

GLOBAL Leaders TODAY

Issue 4 | Volume 3 | Oct - Dec 2023

THE SECRETS OF HOSPITALITY LEADERS

ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI

Secretary-General, World Tourism
Organization (UNWTO)

ALSO INSIDE

The Woman Who Revived
Mexico's Tourism Industry:

Gloria Guevara Manzo

Pg 28

Creating Positive Experiences:
The Business Philosophy of

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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to present the October-December issue of Global Leaders Today, with the theme "Serving Up Success: The Secrets of Hospitality Industry Leaders." This issue highlights the dynamic and ever-evolving hospitality industry, featuring leaders who have successfully adapted to the changing landscape and are delivering exceptional experiences to their guests.

We are honored to feature hospitality leaders such as Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), who played a crucial role in guiding the tourism sector's response and recovery during the pandemic. We also feature influential figures such as Gloria Guevara Manzo, who has made significant contributions to the Mexican travel industry, and Jean-Georges Vongerichten, the world-renowned chef, and restaurateur. Additionally, our issue includes insightful contributions from leading experts such as Jonathan Abraham, CEO and co-founder of Joyned, who shares his thoughts on the future of group travel in the post-pandemic landscape, and Dr. Raul V. Rodriguez, Vice President of Woxsen University, who explores how the string theory shapes our understanding of the world.

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the hardworking team at Global Leaders Today, who have once again delivered exceptional content to our readers. We also want to express our gratitude to our readers for their unwavering support and engagement. We hope the insights and strategies shared in this issue will inspire you to succeed in the ever-evolving hospitality industry.

Best Regards,
Elena Arnaiz
Editor at Global Leaders Today

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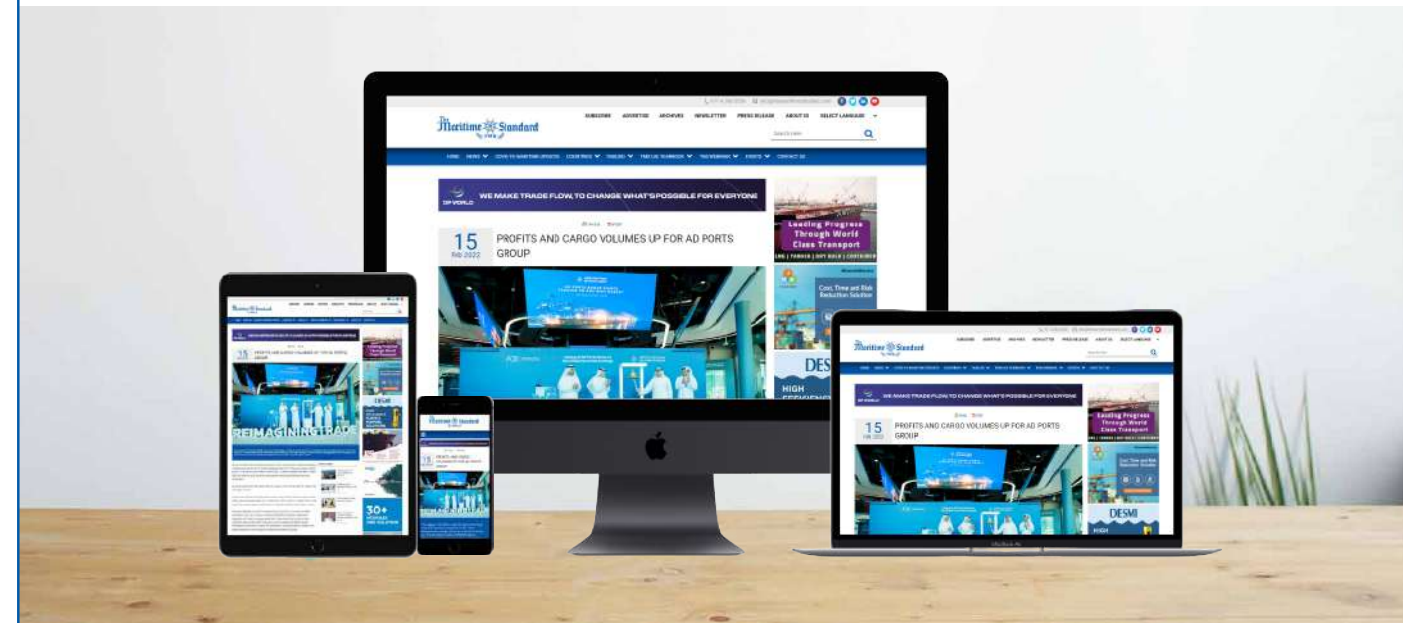
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INNOVATORS

Dominique Crenn

Chef & Owner, Atelier Crenn



Dominique Crenn, the renowned chef and owner of Atelier Crenn, a three-Michelin-starred restaurant in San Francisco, has made culinary history as the first female chef in the United States to receive three Michelin stars. Her unique life story and French heritage are reflected in her imaginative, deeply personal approach to fine French cuisine, which she calls 'poetic culinaria.' In addition to her impressive accolades, Crenn is also the recipient of the World's 50 Best Icon Award in 2021, cementing her position as a leading global figure in the culinary world. Her commitment to pushing boundaries and creating a community-focused culinary experience has made her a standout leader in the hospitality industry.

Geoff Ballotti

President & CEO, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



Geoff Ballotti currently serves as President and CEO of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and is a member of the Board of Directors. With over 30 years of experience in the industry, Geoff has held leadership positions at some of the world's largest hospitality companies. Before joining Wyndham, Geoff served as President and CEO of Wyndham Hotel Group and Wyndham Destinations. He also held various leadership roles at Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, including President of Starwood North America and Executive Vice President of Operations. Geoff's career began in commercial real estate at the Bank of New England. Geoff is a well-respected figure in the industry, having served as Chairman of the American Hotel & Lodging Association Board and the U.S. Travel Association. He is also a former board member of Christel House International, a non-profit organization that helps impoverished children worldwide.

Christopher J. Nassetta

President & Chief Executive Officer, Hilton Worldwide



Christopher J. Nassetta is a seasoned executive and current President and Chief Executive Officer of Hilton, a role he has held since joining the company in 2007. Prior to his time at Hilton, Nassetta served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Host Hotels & Resorts, Inc. for seven years, where he led the company's growth and development. Before that, he co-founded Bailey Capital Corporation and spent seven years at The Oliver Carr Company, where he rose to the role of Chief Development Officer. Nassetta is highly regarded in the industry and serves on multiple boards and organizations, including the U.S. Travel Association, where he serves as Chair and advocates for policies that increase travel to and within the United States. He has also served as Former Chairman of the World Travel & Tourism Council and as an Independent Director of CoStar Group, Inc. Nassetta is dedicated to improving his community and is a member of the Federal City Council, The Economic Club of Washington, D.C., and a supporter of the Arlington Free Clinic.

Ritesh Agarwal

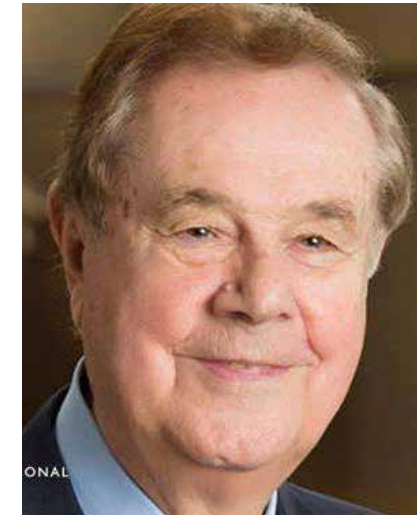
Founder & CEO, OYO Hotels & Homes



Ritesh Agarwal is the founder and CEO of OYO Hotels & Homes, India's leading chain of hotels, homes, and spaces. His journey began at the age of 17 when he traveled across India and stayed in over 100 budget accommodations. This experience ignited a passion for creating a new and better category of affordable hotels that would offer chic, comfortable living spaces to everyone. With his keen eye for design and a commitment to quality, Ritesh launched OYO in May 2013. Since then, the brand has grown exponentially and has revolutionized the hospitality industry with its innovative approach to budget accommodations. Today, OYO is a global phenomenon, with a presence in over 80 countries and more than 1.5 million rooms under management.

