



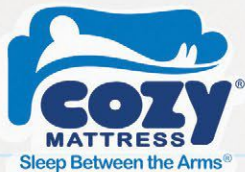
HOTEL MANAGEMENT

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THE LEADING HOSPITALITY NEWS AUTHORITY SINCE 1875 | Vol. 233, No. 11 | October 2018



2018 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY



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HOTEL MANAGEMENT



MELANIE BRANDMAN, FOUNDER AND CEO, THE BRANDMAN AGENCY

In everything she does, Melanie Brandman makes sure it's first class. Whether it's crisscrossing the globe to handle the needs of international travel and lifestyle clients; being covered by the media for her tastes in fashion, design or creating new websites; or saving the planet and cultural traditions, it's all done with an eye toward being the best. As founder and CEO of The Brandman Agency, the executive has leveraged her eponymous company to be more than a public relations firm. Like the woman it reflects, the agency is a touchstone for many within the industry, particularly at the luxury level. A former VP of corporate communications at IHG in London, Brandman has grown TBA from a single New York office to add locations in Los Angeles, London and Sydney. "The greatest challenge is knowing the buck stops with me, and that alone brings tremendous rewards. As my industry evolves, the greatest challenge will always be to ensure my company remains relevant...today and five years from now," said the CEO. An early adopter within the digital and influencer spaces, Brandman also is the brains behind Travel Curator, a website platform devoted to engaging an affluent audience of global travelers. Readers of USA Today recently voted it one of the "10 Best Luxury Travel Blogs." She herself received the Grice Lifetime Achievement Award for Public Relations from HSMIA, among other accolades. "The thought of not evolving keeps me energized to find new ways of doing and learning new things," said Brandman.



LISA CHECCHIO, SVP & CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, WYNDHAM HOTELS & RESORTS

With the passing of Labor Day, Lisa Checchio celebrated both her three-year anniversary at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and her third year in the hospitality industry. Checchio joined Wyndham from JetBlue Airways, a move she described as a natural step for her career. However, it wasn't something that could have happened without taking risks. "Someone took a chance on me, someone from the outside, to bring new experiences and ideas to the industry," Checchio said. "We as women in hospitality, and all of us who work in this industry, have to continue to take chances and seek out strong female talent, and also to be inspired by other industries." This risk-taking mentality is something Checchio wishes to pass on to others in the industry, and she said female hospitality professionals need to take the initiative in seeking out other perspectives in order to rise in the industry. "It's always wonderful when I meet with people who reach out, ask to sit with me and mentor them. But it's also my responsibility to seek out mentees, to identify those potential leaders who may not feel comfortable reaching out and asking for my time. I want to help them navigate not only Wyndham, but the whole industry." Checchio also said that it's important to care about what you are doing and where you are professionally. "The act of truly caring is infectious," she said. "Always do the right thing, push one extra mile, in this or any other industry."



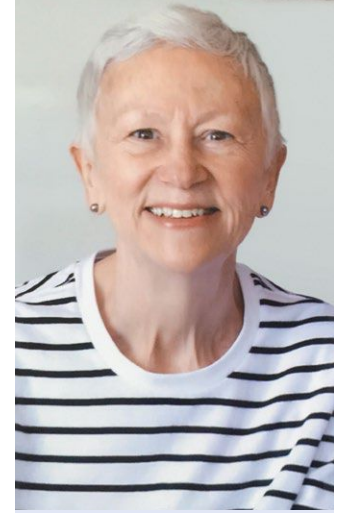
DONNA COOPER, EVP OF SALES, LA QUINTA INNS & SUITES

Donna Cooper has been leading sales teams for years, but early in her career she struggled to find a leadership style after noting her team members all had their own way of doing things. Rather than force a square peg into a round hole, Cooper set about changing herself before changing those around her. "I had to tailor my style to each of those personalities," she said. "Once I did that, everything fell into place." For women looking to grow in hospitality, Cooper encourages them to seek out organizations that already have female leaders. "If a company only has men in senior leadership roles, it can be hard to change their mind. There are many companies that are forward thinking, and I encourage women professionals to seek them out," she said. Cooper recognizes that senior leadership often wants to promote the best employees to leadership roles, but she also said that a company's true success is determined by employees on the front lines. She has found that a growth mindset is a necessity for success, and boils down the requirements for success into simple terms: If you are interested in a position, be the obvious choice. "Learn as much as you can about the role you want, and do the job before it opens," Cooper said. "People want to be directors, they want to manage people, and leaders should encourage them to do those things throughout their career."



SARAH DINGER, SVP OF BRAND MANAGEMENT, MY PLACE HOTELS OF AMERICA

Sarah Dinger will always have a special place at My Place Hotels. In 2012, after more than a decade in various hospitality positions, Dinger stepped on board the nascent upper-midscale hotel chain's platform as employee No. 1 and hasn't looked back. In her half-dozen years with the South Dakota-based chain, she has helped founders Ron Rivett (Super 8's pioneer) and his grandson, Ryan, move the needle of the brand's growth, pushing it from one hotel to 44 (at presstime). With openings and groundbreaks occurring often at relatively whirlwind speed (recently three such events were marked within 12 hours and across a few thousand miles), Dinger touts the fact, "More than 60 percent of My Place franchisees have executed multiple agreements, and the balance of them will—they just haven't yet." Dinger considers relationships a key component of the brand's successful industry entry and acceleration. "It's been my honor to witness the beginnings of each internal department and to work closely with each of their leaders to create value with the same passion instilled in me from the beginning. It's through this work that I've realized how far-reaching relationships really are." The executive sees herself as a role model for all the associates who have joined My Place. "While it's extremely rewarding, a new and upcoming brand is extremely demanding. I...strive to set the example for others that I want to see." Dinger looks forward to celebrating many milestones with the company.



