

Shaping The Future Of The Beverage Industry

An Interview with Wayne E. Chaplin, Chief Executive Officer, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

EDITORS' NOTE Wayne Chaplin serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (Southern Glazer's), the world's pre-eminent distributor of beverage alcohol and a multi-generational, family-owned company. He was named to this role in January 2016, upon the announcement of the combination of Southern Wine & Spirits of America, Inc. and Glazer's, Inc. Chaplin joined Southern Wine & Spirits of America, Inc. (Southern)

in 1984, following a period practicing law at a Miami-based firm. In 1987, he was appointed to Vice President of Operations, and in 1989, was named First Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, overseeing all divisions of the company's distribution operations. By 1992, Chaplin was appointed to the Company's Executive Management Committee and became an officer and director. He was appointed Southern's President and Chief Operating Officer in 1994, and in May 2014, was named President and Chief Executive Officer of Southern. The completion of the combination of Southern and Glazer's was announced in July 2016.

Chaplin was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1956. After graduating Magna Cum Laude from the University of Miami with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, he received a Juris Doctor (J.D.) law degree from the same institution. As he prepared himself for a future leadership role in the company, Chaplin quickly learned the importance of customer sales and service excellence in his early years at Southern. Chaplin went on to serve in various roles including sales supervisor, company comptroller, and operations manager. From this experience, he believes Southern Glazer's goals must be closely tied to its suppliers' goals and customers' needs. Beyond his day-to-day corporate responsibilities, Chaplin is very active in overseeing the wide range of national, state and local charitable causes the company supports – from education and humanitarian relief activities to numerous corporate social responsibility initiatives hosted across the enterprise. In addition to his corporate-related philanthropic activities, Chaplin holds several leadership and board positions. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board and Member of the Executive Committee at the University of Miami. He is also



Wayne E. Chaplin

an active supporter of other community-focused organizations. Chaplin has also demonstrated a deep and ongoing commitment to the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Florida International University (FIU). Through his leadership, advocacy, and philanthropic support – including helping grow the Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by Capital One (SOBEWFF®) into a nationally recognized event that has raised nearly \$50 million for the school – he has played

a key role in advancing its academic excellence and global reputation. Each year, the Festival provides hands-on experience to more than 1,500 FIU students, reinforcing the school's mission to prepare future leaders in hospitality through real-world learning and industry engagement.

COMPANY BRIEF Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (southernglazers.com) is the world's preeminent distributor of beverage alcohol, building brands for moments that matter. The multi-generational, family-owned company has operations in 47 U.S. markets and Canada, as well as brokerage operations through its Southern Glazer's Travel Retail Sales & Export Division in the Caribbean, Central and South America. In 2025, Southern Glazer's was recognized by Newsweek as one of America's Greatest Workplaces for Diversity and America's Greatest Workplaces for Women. Southern Glazer's urges all retail customers and adult consumers to market, sell, serve, and enjoy its products responsibly.

Will you provide an overview of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits' history and heritage?

Southern Glazer's is the product of two multi-generational, family-owned businesses that came together in 2016 to create the largest North American wine and spirits distributor. But our roots go back much further – Southern Wine & Spirits was founded by my father, Harvey Chaplin, in 1968 in Florida, and Glazer's dates back to 1909 in Texas. What's unique about our heritage is how much of it has been driven by family values – hard work, relationships, and doing business the right way. That legacy still guides how we operate today, even as we've grown into a 24,000-employee company with operations across 47 U.S. markets and Canada, as well as brokerage operations through our Southern Glazer's Travel

Retail Sales & Export Division in the Caribbean, Central and South America.

How do you describe Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits' mission and purpose?

Our identity is, "We are the world's preeminent distributor of beverage alcohol and proud to be a multi-generational, family-owned company." Our purpose is, "We build world-class brands for moments that matter." Our vision is "to be the hospitality industry's most valued selling, logistics, and insights provider." These statements reinforce the DNA of who we are, why we do what we do, and what we strive to become. This means being more than a distributor. We are connectors of brands, retailers, and consumers, and we play a key role in helping our partners grow. We empower our people to think and act like business owners, and we equip them with an unmatched suite of tools, training, and resources to deliver the most personalized, best-in-class service and solutions in the industry. With the most valuable portfolio of top brands, a transformative logistics engine, intelligence-powered decision making, and unrivaled investments in innovation, we provide service that out-thinks and outpaces our competition and a culture that enables our people to shape a remarkable future with us.

