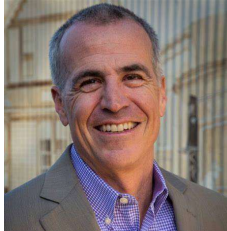


# GSEC Chair's Retreat

## Speaker Bios

### *Retreat Facilitator*



**Bryan Gillette**  
*Founder and Principal Consultant*  
**Summiting Group**

Bryan Gillette has over 25 years of experience in Leadership and Organizational Development, holding executive and senior-level roles in both small and large companies. Before founding his consulting practice, he served on the Executive Committee as Vice President of Human Resources for a mid-sized global technology company and held several other senior leadership positions.

As part of the Summiting Group, Bryan coaches leaders at all levels and facilitates strategic planning and team-building retreats for executive teams to align around a common vision.

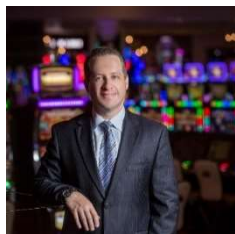
He holds an MBA from California State University and two bachelor's degrees from the University of California, Davis—in Organizational Behavior and Communications. He also teaches graduate-level leadership courses at California State University, East Bay.

To give back to the community, Bryan founded and ran Bridge of Opportunity, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provided scholarships to foster youth pursuing college. He was also Co-Chair and a founding Board Member of iGATE, a nonprofit incubator supporting small, green-focused companies. Additionally, he served as Co-Race Director of the Pleasanton Run for Education, a 3,000-person race that raised \$250,000 for local schools over four years.

An avid endurance athlete, Bryan has completed numerous long-distance events, including cycling across the United States, riding 300 miles in 24 hours, and running 200 miles around Lake Tahoe in 76 hours. A passionate traveler, he spent a year with his wife and two sons exploring South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. He has visited all seven continents and over 60 countries.

Bryan is the author of *EPIC Performance: Lessons from 100 Executives and Endurance Athletes on Reaching Your Peak*, which draws on his own experiences as an ultra-distance athlete and executive, as well as insights from interviews with more than 100 CEOs, CxOs, founders, and endurance athletes.

## Thurs, June 5, guest speakers



### **Mark BIRTHA**

#### ***President***

#### **Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Sacramento Fire Mountain**

Mark BIRTHA is currently with Hard Rock International as President of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain. An executive with the iconic brand, BIRTHA is responsible for operations of Northern California's premier gaming, dining, and entertainment destination and its team members. In addition, he manages the relationship between the Enterprise Rancheria Tribe (owner) and the Seminole Tribe of Florida (partner and owner of Hard Rock International) as well as future expansion and development related to the 900-acre sports and entertainment zone the property sits on. The property recently completed its \$75M Phase II expansion which includes a 2,500-seat Hard Rock Live entertainment venue and the Rocktane Gas + Smoke station. Prior to this he was the President of the Hard Rock Rocksino Northfield Park, the #1 performing gaming property in Ohio. He led the property up to its acquisition by MGM Growth Properties for \$1 Billion in the summer of 2018. Before joining Hard Rock International, BIRTHA was Vice President and General Manager with Station Casinos, the leading provider of gaming and entertainment in the greater Las Vegas area, where they own and operate nine major hotel casino properties. Prior to Station Casinos, BIRTHA was President of Sol Casinos and the AVA Amphitheater in Tucson, AZ where he focused on the strategic vision for the organization and had general management responsibilities for the operations of Casino Del Sol, Casino of the Sun, and the 5,000 seat AVA Amphitheater. In addition, he oversaw the design, construction and operations of Casino Del Sol's \$130M 4 Star / 4 Diamond hotel resort expansion development.

A highly regarded gaming and hospitality executive with over 30 years of experience, BIRTHA's career has spanned both operations and development at the leading casino and hotel companies including Mirage Resorts, Las Vegas Sands, Marriott International and Starwood. BIRTHA graduated from The Hotel School at Cornell University with a Bachelor of Science Degree and as a Merrill Presidential Scholar. In 2011, he was appointed President of the national executive board of The Cornell Hotel Society, the 85-year-old alumni association that represents 14,000 Hotel School graduates from around the world. BIRTHA has been a regular lecturer in The Cornell Hotel School's Casino Operations and Marketing classes and a featured speaker at multiple gaming, Native American, condo/real estate, hospitality research, and hotel conferences. He was a Cornell University Council member and participates on the advisory boards of The Cornell Hotel School, G2E, and Global Gaming Business Magazine.



## **Robert Hess**

***Vice Chairman, Global Corporate Services***  
**Newmark**

Robert Hess is a Practice Leader and Senior Principal for Newmark's Global Consulting and Strategy Solutions Group, responsible for strategy development, business development, market outreach and client service. Hess is a preeminent, sought-after service provider and respected leader in corporate location strategy, site selection and incentive negotiations. He has conducted approximately 300 assignments globally, across a variety of industries and asset types, including mega-facility projects in Asia, Europe and Mexico.

Hess has led over 30 major economic development strategy development initiatives, including states, regions, utilities and private sector developers. He has led the strategic placement and boardroom level business case support of over 100M SF of operations (all asset types) across the U.S. and many global markets and helped secure over \$3.0B in bottom line cost reduction and financial incentives to support these efforts.

Hess graduated cum laude from the University of Minnesota Duluth, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Economic Geography/Urban and Regional Planning. He also earned an MBA in Marketing Management from DePaul University in Chicago. Hess has completed executive development programs at Northwestern University for Global Supply Chain Management and Lean Manufacturing, Advanced Analytics and Automation; MIT for Creative Problem Solving/System Dynamics; and Oxford University for Scenario Planning. He has also completed multiple leadership development courses at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.



## **Harminder Sehmi**

***CFO***  
**Blaize, Inc.**

Harminder Sehmi is the Chief Financial Officer at Blaize®, as well as company Secretary and Treasurer, overseeing all Finance, Legal and HR functions. With 20 years' experience in scaling organizations from early stages through hyper-revenue growth, Harminder works closely with Blaize's CEO in managing funding relationships with existing and new investors, and with the management team to develop profitable revenue streams.

Prior to joining Blaize, Harminder was CFO at Truphone, a global mobile start-up where he collaborated with the CEO to raise over \$525m in equity and convertible debt and oversaw rapid revenue growth in a multi-country footprint. He also held senior finance positions at Yahoo Europe and Vodafone, and established a track record in delivering value and profitable business solutions.

Harminder is a Chartered Accountant (CPA equivalent) from the UK with a Master of Business Administration degree from Cranfield Business School, Bedfordshire.



## **Orville Thomas**

***CEO***

### **Cal EPIC**

Orville Thomas was named CEO of Cal EPIC in November of 2023 and has immediately gotten to work trying to build a 25-acre clean energy, power, and zero-emission innovation campus in Sacramento. Raising funds for \$300 million project is the latest “big project” for Orville. In the last decade, he worked to get California’s high-speed rail project to groundbreaking, helped pass the state’s first gas tax increase in 20-years, and most recently, led the lobbying effort to reauthorize over \$2 billion in state funding for zero-emission infrastructure and zero-emission programs.

Orville has a Bachelor of Art degree in Broadcast Journalism from San Francisco State University and worked as a news reporter in Redding, Chico, and Sacramento prior to graduate school. He has a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of California, Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy and serves as their Sacramento-area alumni coordinator. Outside of work and the Breathe California board, you can find Orville getting back into golf and walking to favorite restaurants with his wife and two dogs.