GLENDA BURKHART

CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DEXTER SOLUTIONS

Do the right thing for the right reason and be willing to be held accountable. This is the driving mantra behind Glenda Burkhart's brand of leadership, as well as her belief that the hotel industry doesn't care who you are—as long as you can work hard, you can succeed. "One of our core values states that we accept each other and our biases," Burkhart said. "People will say I'm patient, but I have zero tolerance for people going against that value." Burkhart said the best way for female hospitality professionals to rise in the industry is to know everything there is to know about the business, to become an authority on the customer and continue to promote themselves as individuals and experts. Throughout all of this, Burkhart also cautioned rising professionals against spending too much time working, and not to forget to slow things down for family and friends. After all, what is the point of success if it isn't celebrated with someone? "Maybe it's me as a grandmother talking, but you cannot get that time back and it's precious. I say that to anyone."



KATIE FALLON, SVP AND GLOBAL HEAD OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS, HILTON

Transitioning from the world of politics into the hospitality industry may not be a typical move, but Katie Beirne Fallon is not a typical leader. Before joining Hilton's team as SVP and global head of corporate affairs, she was a director of legislative affairs for President Barack Obama, and previously served as the former president's deputy communications director, responsible for his strategic communications planning. Two weeks after transitioning out of the White House, Fallon heard a "very compelling" pitch from Hilton CEO Chris Nassetta about the opportunities for leadership in the hospitality sector, about how this is an "exciting time" for hospitality and about how she could bring a unique background to Hilton and have an impact from day one. "I went from not knowing anything about the industry to fully embracing it," she recalled. And now that she's well established in hospitality, Fallon sees plenty of similarities with her former life. "Travel and tourism can have great impact on today's most pressing challenges," she said. "As other sectors poise for massive job disruption or dislocation from adoption of new technologies—not a day goes by where you're not reading about artificial intelligence and its negative impact on the workforce—hospitality is poised to hire one out of every five new jobs created over the next decade. So that gives us an awesome responsibility to prepare and mentor and develop the workforce of the future." In that respect, she said, hospitality can be more capable of having a positive impact than the government itself. "I really do believe our industry is uniquely positioned to be a problem-solver, and one of the ways that I bring that to life on a day-to-day basis is using the scale and scope of our hotels around the world to drive positive environmental impact in their communities." Rather than treating each of Hilton's 5,300 hotels as a "cookie-cutter version of a global brand," Fallon said, Hilton sees the properties as "laboratories for change in their communities."



TAMMY FARLEY, CO-FOUNDER, THE RAINMAKER GROUP

Big things can have small beginnings. When Tammy Farley started out as a plant waterer for hotels, she never imagined she would return years later to co-found revenue management software company The Rainmaker Group. In fact, she still doesn't consider herself a leader "in" the hotel industry, despite the scores of hotels that make use of her company's software. This brand of honesty is reflected in her leadership style and the manner in which Rainmaker operates. "I firmly believe that leadership starts by doing the right thing and the rest will follow," Farley said. "My job is simply to help guide the team to success, but at the end of the day it is how well we work together to deliver on a shared vision that determines how successful we are." While Farley is using her influence within the industry to introduce new technology to help operators increase profits, she also recognizes the importance of elevating women into leadership roles within the industry, and also wants to promote a greater work/life balance for all hospitality workers. "Quite frankly, this is not a gender dilemma, it's a people dilemma," she said. "Men can and do face many of the exact same challenges but have not been penalized as a result. Sad as it may seem in 2018, we need to continue the dialogue and prioritize this issue; only by putting it in the forefront, driven from the top, will we be able to impact real change."



CONGRATULATIONS AMANDA MARCELLO

ON BEING HONORED AS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY



Amanda has been instrumental in developing the positioning and enhancement strategies that have created authentic brands for RLH Corporation in every lodging segment. We look forward to her ongoing leadership as the company continues its strong growth.

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We don't wait for the future. We create it.

Amanda Marcello
Senior Vice President, Brand Strategy





JENNIFER FOX, GROUP CEO, MILLENNIUM & COPTHORNE HOTELS

Jennifer Fox's story is one of persistence and constant movement. Her hospitality career began with the Sheraton brand, and she was IHG's COO of Europe from 2005 to 2011. From 2011 to 2016, Fox was president of Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. Earlier this year, she became CEO of London-based Millennium & Copthorne Hotels, overseeing more than 120 properties across four collections. In hospitality, Fox believes, it is important to build a career from the bottom up. "I've been a director of marketing, I've been a hotel manager, a general manager. I had three brands: Fairmont, Sheraton and InterContinental." As she worked her way up and moved from company to company, she found herself moving all around the world. "I've worked and lived in Australia, four places in the U.S., then I was transferred to Hong Kong, then transferred to London, then when I joined Fairmont I went to Canada, and now I'm back in London." Working all over the world has also been "extremely rewarding" for Fox. "You've got friends all over the world, you have a great international global network of people like yourself, media, customers, people that you do business with." She also appreciates learning about different cultures and constantly improving her cultural sensitivity. Rising through the ranks and leading both departments and companies has made her into a global citizen, she said. "They go hand-in-hand in so many ways."



