

**YPO****Retail Network**

Retail Network's New Chair, Peter Lynch, Steps in with Expertise, Experience and Insights

The saying goes that “every problem is a gift, and without problems we would not grow.” This thinking is what underpins our incoming Chair’s most significant turning point in his professional career and marks a moment when a massive and seemingly devastating exit turned into the beginning of a flourishing new chapter. Read his story and discover his plans for this new Learning Calendar.



The Retail Network welcomes and introduces **Peter Lynch** (YPO Gold Pasadena) as our new Chair for the Learning Calendar. Peter is the current Principal at **A&G Realty Partners** and brings with him a great wealth of experience in retail. Having spent over three decades in the industry, we trust his sound expertise and servant leadership will bring exceeding value to the Network as we continue to focus on being impactful, relevant, prominent and extraordinary.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND



Peter's professional career in retail kicked off when he was actively recruited from college to join Cain Sloan Department Store, a division of Allied Stores Corporation, in Nashville, Tennessee, USA. After a few years, he moved to join Joske's Department Store in Houston, Texas, USA, and in just 13 months, at the young age of 29, was promoted to vice president at the company.

Peter later made a progressive move to San Francisco, California, USA, where he joined Emporium-Capwell. There, his unmistakable talent and tenacity led him to become the executive vice president of finance and operations for a billion-dollar department store. At this point, Peter felt strongly that the department store industry would soon consolidate. In search of further growth, he made a bold break to Southern California. While there, Peter invested his time and expertise into helping build a venture capitalist startup, Store Furnishings International.

It was the early 1990s and as the recession crept in, Store Furnishings International eventually sold to IKEA. While it marked the end of their venture, selling to the multinational group was an event Peter recalls as being "one of the sincerest forms of flattery for me and my partners."

Naturally, this did not dampen Peter's valiant disposition as he went on to become the President of Baby Guess. During his time at Guess, he was responsible for the roll out of Baby Guess, Guess Kids and Guess Home in malls across the United States.

A REMARKABLE TURNING POINT



In the late 1990s, Peter landed his “dream job” running worldwide operations for the Warner Brothers Studio Stores. Not only was this his first experience in the international arena, but it was also the most exciting.

“Now, that was a great run. It was my first time dealing with entertainment and retail. It was a lot of fun playing off Batman and Superman and all the other popular characters of the time,” says Peter.

At a time when Warner Brothers Studio Stores was at the height of its success and with prime locations across the country, America Online (AOL) made the move to buy Time Warner. With an unsettling hint of reticence, Peter recalls this move as being “one of the worst transactions run in this century and the last.”

After closing the transaction, AOL Time Warner decided to shut down the Warner Brothers Studio Stores to take advantage of purchase accounting and moved to a consumer products licensing organization. As Peter went through the motions of losing what was his dream job, he took it on as a learning experience and felt the event brought on a remarkable turning point in his life.

“In the period I went through unwinding this business, I learned something about myself. The intensity of making the announcement that you are closing down one of the biggest retail businesses across the country and being able to work through agreements with every

landlord, every community and with our thousands of employees in just 10 months was a massive undertaking. I would never be in the business that I am today if I had never had that experience,” says Peter.

True to his unwavering diligence to continuously learn and grow, Peter shared the most significant takeaway he gained from this experience: “In adversity, if you really get behind people and you build the right plan and intensively stay with it, you can eventually solve all the problems.”

With the closure of the business, Peter then moved into a flourishing new chapter of his career, and with the help of his founding partners, built what stands today as [A&G Realty Partners](#) — probably the largest retail real estate restructuring business, in addition to health care and for-profit education restructuring. In retrospect, Peter observed that to many, “This incident would have been considered a failure, but it really wasn’t.”

A TRUE SUPPORT SYSTEM



LEADERS CREATING A WORLD OF IMPACT

Having joined YPO in 1994, Peter was not short of support, during his most challenging times, both in his professional and personal life. He recounts the support he received from his forum, which was “a good sounding board” for him, as well as his chapter, which proved to be “really enriching” during that time.

He also shared a heartwarming anecdote from a significant period when he experienced a serious health issue.

“When I was 48, I had quintuple bypass surgery, and my closest friends were YPOers,” he said. “They were of great support and I really felt that after that period we solidified a real and unbreakable connection with one another. There were eight of us who thereafter started meeting for coffee every Saturday to talk about business, life and everything. And, wait for it — it’s been 19 years and we are still going, every Saturday. I mean, these are high-powered leaders who run big businesses, but they all make the time and we all see so much value in these meet-ups.”

LOOKING AHEAD AT THE NEW LEARNING CALENDAR



Peter describes himself as being a person who wants to learn every day, something he considers to be a part of the YPO spirit. He says, "I never thought I had it all figured out, and I never will." It's this same energy he brings into his new role as the Retail Network's Chair, a trait that inspires collaboration, builds support and creates a safe environment for learning and growth.

Commenting on what he is most looking forward to in the new year, he remarks; "I think there is a great sensitivity among this year's board to make sure that we are being totally relevant to the real issues confronting YPO retail folks and how we can serve them. I view myself as a servant leader, and my role is truly to serve the Network's needs. Listening and challenging myself and the members, engaging and collaborating with them, fostering forward thinking — I really want all these things to be a part of our culture."

As Peter takes on his new role, he shares a thoughtful message to our outgoing Chair, **Michael Cimini** (YPO Connecticut River Valley):

“It has been my pleasure to serve on the Retail Network Board and watch the steady hand of Michael Cimini's leadership. As he ends his two-year leadership role as Chairman, he has

continued to grow the participation of the Retail Network and has carried the torch for the Network in making certain it truly stands relevant to its members. He has been a leader in the overall YPO Network Group and has skillfully navigated the resources to support the Retail Network.”

“As a network, we have come a long way in the last four years, with the last two years being no exception.”

“What is particularly impressive about Michael is his collaborative management style and his intense desire to put the Network at the forefront of great learning opportunities, whether they be GLCs, local special YPO events and, of course, our signature learning event, the YPO Retail CEO Summit.”

“It is because of leaders like Michael who give their time and energy that we have truly great YPO experiences. On behalf of the growing network membership of more than 2,500, know that you have made a big difference, and we are pleased that you will still be contributing to the board and the network community.”

“On behalf of the board and YPO management, we look forward to collaborating with you all and wish you all the best for the years to come.”

GET INVOLVED

If you are interested in getting more involved in the network, please contact Nyarai Gomiwa, your Network Community Manager, at ngomiwa@ypo.org for further details.

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