

How the CEO of This Iconic Pizza Brand Is Building on 50 Years of Deep-Dish Dominance and Fueling Sustainable Growth

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Sitting down with Nick Scarpino, the CEO of Giordano's, for the 50th episode of *The CEO Series* felt fitting – especially as the legendary Chicago pizza brand celebrates its own 50th anniversary. Nick's story stood out immediately. Formerly the CMO at Portillo's, another iconic brand, Nick took an unconventional path to the CEO seat, a reminder that leadership journeys are rarely linear. Throughout our conversation, it was clear that his transition from marketing executive to CEO was rooted in a consistent focus on the guest experience and a deep commitment to team development.

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One of the key takeaways from the interview was Nick's emphasis on communication. He shared that, as CEO, every word carries greater weight – and misinterpretations can ripple quickly through a large organization. For aspiring leaders, this is an actionable reminder: Communication isn't just about talking clearly; it's about ensuring your message is truly heard and understood.

Another major insight was Nick's perspective on growth. While Giordano's plans to expand carefully into key markets like Washington, D.C. and Mall of America, Nick stressed that growth must be steady and sustainable. Scaling too quickly can erode quality, which is a death sentence for a beloved brand. In a time when rapid expansion is often glorified, his measured approach serves as an important lesson: Smart scaling beats fast scaling, especially when brand loyalty and quality are at stake.

Financial discipline was also front and center. Nick was candid about the challenges inflation and fluctuating tariffs pose to Giordano's. Yet rather than compromising product quality to manage costs, the company leans into providing value – ensuring that even as prices rise, customers feel they are getting their money's worth. Leaders across industries can take note: In uncertain economic times, protecting product integrity builds long-term trust.

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What struck me most about Nick, though, was his authentic commitment to servant leadership. When asked about his legacy, he didn't mention personal accolades or bottom-line achievements. Instead, he spoke about creating an environment where team members could grow personally and professionally. For any executive, this mindset – prioritizing the development and well-being of your people – is not just admirable; it's increasingly essential for building resilient organizations today.

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