

SUMMIT FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 18-20, 2026 | SEMINOLE HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18TH – WELCOME RECEPTION

5:00PM-7:00PM

WELCOME RECEPTION (COCKTAILS PROVIDED)

TERRACE BD

Sponsored by:



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19^H – DAY #1

7:00AM-9:00AM

SPONSOR SET-UP

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

9:00AM-5:00PM

REGISTRATION

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

9:00AM-11:30AM

BLOODY MARY & MIMOSA BAR

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

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10:00AM-11:00AM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- The Fine Print That Could Bankrupt Your Business: What Hospitality Leaders Need to Know About Liability Exclusions and Nuclear Verdicts

TERRACE BD

Speakers: Kieshia Bryant, Risk Advisor & Client Advocate | USI Insurance Services
Ethan Anderson, Middle Market Property & Casualty Advisor | USI Insurance Services

Have you ever wondered what your General Liability policy actually covers—and just as importantly, what it doesn't? Join us for a discussion on common misconceptions surrounding General Liability coverage and the emerging risks that are driving some of the hospitality industry's largest claims.

We'll explore the growing impact of nuclear verdicts, with a focus on Human Trafficking and Assault-related claims, and discuss the risk management and insurance considerations every hotel owner should understand. Leave with a clearer understanding

of your coverage, your potential exposures, and practical steps to help prepare for a worst-case scenario.

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- **The Operator's Guide to Getting Recommended by ChatGPT, Perplexity & Google AI**
SALON EAST

Speaker: Christopher Britton, Partner & Co-Founder | AI Syndicate

Over 50% of consumers now start their searches in AI answer engines like ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google's AI Overviews, and they're asking for hotel, restaurant, and experience recommendations by name. If your business isn't optimized to appear in those AI-generated answers, you're invisible at the most critical moment in the decision journey. In this session, CJ Britton, co-founder of AI Syndicate, breaks down exactly how Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) works, why it's fundamentally different from traditional SEO, and what Florida operators can do right now to show up where their next guest is already looking.

Sponsored by:  **AI SYNDICATE**

- **The Welcoming Edge: Customer Service in the Age of "Leave Me Alone"**
TERRACE AC

Speaker: Mary Delia Allen, Business Strategist & Founder, The Welcoming Edge

Today's customers are rushed and distracted—and so are your employees. This high-impact session reclaims the power of the first moment. Through relatable stories and actionable strategies, Mary Delia equips hospitality teams to create meaningful connections in seconds. Welcoming well is a no-cost, no-tech micromoment with massive impact—building customer loyalty, strengthening employee engagement, and transforming a simple greeting into a powerful business tool. Because even in a "leave me alone" world, the companies that connect win.

11:00AM-11:30AM

LUNCH

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

11:30AM-1:00PM

WELCOME, STATE OF THE INDUSTRY & KEYNOTE SPEAKER

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

- **Welcome:**
Carol Dover, President & CEO | Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
- **State of the Industry:**
Fred LeFranc, Chaos Strategist & Founding Partner | Results Thru Strategy
- **Thanks for Coming in Today: Creating a Culture Where Employees Thrive & Customer Service Is Alive**
Ryan Minton, 2X Best Selling Author & Keynote Speaker | Former SVP Representing Brands like Hilton & Marriott
The experience your customers have is a direct reflection of the experience your team is having. In this engaging keynote, Ryan Minton shares practical strategies for creating a

culture where employees thrive, service becomes intentional, and memorable guest experiences happen consistently. Sponsored by:



1:00PM-1:15PM

GET CONNECTED-NETWORKING BREAK!

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

1:15PM-2:15PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- **The Hotel Restaurant That Locals Actually Choose**

SALON WEST

Speaker: **Kenneth Scharlatt**, Hotel Food & Beverage Innovator/Founder & Executive Director | Savage Orchid Hospitality

Learn how to move beyond “amenity mode” and build an outlet that earns repeat local business. This session gets into practical concept positioning, community partnerships, local-first marketing, and the operational shifts required to deliver a consistent experience that makes people come back.

- **Visibility-Generative Engine Optimization for Florida’s Tourism Industry**

SALON EAST

Speakers: **Michael Ford**, Managing Director | Clyde
Patrick Fore, CEO | Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

Step into the next era of customer discovery with a high-impact seminar built for hospitality leaders. This session breaks down how search is shifting from “let me Google that” to AI-generated answers and what that means for your business visibility, reservations, and brand authority. You will leave with practical strategies you can use now, not theory.