HEATHER GEISLER, VP OF GLOBAL BRANDS, HYATT HOTELS CORPORATION

Heather Geisler came to Hyatt in 2016 with more than 20 years of marketing and brand experience, most recently as VP of brand marketing for MSNBC. "One of the things about the hospitality industry that I found so attractive is the fact that it is so dynamic and constantly changing," she said. "Cable news has been disrupted in a lot of ways with the rise of digital, and we've seen similar disruptive forces clearly come to play in the hospitality industry." But both industries, she added, still are rooted in consumer insights, consumer desires and consumer needs, whether the consumer is a guest or a TV viewer. When she started at Hyatt, the company immersed her in a hotel for 48 hours. "I was not the VP of global brands," she recalled. Instead, she worked with the housekeeping team and helped set up banquets. "It gave me a new appreciation for the complexities that go into implementing a new guest experience or launching a new campaign that may impact what's happening at the property level." With that in mind, Geisler is a big advocate of empathy in leadership. "Make sure that you understand your team, that you're really connected to what makes your team work and function, the realities that they may be facing within the office and outside. My leadership style is one of humility. You lead through example, but you lead through empathy, and I tend to be a little of a heart-first leader."



SHERRI GILLIGAN, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, TWO ROADS HOSPITALITY

The biggest gift a leader can give is to be present and supportive. This mentality is what led Sherri Gilligan to success as a professional in the 1980s, when most industries still were dominated by men. Gilligan said the industry has become more welcoming to women leaders in years since, but it's still not enough. For this reason, Gilligan is a proponent of networking with like-minded men and women to elevate your career—after all, it's what worked for her. "As women, we need to step up and aim to achieve senior, executive-level roles while empowering other females to lead," she said. "Doing this in a great network of support is crucial for success. Supporting each other in trust enables us to maintain those great relationships and help each other out." Another strategy that worked out for her was taking on multiple roles during her career, from marketing and sales to operations and finance. Gilligan's diverse background helped her stand out and see hospitality through a lens unique to her alone. "I encourage people to try various paths and test out a variety of different roles in order to reach their full potential," she said. "Be true to yourself and don't ever compromise who you are. Being assertive and self-assured will help you reach your greatest potential and be your best self. Surround yourself with a great network of people—your tribe will elevate you to your fullest potential."



MARIAN GOODMAN, SVP OF DEVELOPMENT, AIMBRIDGE HOSPITALITY, CHANNEL POINT HOSPITALITY DIVISION

Ten years before entering hospitality, Marian Goodman was involved in multisite banking operations, management and commercial real estate construction and development. In the late 1980s, Goodman became an equity and operating partner of a Ramada Inn, then proceeded to grow a portfolio of limited- and full-service hotels. By 2000, Goodman was CEO of her own management company, SKY Hospitality, focusing on new development and operations. Ambridge Hospitality acquired the managed portfolio in 2016 and kept Goodman, who leveraged her expertise to grow the Channel Point/Aimbridge select-service portfolio. "My greatest challenge professionally came as an entrepreneur seeking financing for new hotel development. In spite of having owned and operated successful hotels for over 10 years and having finance, real estate, construction and civil engineering experience, people were not used to seeing women in hotel development when I got into it in the late '90s/early 2000s. The greatest reward, personally and professionally, is having persevered in spite of that hurdle to become a successful hotel developer." Goodman measures success against endemic industry goals. "However," she added, "what is most important to me is the level of passion and enjoyment I feel about what I'm doing. When you can see what you are doing has a bigger purpose and you feel passionately about that accomplishment, that's success."



ANGELA M. KOROMPILAS

PRESIDENT AND CEO,
AMERICAN HOTEL
REGISTER COMPANY

After decades in the hospitality industry, 2018 is a high-water mark for Angela M. Korompilas, who leads Chicago's American Hotel Register Company. This year the megasupplier received official certification as a woman-owned business from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, placing it among some of America's elite corporations. "The thorough nature of the review to ensure compliance with the certification requirements was a lengthy process. However, at the end of the day, the stringent requirements only increased the specialness of the designation," she said. Launching luxury line The Gallery and e-commerce website aBundle.com in the past two years, the CEO acknowledges it takes a team to keep AHRC moving. "Our mission is to be the most valued supplier of hospitality products in the world. To remain focused on that aspiration, while adapting to the changing needs of the stakeholders we serve, we need the right team, chasing the right goals, with the right technology, and the right infrastructure and capabilities. We will keep evolving with the intent of being the best."



LESLIE HALE, PRESIDENT AND CEO, RLJ LODGING TRUST

Leslie Hale took over as president and CEO of RLJ Lodging Trust at the end of August, and points to classic mentorship as a crucial factor in her success. “I just have had and am fortunate enough to be surrounded by people who were willing to invest in me, willing to give me counsel and guidance,” she said. “All along my journey, there have been people who have opened doors that seemed to be closed, or individuals who have shined lights on dark spots, or people who’ve just been able to help me when I’ve come to a fork in the road.” Hale has made it a point throughout her career to pay that assistance forward. “I consider myself a link in the chain in many people’s lives, meaning that I’ve had a number of people come up to me and say, ‘There was something that you said that really inspired me,’” she said. “Throughout my career, whether I attended a panel or discussion and I saw somebody who was saying something or doing something that impacted me and inspired me, oftentimes those individuals had no clue that what they said was so important. So, I make it a point that when somebody asks me to speak on a panel to do it because you never know who you’re going to inspire and who you’re going to influence with your presence.” In her new roles, Hale’s goals are to grow as a leader, to find and define her voice and take the organization to the next level.