Gabriel Escarrer Julia

Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Meliá Hotels International



Gabriel Escarrer Julia is a true hospitality industry pioneer, having founded and chaired Meliá Hotels International, now the largest hotel chain in Spain and the largest operator of resorts worldwide. From humble beginnings as a travel agent at age 16, he worked tirelessly to build a business empire that now employs over 33,000 staff. Escarrer's hands-on approach was evident as he served as general manager, receptionist, public relations director, sales manager, and purchasing manager at the Hotel Altair at just 21 years old. His philosophy of always filling every bed has earned him numerous accolades, including Tourism Personality of the Century and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hotel Investment Forum.

Jane Jie Sun

Chief Executive Officer, Trip.com Group



Jane Jie Sun is the CEO of the Trip.com Group, the largest online travel agency in China, since November 2016. Prior to that, she was the co-president, COO, and CFO of the company, where she gained extensive experience in online travel businesses, mergers and acquisitions, and financial operations. Jane's leadership and impressive track record have earned her numerous accolades, including being named one of Fortune's Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Business for four consecutive years since 2017. She was also awarded an Asia Society Asia Game Changer Award in 2019 and was named one of Forbes' Emergent 25 Asia's Latest Star Businesswomen in 2018. Under her leadership, Trip.com Group has received the Institutional Investor Awards for Best CEO and Best CFO. Jane's impressive journey began as an audit manager at KPMG LLP in Silicon Valley, California. She holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Florida's business school and an LLM degree from Peking University Law School.

LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF BURNOUT

- Written by contributing writers Vishal Gupta, Professor, IIM Ahmedabad, Shishir Arya, Founder, MyHeal Consulting



About the Authors:

Vishal Gupta is the Chief Faculty Advisor of the HEAL Consulting Group, a startup working towards providing mindfulness-based interventions to individuals as well as organisations. He is a Professor in the Organizational Behavior Area at the IIM Ahmedabad. He has written 2 books and over 60 peer-reviewed publications (case studies, research papers, book chapters and technical notes) in the domains of leadership, organisational development, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and innovation management. His research has been published in international and national journals of repute and has been covered by national dailies.



Shishir Arya is the Director, Program Design and Training of the HEAL Consulting Group, a startup working towards providing mindfulness-based interventions to individuals as well as organisations. He also serves as the Director of Global Mindfulness Teacher Training Program with Imagine Mindfulness (a registered worldwide non-profit) and a visiting faculty for Mindfulness with leading business schools in India. Using the evidence-based HEAL framework, Shishir has also delivered several customized wellness programs for government institutions and corporations worldwide.

The age of today is characterised by turbulent times. Recently, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern quit from her job saying she no longer had “enough in the tank” to lead. She announced her retirement and distancing from the high-profile leadership position citing burnout issues. Deloitte, in its annual mental health report published in 2022 based on a survey of 3,599 part- or full-time employees, reported that 28 per cent employees had either left their jobs or were planning to leave their job by 2022, with the majority citing mental health issues for leaving.

In today’s day and time of drastic changes and the disruptions brought around by technology, leaders are at the receiving end of multiple demands and challenges in their jobs. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines burnout as a feeling that “results from performing at a high level until stress and tension, especially from extreme and prolonged physical or mental exertion or an overburdening workload, take their toll”. The World Health Organisation has included burnout in its international classification of diseases and has defined it as an “occupational phenomenon”.

Based on my research work and teaching professionals at various life stages, I have realised the following two truths about leadership:

1. The ability to lead is something that is a scarce resource and is not as widely available as we would believe. Mediocrity is the norm, not excellence. Excuses are most readily available, not ownership.
2. Individuals who have the potential to lead are surrounded by people who are adept at making excuses, rather than solving problems. Individuals in



leadership positions are at a constant risk of being battered and bruised by such problem-givers.

If such is the case, how can leaders sustain their energy for long, continue in their leadership positions and limit the potential of becoming burnt out. Such individuals need to develop the capacity to recover and rejuvenate themselves constantly. They need to develop the capacity to **HEAL** themselves – a capacity that is built on three pillars, health (H), emotions (E) and Authentic Living (AL).

H (Health) – ‘H’ of HEAL stands for health. While we usually understand physical health when talk about health, research and practice alike are realising the importance of ‘mental health’ today and the strong linkages that exist between the body and our mind. A recent study by scientists at the Washington University School of Medicine at St. Louis has shown that parts of our brain that control body movements are “plugged into networks involved in thinking and planning, and in control of involuntary bodily functions such as blood pressure and heartbeat.” The finding show that there exists an extremely strong mind-body connecting and calming the body, may also calm the mind, and vice-versa.

As leaders, it therefore becomes extremely important to focus on their mental health and resilience. Focusing on mental health and practicing various exercises such as meditation, yoga or sports can help calm our mind as well as the body. For leaders, it is important to not just be physically fit but also be

able to recharge themselves by calming their mind and body. Numerous research studies today show that meditation can slow down the ageing process. And, other techniques such as yoga, mindful breathing and other such practices can also help.

E (Emotions) – ‘E’ of HEAL stands for emotions. This aspect concerns with our ability to manage emotions (both negative emotions as well as positive emotions) and not become swayed by them. Emotions arise from a part of our brain called the ‘amygdala’ that is not in our conscious control. Every emotion comes with a pre-conditioned and learn response. For example, anger comes with the response of fight. Fear comes with its learnt response of flight or freeze. And envy comes with its conditioned response of criticism and self-attack.

As individuals who are in positions of authority, we need to learn to manage the emotions in our life. The stress that we feel due to the negative emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, shame, sadness or envy can interfere with our ability to do things that we want to do. Similarly, positive emotions such as joy, ecstasy, may also need to be managed as they can motivate us to act without thinking. The signs of poor emotional health could be physical, mental or behavioural. Feeling tired or depressed, gaining weight, change in eating and sleeping habits, acting without thinking, are just a few physical signs. Feeling overwhelmed, trouble keeping track of things, using drugs or alcohol are few mental and behavioural signs of poor emotional health.

Emotional intelligence is used today a lot in leadership coaching and development circles. To us, we define emotional intelligence simply as ‘adding some intelligence to the emotions’ and ‘think about the actions you are going to perform’. Cognitive reappraisal of emotions and coming out of the negative thinking and feeling patterns is extremely important and a crucial element of our HEAL.

AL (Authentic Living) – ‘AL’ of HEAL stands for ‘authentic living’. Mark Twain once remarked: “man is born twice: first, the day we were born; second, the day we find out why”. ‘Authentic Living’ means the ability to live according to our value and purpose. AL is about doing things that we truly love and value in our lives. Having ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ is an extremely important driver of us humans. We are passionate beings and we love doing things that we are passionate about. Living authentically can be achieved in two ways: first, doing the things we love, or second, loving things that we do. Research shows that both ways lead to the same motivational effects and engender similar energies.

Leaders who live authentically are able to do things that they truly value – be it at work, or in their personal lives. If they are unable to do things that they value, they make an effort in finding a purpose or meaning in the work that they are doing. Asking the question of what is the impact of what I do, how does my work help others and how does it help create surplus for people around me could be some good questions to start with.

Authentic living is extremely important for leaders as only when we find the value and meaning in what we do can we find the strength to withstand the troubles, challenges and pains that come our way.

Health, emotions and authentic living together form the new-age capability of HEAL for leaders. Only we can heal ourselves and only when we are able to heal ourselves will we be able to lead well and be truly happy. Rabindra Nath Tagore, very rightly said:

“When I stand before thee at the day’s end, thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing.”

Serving Up Success: The Secrets of Hospitality Industry Leaders

The hospitality industry has been through the wringer in recent times, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war acting as catalysts for global change. These events have forced the industry to reevaluate its strategies, adopt new technologies, and adapt to ever-changing consumer trends. But amidst all this chaos, the industry has continued to thrive, with a compound annual growth rate of 7.0% from 2022 to 2023. As we move forward into 2023, it's clear that the hospitality industry has learned to weather the storm and emerge stronger than ever before. So, what's next for this dynamic and resilient industry? Let's take a closer look.

As we enter a post-pandemic era, the hospitality industry has undergone a significant transformation. With the World Health Organization (WHO) announcing in May that Covid-19 is no longer a global health emergency, people are eager to explore new destinations, try new cuisines, and create unforgettable memories. As a result, consumer preferences have shifted, and the hospitality industry is adapting to meet the new expectations of its guests.