Sponsored by:



- **2 to 30+: The Digital Playbook Behind Talkin’ Tacos’ 970% Growth**

TERRACE BD

Speakers: **Darby E. Perez**, VP of Operations, Talkin’ Tacos
Dylan Lehotsky, Director of Partnerships | Owner.com

Sponsored by:



- **The Value Illusion: Price or Perception- What Really Drives the Decision to Spend**

TERRACE AC

Speaker: **Melissa Hughes**, Human Potential Alchemist

Why will guests gladly spend \$22 on one cocktail and complain about another at \$14?

In this engaging behavioral science session, Dr. Melissa Hughes explores the hidden psychological forces that shape perceived value. Attendees will discover how language, presentation, context, expectation, and emotional experience influence spending decisions and how small strategic shifts can increase guest satisfaction, perceived quality, and revenue without changing the product itself.

Sponsored by:



2:15PM-2:30PM

GET CONNECTED-NETWORKING BREAK!

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

2:30PM-3:30PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- **Actionable Leadership: Driving Results Beyond Hierarchy**

TERRACE BD

Speaker: Christopher McFadden, Founder & Hospitality Career Coach | The McFadden Group Career Coaching

This session reframes leadership as an operational standard, not a position or title. Attendees will examine how everyday decisions, interactions, and task ownership; on the floor, in the kitchen, and behind the scenes shape guest experience, staff retention, and profitability.

Drawing on real-world hospitality examples, the session demonstrates how organizations that distribute leadership behaviors across roles experience:

- *Faster issue resolution during service*
- *Stronger accountability without micromanagement*
- *More consistent guest experiences across shifts and departments*

Industry benchmarks support this shift. Studies from Gallup and Deloitte show that high-involvement teams can outperform peers by 20–25% in productivity and experience significantly lower voluntary turnover. In hospitality, where turnover regularly exceeds 70% annually, even modest improvements in engagement translate into substantial cost savings.

Sponsored by:



- **Inspiring Memorable Service: Blow People Away**

SALON WEST

Speaker: Ryan Minton, 2X Best Selling Author & Keynote Speaker | Former SVP Representing Brands like Hilton & Marriott

What makes an experience truly unforgettable? In this interactive workshop, Ryan Minton unpacks the principles behind creating "Blow People Away" moments — those intentional, memorable interactions that turn ordinary service into lasting customer loyalty.

Sponsored by:



- **Wellness Works: The Future of Hospitality**

SALON EAST

Speakers: **Tammy Pahel**, VP of Spa & Wellness | Carillon Wellness Resort
Patrick Fernandes, CEO | Alchemy Wellness Resorts
Deborah Yager Fleming, CEO & Partner | Aqualina Resorts
Paal Gisholt, CEO | Blueshift

Wellness has become one of hospitality's greatest opportunities for innovation and growth. Join leaders from luxury hospitality, wellness, and healthy lifestyle brands as they discuss how wellness is reshaping the guest experience, supporting employee well-being, inspiring brand loyalty, and creating new opportunities for business success. Discover the trends, strategies, and ideas that are redefining what it means to deliver exceptional hospitality.

- **High Touch High Tech: The Future of Restaurant Guest Relationships**

TERRACE AC

Moderator: **Fred LeFranc**, Chaos Strategist | Results Thru Strategy
Panelists: **Seth Temko**, Founder | NCentiv
Shaun VanAlphen, Director of IT & Communications | Chip City Cookies
Michael Cavoto, Senior Deal Maker | DoorDash

Technology does not create hospitality. It supports it. This panel will explore how restaurant operators can use technology to strengthen the guest journey, build deeper guest relationships, and make better business decisions without losing the human touch that defines great hospitality.

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3:30PM-3:45PM

GET CONNECTED-NETWORKING BREAK!

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

3:45PM-5:00PM

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

- **Powering Florida: Energy, Resilience and Opportunity**

Armando Pimentel, Vice Chairman | NextEra Energy
NextEra Energy's Vice Chairman Armando Pimentel will discuss how Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) underpins Florida's tourism economy with reliable service, storm readiness, and forward-looking investments. He'll dive into how FPL uses a variety of efficiency programs, along with new technologies, to keep customer bills low while supporting continued population and economic growth across the state. The session will also examine Florida's role within the broader national energy conversation.

