

Dan Stone

# “If I was born again tomorrow, perhaps I would have left the hotel business sooner to join the franchise industry”

FRONT BURNER BRANDS' CHIEF BUSINESS & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER EXPLAINS THE LONG-RUNNING SUCCESS OF THE MELTING POT



Founded in 1975, The Melting Pot has offered a unique fondue dining experience for more than 40 years. As the premier fondue restaurant franchise, The Melting Pot has more than 125 restaurants in 35 United States, Canada, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

#### What was your route to your present position?

I joined the company as its director of franchise sales 10 years ago. Since then, I have taken on additional responsibilities in the areas of development, legal, HR and training. I joined the Executive Leadership Team in 2011.

#### What was the need you saw for a restaurant management company?

In 2011, we made a strategic decision to form Front Burner Brands, a management company that would provide shared services and support across multiple brands. The Melting Pot is a 41-year-old brand and is our primary focus in terms of management support.

We have been affiliated with two other brands in recent years and we continue to look for another brand to manage under the portfolio of Front Burner.

#### When was the firm established and what is its size?

The Melting Pot was established in 1975. The franchisor (The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc.) was established in 1984. Front Burner, the Management Company, was established in 2011. Front Burner has 68 team members that support over 125 locations of The Melting Pot. System wide, there are more than 4,000 employees that work at The Melting Pot.

#### What's a typical daily routine for you?

Work 10+ hours, followed by doing CrossFit exercise, then dinner, and wrapping up the day playing with my dogs and watching my favorite TV shows.

#### What is the hardest part of your job?

Balancing six distinct verticals that I am responsible for and the volume of emails and meetings that are associated with that.

#### What is the secret to doing it well?

Work hard and play hard. On the professional side: working smart by focusing on the 20% that will yield 80% of the results you are seeking, having regular one-on-one meetings with those that directly report to me and trusting them to do their jobs. On the personal side: working out, maintaining an active lifestyle, having fun on the weekends and travelling the world. When I am on vacation, I disconnect

from work and allow myself time to recharge the batteries.

#### If you had to start over, what would you do differently?

Great question. I don't have any regrets. If I was born again tomorrow, perhaps I would have left the hotel business (where I was an executive manager for nine years prior to joining The Melting Pot/Front Burner) sooner to join the franchise industry.

#### How do you ensure consistency throughout the many restaurants you manage?

It comes down to having a clear mission and standards with accountability for upholding the mission and standards. As a franchisor, we take the responsibility of protecting The Melting Pot brand very seriously. Our mission is to give each guest the perfect night out at The Melting Pot, regardless of the reason they have chosen to dine with us. This mission is woven into our strong culture and able to be articulated by every team member associated with the brand. We empower our team to see that this mission is accomplished with each of our guests. We recognize and reward the commitment to our mission. Regarding standards, we have a strong, yet fair compliance system in place to ensure that The Melting Pot experience is consistent, regardless of whether you are dining with us in Denver, Miami, Washington DC, Edmonton or Dubai. The result? In 2015, The Melting Pot was recognized as the No. 1 casual dining restaurant in the United States by consumers in the Nation's Restaurant News 2015 Consumer Picks report.



I ENJOY THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH AND THE FACT THAT WE ARE ALL ALIGNED, WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO ACHIEVE THE SAME GOALS”