
PRESS RELEASE



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MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS APPOINTS SCOTT M. O'NEIL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

World's second-largest visitor attraction operator moves to its next exciting chapter as the partner of choice for bringing global IP and brands to life

London, 14 November 2022: Merlin Entertainments, Europe's largest and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, today announces the appointment of 25-year sports and entertainment industry veteran Scott M. O'Neil as Chief Executive Officer, effective 15 November 2022. O'Neil will be responsible for overseeing the business operations and global growth for Merlin Entertainments across its 147 attractions in 24 countries. O'Neil's appointment comes following outgoing CEO Nick Varney's decision to retire after 23 years.

Merlin's attractions include 10 LEGOLAND Resort Theme Parks and hotels, six Resort Theme Parks including Alton Towers, Heide Park and Gardaland, as well as a vibrant portfolio of renowned global brands in city destinations, such as SEA LIFE aquariums, Madame Tussauds, Peppa Pig World of Play, the Lastminute.com London Eye and Sydney Tower Eye. Merlin is continuing to expand, with three LEGOLAND Resorts in China under development and further openings planned across the US and Asia.

O'Neil was most recently CEO for Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment (HBSE), a portfolio of sports, entertainment, and investment properties, where he oversaw more than \$2bn growth in enterprise value, from \$415m to \$2.5bn, through his focus on talent, culture, and guest experience.

Under O'Neil's leadership, HBSE evolved from managing a single team, the Philadelphia 76ers of the National Basketball Association, to an award-winning live sports and entertainment group. It now spans multiple professional teams, real estate holdings, an esports platform, a GRAMMY Museum, a top 10 internationally booked arena, a venture fund, innovation lab and Elevate, a growing sports marketing company.

O'Neil has led some of the top athletic brands in the world, including New York Knicks - NBA, New York Rangers - NHL, Philadelphia Eagles - NFL and the Philadelphia 76ers - NBA, where success is predicated on building the brand, driving attendance, leveraging data, engaging fans through the guest experience and partnering with big brands to drive growth.

Roland Hernandez, Chair of Merlin Entertainments, commented:

"Scott has significant experience in the entertainment industry, a proven track-record of delivering business transformation, and the vision and ambition to lead Merlin through the next exciting stages of its global development. The Board has every confidence in him, and we look forward to working closely together over the coming years."

"I would like to reiterate the Group's thanks to Nick for his outstanding leadership of Merlin Entertainments over the last 23 years. Merlin is one of the best leisure businesses in the world thanks to his leadership, passion, and talent and we wish him all the best in his retirement."

O'Neil, Chief Executive Officer designate, added:

"I am thrilled to be joining the Merlin family. There is an extraordinarily talented management team, a driven, ambitious, hardworking, team centric, can-do culture, and a board led by KIRKBI, Blackstone and CPPIB which is committed and focused on growth and driving value. Merlin partners with some of the top global brands including LEGO, Sony Pictures Entertainment and HASBRO and is a business with phenomenal tailwinds, whose purpose is to bring joy and make lasting memories for families and friends around the world."

"Nick has built an incredible business and achieved unprecedented growth in this industry and yet there are still tremendous upside opportunities ahead to continue the momentum. We are actively building and searching for new attractions and sites. We are fortunate in that we are not constrained to a single studio or content pipeline and are seeking additional brand partners to redefine the attractions business. Merlin will also aggressively look to expand our offerings and experiences in our current attractions. I have been impressed by the talent, energy and dedication of the people at Merlin that I've met so far and am looking forward to working with the wider team to deliver on the exciting growth strategy."

Nick Varney, retiring Chief Executive Officer, added:

"I am very proud of what we have achieved at Merlin over the past 23 years. We have built an incredible business with amazing attractions and brilliant people. I have every confidence that Merlin will go from strength to strength under Scott's leadership over the coming years."

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Notes to Editors

About Merlin Entertainments

Merlin Entertainments is a global leader in location-based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin operates over 140 attractions, 23 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 24 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin's purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its millions of guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its employees.

See www.merlinentertainments.biz for more information and follow on Twitter [@MerlinEntsNews](https://twitter.com/MerlinEntsNews).

About Scott O'Neil

Scott O'Neil has more than 25 years of experience in leading and managing global sports and entertainment brands. With a reputation for innovation, an eye for strategic and global brand development and partnerships, and a passion for culture and talent development, O'Neil has stewarded some of the sports and entertainment industry's most renowned and iconic brands and properties, including the NBA's New York Knicks and Philadelphia 76ers; the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, the NHL's New York Rangers and New Jersey Devils; and the internationally ranked sports and entertainment arenas, Madison Square Garden and Prudential Center.

His mission to build innovative, inspiring, diverse, socially impactful and high performing businesses and brands earned the organizations under O'Neil's management acclaim in innovation and culture. He recently published a life leadership book entitled, *'Be Where Your Feet Are'* published St. Martins Press.

O'Neil earned his bachelor's degree in Marketing from Villanova University, and his master's in Business Administration from Harvard Business School. He has been married for 26 years to wife Lisa, with whom he has three daughters.