The pandemic has forced the hospitality industry to rethink its traditional offerings and pivot to create new experiences that cater to the changing needs of travelers. Today's guests are looking for more than just a place to stay or dine; they want a unique and personalized experience that goes beyond their expectations. This means that hospitality businesses need to prioritize the guest experience to remain relevant and competitive in the market. As the industry continues to evolve, it presents an opportunity for businesses to innovate and create experiences that resonate with guests in a meaningful way. The companies that embrace this change and succeed in delivering exceptional experiences will be the ones that thrive in the new world of hospitality.

As the hospitality industry evolves to meet the changing

needs of travelers in the post-pandemic era, there has been a noticeable increase in both leisure and business travel. Companies are increasing their travel budgets, and there is a growing demand for trade shows and conferences, indicating a pent-up desire to get out of the office. The rise in the work-from-home (WFH) segment of the workforce has also contributed to this resurgence in travel. The trend of "bleisure" travel, where business travelers combine work and leisure activities, is becoming increasingly popular, resulting in a growing market for hospitality businesses.

These developments have a positive impact on the economic recovery of the industry, with increased revenue and job creation. To capitalize on these trends, hospitality businesses need to adapt to meet the needs of these new types of travelers, such as providing flexible spaces for work and leisure and unique, personalized experiences that cater to individual preferences. In the ever-changing landscape of the hospitality industry, industry leaders need to stay informed and innovative to ensure the continued success of their businesses. The future of hospitality is bright, and those who adapt to the changing landscape will thrive in this new era.

In the October-December 2023 issue of Global Leaders Today, we delve deeper into the current trends in the hospitality industry. With a focus on sustainability, purpose, and health & well-being, consumers are setting new benchmarks for hospitality enterprises. From eco-friendly hotels to wellness retreats and farm-to-table dining experiences, industry leaders are adopting new strategies to meet evolving consumer demands. Our issue will feature hospitality leaders representing diverse geographies and cultures who will share the latest trends and secrets of successful hospitality industry leaders. These leaders personify the inspirational leadership crucial for paving the way to create unique and memorable experiences that will disrupt the industry.

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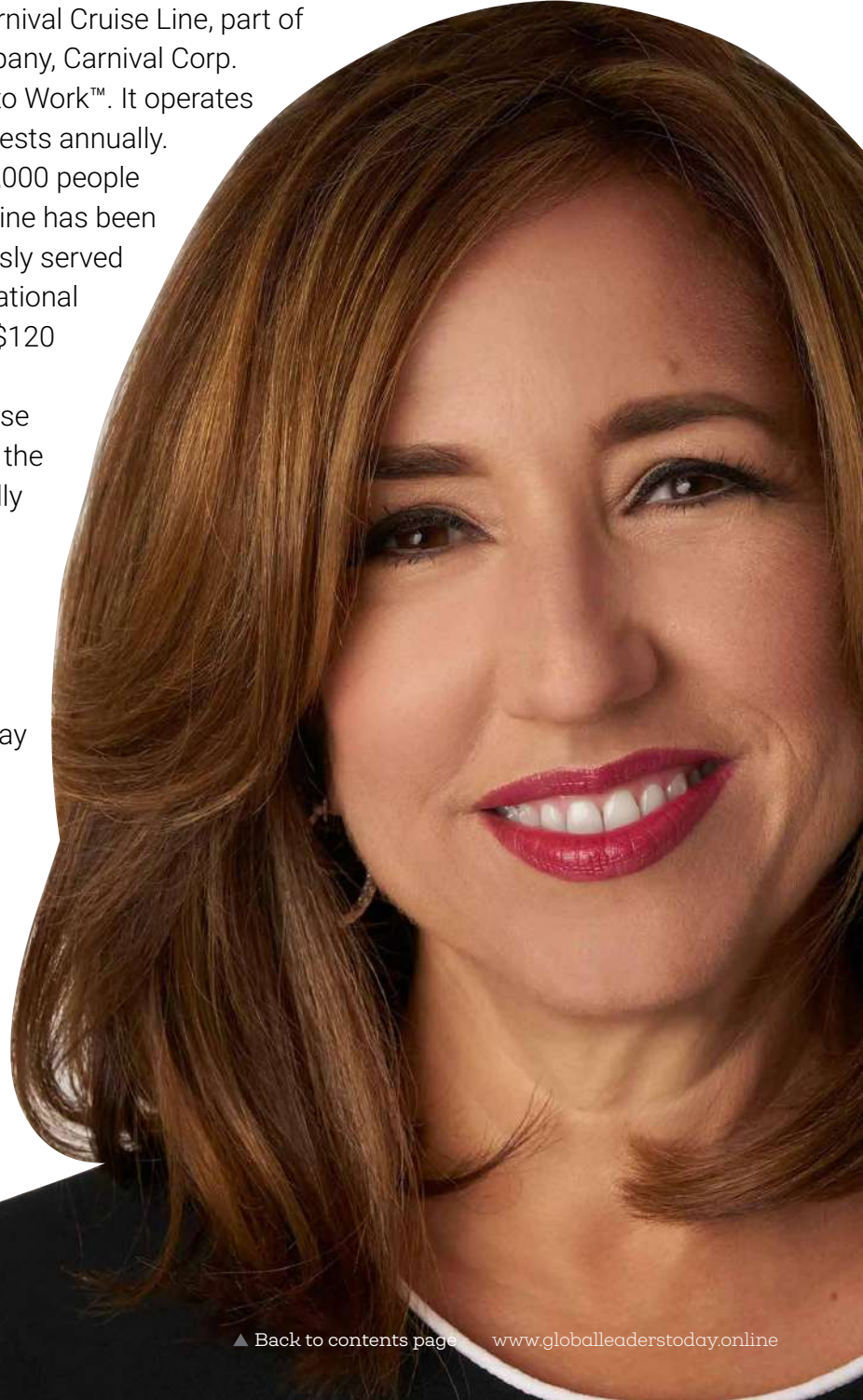


Navigating the Seas of Success: The Rise of Christine Duffy

Christine Duffy is the President of Carnival Cruise Line, part of the world's largest leisure travel company, Carnival Corp. Carnival Cruise Line is a Great Place to Work™. It operates 24 ships, serving nearly six million guests annually. The company employs more than 40,000 people from 120 countries worldwide. Christine has been the President since 2015 and previously served as the CEO of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), representing the \$120 billion global cruise industry. She led Carnival to be the first major U.S. cruise line to resume guest operations after the COVID-19 pandemic. Carnival is rapidly expanding, acquiring five new ships through 2024. Since joining Carnival, Christine oversaw the introduction of six new ships, including the Carnival Celebration, which debuted in Nov. 2022 as part of Carnival's 50th birthday celebration.

By Alexis Miller

Christine Duffy was born and raised in Philadelphia, with her mother serving as a stay-at-home mom and seamstress while her father sold sewing machines and car tires. Despite their modest means, the family enjoyed traveling to Europe to visit cousins; recounting those days, she says, "From a young age, I was exposed to diverse cultures and experiences through my French mother and our frequent trips to visit family in France. This early exposure ignited a passion for travel and a fascination with people and their unique stories and perspectives."



Success is not final, failure is not fatal, and courage is getting up and taking the next step every day.



After graduating high school, Christine applied to become a Pan American World Airways flight attendant. Although she made it to the final interview, she was rejected because her height fell short of the 5-foot-4-inch minimum requirement. But she didn't let that setback deter her from pursuing her dream of working in the travel industry. "I knew that I wanted to be a part of this exciting and dynamic field, and I wasn't going to let one rejection stop me," Christine says.

Christine Duffy's passion for the travel industry started when she worked as a travel agent at McGettigan Travel. She worked her way up to become the company's President over two decades. Even when Maritz Travel Co. acquired the company, she stayed on and was eventually named the CEO. "It's a business that's all about creating unforgettable experiences and bringing people together," she says of the travel industry.

However, when she left Maritz to join CLIA, some may have thought it was a step back. Despite taking a significant pay cut and joining a non-profit, Christine never expected that her job at CLIA would eventually lead her to become a cruise executive.

However, one of her most significant challenges with a silver lining came in 2010 when then-President Obama commented that business leaders whose companies were in financial trouble shouldn't be visiting Las Vegas. Despite the setback, Christine remained undeterred and defended the travel industry, recognizing the importance of face-to-face meetings and business travel. "I knew that the president's comments could be damaging to our industry, so I felt compelled to speak up," Christine says. "It was a reminder

that we must advocate for our industry and the people who work in it."