RUBY HUANG, SVP, ASSET MANAGEMENT, STARWOOD CAPITAL GROUP

Starwood Capital Group’s Ruby Huang’s strong desire to work hard and become financially independent is fueled by her family’s immigration to the U.S. when Huang was 5 years old. “We didn’t speak English and we initially learned the language by watching Sesame Street. Seeing my parents give up their careers, family and friends in Taiwan to provide my three sisters and me a better life was not lost on me,” she said. “They made a huge sacrifice for us to grow up and be educated in the U.S. I wanted to make sure that I made the most of this opportunity.” Making the most of the opportunity included getting good grades throughout her educational career. “I liked setting goals to do well in school and I liked seeing the results of good report cards even better. As I grew older, the goals I set for myself became higher and I think this desire for achievement is what drives me to set high standards for myself personally and professionally.” Huang hopes she is considered a role model, but she acknowledges that she’s not perfect. “The one area I hope to be a role model is that I set high standards for myself and the work that I produce. I always want to impress upon my colleagues that they should do the same for themselves. Most of us spend more time in the office than we do at home, so while we’re there, we should not just ‘get by’ or ‘be average.’ Instead, we should be great!”



CARMEN HUI, GLOBAL COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF OWNER PARTNERSHIPS, BOOKING.COM

In Carmen Hui’s words, a leader is someone who is genuinely curious and motivated by discovering new possibilities, is open to disruptive change and wants to empower employees and those around them through an inclusive culture. Hui walks the walk when it comes to this creed and after 12 years with Host Hotels & Resorts she took up a role at online travel agency Booking.com, a role she relishes for its ability to spread innovation throughout the industry. On her way up through the industry, Hui said she was lucky enough to encounter strong female role models and mentors to help her innovate within her own life, something she wishes other budding hospitality professionals also could experience. “What I’ve learned over the years is that if you don’t innovate to the point of disrupting yourself, then someone else will do it for you,” she said. While the hotel real estate, travel and technology industries remain dominated by men, and Hui believes gender bias does exist, she said many companies are recognizing and confronting the problem. Looking back, if she could offer one piece of advice to herself as she was starting out in the industry, Hui said she would caution herself to not be afraid to fail or make mistakes. “Failure can open new doors and provide key [lessons] to help you adapt and make you stronger. I wish I had learned that it’s OK to fail earlier in my career!”



AMY HULBERT, VP, BOUTIQUE AND UPSCALE BRANDS, BEST WESTERN HOTELS & RESORTS

When Amy Hulbert joined Best Western in 2010, the member organization still had its International moniker and only one so-called “descriptor:” the core Best Western. That same year, BW began its march toward brand expansion, its members passing a ballot to approve three descriptors: Best Western, Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier. By 2017, there were 11 brands, and last month, what is now Best Western Hotels & Resorts introduced its 12th and 13th entries—boutique brands Sadie and Aiden—expanding Hulbert’s horizon yet again. An industry veteran who started with Chicago’s The Gettys Group, Hulbert helmed BW’s design department, where she contemporized the company’s legacy brands, led the design on Vib and GLo and implemented the Design Excellence Program, which offers exclusive design services to hoteliers as part of their membership. Now her focus is on BW’s upscale and boutique brands. “My greatest joy is seeing them come to life,” said Hulbert. “The locations we have coming...are really amazing additions to our portfolio and they are great representations of each new brand itself.” She also leads the brand team regarding construction and operation of corporate-owned assets. Hulbert considers the “speed of change”—zooming from one brand to 13—among her greatest challenges; however, she said, “The enhancements to our brands [have] also brought the greatest rewards. To watch the brand pipeline grow, and our new brands be embraced by developers, has been rewarding and exciting.”



SIMONE MAYER

FOUNDER, CEO, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Born and raised in South Africa, Simone Mayer earned her MBA in marketing and management of organizations from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Business. Twenty years ago, she put her degree to use and launched a kitchen/home accessories retail business, real.life.basic. Four years later, she launched Front of the House, the company’s wholesale division, and started room360 by FOH in 2007 to service the luxury niche. “The idea of being seen as a leader—although it’s very complimentary and nice to hear—it’s not something that is my guiding beacon,” she said. “That probably keeps us under the radar, which in many ways has been a good thing because the idea of being under the radar allows us to not be the targets of our competition as much.” Still, an entrepreneur can blaze a trail while maintaining a low profile. “Having vision, which is different from having ideas, is a sign of a true leader,” she said. “There’s a certain ability to see beyond the landscape into perhaps the unknown and then not being scared of there not being other people around.” Good ideas are important, she said, but creative ideas are what make a company visionary.



RACHEL HUMPHREY, COO AND VP-FRANCHISE RELATIONS, ASIAN AMERICAN HOTEL OWNERS ASSOCIATION

After spending two decades as a trial lawyer, Rachel Humphrey decided to transfer her impressive skill set to AAHOA, where she is responsible for the nearly 18,000-member organization's day-to-day operations and its relationship with industry and brand partners. She also connects members with resources to address industry-related issues and oversees the association's education department. "Having a role in helping AAHOA's members, who own almost half of the hotels in the U.S., become the recognized voice of America's hotel owners is a great motivator," said Humphrey, who also serves on the group's executive leadership team. "I come to work wanting to be a part of the trajectory of this amazing association, and I also get the privilege of surrounding myself with an exceptional team who inspire me every day." Humphrey's leap into hospitality was not exactly planned. "I retired from private practice, with no plan, and trusted everything would work out. I am not a risk-taker, but I ended up with a second career completely different from anything I had done before, which has rewarded me both professionally and personally far beyond what I could have imagined," she said. Humphrey doesn't muse much about personal success, but does measure it professionally. "I continuously strive to improve my impact in both aspects. At home, I measure success by whether I am maintaining the balance we all desire."



