WRAY EXECUTIVE SEARCH

TITLE OF JOB: CEO

LOCATION: Nationwide, California or Southwest preferred

SUMMARY:

A family-owned and operated fast casual restaurant concept with a strong brand identity, loyal customer base, and significant growth potential is in search of a CEO. The company is at an inflection point; ready to evolve from an entrepreneurial, founder-led organization into a more structured, scalable enterprise while preserving its culture, values, and legacy. To lead this next chapter, the company is seeking a seasoned Chief Executive Officer who can serve as both strategic architect and hands-on operator, building the systems, team, and discipline required for sustainable growth.

The CEO will have full responsibility for the overall performance, strategy, and leadership of the company. This is an all-encompassing leadership role requiring the ability to professionalize operations, develop infrastructure, and drive growth, while navigating the nuances of a family-owned business. The ideal candidate is a trusted leader who can influence without disrupting, introduce structure without eroding culture, and align family ownership around a shared vision for the future. This individual must be equally comfortable rolling up their sleeves in the restaurants and leading high-level strategic planning.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Enterprise Leadership & Strategy

- Develop and execute a clear, long-term vision and growth strategy for the business.
- Establish annual operating plans, budgets, and performance objectives aligned with ownership goals.
- Balance near-term execution with long-term value creation and scalability.
- Serve as the primary steward of the brand, culture, and company values.

Operational Excellence & Foundation Building

- Oversee all restaurant operations to ensure consistency, quality, profitability, and guest satisfaction.
- Build and standardize core operating systems, including:
    - Operating procedures and playbooks
    - Labor models and scheduling discipline
    - Inventory, food cost, and margin controls
    - Performance dashboards and KPIs
- Ensure the business is “institutional-ready” with repeatable, scalable processes.

Financial Leadership & Discipline

- Own full P&L responsibility across the business.
- Strengthen financial reporting, forecasting, and cash flow management.
- Partner with finance/accounting to improve cost controls, pricing, and unit economics.
- Translate financial data into actionable insights for operators and ownership.

People, Culture & Leadership Development

- Build, lead, and develop a high-performing leadership team.
- Create clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability across the organization.
- Establish a people-first culture focused on development, engagement, and retention.

- Lead change thoughtfully, ensuring buy-in at all levels of the organization.

Growth & Expansion Readiness

- Assess and prepare the business for growth through new unit development, franchising, or alternative expansion strategies.
- Partner on site selection, real estate, and market entry planning (as applicable).
- Ensure the infrastructure, talent, and systems are in place before scaling.

Family Ownership Partnership

- Serve as a trusted advisor and partner to family owners.
- Navigate family dynamics with emotional intelligence, discretion, and transparency.
- Align ownership around strategic priorities while respecting legacy, values, and long-term objectives.
- Provide clear, consistent communication and data-driven insights to support decision-making.

Leadership Attributes

- Builder mindset that thrives in creating structure where little exists.
- High emotional intelligence; able to influence without authority.
- Trusted, steady leader who brings clarity, discipline, and confidence.
- Hands-on, humble, and comfortable operating at all levels of the business.
- Strategic thinker with strong execution discipline.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE:

- 10+ years of executive leadership experience running a restaurant company, with direct responsibility for overall business performance.
- Proven track record as a hands-on leader in a growing fast casual or QSR brand, with the ability to balance strategy and day-to-day execution.
- Demonstrated success building foundational systems and teams to support scalable growth.
- Deep understanding of restaurant operations, unit economics, labor models, and multi-unit financial management.
- Experience leading organizations through periods of growth, change, or professionalization.
- Strong background in P&L ownership, budgeting, forecasting, and financial discipline.
- Prior experience working within family-owned or founder-led businesses preferred, with the ability to influence, align, and build trust across ownership groups.
- Exposure to expansion strategies such as new unit development, franchising, or regional scaling is a plus.
- Exceptional communication and leadership skills, with the credibility to lead at all levels of the organization.

FOR POSITION REQUIREMENTS AND SPECIFICATIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

Name: Ray Kelley

Direct: (828) 318-9010

E-mail: ray@wraysearch.com

Name: Rebecca Patt

Direct: (612) 354-7400

E-mail: rebecca.patt@wraysearch.com

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