After coming into the spotlight after answering President Obama's comments about business leaders not visiting Las Vegas in 2010, due to her zeal for the industry, she was offered the position of President and CEO of the Cruise Lines International Association, becoming the first-ever woman to serve as Carnival's President. Just a year after taking the job, the industry was hit with the Costa Concordia disaster, followed by the Carnival Triumph incident. However, Christine saw the tragedies as an opportunity for the industry to unite and improve safety education for vacationers.

During her first year as an executive, she showed her commitment to being "where the action really is" by prioritizing visits to every ship in the fleet. As she rose to become President of Carnival Cruise Line, Christine oversaw the introduction of numerous new ships and successfully steered the company through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite her varied roles in the industry, Christine believes that her success can be attributed to her unwavering passion for travel. She says, "My fundamental principle is to find and pursue your passion. The one thing consistent for me is travel. Running a trade association was quite different from being a travel agent or running a big consumer company. But all of it ties back to my passion, travel."

Navigating the pandemic was one of Christine's toughest challenges as a leader. She explains, "As a leader, one of the toughest challenges in times of uncertainty is to resist the urge to make decisions before you have to. People look to us for guidance, but it's important to have patience and the humility to admit that we don't have all the answers yet." She continued, "During the pandemic, information was constantly changing, and we had to wait for more data and validation before making important decisions. Leadership is not always about being the first to act, but about making informed decisions that benefit everyone in the long run."

Looking to the future of the cruise industry, Christine sees a shift towards offering customized and tailored experiences for different demographics.

"From tailored youth programming for different age groups to family-friendly facilities and accommodations like Family Harbor and Havana Cabanas aboard Carnival Vista, cruise lines will cater to the specific needs of their passengers. We will also see more flexible and varied dining choices to accommodate different dietary restrictions and preferences. Entertainment on board will continue to evolve, becoming more diversified and spectacular," Christine says. "And as shore excursions become increasingly important to cruisers, we will see cruise lines offering unique and exciting experiences that were unavailable even just a few years ago."

As a leader in the travel industry, Christine is also involved in various other organizations. She serves as chair of the U.S. Travel Association and represents all travel industry components. Recently, she was re-appointed to the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board by the Secretary of Commerce. In addition to these roles, she serves on the Board of Directors of Aimbridge Hospitality and Herschend Family Entertainment, which owns and operates theme parks like Dollywood and Silver Dollar City. Furthermore, Christine is a member of the Professional Advisory Board of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, of which Carnival is the official celebration partner.

In addition to her accomplishments in the travel industry, Christine is an advocate for women's leadership and has founded the Women's Leadership Initiative of Meeting Professionals International to address the limited number of women in executive and leadership roles in the travel industry. She is also a member of The Committee of 200, which is working towards advancing women's leadership by bringing together the world's most successful women's business leaders.

To conclude, Christine draws inspiration from the words of "Darkest Hour": "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, and courage is getting up and taking the next step every day." "This quote rings true because it reminds us that success is temporary and failure is not the end. Rather, it's about having the courage to get up every day and figure out the next step, even in the face of setbacks."

5 LEADERSHIP ANCHORS™ TO RE-IMAGINE HOW YOU SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Written by Dr. Glenn Williams, Founder, LCP Global



About the Author:

With more than 25 years working as a psychologist, CSuite leader, and executive coach working with leaders in more than 40 countries, Dr Glenn Williams founded LCP Global in 2010. Through his doctoral research and working with thousands of high-capacity leaders, he discovered the connection between personal and corporate well-being and how together they unlock resilience and breakthrough performance. Because success can often come at the expense of important goals and relationships, LCP Global works with leaders and their teams to build and catalyze a culture where leaders can flourish, and organizations can achieve strategic growth outcomes by closing the gap between strategy and execution. When leaders embrace the 5 Leadership Anchors™, they are able to transform their capacity to lead themselves, others, and their businesses. Glenn is the author of three books, the latest published in July 2023, *When Leaders Are Lost: Moving Beyond Disappointment, Failure, and Hurt to Redefine Success*.

It's 2023, and the hospitality and service industries are rebuilding. The COVID-19 global pandemic devastated sectors relying on a consistent flow of people. They could only pivot so much, with cafés, restaurants, hotels, motels, conference centres, and more bearing the brunt of lockdowns and restrictions on travel and trade.

In 2019, the Hospitality Sector, which includes the Travel & Tourism Sector, accounted for 10.4% of global GDP, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). By 2022, the WTTC reported that the hospitality and tourism industries now account for 7.6% of global GDP.

Many businesses closed their doors for good. For those who made it through, there are challenges, but there's also the opportunity to re-imagine and re-position an entire industry.

2023 has brought its share of issues, including rumblings of recession. More than ever, we need courageous leaders willing to think outside the box. If the hospitality and service industries are to

flourish, those at the top must embrace a leadership model that grounds and enriches their own lives, empowering them to do the same for those they lead.

Re-imagine how you serve your customers with 5 Leadership Anchors™

As part of my doctoral thesis, I was privileged to meet and talk with many in global and regional leadership positions across different industries. From these interviews, roundtables, and extensive research, **5 Leadership Anchors™** emerged.

1. Leveraging Relational Currency — involves the quality of your relationships, including those outside your immediate working environment
2. Understanding Motivational Drivers — understanding what success looks like for you, and those you lead and serve
3. Building Resilient Character — how your value code builds resilience, commitment, and confidence
4. Empowering Effective Decision-Making — understanding how your personal script influences every decision you make every day

5. Transforming Goals and Outcomes — building on the first four leadership anchors can create a new trajectory for you, your business, and your customers

Leveraging Relational Currency

Leaders must look after their physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. The research and my discussions with hundreds of leaders tell us that most of those in top leadership roles often sacrifice close personal relationships in pursuit of success. Meaningful relationships outside work energize and refresh, but the positive effects are more far-reaching than many realize.

When leaders invest in their closest relationships, they model a lifestyle of connection to all watching. Prioritizing close friendships, marriages, and family, sends a powerful message to colleagues, staff, and, ultimately, our customers.

Forging authentic customer relations

For all of the disruptions of recent years, there were a few incredibly positive societal shifts. Number one was that we realized that relationships are, in the end, all we have. Those wanting to



thrive in the new era of business must take the desire for genuine and authentic connections seriously.

Leaders who value their relationships are far more likely to appreciate strong customer relationships. Your clients need to know you're listening, understand their needs and are here to serve and benefit them. This must be genuine. Customers can spot platitudes a mile off. It also conveys to them that the service you provide to them goes beyond the transaction.

If you want to set yourself apart, provide exceptional customer service, and flourish in business, ask yourself the following questions.

- What are some of the unique characteristics of your relationship with clients that set you apart from the rest?
- Which relationships are most important to your sales process and customer service endeavours? Do they know you care about their needs?
- How do your relationships outside work model your commitment to serving your customers, injecting meaning and joy in your interactions?

Understanding Motivational Drivers

What does a successful outcome look like for your clients and customers? In other words, what are their key motivational drivers?

Self-awareness is universally recognized as a vital leadership trait. Similarly, it's critical for the relationships you want to serve well. How can you achieve it? Stop talking. Listen. Don't focus on the product or service. Focus on your client's needs and wants and the benefits they expect from you. By focusing on what they need, what motivates them, and their expectations, you're more likely to recognize the overlap in what defines success for them and you.

Similarly, taking time to get to know your colleagues and the teams you have responsibility for will reap benefits for all. Think about it; how can you motivate and inspire those you lead and work with if you don't know what's important to them?

One powerful insight I have come to appreciate is that the needs of my clients change over time, and I need to be careful not to assume that the service I provided last time is what they need or want now.

Building Resilient Character

What's your value code? A leader's values influence all behavior and decisions. Your value code is foundational to your brand and the organizational culture you want to create. Your values influence how you view and serve others. If you regard customer relationships as purely transactional, it won't be long before someone else comes along who can do it better.

However, if you focus on building connections, understanding needs, and appreciating the long-term value of customers—including what long-term value looks like for them—the value you deliver will be multi-faceted, authentic, and relationally based. This type of commitment creates resiliency in your brand, with trust an integral part of what you offer.

Empowering Effective Decision-Making

What's your script? Developing an awareness of your personal script helps you understand what influences your decisions and how you empower others to participate in decision-making.

