

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN BUSINESS – CAROLINE KLEIN, PREFERRED HOTELS AND RESORTS



In our next article celebrating women who are making waves in the world of business, we chat to the dynamic, unstoppable Caroline Klein. She is the youngest on the executive team at Preferred Hotels & Resorts, which comprises more than 750 independent hotels, resorts, residences, and hotel groups across 85 countries. She was recognised as a 'Thirty Under 30' by Hotel Management's 2014 ranking of the hotel industry's top rising talent. Check out 'typical' day for Caroline – we defy you not to feel exhausted just from reading it!

My formula for pursuing success in my career has always been very straight forward – I set my vision on what I want, and I go for it. No apologies, no excuses. My professional passion has always been serving as a deliberate storyteller in the world of travel. I have a Journalism degree from Boston University but chose Public Relations for my career path because I believed it gave me the opportunity to tell important stories through a variety of perspectives and voices – not just my own. I also chose travel/hospitality as my specialty because, in addition to having unwavering wanderlust, I have always believed that travel makes people better in creating a collective understanding across languages, cultures and religions and, because of that, also believe that if everyone had the opportunity to travel, people would show greater tolerance when faced with differences.

Given the 24/7 nature of communications and with a schedule that has me on the road approximately 120 days a year, no two days are alike for me. But, the below is about as typical as it gets when I'm at home and working from our Newport Beach, California office and not on the road. My life is chaotic, and I thrive off of that energy (which also helps fuel me through insane bouts of jetlag!), while having incredible gratitude for all of the experiences and learnings my job provides.



5.30am: I wake up naturally around 5:30am every day – regardless of where I am in the world. I typically check my email and scan social media before getting out of bed to see if there is anything that requires immediate attention or if there is anything my team in Asia needs from me before they unplug for the evening. If I feel like laying around for a few extra minutes, I'll also read theSkimm before getting moving.

From there, my morning takes one of two directions. I either go for a 3-5 mile walk (which is very scenic along the Pacific Ocean thanks to where I live in Southern California), or I'll head to Pilates. A few years ago, I was diagnosed with a chronic back condition with symptoms that can only be alleviated through exercise. Therefore, I place high importance on taking care of my body so that I can maintain my level of travel and overall activity.

One of the things I love most about my job is the people. Every day I get to interact with colleagues who sit all over the world. The global perspective and lessons I've learned about business, regional culture and traditions, and life from these interactions has been invaluable. My colleagues are truly my second family, a source of inspiration, and a reason I look forward to all of my business trips, knowing that I'll get the chance to connect with some of them in person.

Speaking of which, Preferred's Corporate Communications department has in-house media experts based in Beijing, Singapore, London, New York City, and Newport Beach, who manage our internal/external communications platforms and public relations and social media strategies. While we are all constantly communicating one-on-one, we also orchestrate a global department call once every month to discuss major initiatives, recent successes, and how we are tracking towards our collective goals, and to share a few laughs about what's happening personally. One of the lines in our company ideology is "we care... family values inspire us." I take this to heart to ensure we are truly connected as a cohesive team, making everyone feel personally cared for, engaged, and supported like a mini-work family rather than having our dialogues be all business in a very black-and-white fashion. Over my past seven years with Preferred, it has been inspiring to see how everyone has created strong, personal, and trusting bonds, despite having never met in person or only a few times. I don't think we would have had as much success as a collective unit otherwise.

Given the gap in time zones, our monthly call usually takes place at 6am Newport Beach time. This means I often do the call while walking. It's a good way to connect with my team and get in my 10,000 steps first thing in the morning. Multitasking!



7:30am: After my walk or Pilates, it's time to take a quick shower (and sing the praises of dry shampoo) and then head to the office. It is only a mile away so I commute by bike or walking.

8.30am: I'm a creature of habit and like to start my day by eating breakfast at my desk, which typically consists of an avocado with hot sauce, a bunch of pumpkin seeds, and a kombucha. I'll eat while scanning through what has come into my inbox since my initial check at 5:30am, read a few hotel/travel and news sites such as The New York Times, Skift.com, and HotelNewsNow.com, or skim the latest magazine to hit my desk (industry publications like Lodging and HOTELS and lifestyle titles like AFAR, Conde Nast Traveler, and Town & Country).

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8:45am: Because of time zone differences, I triage my morning to ensure that I address any needs from Europe first while they are still at the office. This could be talking to my team member in London about our social media strategy; a prospective hotel client of our newest division, Preferred Hospitality Solutions, to explain our approach to boosting their media profile; or a journalist on deadline who wants to know more about our newest hotel openings, hear the latest developments with our I Prefer Hotel Rewards program, or gather one of our executive’s thoughts on an emerging travel trend. I spend the majority of my day helping media understand the essence of what makes our company so special – from the Preferred brand’s strong legacy and positioning in the industry to the personalities behind our independent hotel members – and then working with them to share those tales with their readers. Our company’s brand promise is “Believe in Travel,” and I could wax poetic all day about how much travel enriches people’s lives.