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5:00PM-7:00PM

HOSPITALITY HAPPY HOUR

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

Network with supplier partners, speakers, and attendees.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20TH– DAY #2

8:00AM-9:30AM

BREAKFAST

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

8:00AM-10:00AM

REGISTRATION

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

8:30AM-11:30AM

MIMOSA BAR

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

8:15AM-9:30AM

MORNING KEYNOTE

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

- **The GOAT Legends of the Industry**

- **Moderator:** Carol Dover, President & CEO | Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
- **Panelists:** Jack Miller, Founder | Miller's Ale House
Tim Gannon, Co-Founder | Outback Steakhouse
Don Fox, Restaurant Industry Leader & Author, Former CEO of Firehouse Subs

Join an inspiring conversation with some of the hospitality industry's most accomplished leaders as they share the stories behind their success. Hear firsthand about the defining moments, challenges they've overcome, and the leadership principles that have shaped their careers. Walk away with valuable insights, practical advice, and inspiration to elevate your own journey in hospitality.

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9:30AM-9:45AM

GET CONNECTED-NETWORKING BREAK!

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

9:45AM-10:45AM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- **Beyond Management: Leading with an Entrepreneurial Mindset**

SALON EAST

Speakers: John Sullivan, VP | East U.S. Marriott Luxury Brands

Keith Space, President & COO | Fort Hospitality/Four Seasons

Mary Rogers, EVP Hospitality Operations | Turnberry

Joy Boyd, Area Managing Director | The Islander Resorts

Great hotels aren't built by managers alone—they're built by leaders who embrace innovation, inspire people, and seize opportunities. Join an engaging discussion with respected hospitality executives who will share real-world experiences on leading with purpose, adapting to change, fostering creativity, and building teams that consistently exceed expectations. Walk away with actionable strategies you can implement immediately, regardless of your role or property size.

- **Turning Traveler Insights into Performance: Winning in Florida's Evolving Market**

TERRACE BD

Explore the traveler trends shaping demand across Florida and learn how to turn those insights into measurable results. From evolving booking behaviors and market shifts to visibility strategies, advertising, and promotional opportunities, this session will provide practical ways to capture demand, strengthen your competitive position, and drive more bookings. Walk away with actionable tactics to stay ahead in today's dynamic travel landscape.

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- **Press Play with Confidence: Closing the Hidden Licensing Gap on Music, TV, Streaming & Film**

TERRACE AC

Speakers: **Jessica Frost**, AVP Customer Experience & Engagement | BMI

Jonathan Burg, CMO | MPLC

Join BMI and MPLC for a dynamic operator-focused session tailored specifically for hospitality and lodging owners and operators. This engaging event will guide you through the ins and outs of licensing the music, TV, streaming, and films your guests love, helping you confidently create the best possible atmosphere in your business.

On the music front, you'll gain valuable insights into how both background and live performances are regulated and learn how the right tunes can set the perfect mood for your establishment. For TV, streaming and films, your screens are already shaping the guest experience which can increase footfall and elevate every customer touchpoint, but only when you're licensed to show them publicly.

In this session you will learn:

- *The compliance landscape for music, TV, streaming and film in hospitality and lodging.*
- *Smart, practical and simple strategies to stay compliant.*
- *How to unlock the financial upside with new use cases for music, TV, streaming and film that deepen customer engagement.*

Join us to unlock practical knowledge and ensure your business stays compliant while delivering a memorable guest experience.

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- **Your Catering Growth Playbook: Real Tactics from Operators Winning at Catering**

SALON WEST

Moderator: Kelly Grogan, Founder | CRUMBS

Panelists: Jay Johnson, Owner | Bubba's Roadhouse & Saloon

Bill Lay, Owner | Catered Affairs of Key West

Whether you're looking to grow an existing catering program or build one from the ground up, this session will provide practical strategies to help you drive more sales and maximize profitability. Learn how to identify new catering customers hiding in plain sight, increase revenue from your current customer base, and turn your restaurant into a daily marketing tool for catering. We'll also cover how to build a menu that's operationally efficient and highly profitable, along with proven tactics for succeeding on catering marketplaces like ezCater without sacrificing your margins. Walk away with actionable ideas you can implement immediately to grow your catering business.