How critical has it been for Southern Glazer's to maintain its culture and values throughout the decades?

It's been absolutely essential. Our culture is our compass. As we've grown, we've made deliberate efforts to protect what made us successful in the first place – our values. We've recently refreshed these into our new HEART Values: Honesty, Excellence, Agility, Respect, and Teamwork. These values guide every decision we make, from the C-suite to the warehouse floor. We've built a performance-driven culture, but one that prioritizes people and relationships. That balance is what allows us to deliver exceptional results, year after year.

What have been the keys to Southern Glazer's industry leadership?

I believe our leadership comes from four core strengths: our scale, our relationships, our talent, and our ability to adapt and innovate. We've made the right strategic investments in technology, logistics, and data to serve our suppliers and customers at the highest level. But none of that works without our people. We have the best teams in the business – people who care deeply about getting it right, growing the business, and supporting each other along the way. We also foster an ownership

mindset across our company. We encourage our people to think and act like owners – taking responsibility for outcomes, identifying opportunities, and doing what’s right for the long term. That mindset helps fuel continuous improvement at every level of the business. Most importantly, we never get complacent. Our ability to challenge ourselves, evolve with the market, and stay ahead of the curve is what has made us a leader – and what continues to keep us in that position today. In the end, we are in the hospitality business, so that means remaining a people-first company. My father always said hire the best people and pay them well. By doing that, and by fostering an environment where individuals are empowered and motivated to bring their best selves to work, we are truly building the future of beverage distribution which ultimately benefits all of our trading partners.

Will you highlight Southern Glazer’s international expansion, and where you see additional opportunities for growth?

In 2023, we acquired Miami-based WEBB Banks, the leading premium wine and spirits distributor in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, as well as the travel retail and cruise sector. The acquisition provided another connection point for Southern Glazer’s and our valued suppliers who are looking for expert route-to-market capabilities across the Atlantic basin. Combining the strength of our supply chain and logistics expertise with WEBB Banks’ strong customer relationships and knowledge of the market was an absolute game changer for our suppliers. In February 2025, we officially rebranded the business as Southern Glazer’s Travel Retail Sales & Export Division. Since Southern Glazer’s acquired WEBB Banks in 2023, the business has strengthened operations and expanded its reach. The division also launched a 32,000-square-foot Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) in Miami. The Miami FTZ, which doubles the capacity of existing FTZ operations, will streamline import and export processes with enhanced inventory control, increased cost-efficiency, and dedicated support resources.

We are not only focused on international expansion. We also look for opportunities to grow domestically in the U.S. In December 2024, we closed our acquisition of Horizon Beverage Group, Inc. (Horizon), one of New England’s premier alcohol distributors, including all of Horizon’s operations and wine, spirits and beer portfolio. The operations in Massachusetts and Rhode Island now operate under the name Southern Glazer’s Beverage Company. This acquisition marked an exciting expansion for our business, adding Massachusetts and Rhode Island as the 46th and 47th markets in our U.S. footprint.

Will you discuss Southern Glazer’s investment in technology, and how new technology will impact the future of the business?

Technology is a critical enabler of everything we do. Whether it’s our industry-leading B2B platform Proof®, our advanced route optimization tools, or our use of AI and analytics, we are investing to make every part of our business smarter and more responsive. Technology is helping us simplify complex processes, improve accuracy, and deliver a better experience for customers and suppliers alike. We’re also making



Drinks prepared with beverages distributed by Southern Glazer’s

significant investments in our back office technology to streamline and drive efficiencies across our enterprise. And we’re just getting started – there’s tremendous opportunity ahead to digitize and transform how the industry operates. Earlier this year, we reorganized our digital and IT teams under one leadership structure. This “OneTech” structure enables us to realize critical synergies as technology remains a key enabler of Southern Glazer’s digital transformation.