The rest of my morning is filled with internal meetings and conference calls, which I conduct via video as much as possible. The personal connection to colleagues is valuable, and it’s near impossible to get distracted or multi-task when someone is staring right back at you!

If I'm lucky, I will also have a window of time to do some writing, which could take many forms. One of my main responsibilities is setting our company's overall corporate voice and communications strategy, ensuring consistency in strategic messaging to internal (associates) and external (hoteliers, media, and other industry partners) audiences from our leadership team, to the media, on our brand social media channels, and through our intranet and extranet communications platforms. I dedicate a significant amount of time to collaborating with our leadership team on thought leadership opportunities, which include Q&As from media or editing by bylines for publication and other communications such as announcements to member hoteliers about new corporate initiatives. This also includes working alongside our CEO Lindsey Ueberroth on drafting the majority of her communications such as an internal, quarterly What's Update presentation; a monthly newsletter in her voice that gives associates an update on her latest travels, books/podcasts/articles she's been inspired by, and top company happenings; and the Preferred Postcard, a bi-annual printed publication that goes to top executives at all of our member hotels. My journalism degree definitely comes in handy with the requirement to switch my voice often to meet the tone required by each individual communication and style of each executive!

Noon: If I didn't do Pilates in the morning, I may try to duck out and get an hour class in at my studio that's a 3-minute walk from my office. It took me a very long time to feel comfortable taking time for myself during the day, but stepping away from my desk for an hour every now and then has helped increase my productivity and creativity. Standard work hours don't apply for me so I try to reclaim pockets of personal time whenever I can, without it interfering with my productivity or efficiency at the office.

Other scenarios could include meeting a journalist or social media influencer at one of our three stunning member hotels in the area – Montage Laguna Beach, Surf & Sand Resort, or Balboa Bay Resort – for lunch or coffee to discuss what's happening with Preferred and how we could partner on a story or social media campaign. Or, I'll have a healthy working lunch at my desk.



Montage Laguna Beach

It's around this time of day when I find myself daydreaming about my next personal trip and spending a few minutes on my United Airlines app seeing how much a certain flight would cost, checking out how a destination looks by scrolling through Instagram, and looking at my work calendar to see when I could make it happen. I am a huge believer and proponent of bleisure travel, and, earlier this year, I knocked a trip off my bucket list with a solo weekend in Oman to hike across the Jebel Akhdar when en route to business in Dubai. The list of destinations I would like to explore is endless, if only there was more time...

1:30pm: Again with time zones in mind, I'll check in with my NYC team for both Preferred Hotels & Resorts and PHG Consulting, its sister destination marketing company. The PHG Consulting team works with international destinations such as Durban, South Africa; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Suzhou, China; so they are used to accommodating many different time zones as well.

The rest of my afternoon is filled with internal meetings/conference calls, emails/phone calls with journalists, and writing.

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6pm: I try to get out of the office to enjoy a few hours of daylight and personal time before logging back in later in the evening (more on that in a minute). I will either go for a hike by myself or with a friend (if it's with a friend, the hike will typically be followed by a drink and/or dinner), call my family who are based in Milwaukee and Chicago to catch them before bedtime (I moved here from the Midwest two years ago and miss my family dearly), or run a few errands before heading home to take a walk, catch up on some reading, and make dinner.



9pm: Time to log back onto my computer for an hour or so to do some more writing or responding to emails that I couldn't get to during the day or have a WeChat call with someone from our Beijing office. Having had a few hours between the office and now allows me to approach some items with a clear head, and I love what I do so I don't mind the late-night work!

10pm: If I'm not traveling the next day, I will either be on the couch watching an episode of my latest favorite show or heading to bed. However, because I travel so much, this is often my prime packing hour. In fact, I dedicated an entire room in my house to be my "dressing room" to make the packing process fun and easy! (It's my second bedroom but with a full-length mirror and plenty of space to throw my clothes about.) I blast some tunes while trying on my clothes to see what will make it into my suitcase, and it tends to turn into a full-on dance party. Whenever possible I try to only use my carry-on and a purse, but some of my trips include stops in places with very different climates, business cultures, and types of meetings so it's not always a straight-forward process. As I write this (on the plane heading off on a 25-day work trip that will take me to China, Bali, Singapore, and New York), I just completed a particularly lively evening of packing that lasted until about 1am (what can I say, the dancing makes it fun but is a distraction!). And, it's not about just what I pack but how I pack since sometimes I head straight to a meeting after a long plane ride. My number one packing tip? I hang everything but my workout clothes, jeans, and lingerie and place a plastic dry-cleaning bag between every layer of clothing. This way, I can get off a plane, regardless of how long I've traveled, and everything is wrinkle-free!

When I'm done packing, it is time to crawl into bed. As much as I know I should avoid this, I tend to find myself scrolling through Instagram if I'm headed out on a trip the next day, searching the destination hashtag and feed of my host hotel to not only fuel my excitement but also see the reality (while likely filtered) of what's happening there and gather a few tips of how to spend any downtime I might have.