

Meryl Levitz, President and CEO, VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

In her role as president and CEO of VISIT PHILADELPHIA®, Meryl Levitz is responsible for building the region's image and growing its tourism industry, worth \$10 billion in economic impact. Stated simply, her job is to get people to visit Philadelphia. A respected civic leader and consummate convener, Levitz has spent more than 30 years working to get Philadelphia recognized as a premier destination. In 2013 alone, the region welcomed 39 million domestic visitors—that's 12 million more than in 1997 when the company started marketing.

Levitz works with VISIT PHILADELPHIA's board and staff to build the region's economy and image through destination marketing that increases the number of visitors, the number of nights they stay and the number of things they do in the five-county area. The company employs advertising, public relations, web and social media tactics, hotel marketing and research.

After receiving Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Illinois, Levitz began her career as an educator but soon began promoting her adopted town of Philadelphia, first as co-founder of the Center City Proprietors Association in 1978 and later at the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, where she oversaw the opening of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, opened the Great Plaza at Penn's Landing and developed annual celebrations (Jambalaya Jam, River Blues, Yo! Philadelphia and others) to draw crowds to the waterfront. In 2002 and 2003, Levitz co-chaired Governor Ed Rendell's tourism-transition team.

Levitz serves on the U.S. Travel Association board; the Philadelphia International Airport Advisory Board; the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts' Sales and Marketing Advisory Committee; the Drexel University Center for Hospitality and Sport Management Advisory Board; the Mayor's Hospitality Cabinet; and the Mayor's Cultural Advisory Council. She is also on the boards of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, Independence Visitor Center, Historic Philadelphia, Inc., Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Welcome America, Inc. and Global Philadelphia.

Recognized locally and nationally for the tourism marketing work they do, Levitz and the VISIT PHILADELPHIA team have accrued a wealth of honors over the years. Travel news site Skift named Levitz to its World's Top Travel Marketers list in December 2013. VISIT PHILADELPHIA's campaigns and web and social media properties have garnered praise from organizations and publications such as U.S. Travel Association, Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, International Academy of the Visual Arts, *Travel + Leisure* and *Travel Weekly*, among others.