How important is it for Southern Glazer’s to build an inclusive workforce?

We recognize that a strong and inclusive culture remains critical to our success. Just as we evolve and grow to meet the ever-changing needs of our customers and suppliers, we are proud to reaffirm our commitment to a culture of belonging for our employees. Our culture of belonging is about celebrating what makes each person unique while coming together with a shared purpose. We recognize that belonging looks different for everyone, and that’s why we’re committed to meeting our people where they are – and ensuring they have what they need to thrive. When we

build an environment where every voice is heard and every idea is welcomed, we unlock creativity and spark new possibilities. This isn’t a corporate initiative; it’s who we are. It’s how we lead, how we collaborate, and how we show up for our customers and supplier partners.

What do you see as Southern Glazer’s responsibility to be engaged in its communities and a force for good in society?

As a family-founded and values-driven company, we take our role in the community seriously. We believe that business success and social responsibility go hand in hand. From advancing education and empowering underrepresented communities to supporting environmental sustainability and championing the prevention of underage drinking, we aim to be a positive force wherever we operate. We’re not just in the business of distribution – we’re in the business of impact. For example, we have a deep and ongoing commitment to the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Florida International University – named for our family. Through leadership, advocacy, and philanthropic support – including



Southern Glazer's VolunCheers events (above and below)

helping grow the Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by Capital One (SOBEWFF®) into a nationally recognized event that has raised nearly \$50 million for the school – Southern Glazer's has played a key role in advancing the school's academic excellence and global reputation.

Because education provides opportunity, we also have a strong relationship with the University of Miami, my alma mater. I currently serve as Vice Chair of the Board and member of the Executive Committee at the University and we have supported the University's Distinguished Lecture Series and other programs. And, we also support Mount Sinai Medical Center. In fact, in addition to my role as a Board of Trustee member, the Harvey R. Chaplin Family Stroke and Chest Pain Center at Mount Sinai Medical Center was named for my late father. We, of course, through our employees across the country, are involved in many philanthropic activities, but it's especially important for us to give back here in our hometown where our business was founded and is still headquartered.

How does Southern Glazer's decide where to focus its philanthropic efforts?

Our employee "VolunCheers" are at the heart of our community engagement efforts. With our internal website VolunCheers Online, employees have a powerful platform to organize, track, and amplify their charitable efforts – all in one place. This tool allows us to capture the full depth of Southern Glazer's dedication as one team, showcasing the time, resources, and passion poured into creating a lasting, global impact. In addition to the inspiring, personal efforts of Southern Glazer's employees, our

network of approximately 100 VolunCheers Ambassadors help drive giving and volunteering activities across our company. Since we launched VolunCheers Online in July 2018, Southern Glazer's employees across the United States and Canada have created more than 4,419 volunteer events and logged over 86,072 volunteer hours. People can read more about these efforts in our CSR Report.



What do you see as the keys to effective leadership, and how do you approach your management style?

I had so many great mentors to show me what effective leadership is all about. My father, Harvey, was a huge influence here, as well as our other founders who have been with us from the beginning. What I've learned is that great leadership is about clarity, consistency, and empathy. You need to set a clear vision, model the values you expect from others, and genuinely care about your people. My leadership style is collaborative and grounded in trust – I believe in surrounding myself with smart, passionate people and giving them the space and support to lead. I also feel it's important to treat people the way you want to be treated, especially treating people with respect. Being a good listener is a skill that is critical to effective leadership and something I try to practice every day.

With the success and impact that Southern Glazer's has achieved, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to celebrate the wins?

Absolutely. In this business, you have to take the time to celebrate the wins – large and small. Our people work incredibly hard, and it's important to recognize that effort. I genuinely enjoy the work we do, especially when it brings people together and moves the industry forward. One of my greatest privileges is to be able to work with my three children, David, Jennifer and Mark, as well as several other family members who are all leaders at the company. Having my family as part of the organization and helping drive it forward is something I cherish. When you love what you do and do what you love, it never feels like work. There's a lot to be proud of – but we also know the best is yet to come. Celebrating the journey is part of what keeps us energized for the future. ●