



# PROJECT 24

Executive Interview Series

Fall 2015

Spotlighting: Food Industry Executive

## Paul Trotti



Employer: Chick-fil-A Corporation

Position: Menu and Sustainable Food Strategy Leader

Credited with inventing Chick-fil-A's boneless breast of chicken sandwich, Truett Cathy founded Chick-fil-A, Inc. in the early 1960s. Since then, Chick-fil-A has steadily grown to become the largest quick-service chicken restaurant chain in the United States, based on domestic annual sales at over 1,900 locations in 42 states and Washington, D.C. In 2014, annual sales were nearly \$6 billion. With 47 consecutive years of positive sales growth, Chick-fil-A is privately held and family-owned.

Paul Trotti joined Chick-fil-A in 2012 and recently led the strategy and selection of a new coffee partner, bringing a farmer-direct coffee model to more than 1,600 restaurants. The program allows family coffee farmers in Central America to earn up to 10 times more than in traditional revenue models.

Trotti received his undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from The Georgia Institute of Technology and his MBA from Duke University. Prior to his tenure with Chick-fil-A, Trotti spent ten years at Newell Rubbermaid where he served as a Vice President of R&D/Innovation/New Product Development for various business units as well as a General Manager for one of Newell Rubbermaid's strategic acquisition businesses. Additionally, Trotti spent two years with IBM where he was a Worldwide Manufacturing Engineer.



**Servant-mindset, active community leader, and focused father** are words that describe

Georgia native, Paul Trotti. Married to wife Lindsay, whom he met during high school, the Trottis work together to juggle jam-packed schedules which often revolve around their three school-aged children: Trey (10), Ryan (8), and Caroline (5). Their favorite family activities include shooting hoops (or any sport involving balls!), hiking, running, and bouncing on the trampoline. When not at work, Paul is usually on the sports field or on the court coaching children's sports activities. Trotti also serves on Johnson Ferry Christian Academy's Board of Directors, as well as Rise Up! Ministries' Board of Directors and is active in several ministries at his church.

14 Years Married

3 Children

Favorite Family Vacation Spot?

Hilton Head, South Carolina—Palmetto Dunes



Trotti named as one of Atlanta Business Chronicle's Top 40 Under 40 in 2014

**Q: How would you define your mission as a parent?**

A: "Our first desire as a couple is not for our kids to be happy. While we would certainly love them to be happy, we believe the most important things we can provide for them are every opportunity possible to know Jesus, learn what it means to be responsible, and make sure they go to bed each night knowing they are fully loved."

**Q: What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing demands at the office and home?**

A: Paul summarizes his greatest challenge in one word: *balance*. "It is a constant juggling act to navigate giving my best to my employer, but also treating my wife and my children as my most important priority." Paul admits he is passionate about his career—and business in general. Thus, he has learned to be extremely focused and efficient when at work so as not to cut too deeply into family time. Paul elaborates, "I evaluate where I'm spending my time on a weekly basis to ensure Lindsay and our three kids aren't getting my leftovers, but my best."

**Q: With so many different demands for your time in both your personal and professional life, how do you prioritize everything? Are there tips, techniques or habits you've developed to manage how you spend your time?**

Trotti credits deliberate planning and superior communication to managing his priorities. Trotti explains: "I'm a planner and an advocate of scheduling around my calendar. Each Sunday night, I review my calendar for the upcoming week and pray through the week's activities and commitments before-hand. Additionally, Lindsay and I communicate constantly regarding the kids' schedules. We are continually discussing what is best for our family and how we should prioritize our time."

## Did You Know ...?

- **There's a reason the "A" is capitalized in Chick-fil-A.**

The capitalized "A" symbolizes "Grade A." Chick-fil-A uses only the best ingredients. In fact, all of their chicken will be raised without antibiotics by 2019.

- **"My pleasure!"**

If you haven't noticed, all Chick-fil-A employees are trained to respond "my pleasure" when a customer says thank you.

- **The Crazy Cow Campaign**

Since the chain's "Eat Mor Chikin®" Cow campaign began in 1995, chain-wide sales have increased six-fold. The Cow campaign is now a fully integrated marketing program, which includes store point-of-purchase materials, promotions, radio and TV advertising, and clothing and merchandise sales.

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**"I have to evaluate where I'm spending my time to ensure my family isn't getting my leftovers."**

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“The single **biggest**  
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- Paul Trotti

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Trotti with wife Lindsay, sons Trey and Ryan, and daughter Caroline

**Q: What secrets can you share that have helped you both protect and grow your marriage while balancing career demands?**

A: “Lindsay and I make our marriage a priority. We have regular date nights.” Paul believes focused communication also contributes to his and Lindsay’s successful partnership. “As a couple, we talk through everything.” When Trotti has a particularly rough stretch of travel, their planning goes into over-drive. “We synch calendars and prioritize the kids’ activities to ensure I don’t miss the most important ones.”

**Q: What is the greatest challenge in parenting today's youth?**

A: “Teaching our children to be grateful.”

**Q: If there's one "life lesson" you can choose to pass on to your children, what would it be and why?**

A: Trotti has a daily ritual he shares with his children each morning before school. “As the kids leave the house during the week, they are reminded of the traits a ‘Trotti kid’ displays: give your best; have a joyful heart; and be a leader.”

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“We make our  
marriage a  
priority.”

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