DOROTHY A. JENNINGS, EVP, HVS

Like a dynamo that drives a well-oiled machine, Dorothy Jennings has enough energy to power her along two industry paths. As EVP at hospitality consulting firm HVS, she is involved in the hotel investment advisory and brokerage division and oversees public relations and marketing as well. On another track, Jennings is the conference coordinator for the New York University International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference, which in 2018 marked 40 years of bringing together hospitality's key movers and shakers. It's a role she has savored since 1979, when she helped conference founder Stephen W. Brener get momentum behind the event. Today, she tandems with conference chairman and Loews Hotels & Co. CEO Jonathan M. Tisch and a team to keep the ball rolling. Jennings, a children's- and animal-welfare advocate, said one of her greatest accomplishments via the conference has been raising millions of dollars in sponsorship donations directed toward scholarships and academic initiatives for students of the Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality and Tourism. "Some of these students juggle several jobs to be able to aspire to the excellent education they receive at the university," said Jennings. In recognition of her efforts, NYU named a university room in her honor and in June, she received the United Jewish Appeal's Lifetime Achievement Award for her service to the hospitality industry.



SHEILA JOHNSON, FOUNDER AND CEO, SALAMANDER HOTELS & RESORTS

As founder and CEO of Salamander Hotels & Resorts, Sheila Johnson oversees a growing portfolio of luxury properties in four southern states. But Johnson's resume extends far beyond hospitality: She is also a co-founder of Black Entertainment Television; the team president, managing partner and governor of the WNBA's Washington Mystics; and the first African-American woman to attain a net worth of at least \$1 billion. "Throughout my professional career, I have had to overcome numerous business obstacles," Johnson recalled. "When I co-founded Black Entertainment Television, we couldn't get funding. As a female professional sports team owner, I'm in the minority. And there are very few people who look like me who own and develop luxury hotels." Still, she emphasized, "I'm not afraid of breaking stereotypes or glass ceilings." Women in leadership roles, said Johnson, need to advocate for each other. "I have spent a career advocating for other women through documentaries, as an ambassador for a global charity and even hosting women's golf tournaments," she said. Last year, at the Middleburg Film Festival held at the Salamander Resort & Spa in Middleburg, Va., Johnson helped curate an all-female director experience. "It was extremely powerful."



FERN I. KANTER, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND EVP, CHMWARNICK

Some people accept leadership when it is presented to them, others actively seek it for themselves—Fern Kanter has committed the better part of her life to helping other women become the best leaders they can be, improving their lives at home, as moms, in their own businesses and in their careers. "I have met so many incredibly competent, smart, professional women who have not been able to reap the benefits of being smart and competent. Partly at fault is the world around us, but we, too, have to navigate better," she said. "I will continue to work with women, at all stages in their career, to develop their voice, exude confidence, raise their hands and ask for what they want. I want to see that all women who so choose have a clear path to the C-suite." Kanter credits her professional success during the past nearly four decades to passion for what she does and perseverance to get it done. "I don't acknowledge 'obstacles' but rather consider these challenges as opportunities. And as a woman, I think we get more than our fair share (of challenges)," she said. "I didn't allow other people, men or women, to influence my perception of my skills, capabilities or future potential. While you can't control the outside influences (although I cannot say I have never tried), I believe women can choose how they filter information, how they respond and how they allow it to impact them."



SAM MONTROSS

CEO, CADENCE KEEN INNOVATIONS

Sam Montross has always set out to make someone else's job easier. Running a company with one employee (herself) and one product proved to be a lonely beginning, but her humble start informed her leadership style to this day. "People often confuse management with leadership," Montross said. "A parent manages the family's affairs and tells their kids what to do. Leadership in a parent is one who gives children the tools and the confidence building to become whatever that child's greatness has in store." Montross also said that a good leader is never afraid to ask for help. After all, this is the hospitality business, and both co-workers and leaders should be on hand to provide assistance or guidance when needed. If not, hoteliers should seek it out. "There are so many wonderful people in our industry. Someone along the way helped them when they were starting out," she said. "It is not a sign of weakness to ask who they might know, or how best you should approach a challenge. Don't let pride rob you of the opportunity to learn more quickly, and to allow that person to feel like they contributed to your success. Both win."



COLLEEN KEATING, COO, AMERICAS, IHG

A onetime franchise operator of Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Express hotels, Colleen Keating now holds operations responsibility for those brands and others within IHG's Americas region, where she also serves as a member of the regional leadership team. Her journey has included stints with Omni Hotels & Resorts and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, 17 years with Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide and, most recently, serving as EVP of operations for Davidson Hotels & Resorts. Keating has any number of targets on her radar. "Broadly, we must continue to elevate the performance of IHG hotels. Specifically, we're focused on a successful launch of Avid hotels, new design roll-outs across Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express hotels, multiyear initiatives to drive performance of our Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts, and the continued momentum of our extended-stay brands. At the same time, we will continue to drive the growth of our lifestyle and luxury portfolio," she said. Such an agenda can push work/life balance boundaries, but Keating keeps it all in check. "I work diligently to manage my energy, organize and prioritize. It's also critically important to have the right supporting team both at work and at home. I've always been thoughtful about managing my career in a 24/7 business and being present for my family," she said. The same goes for her work family. "I've been spending as much time as possible connecting with colleagues... to learn what support, tools and empowerment they need to deliver against our ambitious goals."



VANESSA OGLE

CEO AND FOUNDER,
ENSEO

In 2000, Vanessa Ogle, who has a degree in international business and marketing, founded Enseo, a technology-based services provider for hospitality, education, hospitals and government installations. As a minority woman business owner with 26 years of operational experience in technology companies, she has secured more than 30 patents from the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The intensity of Ogle's team has allowed her to gauge the company's success. "They are truly passionate about what we do and how we serve each other and our customers," she said. "They cheer the wins and truly get frustrated when things don't go the way we think they should. Our customers keep coming back for more." Ogle has faced challenges along the way. "I am consistently challenged when I believe the best product and service should win the day. There is a special kind of friction when a woman tells a group of men in technology that there is a better way," she said. Ogle's current mission for Enseo is to equip classrooms around the country with the same technology the company uses to protect hotel housekeepers.