Learn to leverage the power of story. Your colleagues and those you partner with to deliver great customer service need to see how your story connects to your work. Everyone has a story. Learn about your customer. Learn to connect your story with theirs. Stories create context and meaning and spark interest. When you turn up to work, does your internal script focus on creating a brand encompassing a customer experience that builds connection, or do you tell yourself just to do enough to get through the day?

Transforming Goals and Outcomes

Building on the first four leadership anchors creates a new trajectory for you, your business, and your customers.

It's contagious when leaders know who they are, who their customers are, and what's important to them. It will change how you and your staff relate to and serve your clients. For example, when faced with a stressed-out customer, remember that we all have bad days and ask yourself some questions.

- How can I make their world better?
- How can I serve them in such a way that they leave inspired, feeling lighter?

As leaders, we're in a rare moment in time. We can set an entire industry up to flourish as we embrace transformation in our own lives and champion it in the broader business culture.

I'll leave you with this question. What goals can you set for yourself and your business that will radically transform how your customers see you?

Transforming Tourism: How Zurab Pololikashvili is Leading the Recovery

Zurab Pololikashvili has been Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) since January 2018. Prior to this, he worked in a number of high-level roles in both the private and public sectors. After graduating with a degree in banking, Mr. Pololikashvili gained extensive experience in the private sector, including a prominent role in one of Georgia's biggest banks and as CEO of the country's leading football team, FC Dinamo Tbilisi.

By Sherlyn Gomes

Zurab Pololikashvili's career has been marked by an impressive range of achievements across both the private and public sectors. Armed with a degree in banking, he quickly rose through the ranks of one of Georgia's biggest banks, serving in prominent roles such as Manager of International Operations for TBC Bank, Director of TBC Bank's Central Branch Office from 2001-2005, and Vice President of TBC Group from 2010 to 2011. Not content with merely excelling in the financial world, Pololikashvili also served as CEO of the country's leading football team, FC Dinamo Tbilisi, from 2001 to 2011.

Pololikashvili then transitioned to the public sector, serving as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2005 to 2006. In this role, he supervised various departments and was responsible for ushering in a new phase of more liberal and secure visa regimes, as well as deepening relations with international organizations such as the UNWTO.

Due to his outstanding achievements, in 2006, Pololikashvili was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to Spain, Andorra, Algeria, and Morocco. He also

served as Permanent Representative of Georgia to the UNWTO up to December 2017.

Between 2009 and 2010, he was the Minister of Economic Development of Georgia, overseeing the country's long-term fiscal growth strategies, advanced foreign trade and investment policy initiatives, and promoting the development of the tourism, infrastructure, and transportation sectors. As Minister, he launched an innovative policy for the development of tourism in Georgia, prioritizing the industry on both the government and private sector agendas. His reforms, marketing activities, improvement of infrastructure, and visa liberalization initiatives helped Georgia nearly double the number of international tourist arrivals from 1.5 million in 2009 to over 2.8 million by 2011. These reforms paved the way for sustainable tourism practices in Georgia and poverty alleviation initiatives, placing Georgia among the top tourism destinations in the region.

Pololikashvili's exceptional accomplishments in the industry led to his election as the Secretary-General of UNWTO, the United Nations agency

dedicated to promoting sustainable, responsible, and inclusive tourism, back in 2018. In this role, his leadership has been instrumental in advancing the organization's key priorities, including jobs and education, tourism and rural development, and sustainability. At the 23rd General Assembly of the UNWTO, Member States unanimously approved his plan of action for global tourism, including the landmark Agenda for Africa and his focus on promoting tourism as a driver of gender equality, job creation, and rural development.

When the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill, and the tourism sector was the worst affected of all major economic sectors, the Secretary-General of UNWTO, Pololikashvili, took this crisis as an opportunity to rethink tourism development. He says, "Recovery must involve transforming the sector, re-inventing tourism destinations and businesses, rebuilding the tourism ecosystem, and innovating and investing in sustainable tourism."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pololikashvili played a pivotal role in guiding the tourism sector's response and recovery, winning political and



Our sector gives them a chance to make a living, to earn not just a wage but also dignity and equality. Tourism jobs also empower people and provide a chance to have a stake in their societies – often for the first time.



practical support from governments and international organizations and uniting stakeholders around shared solutions and harmonized protocols. Under his leadership, UNWTO gained unprecedented visibility and prominence within the United Nations system, strengthening bonds with other key agencies and placing tourism at the heart of the broader recovery and sustainable development agenda.

Pololikashvili centered his efforts on supporting measures to restart tourism from both governments and the private sector through partnerships and agreements, with a special focus on

innovation, education, and digitalization. Pololikashvili guided the sector, releasing recommendations for action and giving health advice to tourists. Moreover, as a UN agency specializing in tourism, UNWTO has released frequent travel restrictions reports and regular analysis of the COVID-19 impact on Tourism.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the tourism industry, with a 60-80% decline in international tourism foreseen for 2020 and a drop of between US \$910 billion and \$1.2 trillion in exports," said Pololikashvili.

According to the UNWTO, over 100 million direct tourism jobs were at risk due to the pandemic, disproportionately affecting women, young people, rural communities, indigenous peoples, and informal workers - groups that are more likely to be employed in micro or small tourism businesses. The crisis also created an even more significant hardship for low-income and developing economies and their local communities, which disproportionately depend on tourism and hence face a severe risk of higher poverty.

In response to this crisis, Pololikashvili said, "I take it upon myself to lead



Without a doubt, we have a big to-do list! Firstly, we need to rethink tourism as an employer. In every part of the world, our sector is a lifeline. It supports millions of businesses and jobs. But we must make sure these are decent jobs! During the pandemic, we saw large numbers of workers leave tourism. Not all of them have returned.



UNWTO with a strong focus on building partnerships, fostering jobs and opportunities for all, mastering technology and innovation, and advancing sustainability and the fight against climate change."

Under his leadership, UNWTO convened the Global Tourism Crisis Committee (GTCC), gathering the heads of the tourism sector to prepare a unified global response to the crisis and a guide towards recovery by ensuring WHO that health measures are implemented in ways that minimize the disproportionate impact on international travel and trade; by standing in solidarity with the affected countries; and by emphasizing tourism's proven resilience and by standing ready to support recovery.

The UNWTO-led Committee has held regular virtual meetings, reflecting the need for coordinated and efficient action by the private and public sectors, governments, international financing institutions, and the United Nations, with agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and

the International Maritime Organization (IMO); Among the private sector were representatives from IFEMA, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the Airports Council International (ACI), and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

"Tourism can – and indeed must – play a key role in turning 'recover together, recover stronger' into action. To be sure, ours was among the worst affected of all major economic sectors over the past two years," said Pololikashvili. Despite the challenges faced by the tourism sector, he remains optimistic about its ability to bounce back and believes that its transformative power can benefit all.

According to Pololikashvili, travel is not only an excellent barometer of trust on a global scale, but it also has a unique ability to drive recovery and create opportunities. He says, "From political leaders to start-up businesses, the transformative power of tourism can benefit individuals and communities alike like never before." He emphasized that the tourism industry's potential to provide opportunities for all, regardless of social or economic background, is unparalleled.

Despite the harsh impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry, Pololikashvili firmly believes in its potential to bounce back and help shape a sustainable and inclusive future for all. He acknowledged the significant challenges faced by the industry, saying, "In 2020, the number of international tourists slumped down to levels last seen 30 years ago. G20 economies saw their tourism gross domestic product cut by half. And in two years, the world lost almost \$4 trillion in direct tourism GDP and around 50 million tourism jobs."

He adds, "However, the worst looks to be over. Tourism is restarting in many parts of the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization's data show that international arrival numbers for the first seven months of 2022 were three times higher than for 2021."

Pololikashvili's remarkable contributions to the tourism industry have not gone

unnoticed, as evidenced by his re-election for a second term as Secretary-General of UNWTO during the 24th General Assembly in Madrid in 2021. His strong mandate to guide the restart of tourism and advance key priorities underscores his unwavering commitment to promoting tourism's transformative power for the benefit of all.

In 2022, World Tourism Day was centered around the theme of 'Rethinking Tourism.' He says, "We made clear that now is the time to speed up and scale up our sector's transformation. There is no time to waste. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, has warned us the global community is "moving backward."

In his view, tourism must be rethought in every way, from its role as an employer and driver of opportunity to its economic and environmental impacts. Pololikashvili emphasizes the need for tourism to be seen as a solution to, rather than a cause of, the climate emergency. He says, "It needs to be addressed at every level: As an employer As a driver of opportunity As an economic pillar And as a solution to – not a cause of – the climate emergency."

