



## **RUSS PILLAR '87 P'24**

A tireless opportunity democratizer, youth advocate, and environmental defender, Russ Pillar has spent most of the past three decades running some of the world's best loved and well-known consumer brands.

Russ currently serves as Senior Advisor to Mubadala Investment Company, the sovereign wealth fund of the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi), where he initiates, evaluates, and manages direct investment opportunities globally and has responsibility for the firm's sports, media, and entertainment initiatives. He also has worked as part of the Mubadala team to define, develop, and implement an encompassing ESG (environmental, social, governance) policy.

Prior to joining Mubadala, Russ founded and served as Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Reigning Champs, the world's largest NCAA-compliant path-to-college company for student-athletes, for which he wrote the initial business plan and raised more than \$100 million of capital he then used to acquire and integrate a dozen different operating entities, spurring historic organic growth. Reigning Champs's proprietary software and 1,500 teammates now power a *profit+purpose* network comprised of 900 universities, 41,000 college coaches, and 6 million student-athletes and features a mission-driven give-back program that, since inception, has provided more than \$50 million of test preparation and advisory services free of charge to tens of thousands of student-athletes most in need. Russ led the sale of Reigning Champs to IMG Performance, a division of Endeavor, in June 2021.

Earlier in his career, Russ led the purchase and turn-around of the Los Angeles Marathon as its President and Director; served as the senior digital media executive at two of the world's largest media companies as President of the Viacom Digital Media Group and President and Chief Executive Officer of the CBS Internet Group; ran a portfolio of Virgin-branded businesses staffed by 1,600+ employees spanning the western hemisphere as President, Chief Executive Officer, and Director of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Entertainment Group; co-led the leveraged buyout, turn-around, and initial public offering of pioneer internet service provider Prodigy as President and Chief Executive Officer of Prodigy Internet and Vice Chairman of Prodigy Communications Corporation; and led the turn-around, rapid global growth, and sale of publicly-traded Precision Systems, a portfolio company of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, where he served as President, Chief Executive Officer, and Director. Russ began his career as an investment banker in corporate finance in the Japan Banking Group at Merrill Lynch Capital Markets and then served as President of international merchant bank Japanese Capital Affiliates.

Over the course of his career, Russ has been a member of the Board of Directors or a Board Observer of more than three dozen for-profit public and private consumer-facing sports, media, retail, and technology companies including CBS SportsLine.com, the Los Angeles Marathon, the Virgin Entertainment Group, TiVo, AVP Pro Beach Volleyball, and Zumba Fitness, among many others. His mission-driven non-profit activities have included Board of Directors service at Running USA (where he created and chaired their National Youth Running Initiative), Heal the Bay, The Nature Conservancy (Idaho), the Ocean Institute, and the Ronald McDonald House Children's Charities (Florida). He was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Young Presidents' Organization; he is a Henry Crown Fellow at The Aspen Institute and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

Russ graduated Phi Beta Kappa, *cum laude* from Brown University with an A.B. in East Asian Studies, having studied for a year as an international exchange student at Keio University in Tokyo. While at Brown he played on the University's rugby team, coached its women's rugby team, and was a National Finalist in the Rhodes Scholarship Competition. Over the past three decades Russ has served Brown on its President's Leadership Council, its Creative Arts Advisory Council, and its Entrepreneurship Program Board of Directors; he currently is a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Brown University Sports Foundation. *The Brown Alumni Monthly* named him one of the 100 alumni who had the greatest impact on the 20<sup>th</sup> century.