



BRAND USA SENIOR EXECUTIVES

Chris Thompson **President and CEO**



Since 2012, Chris Thompson has led the nation's public-private partnership dedicated to contributing to community prosperity throughout the USA by marketing the welcome, driving international visitation, and clearly communicating U.S. travel policy. Under Chris' direction, Brand USA has nearly tripled its partnership network and more than doubled its partner contributions and program offerings.

Prior to joining Brand USA, Chris was president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA where he led record growth in international visitation. Furthermore, in 2022, Chris was inducted into the VISIT FLORIDA Tourism Hall of Fame.

Working in the industry more than 40 years, Chris has served on numerous boards. Currently he serves on Destinations International's board of directors and is a member of its executive and global leadership board committees. And he is a member of the Advisory Board for the Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute, an entity within the Department of Tourism, Recreation, and Sport Management at his alma mater the University of Florida. Read [full bio](#).

Don Richardson **Chief Financial and Diversity and Inclusion Office**



As chief financial officer, Don Richardson is responsible for developing and leading the financial strategy for the organization in a way that is responsive to Brand USA's key stakeholders, ensures compliance with policies and operating controls, and enables the organization to make strategic decisions and accurately measure performance and return on investment of its core initiatives.

As chief diversity and inclusion officer, Don is responsible for optimizing organizational culture and aligning the organizations diversity and inclusion goals with business outcomes and key stakeholders, such as customers and employees. Don also serves on the board of directors of the world's leading network of LGBTQ+ tourism businesses, IGLTA, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association.

Before joining Brand USA, Don was Senior Principal and Managing Director for an independent consulting firm and led the Business Systems Practice for Bazilio Cobb Associates from 2011 to 2013. Read [full bio](#).



BRAND USA SENIOR EXECUTIVES

Staci Mellman

Senior Vice President of Integrated Marketing



Staci Mellman joined Brand USA in November 2022 and is the most senior female in the organization. In her role she is responsible for consumer marketing across digital and print platforms and utilizing earned and paid tactics. Prior to Brand USA, Staci was VISIT FLORIDA's Chief Marketing Officer.

During her tenure at VISIT FLORIDA, Staci developed and executed a global marketing strategy, campaigned for important issues, including accessibility to be at the forefront of the travel and tourism industry, and led the state of Florida's recovery post-pandemic, outpacing economists' projections by two years.

Staci earned an MBA from The Australian Graduate School of Management before rising through the ranks at VISIT FLORIDA. She has a demonstrated experience in building brands and leading global integrated marketing initiatives and has won numerous awards, including the Expedia Epic Top Tourism award and Emmy Award Suncoast Regional award. Read full [bio](#).

Aaron Wodin-Schwartz

Senior Vice President of Public Affairs



Aaron leads outreach efforts to key stakeholders to promote and advance Brand USA's mission and raise visibility worldwide for the organization. He is responsible for Brand USA's relationship with federal partners and relevant industry groups to ensure effective implementation of the Travel Promotion Act (TPA). The team he oversees helps to communicate U.S. travel policies and develop collaborative opportunities to promote inbound travel to the United States.

Aaron joined Brand USA in November 2011, serving as Deputy Director of Strategic Outreach, Director of Public Policy, and Vice President of Public Policy before his promotion to Senior Vice President of Public Affairs in 2021. Aaron was inducted into the Destination Marketing Association International "30 Under 30" Class of 2014.

Prior to Brand USA, Aaron was a presidential management fellow at the U.S. Department of Commerce serving as policy advisor to the deputy assistant secretary for services industries where, among other things, he worked on implementation of the TPA. Prior to government service, Aaron was the program assistant for the Latin American and Hemispheric Studies Program at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

Aaron holds the M.A. in Latin American and Hemispheric Studies from The George Washington University and the B.A. in political science from the University of



BRAND USA SENIOR EXECUTIVES

Massachusetts, and he speaks fluent Spanish and is conversant in French and Portuguese. Read full [bio](#).