

INDUSTRY PARTNER OF THE YEAR WINNER

WINNER: CHRIS COAN, GENERAL MANAGER, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT MARKETS, GAS SOUTH

Chris Coan joined the Gas South team in November 2006, but his first restaurant experience stretches back to when he was in high school. He used to work Saturdays and Sundays bussing tables at Veeder's Family Restaurant in Schenectady, NY, to earn extra money.

Coan knows the amount of hard work required to have a successful restaurant. He works with restaurant customers to develop creative solutions for their needs as far as rate plans and price, but also looks at ways to help expand their marketing reach. He is responsible for all industrial and governmental customers with annual natural gas consumption greater than 30,000 therms.

A graduate of the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, Chris also received an undergraduate degree in chemistry from The State University of New York and a degree in ceramics from Georgia Tech.

What restaurant industry means to Georgia: The restaurant industry plays a key role when evaluating the strength of the Georgia economy. The industry is a large provider of diverse jobs for Georgians, while bringing together community members for one of the country's favorite shared pastimes — eating out. As such, the restaurant industry plays a key role in keeping our local economy and communities strong.

Major trends: In this economy, controlling operating costs, including those associated with utilities like natural gas, will be very important.

The other trend I see is more customers asking

for local produce and sustainable products served at their favorite restaurants. The GRA has seen the interest in local and sustainable issues surfaced by various roundtables, committees and GRA partners and acted quickly to build the Green Foodservice Alliance (GFA). The GFA is a great addition to the GRA and will have a big impact on helping its members learn and implement programs that promote environmentally friendly best practices.

Industry's most pressing challenges: Credit issues will continue to be a big challenge in 2011. It will hit restaurant owners on two fronts. Most importantly, restaurant owners will find it much harder to find capital to support expansions or to stay afloat during slow times. In addition to tight credit, identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in Georgia, and regulations around data security for restaurants that accept credit cards will add additional costs and risks for owners as they work to stay compliant.

Advice to those just starting out: I don't have much advice to offer someone entering the restaurant business, but for those who are new to the GRA, I would recommend they get involved. The best way to optimize your membership is to get involved with the various committees and roundtables. Working on a committee is a great opportunity to

network with restaurateurs and the vendors who support their businesses. This is a great opportunity to learn about what's going on in the industry and a friendly environment to refine your value proposition. For anyone looking to sell their services or products to a restaurant, I recommend you go out and eat at the restaurants you want to serve. It's always easier to start a sales call with "I really enjoyed your special last night."



Chris Coan



INDUSTRY PARTNER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

FINALIST: KATHLEEN CIARAMELLO, EAST REGION VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE FOODSERVICE/ON-PREMISE DIVISION, THE COCA-COLA COMPANY

Kathleen Ciaramello is East Region Vice President for the FoodService/On-Premise division of Coca-Cola North America, with responsibility for the 20 East Coast states. She is also one of 12 inaugural members of the Coca-Cola Women's Leadership Council, which helps the company increase the focus on the development and movement of women into leadership roles.

A Massachusetts native, Kathleen joined The Coca-Cola Company in 1985 and worked her way to her current position with the company. She is active in the Georgia restaurant and foodservice community and is also on the advisory board for the Atlanta Community Food Bank's "Atlanta Table" and the YMCA Metro Atlanta board of directors. She is the 2008 recipient of the "25 WOW Women to Watch" award.

Industry's most pressing challenges: Food safety and health concerns about food and beverages, such as obesity, are two issues that face our industry now and will for many years to come.



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Kathleen Ciaramello

Volunteering for charities and industry organizations will help you thrive in both your personal and professional life.

Advice to those just starting out:

Spend the time early in your career to discover what you are known for, what you want to be known for, what unique contribution you have to make, and then, deliver on it. Don't make it something you do when you have time. Make the time to do it right. Make it the priority it should be.

Also, take the time to give back. You'll get twice what you give.

FINALIST: MARTIN TANENBAUM, TAX PARTNER, HABIF, AROGETI & WYNNE, LLP

As a tax partner at Habif, Arogeti and Wynne, Martin's extensive accounting experience includes corporate, personal and partnership income tax research and compliance. He helps

Martin Tanenbaum



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restaurant clients — many of whom have family-owned businesses — with their estate planning and has an in-depth knowledge of pensions and other retirement planning vehicles, allowing him to advise clients on economically efficient means of providing employee benefits. Martin's technical expertise has proven invaluable in sorting through

tax and accounting issues related to bankruptcy and debt restructuring.

He also provides guidance on issues concerning business operations, the preservation of individual and corporate net worth, franchising and the interrelationship between family members and nonfamily executives. He often acts as part of a "think tank" for his clients, assisting with economic, business and family issues.

Martin is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Georgia Society of Certified Public Accountants. He serves on the GRA and Atlanta Franchise Alliance boards and is a past board member of the Temple Sinai.

Major trends: Increased use of social marketing, continued innovation in serving size options and service formats, and a variety of new capital funding options.

Most rewarding/challenging part of career: The current declining economic environment has presented a struggle for everyone. Working closely with my clients through these times has been difficult, both financially and emotionally. It has been extremely rewarding, however, to be able to offer my professional advice to help them stay in business and prosper.

Key to success: A commitment to, focus on and persistence in a profession I love and those that I advise, as well as my involvement in the Atlanta charitable community. ■