10:45AM-11:00AM

GET CONNECTED-NETWORKING BREAK

SPONSOR MARKETPLACE

11:00AM-12:00PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

- **Are Your Service-Charge Practices Creating Liability? Do Your Marketing Emails Contain Spy Pixels? New Compliance Challenges for Florida Hospitality Operators.**

SALON WEST

Speaker: Kevin Johnson, Shareholder | Johnson Jackson, PLLC.

Do you impose service charges for special events? Have you moved to a full service-charge/commission pay model? No matter where you are on the spectrum, service charges can create compliance issues, ranging from disclosure obligations under Florida's new law to overtime-calculation and tax-reporting responsibilities that can trip up even experienced operators.

Kevin Johnson will explain where these hidden traps lie and recommend strategies for ensuring compliance. He will also provide an update on current litigation trends ranging from the use of so-called spy pixels in marketing emails to the use of AI in hiring.

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- **Stop the Bleeding. Rebuild the Brand**

TERRACE AC

Moderator: Fred LeFranc, Chaos Strategist | Results Thru Strategy

Panelist: Jim Greco, President | Pilgrim Holdings

Restaurant turnarounds rarely fail because leaders lack ideas. They fail because everything feels urgent, priorities become blurred, and the organization loses focus. Join restaurant industry veterans Fred LeFranc and Jim Greco for a candid, practical conversation about what leaders must address first when a brand is underperforming. The session will explore how to stabilize the business, rebuild trust, and create a clear path back to sustainable growth.

Topics will include leadership and culture, financial literacy, unit economics, operating systems, accountability, guest experience, brand relevance, talent decisions, and the discipline required to turn strategy into action.

Attendees will leave with a clearer framework for diagnosing the real problems, setting the right priorities, and leading a turnaround without creating more chaos along the way.

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- **Hemp-Infused Hospitality: The Policies, The Challenges, and The Opportunities**

SALON EAST

Moderator: Samantha Padgett, Vice President of Government Relations and General Counsel | Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association

Panelists: Cole Peacock, President | RC Peacock Consulting Group & Co-Founder, C3 Investment Group

Eric Brewer, SVP External Affairs & GR | Total Wine & More

Learn how THC policy impacts operations, where regulations are headed, and opportunities for restaurant beverage programs.

- **The Local Advantage: Why Supporting Farmers, Ranchers & Fishermen Makes Good Business**

TERRACE BD

Moderator: Patrick Fore, CEO | Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

Panelists: Dan Murphy, Retail & International Trade Division of Marketing | Florida Department of Agriculture, Fresh From Florida

Anne Rollings, Executive Director Communications & Business Development | Watershed Hospitality Concepts

Tim Solano, Farmer | Cedar Key

Tommy Ward, Executive Director | 4Roots

Consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes from—and restaurants that build strong relationships with local farmers, ranchers and fishermen are creating more resilient businesses, unique menus, and stronger community

connections, while delighting their guests with fresh, quality fare. Hear firsthand from restaurant and food production leaders who are making local sourcing work, the challenges they've overcome, and why investing in local producers is good for both business and the communities they serve.

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11:30AM-12:30PM

LUNCH

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

12:30PM-1:30PM

CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

SEMINOLE BALLROOM

- **Engagement That Rocks! Set List to Enhance Experiences & Retain Chart-Topping Talent.**

Jim Knight, Keynote Speaker, Best Selling Author, Impact Catalyst

Knowing that employees are so critical to any business, how leaders treat them is the one true strategy to empower and retain team members and ultimately create a world class organization. This high-energy keynote program is effectively designed to highlight proven ways to create and maintain a strong internal team member culture through robust engagement.

Keynote speaker and best-selling author, Jim Knight will act as a thought-starter for the session. He will use the visceral backdrop of Rock 'n Roll and several well-known brands, including Hard Rock International—via his 21-year run with that brand as the head of Global Training & Development—to discuss key strategies to secure commitment (versus compliance) from team members, ensuring they stick around longer, deliver unforgettable guest experiences, and produce sustainable results.

Key Unique Concepts will include:

- *Understanding Virtuous vs. Vicious Environments*
- *Using Servant Leadership via the Service/Profit Chain*
- *Amping Up Communication*
- *Empowering Team Members*
- *Employing the Emotional Bank Account*
- *Utilizing Philanthropy as a Differentiator*
- *Creating an Army of Giants via Mentorship*
- *Retaining Top Talent*