

Darren Bondar

CHIEF EXECUTIVE · FOUNDER · CONSUMER BRANDS · PUBLIC MARKETS

Building consumer brands — and the organizations that scale them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I've spent twenty-seven years building consumer businesses — *mostly by turning one good location into a system other people would fund.*

WATCH IT! was the first. One store in 1999, and eventually a national specialty retail chain. I built the brand, the merchandising, the store experience and the franchise system, and I learned the business one location at a time. That took eighteen years.

Spiritleaf followed, in a category with no operating precedent in Canada. Concept to more than a hundred locations in four years, and the country's largest recreational cannabis retail brand. The franchise model worked because the unit

economics gave partners the confidence to invest. We took the company public and sold it for \$131 million.

Most recently I founded and led a public company in industrial hemp and agricultural carbon. When conditions changed, I chose to stay and do the work: restructured the balance sheet, wound down legacy operations, renewed the board and governance, and rebuilt the entity as Next Phase Ventures Ltd. (TSXV: NPV). It was the harder path, and the right one for shareholders.

What I take from all of it: I create the greatest value building consumer brands and the organizations around them — setting a clear plan, hiring people who are better than me at their part of it, and executing with discipline through both growth and difficulty. Expansion taught me how to build. The last few years taught me how to decide. I'd like to put both to work in one company for the next decade.

EXECUTIVE VALUE PROPOSITION

Boards bring me in when something is about to change: growth arriving faster than the business can absorb, a franchise system that has stalled, a strategy that has stopped working, or a company being readied for sale.

The work is the same each time — decide what matters, put the right people in the right seats, and hold the organization to the plan long enough for it to compound. I am most useful early, before the options narrow.

TRACK RECORD

\$131M	100+	\$100M+	1,000+
SHAREHOLDER VALUE REALIZED AT EXIT	RETAIL LOCATIONS BUILT AND FRANCHISED	DEBT AND EQUITY CAPITAL RAISED	EMPLOYEES AND FRANCHISE PARTNERS LED

27 YEARS — CONSUMER RETAIL & FRANCHISE | PUBLIC COMPANY CEO — TSX-V AND CSE | MBA — UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

“Every business I've built came down to the same two things: a brand people trust and a team that tells me the truth.”

Trust is the whole asset — customers give it slowly and take it back quickly, and so do employees, franchise partners and shareholders. I lead plainly and give good people room to decide. The best teams I've had believed in the plan and were willing to build it.

EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE

Founder & Chief Executive Officer

WATCH IT! · 1999 – 2017

Grew a single store into a national specialty retail chain in premium watches, sunglasses and accessories. Created the brand, built the merchandising and store experience that defined it, and developed the franchise system that sustained two decades of growth — the operating foundation for everything that followed.

BRAND CREATION · MERCHANDISING · RETAIL OPERATIONS · FRANCHISING · CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Founder & Chief Executive Officer

SPIRITLEAF · INNER SPIRIT HOLDINGS, CSE · 2017 – 2021

Created and scaled Canada's largest recreational cannabis retail network in a category with no operating precedent — no playbook, no comparables, a regulatory regime being written in real time. Built the franchise model and unit economics that partners funded, took the company public, and led it to a \$131 million acquisition.

100+ LOCATIONS · FRANCHISE SYSTEM · NATIONAL BRAND · \$131M EXIT

President & Chief Executive Officer

NEXT PHASE VENTURES LTD. · TSXV: NPV, FORMERLY HEMPALTA CORP. · 2021 – PRESENT

Founded Trail Blazing Ventures Ltd. as a capital pool company and raised the capital required to complete the go-public process. Led its qualifying transaction with Hempalta Corp. in March 2024, and the company's subsequent evolution into Next Phase Ventures Ltd. As conditions changed, chose to stay and lead a full corporate reset — restructuring capital, rationalizing debt, winding down legacy operations, renewing the board and governance, and rebuilding the entity as a clean listed platform.

RESTRUCTURING · CAPITAL MARKETS · GOVERNANCE · STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

Founder

NEXT PHASE ADVISORY · CURRENT

Advises a small number of founders and boards on strategy, capital and leadership. Deliberately limited, and not a substitute for the operating seat.

LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

RETAIL & BRAND

Brands customers choose on purpose — and pay more for.

CAPITAL & GOVERNANCE

Financing, disclosure and boards, from the seat that answers.

MULTI-UNIT & FRANCHISE

One good location turned into a system others will fund.

TRANSACTIONS

Positions a business to be bought well — and closes it.

FOUNDER JUDGMENT

Moves early, decides without full information, owns what follows.

PEOPLE

Hires executives who outgrow their titles — and keeps them.

EXECUTIVE MANDATES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

PRESIDENT

PORTFOLIO COMPANY CEO

One company, five to ten years, with the authority to make the calls the title implies. Equity alongside salary.

SECTOR FOCUS

RETAIL & FRANCHISE

MULTI-UNIT CONSUMER

PREMIUM CONSUMER BRANDS

PE PORTFOLIO & PUBLIC COMPANIES

\$20M–\$250M revenue, or the credible path to it. Open to relocation from Calgary.

RECOGNITION

Calgary Business Leadership Award · Top 40 Under 40 · Alberta School of Business Distinguished Retail Award · Canadian Franchise Awards of Excellence.

Darren Bondar

CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA · OPEN TO RELOCATION

darren@darrenbondar.com

+1 587 434 5554 · linkedin.com/in/darren-bondar