peers in the restaurant industry. You never know when you're back in the office what the other guys are doing, and it's rewarding to find out that, hey, we're doing the same thing, we're okay. Some of the strategies I picked up at the conference showed me we need to be working on a few things. I'll be taking some good ideas back to Dallas with me.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference?

It's been refreshing because normally I go to the financial seminars, which can be pretty boring because everyone wants to talk about numbers and ROI. *Chain Leader LIVE* has been fun for me. It gives a different perspective on what it's all about: service customers, and hopefully the profits will follow if you do a good job.

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

It's been wonderful. I felt like we didn't have to go out and eat afterwards. Plenty of food.

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

I'd definitely recommend it. I do like the smallness of the conference--you get to circulate and meet people. I've gone to some big conferences before, and you are just a number in the group. The other thing I've enjoyed about *Chain Leader LIVE* is the vendors. There's good interaction with the vendors, but they're not trying to sell you something here. I'm trying to learn something, not to buy something.

Phil Friedman
Chairman and CEO
McAlister's Corporation

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

Chain Leader LIVE has been very informative. I really look for conferences where there's content, a good understanding of the business and a number of takeaways. What I look for is information about leadership and chain management, and I find that here at *Chain Leader LIVE*.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference?

Well, that helps a lot for a couple of reasons: The interaction of the operators is good in the informal environment because we get to talk a lot about what someone's doing and not doing; we're an industry of sharing and that happens here a great deal. Second, you get to understand a lot about the companies and what they are doing. The third thing, on a personal level, I get more out of a conference when there are a number of people dealing with problems and solutions. Often you go to conferences which are a little more academic, and this one is very tactical and tangible.

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

It's been very good. It's been interesting. We had a number of concepts present their food at the reception last night, and I was able to get a feel for things that are happening in Chicago. What was interesting to me was that they were kind of younger and smaller chains who were building their own brands, so it was kind of neat to see.

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

Yes, I would. I want our people to attend but I think other people in the industry should attend as well. The content has been good, and it provides a perspective that is designed to be helpful. I think you'll get a lot out of the investment of your time, which is not that long.

Phil Roberts
Chairman and CEO
Parasole Restaurant Holdings Inc.

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

This is my first time here and I really like it a lot. I'm attending all of the sessions, and I don't normally do that. I really like the candor, the openness and the honesty of the participants. Nobody seems particularly guarded about what they're talking about. I thought Phil Hickey's presentation was superb, as well as that of the participants yesterday. I thought all were very open and candid and enlightening. So, I've liked it a lot.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference?

I think everyone would respond the same way. Operators like to be around other operators. I forget who it was that talked about the "three legs of the stool," and that's terribly important, but there are times when you need to get away from that. We are all bombarded by vendors, everybody wanting to sell you everything from light bulbs to tables and chairs. That's all valuable and necessary, but there are times when you need to have a cool center. This seems to be a cool center because you have operators talking to operators, and I think that's extremely valuable. I find it refreshing.

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

I think the food has been great. I think there's been a genuine effort made here to do something a little unique, a little special, so I think it's been very good. You had participants last night--everybody from Morton's to Go Roma--and that's quality stuff.

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

Definitely. I would recommend a couple of other people in our company come next year.

**Peter Schonman
Corporate Executive Chef
Biaggi's Ristorante Italiano**

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

I love it. I wish it wasn't ending so soon. It's been a great couple of days and great to meet people and learn things. I think the best thing about it is knowing that we're all striving for the same goal. There are a lot of companies out there that are high quality. The networking has been a good thing.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference?

I like that aspect because it allows me as an operator to meet other operators from around the country to share some stories and get the understanding that we are not alone on an island somewhere. That we have some of the same successes and failures. It's just a great thing to meet other people in the business.

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

The food has been surprisingly good. Very creative, a great selection, so no matter what you eat or what your diet might be there's something for everyone. It's been great. It's been impressive.

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

We were just talking about that this morning and I definitely would.

Scott Hughes
Vice President of Marketing
Bruegger's Enterprises Inc.

How do you like *Chain Leader LIVE* so far and what do you like best about it?

I think *Chain Leader LIVE* is great. This is my first year. It's a great, informative group of sessions, and the people are very knowledgeable. It's a small enough group that you can really mingle and interact. I think it's going to be something I do every year.

Most of the attendees here are operators. What do you think about that aspect of the conference? It has been great. It's an excellent opportunity to mingle and to meet old friends and to share ideas and exchange best practices.

What's your impression of the food as compared to other conferences?

Wonderful!

Would you recommend *Chain Leader LIVE* to other operators and to your colleagues?

I would. There were two of us here this year: me from marketing and our new product director. But I think it would benefit our operations folks to come out here and share some ideas, and probably the technology folks as well.