

Jon Zwickel's Bio

Jon is a third generation hotelier who started his career in his family business “carrying suitcases and trays” in New York’s legendary Catskill Mountain hotels. He founded InnVentures in 1978 and expanded the business into an award-winning company through the 1980’s by structuring Wall Street-funded limited partnerships to acquire under-performing hotels. He then managed the hotel turn-around’s through a disciplined program of renovation, repositioning, re-branding and operational controls. After successfully repeating this model with 11 mid-market, franchised hotels in New York, Vermont and Florida, the U.S. tax laws changed and the properties were profitably sold.

After moving to Vancouver in 1988, Jon restarted InnVentures as a boutique hospitality management and consulting company. His firm evolved to become one of Canada’s largest hotel companies. In 1997, Jon and his partners completed an IPO on the Toronto Stock Exchange, co-founding Canadian Hotel Income Properties (CHIP REIT), Canada’s first hotel real estate investment trust. As Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the hotel management group, Jon’s focus was the visioning and repositioning of CHIP hotels, overseeing capital budgets to implement renovations, establishing an in-house procurement group and negotiating franchise agreements with multiple hotel brands. In late 1998, after experiencing explosive growth, the management group was stabilized and Jon accepted an offer to sell his interest in the company.

In 2000, after a sabbatical, Jon began consulting to hotel and resort developers in Canada and Central America. He concurrently founded a quick-serve restaurant concept and opened two locations. In the ensuing five years, he found that he missed direct involvement in the hotel business.

In 2005, Jon joined Bellstar Hotels & Resorts. He started as a strategic growth advisor and subsequently acquired an interest in the company. As a shareholder, director and member of the Executive, his role was to establish and implement the vision for the company’s long-term business strategies, to establish the Bellstar brand, to re-structure the company’s procurement division and to ensure the implementation of environmental sustainability policies. As Executive Vice President and Chief Growth Officer, Jon’s direct responsibilities included deal structure, real estate development, management contracts and acquisitions. During Jon’s 5-year tenure, Bellstar grew from one property with 44 suites to a portfolio of 12 exceptional resorts with more than 1,200 suites. Jon was also directly involved in creating two of the company’s large-scale fractional resort-residential development projects, both of which were joint ventures with a First Nations band. During this period, Bellstar became a highly regarded brand that was ranked as the largest operator of independent hotels in Canada. In 2010, Bellstar’s corporate growth objectives were achieved and Jon sold his interest in the company.

After taking time to travel with his wife, Jon reestablished InnVentures as a hospitality consulting firm providing advisory services to developers and owners of resorts, hotels and recreational real estate. From 2012 to 2019, Jon served as President & CEO of the Canadian Vacation Ownership Association, an advocacy association representing the interests of the vacation-ownership and timeshare industry. He now volunteers with CVOA as its Chair. In 2017, Jon was named *Vacation Ownership Industry Global Leader of the Year*.

Jon’s recent philanthropic work centered on leading the Vancouver Native Housing Society through the process of envisioning and creating a viable social enterprise. He spent two years working pro bono to assemble and lead a team that transformed the 18-suite Skwachàys Lodge into a luxury boutique Aboriginal arts and culture hotel whose profits mitigate homelessness by minimizing the society’s dependence on government funding and private donations. As a result of his efforts at Skwachàys, Jon was honoured with the *2016 Canadian Prime Minister’s Business Leader Volunteer Award*.

Jon’s skills are unique in that his direct experience encompasses entrepreneurial growth, corporate finance, corporate and project visioning, hotel operations, franchise negotiations, acquisitions, condo/strata management, recreational and resort real estate development, timeshare, fractional and whole ownership offerings, and real estate development in third-world countries and in partnership with First Nations.

Jon regularly attends industry conferences and is an accomplished public speaker on industry topics. He has been an active member of TEC/Vistage, as well as various industry associations.

In his spare time, Jon tinkers with his vintage motorcycles and reorganizes his wine cellar. He and his wife enjoy live music, cooking, doing NY Times crossword puzzles and traveling to out-of-the-way places. Their four adult children are busy pursuing their careers.