

How Did I Get Here?

Ron Shaich

Chairman and chief executive officer, Panera Bread
from **Bloomberg Businessweek**



. Education

- Livingston High School, Livingston, N.J., class of 1971
- Clark University, Worcester, Mass., class of 1976
 - Harvard Business School, class of 1978

. Work Experience

- 1978–79
Eastern regional manager, Original Cookie Company
- 1979–80
President, Targeting Systems
- 1980–81
Founder, the Cookie Jar
- 1981–99
Co-founder, co-chairman, CEO, Au Bon Pain
- 1999–2010
Chairman and CEO, Panera Bread
- 2010–Present
Co-founder, No Labels
- 2010–13
Executive chairman, Panera
- 2013–Present
Chairman and CEO, Panera

• Life Lessons

- “Growth isn’t about pressing the accelerator; it’s about opportunities to move in specific directions.”
- “The job of leadership is to figure out where the world is going and make sure your organization is there.”
- “We may serve 10 million people a week, but if we’re going to be competitive, it’s all about one guest’s experience.”



Class photo, 1968

- “I went off to D.C. and did political campaign consulting. We were using geodemographic targeting with voters, the forerunner to what people now call Big Data.”
- “I went to HBS not knowing what an investment banker was.”



Graduating from Harvard Business School

- “Nobody bought cookies before noon. So I decided to put in French baked goods and became a licensee of a three-store chain called Au Bon Pain. Sometimes they billed me, sometimes they didn’t—they were out of control.”

- “We reached an agreement to take my one cookie store and the Au Bon Pain bakeries and create a new company, of which I got 60 percent of the stock. They had \$3 million in debt.”



With Au Bon Pain co-founder, Louis Kane, 1991

- “I met a couple of guys with 19 stores called St. Louis Bread Company. I thought, ‘Maybe we should buy it. Au Bon Pain can do urban, and these guys can do suburban.’ We later renamed it Panera.”



One of the original St. Louis Bread Co. locations, 1993

- “We’ve got 2,000 stores, over 100,000 employees, \$5 billion in market cap, and serve 3 to 4 percent of all Americans every week.”
- “I’ve become much more conscious of what I eat over the years: My diet is increasingly—but not entirely—plant-based. My all-time favorite lunch is the Spicy Thai Salad With Chicken, and I also love our Green Goddess Cobb Salad.”