LARA LATTURE, PRESIDENT, NORTHWEST X SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

After learning about sales in a department store, Lara Latture decided that hospitality would be a better fit instead. "I knew a lot of people in the business and I went out to apply for a [sales] job with Hilton for a hotel that they owned and operated," she said. From there, she worked her way up to GM before she turned 30, then director of operations and, most recently, COO and EVP of The Hotel Group. Her biggest challenge in those early years, she recalled, was convincing people that she was serious about making hospitality her career. "When we look very different from all the guys in black suits and blue ties, there is a stereotype there that we have to kind of just decide that we're going to bust through. And that sounds like kind of a strange thing, but I think it's real. I just don't think most people talk about it." After nearly 20 years at The Hotel Group, Latture moved on to found Northwest x Southern Hospitality at the start of 2018 and serves as the company's president. The most important skill a leader possesses, she believes, is a willingness to listen and learn. "I had to learn the hard way and back myself up, whether it was learning detailed accounting skills or understanding what revenue management in a hotel meant or understanding what yield meant. If you're smart and you're really lucky, you surround yourself with people that know so much more than you do and you try and take a little bit from everybody."



AMANDA MARCELLO, SVP OF BRAND STRATEGY, RLH CORPORATION

Amanda Marcello has always unconsciously pursued a career in hospitality. While earning her business degree at Johnson & Wales University, Marcello took several hospitality courses, and her affinity for the industry eventually led her to join JPG Restaurant Group and hospitality consulting agency AF&Co before transitioning into her current role as SVP of brand strategy at RLH Corporation. She said that the hotel industry is attractive because it allows business owners to curate an entire experience from the ground up, but she also admitted that the industry can be challenging to keep up with for newcomers. She lists communication skills and a desire to take action as the most important character traits for success in hospitality, but also said industry leadership is important for fostering future talent in the industry. She challenged leaders to get to know their employees on an individual basis to the best of their ability because there may be some unassuming diamonds in the rough waiting to be discovered. "It starts at the top," she said. "Not everyone has an outgoing, assertive personality. Sometimes there are some more introverted geniuses among us." For rising hospitality professionals, women or otherwise, Marcello said it's important to speak your mind and make your growth goals known throughout the company. "If you are the only person thinking about where you want to be in 10 years, that's not good," she said. "Speak up."



MICHELLE MASTERS, REGIONAL VP OF FRANCHISE OPERATIONS, RADISSON HOTEL GROUP

As regional VP of franchise operations for Radisson Hotel Group (formerly the Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group), Michelle Masters is responsible for achieving hotel revenue growth goals and corporate, guest, franchisee and employee satisfaction goals. Masters credits much of her rise through the ranks to Radisson's culture, especially the leadership of Marilyn Carlson Nelson, co-owner of Carlson and the company's former chairwoman and CEO. "She really set that platform for women to be very successful with her initiatives and her drive to create great women in business and leaders." Another mentor within the company is former Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group executive Nancy Johnson, who Masters credits with giving her the "confidence and the drive" to go farther in business. As someone who was mentored by strong women, she now tries to mentor the next generation and get them as excited about the industry as she is. Leadership, said Masters, is about being inspirational. "It's finding the right people that have passions and you find the skill sets that you can develop with those people," she said. "A big part of it is finding those right people and developing and getting into what makes them thrive, and then helping them achieve their goals." A good leader, she said, provides great direction that the team buys into and encourages collaboration and open communication among the whole team.



MARGARET MCMAHON, SVP AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, WIMBERLY INTERIORS

An industry veteran with more than three decades in hospitality design, Margaret McMahon now leads Wimberly Interiors, a design studio of WATG, with studios in New York, Miami, Dubai, Shanghai and Los Angeles. She is the first woman to be an SVP at WATG. As she climbed the professional ladder, her greatest challenge was breaking the habit of micromanaging. “A good leader has to let go of that habit and trust they are hiring people whose core competencies are better than their own and let them do what they do best,” she said. As a leader, McMahon wants to make sure the next generation of hoteliers is prepared to take on all of the challenges it will face. “There is a bit of psychology, a bit of sociology, a bit of economics and most importantly a lot of rolling up your sleeves and committing to hard work,” she said. “We need to take the time to truly show [women] all the aspects of what [they] need to be a good leader. I think a good analogy is the student applying to college. It isn’t just their SAT scores that matter, but also the extracurricular activities that make them a well-rounded candidate. The same holds true for future women leaders.” She is optimistic for the future generations of women in hospitality. “We have certainly earned our seat at the table, and I am seeing more and more women in leadership roles,” she said. “I am excited to see it continue.”



KATIE MORO, REGIONAL VP, DEMAND360 PARTNERSHIPS, TRAVELCLICK

Revenue management isn’t a topic that excites the majority of people, but TravelClick’s Katie Moro is the exception. Ten years after joining TravelClick as the first person hired to sell the Demand360 product, she still is “super passionate” about the topic. “The fact that I’m excited about it 10 years later, it definitely comes through,” she said. “When I’m on the phone with customers and I’m even just showing the product, I get so excited about what it can do for the hoteliers that it really shines through.” Moro has watched revenue management change over the years, and she said she is proud to have helped influence that change. “It’s such a rewarding thing for me because people are doing things differently, and a lot of that comes from our product. They are looking at future data for the first time ever. What I’m doing has played a big part in the advancement, and it’s exciting.” Moro also is excited by the growth of women in the revenue management field. She spoke on a panel in June at the NYU International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference and the entire panel was composed of women. “We were just blown away. For me, it confirmed that this is the time for women to be leaders in our industry. You walk in sometimes and there’s many men in suits. And that, I don’t think, is going to change any time soon. But to have a panel talking about data in our industry and having it be women was really, really gratifying.”