He continues, "Without a doubt, we have a big to-do list! Firstly, we need to rethink tourism as an employer. In every part of the world, our sector is a lifeline. It supports millions of businesses and jobs. But we must make sure these are decent jobs! During the pandemic, we saw large numbers of workers leave tourism. Not all of them have returned."

Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of tourism as a force of peace and understanding. He adds, "We must continue to make tourism a force of peace and understanding. Just over one year ago, Russia invaded Ukraine. Tourism stood together in condemnation. Our Members swiftly voted to suspend Russia's Membership in UNWTO. And our sector offered practical support for those affected – with flights, hotels, and more. I assure you that we will continue to work for peace. And we will ensure that when peace does return, tourism helps rebuild broken trust."



He continues, "But while we have reason to be optimistic, we do not have cause to be complacent. As a global community, we are falling behind in our efforts to reach the climate action goals of the Paris Agreement. We are also behind in progress toward almost every single Sustainable Development Goal, most notably the vital goal of achieving gender equality and reducing poverty. Again, tourism can help get us back on track – only if we acknowledge that we cannot simply revert to pre-pandemic models. If our sector is to realize its unique potential to deliver positive change, we must speed up and scale up."

Pololikashvili has also been focusing on the urgent need for climate action in the tourism industry. He highlights the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, which has garnered almost 700 signatories in less than a year, including leading businesses and destinations, exemplifies the industry's commitment to tackling the issue. Pololikashvili says, "But we need governments to also commit to big climate action ambitions if we are to make a real impact. This includes rethinking financing. Tourism can only deliver its benefits if governments deliver the support the sector needs – both financially and practically. And we need Ministers to make a case for tourism at the national

level. Only a whole-of-government approach can deliver the scale and speed of transformation we need."

As a leader in the tourism and hospitality industry, Pololikashvili's dedication and contributions have been recognized by the International Hospitality Institute, which named him one of the 100 Most Powerful People in Global Hospitality in June 2022.

In his concluding remarks, Pololikashvili says, "Our sector gives them a chance to make a living, to earn not just a wage but also dignity and equality. Tourism jobs also empower people and provide a chance to have a stake in their societies – often for the first time."

CityscapeGlobal

Saudi Arabia 2023:

A Monumental Real Estate Success

Cityscape Global is renowned as the largest real estate exhibition globally. It welcomed 350 exhibitors, over 10,000 international investors, an impressive lineup of more than 300 speakers, and an astounding 160,000 visitors. The event was a resounding success with the help of the organizers, Tahaluf, a company under the umbrella of the Saudi Federation for Cyber Security, Programming & Drones (SAFCSP), in establishing the country as a global leader. Global Leaders Today magazine attended the event to provide extensive coverage and spotlight the pivotal moments of this flourishing occasion.

A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Over 3,800 housing units were booked during the event, representing a staggering total worth of SAR 3.8 billion (approximately \$1 billion). This huge investment highlights the robust demand for housing in Saudi Arabia, with investors seizing the opportunity presented by the exhibition.

But the impact extended far beyond the real estate sector. The exhibition had an extensive indirect economic impact on Riyadh, encompassing various sectors such as hospitality services, aviation, and hotels, with a total value exceeding SAR 94.5 million (approximately \$25 million).

Furthermore, the event received an overwhelming response from participants and investors, with registration requests for the upcoming year already quadrupling compared to the current year. Faisal Al Khamissi, Chairman of the board of directors of SAFCSP, says, "The overwhelming interest in next year's event reaffirms our commitment to hosting global events like Cityscape and Black Hat."

Looking ahead, Saudi Arabia is poised to introduce new brands to the world, including LEAP, as part of its ongoing efforts to establish itself as a global hub for various sectors. Faisal Al Khamissi shared the exciting vision, stating, "We look forward to introducing new Saudi brands, including



BBC Presenter Lucy Hedges with GLT magazine

LEAP, and envision five more exciting events within the next two years."

In recognition of the invaluable support that contributed to the success of the Cityscape Global Exhibition, Faisal Al Khamissi extended his heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing, particularly Minister Majid bin Abdullah Al-Hogail and Vice Minister Eng. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Budair. Their partnership and collaboration were instrumental in making this remarkable achievement possible.

GLT President Prof Jeevan D'Mello, who is a renowned international speaker, attended and participated in the event. He stated, "The event achieved remarkable success, drawing speakers and participants from all corners of the globe. It stands as a truly unique and

groundbreaking gathering, poised to propel the industry to unprecedented heights." During the panel discussion on 'The Housing Crisis: A Global Problem in Need of Global Solutions,' Prof Jeevan spoke passionately on the importance of considering the cultural and social expectations of citizens of the country while designing and developing affordable housing. Dr Orna Rosenfeld, PhD who is a global expert on housing, also noted the importance of governmental regulation and initiatives that become drivers towards appropriate and sustainable housing solutions.

Sherlyn Gomes, the Features Editor of GLT, eloquently summarized the grand success, saying, "The Cityscape Global Conference and Exhibition showcased the incredible growth potential of Saudi Arabia's real estate sector, with investments exceeding \$110 billion

and a multitude of exciting projects and initiatives on the horizon." She continued, "Undoubtedly, the Kingdom has solidified its position as a global real estate powerhouse. Vision 2030 continues to be the driving force behind this development, and this exhibition played a pivotal role in attracting global interest and investments, propelling the Kingdom even closer to a prosperous future."

As Saudi Arabia's real estate market continues to grow, opportunities for investors, developers, and various industry players abound. With a strong focus on sustainability, technology, and innovation, the sector is poised for continued expansion and success. The future of living in Saudi Arabia is taking shape, and the Cityscape Global Conference and Exhibition is at the forefront of this exciting transformation.

Navigating the Hospitality Industry: Insights from Fredrik Jonsson

With over 25 years of experience, Fredrik Jonsson has worked for sovereign-backed asset owners, blue chip development companies, international hotel operators, and independent hotels, as well as for the entertainment industry, which has given him the ability to truly have a global understanding of all angles of the real estate lifecycle, both at an asset as well as corporate levels, with a special focus on hospitality. Since 2017, as Founder and Managing Partner of MEREHA, Fredrik has led the company's advisory practice providing bespoke and tailored services to its clients in the Media, Entertainment, Real Estate, and Hospitality sectors. Prior to establishing MEREHA, Fredrik was a Senior Vice President of the Investment Corporation of Dubai and Head of Asset Management Hospitality.

By Justin Roberts

Fredrik Jonsson's journey in the hospitality and services industry has been shaped by a series of valuable experiences that have taught him important lessons about leadership, teamwork, and the significance of mentorship. Reflecting on his past experiences, Fredrik highlights the impact of a decision made by his father when he was 14 years old. He says, "At the time, most of my friends chose a 2-year practical program which would not allow students to access university on completion. I initially planned to attend the same 2-year program, and my father had a very stern discussion with me then, directing me to apply for the 3-year economic program instead."

This pivotal decision served as a launchpad for Fredrik's personal and professional growth, imparting a valuable lesson about the significance of seeking guidance from mentors and sharing knowledge with others.

Building on his formative experiences, Fredrik then joined the mandatory military service, where he served as a sergeant and quartermaster responsible for overseeing the logistics and food supply of the battalion. Reflecting on

this experience, he says, "At the time, five corporals reported directly to me with a platoon of 40 soldiers. The challenging environment, with limited resources and harsh weather conditions at minus 30 degrees Celsius, taught me the importance of effective leadership. Balancing time-bound objectives while motivating my team members to perform their duties, even without sufficient sleep or food, was a valuable experience."

He continued, "Through this experience, I learned that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Effective leadership requires understanding how different individuals respond to various approaches and tailoring my leadership style to bring out the best in each person." Fredrik also realized that the team's success was more important than individual performance. A cohesive team effort, where each person is working towards a common goal, is essential to achieving collective success.

These invaluable lessons have stayed with him throughout his professional career, as he strives to be a leader who inspires, guides, and empowers his team to achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

Reflecting on his career trajectory,

Fredrik recalls how he was first drawn to the hospitality and services industry. "Between completing my high school economics degree and military service, I had a gap of 6 months. During this time, I commenced working at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm, which became my first entry into the hospitality and services industry. At the time, I worked in Room Service, Catering, and Reception, and I started to enjoy the hospitality industry," he says. This experience later set him on a path to pursue further education in tourism and hospitality after his military service, when he enrolled in a three-year hotel management school program in Switzerland.

