

Restaurant Manager and Write-On Handheld user, Thai Hua of Spring Rolls restaurants in Toronto is honored by his peers and *Hospitality Technology* magazine.



Restaurant Executive Summit

# Summit Keeps Focus on Growth

**A**t the recent Restaurant Executive Summit leaders of growth-oriented restaurants convened for a two-day conclave on strategies to continue to drive growth. While the impetus was a full-slate of sessions, bringing together leading analysts, industry leaders and colleagues, the focus of most attendees was on networking.

"Having Restaurant leaders speak to the group about how they are leveraging systems to drive results in their respective businesses I found to be effective and extremely relevant," explains Jim Parrish, chief operating officer of Church's Chicken. "The networking opportunities with peers in the business was not only an opportunity to make new friends, it provided ample time to discuss common issues and share best demonstrated practices."

Held October 5-7 at The Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, Florida, the Summit brought together more than 50 leading restaurant executives. Sessions started on Thursday with Geoffrey Colvin, senior editor-at-large, *Fortune* magazine, supplying the opening keynote that addressed the challenges to, and strategies for success in a high growth business environment. Colvin emphasized his vision of Wall Street expectations for restaurant companies and fleshed out that theme as moderator of a panel of analysts, including Andrew M. Barish, managing

director/senior restaurant analyst, Banc of America Securities; Bryan Elliott, senior restaurant analyst, Raymond James & Associates; Lynne Jacoby, food & beverage practice leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers; and Michael Smith, senior vice president, Oppenheimer & Co.

In addition to defining Wall Street expectations, many restaurant leaders were focused on the challenges associated with high growth. Robert Lin, president and chief operating officer at Food Concepts International and George Katakalis, president of Daphne's Greek Café led a packed session on site selection strategies. "The Summit was structured to allow each of us to develop great dialogues with other industry leaders," notes Chuck Winship, CEO of Beef O'Brady's. "The relatively small group of attendees, the intimate accommodations, and the well planned sessions created a spontaneity and collegial spirit that many conferences struggle to attain."

One of the highlights of the Summit was the presentation of the Breakthrough Awards at a special dinner ceremony. The Breakthrough awards recognize growth-oriented restaurant companies that have shown exceptional innovation and execution in workforce intelligence, guest services, brand



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Breakthrough Award winners from left: VP IT Bill McMillan of Qdoba Restaurants; New World Restaurant Group CEO Paul Murphy; Chris Contino, VP marketing at Culvers; Carl Howard, Damon's International CFO; and Thai Hua, president of Spring Rolls.

growth and operational efficiency.

Damon's International won the workforce intelligence award for their multifaceted approach to training and labor man-

agement through their use of the Harvard Business School ManageMentor program as well as their development of the STAR training program. Damon's International

Chief Financial Officer Carl Howard accepted the award for the company.

Chris Contino, Culver's vice president marketing, accepted the award for guest services in recognition of the company's focus on making sure "every guest is happy when they leave."

One of the most important paths to growth is through revitalization, illustrated by New World Restaurant Group's changes to its Einstein brand. CEO Paul Murphy was on hand to accept the first Breakthrough award for Brand Growth.

For five-unit Spring Rolls restaurants, a drive for efficiency has led to improvements in the restaurant's processes. A commitment to wireless POS helped president Thai Hua gain a special Breakthrough award for operational efficiency. The other award for operational efficiency went to Qdoba, a company that has stayed lean and efficient even as it has grown significantly. Bill McMillan, VP IT accepted the award on behalf of Qdoba for his effort to keep IT systems streamlined and efficient. ■