LEENY OBERG, CFO, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

Before becoming Marriott International’s CFO in 2016, Leeny Oberg was CFO for the company’s Ritz-Carlton brand, and spent five years as Marriott’s SVP of corporate and development finance, leading a team that valued new hotel development projects and merger-and-acquisition opportunities and prepared the company’s long-range plans and annual budgets. The financial side of the business, Oberg said, is more enjoyable than people might think. “It’s actually a lot of fun to do that and be able to ask tons and tons of questions,” she said. “My first role was in the investor-relations area, which is a perfect opportunity to get grounded in all of what makes the industry so special.” Handling the company’s finances gave her the chance to learn more about Marriott’s growth strategy and how that fit in with the overall dynamic of the industry. “It means that you have to have talked and learned about all different parts of the company and be able to tie them together,” she said. To Oberg, effective leadership means charting a course and then getting out of the way. “Let your team make it happen,” she said. “Strong leaders are particularly open minded. They’re great listeners and they’re really curious. A great leader demonstrates the ability to focus on making a strategy and getting a strategy executed, but also thinking just as much about the development of the team members since they—quite frankly—are the future for the company.”



BARBARA PURVIS, PRESIDENT, ESSEX HOTEL MANAGEMENT

Military kid Barbara Purvis learned to pivot and adapt early, which has helped her be ready for anything the hotel industry throws at her. “As with most small companies, Essex provided me the invaluable opportunity to get involved in all facets of the business—my responsibilities quickly grew, and my roles expanded as a senior-level executive in hotel and real estate development, acquisitions, financing and operations,” she said. “I’ve been in the hospitality business nearly 30 years, and I’m still learning.” Purvis is most proud of her company’s great reputation with its partners, among the brands and within the financial community. “We’ve been involved in over 50 hotel projects through several business cycles, and we know what it takes to be successful. We can’t always pull a rabbit out of a hat, but I’ve helped create a company that’s truly centered around integrity and doing the right thing—even when no one is watching.” Her advice for other women in the industry is to get out of your comfort zone, invest in your own career development and work your strengths. Purvis is more than ready to see more women leaders in hospitality: “It’s a great time to be a woman in this industry—and to see more women succeed at the top will be more than worth the inconvenience of long lines for the women’s room at hotel conferences!”



JANET VAN ARSDALE
PRESIDENT AND
FOUNDER, JVA ART
GROUP

Janet Van Arsdale started her first business in 1970, launching an art gallery that became an art consulting firm. She began working in hospitality when a hotel designer knew what she wanted for a project but couldn’t find it anywhere. “She said, ‘Can you take some pictures and change them around?’” Van Arsdale recalled. When Van Arsdale was able to deliver, the designer wanted more pictures in more styles—and Van Arsdale had a new niche. Over the years, Van Arsdale and her team have traveled the world, snapping photographs of everything in order to get the exact image that her client needs. (She uses a medium-format 80-pixel camera that can take photos large enough to go on the side of a building, she said.) After almost 50 years in the business, Van Arsdale is training the next generation of professionals, educating millennials on the balance between artistic sense and business sensibility. “The combination of boomers and millennials is where it’s at,” she said. By employing a diverse team, JVA Art can work with up-and-coming designers and experienced principals alike.



LISA SAWYER, PRESIDENT, BUDGET HOST

Lisa Sawyer was a freshly minted teenager when her father, Ray, decided America could use a great, value-based hotel product that told its story right up front and (together with Ed Semmler) launched Budget Host. That was in 1975. Twenty-one years later, after gaining a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Texas at Austin and working in public affairs at Time Warner Cable, the siren song of the family business called Sawyer to join the company as marketing director. Budget Host has since grown from one motel in Fort Worth, Texas, to almost 150 Budget Host Inns/Hotels in 37 states. Sawyer, who spent a decade learning the ins and outs of the business, has been president since 2007, following in the footsteps of her father, who passed away that year. Continuing his legacy, her winning smile heralds her ingrained positive attitude. "My biggest motivation comes from wanting our hotel owners to be successful... Every Budget Host owner has my personal cell phone number. It's important to me to be available to them and it's made a positive impression." Wrangling the challenges of technology vis-a-vis the economy chain while enjoying her solid relationships with owners, vendors and industry peers is a daily dish on the executive's plate. "Having a great network is crucial for success," said Sawyer. She intends to "continue to focus on growing the chain [and] continue to look for additional services and benefits we can offer to help our properties be as successful as possible."



ANNE ENGELKING SMITH, VP OF BRAND STRATEGY, CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

Anne Engelking Smith is, in a word, an outsider to hospitality. She joined Choice Hotels International from the AARP—where she oversaw the brand's commercial marketing—not because of her hotel knowledge, but because she knows how to grow a brand. Despite her vantage point as an industry outsider, she has strong opinions on the role of leadership, specifically how leaders alone have the power to get the right people in the right positions in order to create success. She advises rising employees—particularly women—to seek to create an impact through their words and actions, and cautions that sometimes it will be difficult to be heard. "In learning how to be a successful female leader, I sometimes feel that we have to justify our right to speak. The confidence you build as a female leader comes from overcoming some of those tendencies," Smith said. She also said the best way to build influence in the industry as a leader is to pick something you are passionate about and throw yourself into it, and to seek mentorship whenever possible. "Whenever I have an opportunity to talk about diversity in leadership, I do, both formally and informally. I invite associates to join me for lunch, and when I'm at conferences I pay it forward. It doesn't help others if I only keep my success to myself."