His experience in the industry includes roles as General Manager Development-Hospitality at Majid Al Futtaim Properties, overseeing land acquisitions and development activities for its hospitality division across GCC and the Levant, as well as with Melia Hotels International where he was based out of Spain and responsible for the group's development activities across Europe, Middle East, and North Africa.

Throughout his illustrious career in the hospitality and services industry,



In a fast-paced world, the key to growth and success is to never stop learning. Stay curious, seek out diverse opinions, and appreciate the thought leadership of your team. It's a recipe for personal and professional advancement.



Fredrik has held several key roles that have allowed him to hone his skills and expertise. After his time at Melia Hotels International and Majid Al Futtaim Properties, he became the Director of Operations - Asset Management at Qatari Diar, where he had the challenging task of managing the company's asset management activities across all asset classes, as well as its hospitality division. At the time, Qatari Diar's portfolio included 49 projects under development and operation in 29 countries with a combined value of over US\$35 billion, and Fredrik's role involved managing the company's 40% shareholding in Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (FRHI), representing Qatari Diar's interest as a member of the board, and serving as a committee member.

After his time at Qatari Diar, Fredrik served as a Senior Vice President of the Investment Corporation of Dubai and Head of Asset Management Hospitality, where he established and led the asset management function for the hospitality division.

He oversaw a portfolio of 2,200 keys with a value of US\$2.5 billion, including iconic properties such as Atlantis the Palm Dubai, Mandarin Oriental New York, and W Washington DC. Additionally, he was responsible for strategically implementing and developing ten pipeline hotels with approximately 2,500 keys in Dubai. These experiences have equipped him with a

deep understanding of the industry and the skills and expertise necessary to establish his own company, MEREHA. With MEREHA, Fredrik is able to bring his wealth of experience and expertise to provide personalized and customized services to clients in the Media, Entertainment, Real Estate, and Hospitality sectors. As the Founder and Managing Partner of the company since 2017, he has used his extensive industry knowledge to deliver valuable insights and solutions to clients. Through MEREHA, Fredrik aims to empower businesses to achieve their goals and reach their full potential, drawing upon his experiences as a hospitality and services industry leader to guide and inspire others.

According to Fredrik, the MEREHA team brings a deep multiyear sector understanding to their clients, with senior executive experiences gained from working with blue chip corporates and operating companies. He says, "Our expertise spans across all stages of the real estate asset lifecycle, from acquisitions to disposals, giving them a unique perspective on the strategies and levers that drive real estate values and returns. As a result, MEREHA provides advice and management that allows our clients to make informed decisions based on facts and economic cycles that support asset value creation."

Fredrik's organization, MEREHA, has been recognized with numerous awards, including Best Hospitality Real Estate Advisory 2019 in the MENA region by Lux Review and Most Innovative Real Estate & Hospitality Advisors in the UAE for 2021 by MEA Markets. Additionally, Lux Life named MEREHA the Best Boutique Hospitality Advisory Practice in the MENA region for 2021, and Corporate Live Wire recognized them as the Real Estate & Hospitality Advisors of the Year for both 2021 and 2022.

With his extensive industry knowledge and expertise, Fredrik advises aspiring leaders, "In a fast-paced world, the key to growth and success is to never stop learning. Stay curious, seek out diverse opinions, and appreciate the thought leadership of your team. It's a recipe for personal and professional advancement."



Looking Beyond Inflation: Why We Need Better Metrics To Determine Pay Rises

- Written by contributing writer Rameez Kaleem, Founder & Managing Director, 3R Strategy



About the Author:

Rameez Kaleem is the founder and managing director at reward consultancy 3R Strategy and the author of A Case of the Mondays. With his team at 3R Strategy, he helps businesses build a culture of trust through pay transparency.

With the cost of living crisis having a huge impact on the lives of many across the country, there has been a lot of discussion about pay rises matching the inflation rate.

Inflation has been pretty low for a long time, with the average annual inflation rate between 2018-2021 being 2%. In the last year, it has skyrocketed to 11%. This has a distinct impact on not only how far an employee's salary will go but also on the business and its operational costs. Companies have historically been justifying low pay budgets by low inflation numbers - but does this make sense? To ensure that pay is fair and appropriate, organizations must address key issues in the pay decision-making process.

1. The problem of choice

Inflation is measured in different ways. For example, The Consumer Prices

Index (CPI) is the standard method in Europe. The Retail Price Index (RPI) is usually used in the UK, and the Consumer Prices Index, including owner-occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), is considered to be the most comprehensive.

The problem with the range of choice is that many organizations will choose whichever number fits the narrative which best suits them and will then have the data to back it up. However, after years of low inflation justifying low pay increases, many employees now feel that it is time they are compensated, although most organizations can not realistically provide 11% pay rises.

To establish fair pay, organizations mustn't align pay decisions with whichever numbers fit their narrative, and other factors must be taken into account. A standardized process across industries will help organizations and employees benchmark their salaries more effectively.

2. Inflation alone does not ensure appropriate pay

Inflation alone can't justify pay decisions. Instead, leaders must begin by considering whether their employees are earning the right salaries in the first place.

If salaries are too low, they should receive more than an inflationary increase. And if they are too high, then an increase is not necessary at all. Relying solely on inflation as a basis for pay increases doesn't solve the problem of existing inequalities.

Imagine you have one skinny cat and one fat cat, and you feed both of them one sardine a day. The skinny cat probably needs more, while the fat cat was well-fed already. Basing pay rises on inflation alone is similar.

A better alternative is to invest in

robust salary benchmarking to ensure salaries are aligned with the external market. How is inflation relevant if our starting salaries are already wrong?

3. Define pay decisions clearly

Leaders also need to think more broadly about how and why they are making pay decisions. How clearly is this mapped out, and do employees have a good understanding of this? Clear definitions that are actively communicated to everyone in an organization ensure that everyone understands the process and knows that it is fair.

When people feel in the dark about how and why pay decisions are being made, they begin to create their own assumptions, which can have a negative impact on morale and engagement. Once leadership has clearly defined pay decisions, sharing them is key so that nobody has any false preconceptions. A clear and fair pay process must be communicated appropriately to employees so that a culture of trust is built.

Developing clear reward principles and communicating salary decisions, as well as desired behaviors to employees will help everyone, including leadership, understand in detail the how and the why of pay decisions. Clear definitions and transparency about salary-making decisions will help build better trust and engagement in addition to ensuring that pay is fair.

In closing, salary budgeting decisions and deciding on pay rises is a complex process that needs to take into account various factors to ensure that pay is fair and appropriate. Basing pay on inflation alone is too one-dimensional and neglects other key factors. To ensure pay is fair, leaders must assess whether their salaries are accurate or fair, to begin with.



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The Woman Who Revived Mexico's Tourism Industry: Gloria Guevara Manzo

Gloria Guevara Manzo is an influential figure in the Mexican travel industry, having held various positions at Sabre Travel Network and Sabre Holdings before President Calderon was appointed Minister and Secretary of Tourism in 2010. During her tenure, she led the creation of the "National Agreement for Tourism," which aligned the country's various sectors towards a common strategic plan. She was named one of the "Most Influential Women in Mexico" by CNN, Forbes, and Expansion and recognized by the United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO) as a world leader in the sector. Guevara is also a special advisor on Government affairs at Harvard University and a member of the Future of Travel and Tourism Global Agenda Council of the World Economic Forum.

By **Elena Arnaiz**

Gloria Guevara was born and raised in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. She fondly recalls her childhood: "I'm from Guadalajara, but I grew up all over Mexico. My parents made it a point to travel all over the country. I learned to appreciate different traditions and have empathy." This upbringing would prove to be a formative influence on her later career.

After completing her B.S. in Computer Science from Anahuac University, Guevara pursued her MBA from the prestigious Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. She continued to expand her academic horizons, undertaking further studies in Marketing, General Management, Project Management, Leadership, and other subjects at IPADE, George Washington University, and other renowned institutions.



