

1 David Novak , CEO , Yum ! Brands – CNN.com .

3 -LRB- CNN -RRB- -- If you need a quick bite on the go , David Novak
is your man .

1 He heads up Yum !

1 Brands the largest fast food operator in the world , with nearly 35,000 locations .

1 Among the household names on Yum 's menu are chicken giant KFC ,
Pizza Hut and Taco Bell .

1 Novak talks to CNN 's Maggie Lake in The Boardroom about leadership tastes , the love of the industry and his surprise at finding himself in the corner office .

3 Novak : Well I never really dreamt that I would become a chief executive officer of a company like Yum brands .

3 You know , I grew up in a pretty humble background , in the trailer
court , I had lived in 23 states by the time I was in 7th grade .

3 I started out as an advertising copywriter and moved up the agency ladders so , none of this was really planned and I worked hard , do n't get me wrong , but you know when I look back at it I go ` how did it happen to me ? '

3 And what the book that I just wrote is all about is what I learned along the way .

3 Lake : How did that experience shape you as a CEO ?

3 Novak : Well , I think when you 're leading a company you have to be able to motivate people , inspire people and get along with all different types of people .

3 And , when I was traveling as a young child and moving into all
these schools for the first time , I think it taught me how to work
through the anxiety of meeting new people and sort of giving you that
sixth sense of who to hang with -- who 's really good , who 's not so
hot -- and I think that 's helped shape my career .

3 Lake : As you 've moved up the ladder to CEO , is it harder to stay in touch with people who are on the frontline now ?

3 Novak : Well , I think it would be easy to walk away from the front line , but I think what you have to do as a CEO is be in touch with the people .

3 You know , I love our business because I love people , I love food ,
I love marketing -- you know , the business is all about those
things .

3 So , for me it 's very easy to go out and be with the people , I like that and I would n't like my job if I could n't do it .

3 Lake : Now , you 've been described as hyper competitive , is that an asset or a liability ?

3 Novak : Well , that 's the other reason why I like what I do , I 'm

in a very competitive category .

3 And it is a very , slug it out , you know , you want to beat the other guy , you want to do better , you want to be first , you want to be innovative , so to me that 's another reason why I love what I do .

3 And we have a company of people that love that too , and that 's what the real privilege is .

3 Lake : Has the attention on the obesity epidemic changed how you approach the business or Yum 's strategy ?

3 Novak : Well , first of all , we really do n't market to children , that 's not a real strategy of ours .

1 Second of all , we are very cogniscent with obesity , we know obesity is a problem and that 's why we were the first to take the trans fats out of our cooking oils .

3 That 's why we 're looking for ways to reduce sodium and make our food more and more nutritious , that 's why we 're really offering consumers more options .

3 Lake : Yum is one of the dominant players in China and you 've succeeded where others have failed , what 's been the key to your success there ?

3 Novak : We have our own distribution system -- it 's the only place in the world where we have our own distribution system .

3 We have the largest retail development network in the world in China , because this is such a growth opportunity for us .

3 And then we have a people capability , our operations there are absolutely outstanding , I think 70 % of our restaurants ' general managers have at least a college education , and if you go there you see tremendous customer mania , you see lots of focus on the customer and we 're winning on every front .

3 E-mail to a friend