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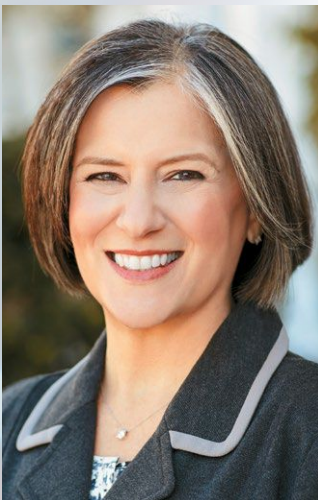
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LAURA VAN TIL, PRESIDENT, KESSLER COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

For Laura van Til, president of Kessler Collection Management, making the hotel industry a career was a natural choice. “With my father, Richard Kessler, being an entrepreneur in hotel development, I grew up immersed in the environment—naturally, I developed a broad experience in many aspects of hotel development and operations businesses.” Richard Kessler, of course, is the president and CEO of The Kessler Enterprise, which boasts a portfolio of “passionately created and artistically inspired” boutique hotels, and in 2010 launched Marriott International’s Autograph Collection. But van Til didn’t become president of the company solely because of her heritage; she had to put the hard work first. She earned a bachelor’s degree in hotel administration from Cornell University and an MBA in finance from Emory University, then worked a stint at AIG Global Investment Group before joining Kessler more than a decade before taking over as president. Her leadership strategy is simple: “I tend to favor a thorough discussion of strategy, but then give the team the freedom to let loose and execute.” She is proud of the impact the company has had on peoples’ lives, and measures influence based on what she hears about Kessler from people who don’t know who she is or when they have been unfamiliar with the brand or company previously. Her advice for other women in the industry? “Be sure to always go with your instincts, and always be able to tell an engaging story.”



MICHELLE WOODLEY, PRESIDENT, PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Growing up in a Greek family meant that food and hospitality were a natural part of life, so it was less fate and more heritage that led Michelle Woodley to enter the hotel industry. Woodley shared fond memories of catering her older brother’s senior prom in high school, an experience that led her to enter the Cornell School of Hotel Administration to pursue the food-and-beverage lifestyle, only to redirect into hotel operations after a bad encounter with a food chemistry course. The rest, she said, was one long learning experience after another. Now, Woodley looks around the hotel industry and sees more women leaders than at any other point in history, but she also recounted familiar experiences of being the sole female panelist at industry conferences. However, Woodley also said she values a balanced approach to leadership. “I haven’t looked at myself as a female leader, but a leader,” she said. “Male and female executives all bring valuable tools to the table, and diversity is vital to all organizations in terms of breeding a prosperous workplace.” Looking back at her career, she said that if she had any one piece of advice for those starting out in the industry it would be to seize every opportunity that becomes available. “I had an opportunity to work in Beijing in the early ’90s, and it would have been a great two years. But I hesitated on taking it and it passed by. I do wish that little voice in my head would stop reminding me!”



MONICA XUEREB, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, LOEWS HOTELS & CO.

Instead of hospitality, Loews Hotels chief revenue officer Monica Xuereb studied languages in school. “It prepared me very well for what I do now, which centers around logic and trying to bring a lot of different things together to determine the best way forward.” At Loews Hotels & Co., Xuereb guides and supports all revenue processes, including overseeing the company’s strategy for generating more efficient, predictable and profitable revenue. She came to the company in 2013 after running her own hospitality consulting firm and spending 17 years in senior revenue-management roles at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Marriott International. “There’s obviously always competition involved,” she said about her career rise. “Everyone wants to advance, and I was very lucky that I had great mentors throughout my career that really helped me to gain an edge.” Partnering with organizations like the American Hotel & Lodging Association and the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, she works to share her expertise with her peers. “We are all competitors, but we are also responsible for ensuring that we continue to be successful,” she said. Beyond delivering returns to owners, she said, success means ensuring team members have a stable environment where they can thrive. Xuereb defines leadership as being able to gather people around a common purpose. “For me, the only way that you can do that is to establish a culture of trust and transparency and communication,” she said. “If you have those three things, you can really get through anything that comes your way.”



TINA YU, SVP, KSL CAPITAL PARTNERS

Tina Yu points to her global perspective and passion for travel as building blocks supporting her success. “I have lived in four countries on three different continents and visited 47 countries,” she said. “I have always embraced immersing myself into any new country or culture. I firmly believe it allows me to bring a local perspective when we are looking at a new market but also build deeper relationships by relating to others.” Yu, who was named winner of The International Hotel Investment Forum and The International Society of Hospitality Consultants Young Leader Award 2018, also points out the benefits her employer offers in terms of growth. “I am also blessed to be at a firm, KSL Capital Partners, where I have found incredible mentors who have always encouraged me to grow and who have never made me feel as a young woman in the industry that there was ever a glass ceiling to my career path,” she said. “I hope that I can provide an example for young women in our industry and across other industries... that we can take leadership roles and not be afraid to have our voices heard.” Yu is proud of raising her hand to help KSL open its London branch five years ago. “Since then, KSL Capital Partners has been able to expand our London office and build out our European investing platform. I’ve enjoyed being an integral part to the international expansion for the firm as it has been one of the more gratifying experiences of my professional career.” Yu has firm goals for the future in mind. “Careerwise, my goal is to continue to help KSL become the world’s most respected and successful travel and leisure investor by continuing to open new frontiers (by both geography and asset type). On a personal level, I hope to continue to learn, grow, travel and meet new and inspiring people from around the world.”