

James Skinner

Former CEO of McDonald's and Executive Chairman Walgreen Boots Alliance

As McDonald's Corporation's vice chairman and CEO, Jim Skinner led a turnaround at the world's largest food service retailer, leaving the company with the best financial performance in its history. He was one of the three architects of McDonald's worldwide revitalization effort launched in 2003 and upon becoming CEO in 2004, he brought about nothing short of a "Golden Age for the Golden Arches," according to *Fortune*. His greatest accomplishment, the "Plan to Win" strategy, managed to reversing falling profits. His strategy focused on improving existing locations rather than building more, and his top priorities were long-term sustainable growth, talent management, and leadership development. Due to this successful shift in strategy, Skinner and his team presided over increased sales, reinvented menus, modernized restaurants, and innovative new food offerings. Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), he shares hard-won lessons from his 41 years with McDonald's and outlines his approach to strategy, focusing on his turnaround story, creating the buy-in necessary to successfully execute change, and leadership development.

An Incredible Personal Story Amidst Keen Business Insight. Jim Skinner's incredible turnaround at McDonald's reflects the amazing one he accomplished for himself. After a difficult childhood in an abusive home in Iowa, he enlisted in the US Navy immediately following high school graduation. He served for 10 years before returning stateside, getting a manager trainee post at a local Illinois McDonald's—returning to the chain where he had held his first job. He never graduated from college, attending Roosevelt University in Chicago before dropping out after his sophomore year, but quickly became part of McDonald's international management team. There, he rose up the ranks to oversee development and operations in Central Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and India. After working in every region of the world, he was named president and COO but was catapulted to CEO in 2004 after his two predecessors died suddenly and unexpectedly within one year's time. He took the helm of the company not only at a time of internal, organizational tragedy but had to lead the company through the largest recession the US has seen since 1929.

Skinner's Success By The Numbers. During Skinner's tenure as CEO, McDonald's became a standout in the fast-food industry, posting strong results despite a brutal economy. The chain's shares more than tripled, reaching an all-time high of \$102.22 a share, which dwarfed the sub-\$13 it traded at in early 2003 before "Plan to Win" was introduced. Global sales at stores open at least a year went up every month for more than eight years, and the company grew at an annual rate of 5%. Same-store sales, a closely watched industry metric, climbed each of the seven years of his tenure.

Skinner and his success did not go unnoticed. *Marketwatch* named him "CEO of the Year," and *Restaurants & Institutions* bestowed him its "2007 Executive of the Year" title. He was named one of "America's Best CEOs" by *Institutional Investor*. *Chief Executive* named Skinner the "2009 CEO of the Year," and *Barron's* recognized him as one of the "30 Most Respected CEOs." He was also listed in *SmartMoney's* "Power 30" and as one of "The TopGun CEOs" by Brendan Wood International. Skinner is also the recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation Award and the Navy's Lone Sailor Award. Currently, he is the executive chairman at Walgreen's Boots Alliance.

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