

# Hotel Business



## Hospitality Leaders Launch Coalition to Accelerate Gender Equality at Highest Levels

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**INTERNATIONAL REPORT**—A group of hoteliers and hospitality academics have joined forces to launch an initiative that aims to accelerate the path to improved gender equality in higher level positions across the industry, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5.

LeadingHôtelières was founded by Frank M. Pfaller, CEO/president, the HoteliersGuild community, and cofounded by Lindsey Ueberroth, CEO, Preferred Hotels & Resorts. Considerate Group founding partner Xenia zu Hohenlohe leads as chairwoman for the inaugural year and is joined by Dr. Sowon Kim, co-chair associate professor of management at Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL).

The team has enlisted support from Grand Hotel Tremezzo owner/CEO Valentina de Santis; sustainability architect Yasmine Mahmoudieh; Vicki Tollman, director of Red Carnation Hotels; Dr. Tania Bardhan, director of spa at Four Seasons Hong Kong; and hospitality consultancy WE(i) Think CEO Celine Vadam, among others, who will all take on vital roles in addressing gender balances at a systemic level, from research, to design, to networking, with communication coordinated by Maria Pajares, MD of Mason Rose.

Additionally, an advisory board that will provide expert advice and support is gradually taking shape and includes Sue Harmsworth, founder, ESPA International; Dr. Henri Kuokkanen,

associate professor at Institut Paul Bocuse; and Dr. Willy Legrand, professor at IUBH University of Applied Sciences.

“I’m happy to see more women CEOs in hospitality, but we are still a far cry from where I hope we can be in terms of representation,” said Ueberroth. “The biggest challenges for women looking to achieve top leadership roles were the need to travel, relocate and dedicate long hours. In the past, once having children and raising a family came into the equation, many women were forced to make a choice, and those challenges were hard to overcome. Given the innovations in technology and a more open attitude towards flexible working hours and ‘home offices,’ many of these hurdles seem alleviated.”

LeadingHôtelières aims to accelerate gender equality by providing guidance, mentorship and training through a powerful network of contacts in the industry.

The focus of 2021 is specifically geared towards flexible working structures. Heading the research arm of the initiative, Dr. Kim said, “We are currently working on a framework to test whether the outcome of our goal, to improve gender equality among directorial and operational roles in the hospitality industry through updated flexible working schemes, actually works for our hotelier partners. We aim to create new and relevant knowledge and share these findings in a meaningful, productive way.”

Hohenlohe added, “Gender equality is a key part of the UN’s Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and any business serious about future-proofing itself will need to address this issue. We have an incredible collection of women with highly professional profiles paired with great brainpower in this group, all driven by the motivation to ensure the female hotelier of the future will be able to finally have the same opportunities for career development as their male peers.”

On first devising the project, Pfaller said, “When we looked at our HG membership roster, we realized that we had far too few women in leadership positions. Reaching out initially to Lindsey, Xenia and Sowon, we were thrilled to realize their enthusiasm to join our cause to making a real change.”