

Speaker Biographies

EVENT HOST

**J. Michael
Fischer Jr.**

Managing Director,
DBD Investment
Bank

Mr. Fischer brings deep expertise in middle-market corporate finance and capital solutions to his role as Managing Director at DBD Investment Bank, which he joined in May 2024. His distinguished career in commercial banking has included structuring and participating in several billion dollars worth of structured loans, deposits, and complex financial instruments.

Prior to joining DBD Investment Bank, Mr. Fischer held Vice President positions at both First Bank and Columbia Bank, where he demonstrated his ability to navigate complex financial transactions and build lasting client relationships. His expertise in structuring sophisticated financial solutions has earned him recognition as a trusted advisor to executives and business owners across the nation.

Mr. Fischer maintains an active leadership presence in the financial community, notably through his involvement with the New Jersey Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG). As the organization's incoming Vice President, he co-chairs both the CEO and CFO Executive Dinner Series and the ACG Corporate Growth Awards, demonstrating his commitment to fostering business relationships and promoting corporate development.

Beyond traditional banking, Mr. Fischer combines his passion for fitness with his business acumen, serving in strategic advisory roles for various fitness-related enterprises. This unique intersection of interests reflects his holistic approach to business development and industry expertise.

A graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University with a bachelor's degree in international business, Mr. Fischer resides in Central New Jersey with his wife and daughter.

**Laura Crothers**

Founder and CEO,
Crothers Consulting

Laura Crothers is a highly regarded speaker, author, and expert in leadership and HR. As Founder and CEO of Crothers Consulting, she has grown the firm over the past 16 years into a team of 24.

Her leadership was shaped in senior roles at Standard & Poor's, CIT, Merrill Lynch, ADP, and EverBank, where she guided employee and company growth through numerous mergers and acquisitions. Known for pragmatic, innovative solutions, Laura builds genuine connections through a straightforward, approachable style.

At Standard & Poor's, she led HR Mergers and Acquisitions, specializing in complex HR diligence and integration strategy. As Chief People Officer at USXL, she scaled the HR function for the startup as it grew to \$1 billion in assets and from 8 to 250 employees within five years.

Laura was recently named a Woman of Influence by ROI-NJ and a Leading Woman in Business by NJBIZ, recognized among the Top 25 Leading Women Entrepreneurs, and honored in both 2024 and 2025 as the Most Innovative Leadership Training & HR Solutions Company in the Northeast USA.

She serves on the board of directors of ACG-NJ and is active in numerous community organizations. Laura also chairs the New Jersey chapter of the Women Presidents' Organization (WPO), a roundtable for CEOs of multimillion-dollar businesses.

Outside of work, Laura enjoys traveling, entertaining, and skiing with her two sons and friends.

Speaker Biographies

**Andrew Mabey**

Director, DAK Group

Andrew Mabey has a rare combination of M&A and operational skills developed from working as both an Investment Banker, as an executive in an operating company and at a Private-Equity backed roll-up as the Head of M&A.

An integral part of DAK's Transaction Team, Mr. Mabey advises middle market businesses owners on the best strategies to use to generate the maximum value for their company. He leverages his diverse experience, and hands-on expertise to the advantage of his clients.

For over a decade he worked at a well-respected boutique Investment Bank based in New York City where he successfully advised companies across a broad range of industries, including business services, distribution, manufacturing, chemicals, consumer products, and infrastructure. He combines this with his role at Third Bridge, a privately held company, where he sought to develop operating skills and a hands-on understanding of the entrepreneurial environment.

At Third Bridge, Andrew built and oversaw a global customer success team charged with managing, growing, and cross-selling to the company's largest accounts, which included the world's leading hedge funds, private equity firms, and strategy consultancies. During his tenure, the company grew from 30 people to over 1,000.

He next joined a Private Equity-backed roll-up as Head of M&A and Corporate Strategy. Over a two-year period, nearly 20 acquisitions were completed, including the simultaneous closing of six transactions on New Years Eve 2020 during the height of the pandemic! The end-result was the creation of American Elevator Group ("AEG"), one of the largest elevator companies in North America.

At AEG he developed a keen insight into what business indicators lead to successful acquisitions. He uses this knowledge today guiding clients on preparing their company for sale, and conducting a solid review of these indicators to ensure they are in optimal condition before bringing a client to market –and maximizing value for them.

He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Yale and lives in New Jersey with his wife and two sons.

**Robert L. Johnson**

Partner, FBT Gibbons

Rob — an Assistant Counsel to the Governor of New Jersey from 2010 to 2012 who has been recognized in The Best Lawyers in America® — relies on his corporate training and experience to inform his comprehensive corporate practice, which features a strong focus on mergers and acquisitions. Helping business clients expand their markets and establish significant presence throughout the region, Rob represents public and private companies, commercial banks, and governmental agencies in connection with mergers and acquisitions, stock and asset purchase transactions, securities regulations, corporate governance matters, credit facilities, public finance, contract drafting, cross-border transactions, and general corporate matters. He also has represented clients in negotiations with the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance for specific exemptions and obtaining certain licenses.

