

Christopher L Thompson

President & CEO



Christopher L. Thompson is president and CEO of Brand USA, the public-private partnership responsible for launching the United States' first-ever nationally coordinated tourism marketing effort. In this role, Chris is responsible for accelerating the organization's efforts to build and execute effective marketing strategies to increase inbound travel to the United States in order to increase U.S. exports, create jobs, strengthen the economy, and help enhance the image of the United States with people all over the world.

Chris has nearly 30 years' experience in the travel and tourism industry. Prior to joining Brand USA on November 1, 2012, Chris was president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA. Under his leadership, Florida realized record growth in international visitation.

He began his career in tourism with the Division of Tourism in the former Florida Department of Commerce in April 1983 and was appointed bureau chief over domestic tourism in April 1986. In November 1988, he joined the Leon County (Florida) Tourist Development Council as the organization's first executive director, and in April 1991 took leadership of the Tallahassee (Florida) Area Convention and Visitors Bureau as president and CEO. In August 1995, Chris founded MarketServe, Inc., a professional management, marketing and planning services company based in Tallahassee, Florida. Two years later, he joined VISIT FLORIDA as senior vice president, partner development. He was promoted to chief operating officer in May 2003 and named president and CEO in May 2009.

Throughout his career, Chris has been honored with a number of industry awards and recognized for numerous accomplishments, including twice being named one of the "Top Twenty Five Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales & Marketing" by the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International in 2009 and 2013.

A Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) since May 2010, Chris has been a member of and served on the leadership boards of numerous national, regional, state and local trade associations and organizations, including the Destination Marketing Association International, Association of Travel Marketing Executives, International SKAL, the Southeast Tourism Society, and the Travel and Tourism Advisory Council, Miami Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. His past board memberships include the U.S. Travel Association and the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board.

Chris earned his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the University of Florida in 1980. He and his wife, Susan, have two grown boys, Christopher and James.