Howard Behar

Former President of Starbucks Coffee Company North America and Starbucks Coffee International

Howard Behar is the former president of Starbucks Coffee Company North America and Starbucks Coffee International. He joined Starbucks in 1989 when the company had just begun to venture outside the Northwest region. Initially serving as vice president of sales and operations, he grew the retail business from 28 stores to more than 400 stores by the time he was named president of Starbucks Coffee International in 1995. Under Behar's leadership, Starbucks opened its first location in Tokyo in 1996. Following this historic opening, over the next three years he introduced the Starbucks brand across Asia and the United Kingdom. After a two-year hiatus, he returned to Starbucks as President of Starbucks North America until his retirement in January 2003. He was a director of the Company from 1996 to 2008.

Howard Behar began his career in the furniture business where he discovered it was the people he loved, not the furniture. His sense of the customers as people, his concern for their needs, and his experience of being a part of people's dreams for their homes and their lives helped him make the next successive moves in his retail career.

A frequent speaker on the topics of organizational and personal leadership, Mr. Behar serves on several profit and nonprofit boards, including Anna's Linens, Sterling Savings Bank, Education Elements and the advisory boards of Anthos Capital and Roadtrip Nation. His non-profit commitments are to the University of Washington Foundation, Global Compassion Council and the Biller Family Foundation. He is sponsoring a joint educational initiative with the University of Washington School of Social Work and the Business School. He also served as the Fritsky Leadership Chair 2008-2009 at the UW's Foster School of Business. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Lynn, and he loves boating and spending time with his children and young grandchildren.