In keeping with his service to the state of New Jersey, he handles private placements matters for the New Jersey Division of Investment, and he is assisting firm client Rowan University in its complex, high-profile acquisition of the School of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Speaker Biographies

**Wolfgang Tsoutsouris**

Managing Director,
MAST Advisors, Inc.

Wolfgang Tsoutsouris has more than 15 years of experience in corporate finance, operations, restructuring, M&A and alternative investments. Currently, Wolfgang is a Managing Director at MAST Advisors, a middle-market corporate advisory firm focused on M&A, strategy and capital raising. He is also a Lead Coach at Law Firm Mentor, where he has advised hundreds of law firms on growth and financial strategy.

Previously, Wolfgang spent 8 years at a boutique restructuring advisory and a major accounting firm, where he was involved in virtually every aspect of in and out-of-court restructurings on both debtor and creditor-side engagements. He was also Director of Operations for a digital marketing start-up, managing all operational activities including budgeting, hiring, process improvement, client and vendor management, and acquisitions.

Wolfgang began his finance career as an Analyst with Blackstone's Alternative Asset Management division, where he focused on strategies and hedge funds trading in commodities.

A big fan of BBQ, Wolfgang is the founder of DirtyJerzBBQ, an award-winning BBQ sauce that can be purchased online and in several gourmet markets in New Jersey.

In his previous life Wolfgang spent 14 years as a professional violinist, performing on many Broadway productions and with numerous orchestras and chamber ensembles in New York City and throughout the Northeast.

Wolfgang has an MBA with a concentration in Finance and Investments from Baruch College – the Zicklin School of Business. He also received a Masters in Music from Brigham Young University, spent a year in the graduate program at The Juilliard School and has a Bachelors in Music from Northwestern University with a major in violin performance.

**Blake Balsamo**

Executive Director,
Americas, i2i Logic

Blake Balsamo is Executive Director, Americas at i2i Logic, a banking analytics and intelligence platform that helps commercial and corporate bankers win deeper client relationships through data-driven insight. Blake works with bank leadership and coverage teams to embed industry benchmarking, peer performance, and scenario analysis into day-to-day workflows – so bankers can lead with relevant, value-added conversations. Prior to i2i Logic, Blake spent more than a decade in commercial banking, advising middle-market companies and supporting complex credit and growth needs. He is passionate about helping bankers modernize coverage with practical technology that improves both client outcomes and profitability.

Speaker Biographies

**MJ Jolda**

Principal + Chief
Marketing Officer,
CMO+Co.

MJ Jolda brings over two decades of brand-building and marketing leadership to founder-led and private equity-backed businesses alike, with a track record of turning underperforming brands into high-growth stories including preparing companies for sale.

As Principal and Chief Marketing Officer of CMO + Company, MJ serves as a fractional CMO to growth-stage and PE-backed brands, embedding directly with leadership to sharpen brand positioning, build scalable go-to-market strategy, and connect marketing decisions to enterprise value. Her client roster includes PE-owned portfolio companies LILLEbaby and Uinta Brewing (The Riverside Company) and Nutri-Vet Pet + Wellness (Imperial Capital Group), alongside founder-led brands such as Goodie Girl Cookies and The RMG Group, with several engagements centered on strategic marketing preparation ahead of a sale.

MJ began her career at Reckitt, one of the industry's premier CPG companies, before moving into marketing leadership roles inside PE-backed businesses. As Marketing Director at Prestige Brands (a GTCR portfolio company) and Pinnacle Foods (backed by Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst and JPMorgan Venture), she led brand turnarounds and participated directly in M&A due diligence and divestiture strategy giving her a buyer's-eye view of what makes a brand valuable, and vulnerable, in a transaction. She later served as Senior VP of Marketing and R&D at Marcal Manufacturing (Highland Capital Management), where she was part of the management team that reversed a \$15M loss into a \$5M profit while rebuilding the brand around sustainability.

MJ is also deeply engaged in the middle-market community as Immediate Past President of ACG New Jersey (2022–2024) and a board member since 2015, where she has led chapter branding, membership growth, and marketing strategy for the organization itself. She is a member of Vistage and holds an MBA from NYU Stern and lives in New Jersey with her husband and two parrots, Charlie and Patrick.

**Bridget
Mackolin**

Manager, Eisner
Advisory Group LLC

Bridget Mackolin is a Senior Manager in the Corporate Tax Group with 10 years of public accounting experience. She serves both privately held and publicly traded clients across a wide variety of industries, with a focus on technology, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and life sciences.

Bridget manages the tax compliance process for multinational and multistate corporations. Her experience includes preparation, review and audit of ASC 740 tax provisions and the reporting of income taxes in company financial statements. She assists clients with tax planning opportunities to minimize overall tax liability and risk exposure including R&D tax credits, stock-based compensation, transfer pricing, IRS and state audit support.