

**From the *Nashville Business Journal*:**

## **Executive Profile: Peter Demos**

**On why he chose running a restaurant to becoming a lawyer, the rough-and-tumble world of hiring and why he wants employees who can tell it like it is.**

Date: Friday, July 15, 2011, 5:00am CDT

***Peter Demos** is president of Demos', his family-owned restaurant chain. He has helped grow his family's dining concept, which now has five locations including the well-known downtown Nashville lunch spot. Demos also is active in government issues affecting business.*

### **What single thing makes your organization stand out?**

We are fanatical about customer service. Everything we do is for the customer.

### **What does your organization have in the works for 2011?**

We are in the process of testing several new recipes to start another concept. We anticipate opening in 2012 or 2013.

### **How did you wind up in your current position?**

I have worked in the restaurant since I was 12 years old as a dishwasher at Western Sizzlin' Steak House through general manager at Demos'. I left to go to law school and became a lawyer — still working part time at Demos'. One day I realized that I enjoyed the days I worked in the restaurant more than the days I did not. I called my father and asked if I could come back. At the time, he was looking for someone to relieve him and my mother, so I asked at the exact right time.

**What makes an effective business leader?**

Direct communication, organization and a passion for your business and its people.

**What word best describes your leadership style?**

Tenacious.

**Goal yet to be achieved?**

To have a support structure that clearly understands and believes in the culture and the concept to such a level that it could run whether I was around or not.

**Professional pet peeve?**

Whiners and excuses.

**What keeps you up at night?**

Every time we lose a customer due to repeated mistakes that we cannot fix.

**What do you do to relieve stress?**

Watch movies.

**What is the simplest thing you never learned to do?**

Dance.

**Favorite hobbies?**

Watching movies, reading books, collecting baseball paraphernalia, studying other business models and playing games.

**Pets?**

Have two dogs, a miniature schnauzer and Boston terrier. My daughter is currently collecting tadpoles from a neighbor's pond, so I am afraid that a frog will soon be joining our family.

**What's the best gift you've ever received?**

My first dog I got after moving out of my parents' house was a Christmas gift from my parents. She was a Boston terrier named Snort.

**You've just been given \$100,00 to donate to charity. Where would you give it?**

I like my support going to organizations that protect people from abusive situations, like domestic violence shelters and child advocacy centers.

**When faced with two equally qualified candidates, how do you determine whom to hire?**

I hire both and then open up another location for them. However, if I have only one option, then I want the person who I could drink a beer with. If they can't fit in with our culture, then qualifications are irrelevant.

**What would you like to cross off your "bucket list" next?**

I want to go to Australia for a couple of weeks.

**What line of work would you pursue if you couldn't work in your present one?**

Anything in hospitality.

**Can you name a person who has had a tremendous impact on you as a leader?**

My wife, Kristin, has had a tremendous impact on me. She has the complete opposite personality than me, so she helps me see things from a different perspective. I steal ideas from her all the time.

**Organization or company other than your own that you most admire?**

Cracker Barrel.

**What is there about you that people would be surprised to learn?**

If I told you, then it would no longer be a surprise. I like surprising people.

**What skill would you most like to improve?**

Ability to make small talk with people.

**Biggest professional mistake and how you overcame it?**

The first general manager that I hired from the outside was terminated for theft and for sexual harassment. He was hurting the restaurant to cover his tracks. I had no backup GM trained when I terminated him, and it took me about a year to get the store to the level it needed to be. Now, I always am looking and training for upper-level managers.

**What is the one behavior or trait that most often derails leaders' careers?**

Ego. One of the best pieces of business advice I received is, 'Never surround yourself with people who are afraid to tell you that you are full of s---.' I think business people start believing they are better than they are.

**They're making a movie of your life. Is it a drama or comedy and who plays you?**

Drama. Johnny Depp — not because he looks anything like me, but he is a soul searcher.

**If you could live a double life, the other would be:**

Samurai.

**About Demos**

**Age:** 40

**Title:** President

**Company:** Demos' Restaurant

**Address:** 1119 N.W. Broad St., Murfreesboro 37129

**Web:** [demosrestaurants.com](http://demosrestaurants.com)

**Employees:** 530

**Most recently read book:** "Super Casino: Inside the New Las Vegas" by Pete Earley

**Favorite music artist:** Metallica

**Education:** Middle Tennessee State University, B.S., sociology; University of Missouri-Kansas City, J.D.

**Community involvement:** Vice chairman, board of directors, Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce; vice president, Tennessee Hospitality Association; Transit Alliance member; NFIB Leadership Council.