Guevara's impressive academic background served as a solid foundation for her 15-year-long professional journey with Sabre Travel Network and Sabre Holdings, where she quickly rose up the ranks. She was based in Mexico City and Coral Gables, Florida, and had regional responsibilities for the Latin America and Caribbean region. Guevara's leadership skills and business acumen were recognized when she was appointed CEO of Sabre de Mexico, a joint venture between Aeromexico, Mexicana, and Sabre Holdings. Guevara says, "I love the travel industry because it brings people and cultures together. It's an industry that can change the world for the better."

In 2010, Gloria Guevara's impressive career trajectory took a monumental turn when President Felipe Calderon appointed her Secretary of Tourism, a pivotal cabinet position responsible for leading a sector contributing to 9% of Mexico's GDP and employing over 7.5 million people. With Mexico being one of the top 10 destinations in the world for international tourism, Guevara faced a formidable task ahead.

Just two weeks after her appointment, Guevara oversaw the Mexico Tourism Board. She skillfully developed strategies to promote and position the country as a premier tourist destination, even during difficult times. During her tenure as Secretary of Tourism, Guevara's crowning achievement was creating and signing the National Agreement for Tourism in 2011. This groundbreaking initiative was a strategic plan that aligned the entire tourism sector and the Mexican Federal Government with all the Governors of Mexican states, Congress, Senate, Unions, Academia, and representatives from the Private Sector. The agreement laid a strong foundation for the sector's growth and development in Mexico and has since been used as a model for other countries and praised by the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Despite facing significant challenges, Gloria Guevara's leadership as the Secretary of Tourism for Mexico from 2010 to 2012 was instrumental in turning around the country's tourism industry. During her tenure, Mexico experienced the worst financial and

economic crises, as well as the H1N1 flu outbreak and security challenges, making it a challenging environment for the tourism sector.

Reflecting on the tough times, Guevara says, "I was the Mexico tourism board president for three years. That was right after the outbreak of H1N1, the financial and economic crisis in the U.S., and security challenges when many people stopped traveling. It had a huge impact on travel to Mexico. Part of my job was to try to reset the tone and put things in context, to explain that Mexico was a big country and we could not paint it with just one brush – no more than you can paint the U.S. with just one brush. The more you travel, the more you open your mind and learn."

Despite the challenges, Guevara remained steadfast in her determination to promote Mexico as a travel destination. She implemented various initiatives, such as 'Mundo Maya' and 'Vive Mexico,' which aimed to showcase Mexico's diverse cultural and natural heritage. Under her leadership, Mexico's tourism industry bounced back, and the country welcomed over 23 million international visitors in 2012.

Guevara's expertise in the tourism industry led her to her next role as the President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council on August 15, 2017. Guevara's leadership at the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has been characterized by significant achievements, including launching the Seamless Traveller Journey program and prioritizing sustainability, talent development, and innovation in the travel and tourism sector. She has advocated for the industry, promoting it as a critical driver of economic growth and job creation. She has positioned the WTTC as a leading voice in the industry, representing the private sector's interests while working closely with governments and stakeholders.

She has championed the idea that travel can be a force for good. "Professionally speaking, travel can be a force for good. It has allowed me to meet people I never would have otherwise. It creates empathy and understanding, which are both always needed in the world," she reflects. According to Guevara,

travel allows people to broaden their perspectives and better appreciate different cultures and ways of life. "We jump to conclusions too fast without putting ourselves in the shoes of the others," she adds.

Guevara's passion for sustainable tourism is reflected in her belief that travel can promote a deeper appreciation for the environment. "It gives them a better appreciation of other people and other nationalities, whether we're in Dubai or Hong Kong or the U.S., as well as a better appreciation for nature and sustainable tourism," she explains. "For example, seeing the migration of monarch butterflies or whales in Baja can help people connect with nature and understand its fragility."

Currently, Guevara serves as the Chief Special Advisor to the Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia and oversees the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Global Center. This multi-country, multi-stakeholder coalition aims to support the tourism industry's transition to net-zero emissions while protecting nature and supporting communities.

She stresses that tourism must prioritize inclusivity for all and take accountability for sustainable growth. Guevara says, "This includes addressing climate change and environmental concerns, as we are responsible for protecting our natural and cultural assets."



Professionally speaking, travel can be a force for good. It has allowed me to meet people I never would have otherwise. It creates empathy and understanding, which are both always needed in the world.



Building a Successful Hotel Collection in India: Randhir Narayan

Randhir Narayan is an accomplished entrepreneur and hospitality expert with nearly three decades of experience in the industry. He has worked for top-tier companies like Holiday Inn (Crowne Plaza), Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, and Kuoni (India), as well as one of India's largest private equity firms, where he focused on investing in the hospitality sector. Randhir focuses on AM Hotel Kollektion, which provides management services for independent hotel owners. His dynamic leadership, understanding of the hospitality business, adaptability, and love for people are the driving forces behind the success of AM Hotel Kollektion. Randhir has cracked the code of effective operational management, and the company today does not outsource any facet of the business. In fact, for some more prominent hotel brands, AM Hotel Kollektion is a third-party hotel operator, operating not only for other hotel brands but for itself.

By Sherlyn Gomes

Randhir Narayan grew up in a joint family in a small town in central India. Reflecting on his childhood, he says, "I often felt the push and pull of frequent comparisons between family members and relatives, which motivated me to choose a path that differentiated me from others." Randhir says he craved for finer things in life and wanted to stand out from the crowd. It was this motivation that led him to explore the world of hospitality.

Reflecting on how he chose his career path, he reminisces fondly, "Early in my senior school years, I discovered my passion for the hospitality industry while visiting the city's only 5-star hotel. The experience had an immediate and profound appeal, and I knew that pursuing a career in the hotel industry was my calling." He continues, "With the help of a classmate's father, Mr. Udes Sharma, who happened to be a Hotel

General Manager, I could attend a Hotel School in Europe that he recommended. During my time there, my desire to be a part of the industry became deeply rooted and evolved into a strong vision with a mission to make a significant impact."

Randhir's career in the hospitality industry began with the renowned Oberoi Hotels & Resorts (India), where he gained valuable experience. He went on to work with well-known companies such as Kuoni, Holiday Inn (Crowne Plaza), and one of India's largest Private Equity Firms, where he focused on investing in the hospitality sector. These experiences gave Randhir a deep understanding of the industry, which proved invaluable in his entrepreneurial venture.

In 2014, Randhir embarked on his entrepreneurial journey with the goal of creating opportunities for both himself and others. This led to the establishment of his hospitality company, which has



Prioritize ethics, have clarity in communication, maintain a positive and flexible attitude towards customers and service teams, recognize that we are in a people business, see technology as an enabler, and always focus on the basics such as providing a good night's sleep and wholesome meals to customers.



provided innovative solutions and exceptional value for its customers.

His entrepreneurial spirit has led him to establish several ventures, including AHS India, AM Hotel Kollektion, Indicus Hospitality Ventures, Modern School, and Kaimur. Notably, Kaimur, a primary school established in 2002 in Randhir's hometown, provides quality primary education and generates employment.

Randhir's belief in creating his path inspired him to found AM Hotel Kollektion in 2018. The tagline of the collection, 'Unique Hotels, One Extraordinary Kollektion,' reflects his vision of providing guests with exceptional experiences at each property. AM Hotel Kollektion is not just a brand but a collection of hotels and resorts, each with its unique identity and charm. Through AM Hotel Kollektion, independent hotel owners can access professional management services to achieve greater operational efficiencies and enhance their guest offerings. With hotels in 18 locations across India, the company wants to expand internationally while forming partnerships that align with its core values and vision.

As the founder of AM Hotel Kollektion, Randhir introduced the first hotel collection concept in India to cater to hospitality assets. He says, "While this concept has been prevalent in other parts of the world, we were the first in India to provide an option for independent hotel owners who may not be suitable to be part of a brand and management due to their size." He continued, "The impact of our unique concept can be seen in our impressive results. As they say, "proof is in the pudding," our hotels have consistently delivered a 20% increase in revenue and customer satisfaction. Today, we operate 18 hotels with a workforce of 800 that has remained strong even during the pandemic. "

His organization has successfully maintained exceptional standards and is known for operating its hotels under stringent benchmarks, which include:

-A 1:1.2 room-to-staff ratio

-A 50% gross operating profit (GOP) target, which helps to stabilize above 40% GOP

-A 20% increase in revenue within the first year for newly converted hotels.

Randhir's philosophy conservative philosophy toward business operations has ensured that the company operates ethically while delivering value to its customers. Randhir says, "As I build a differentiated management company, which is not a brand but a collection, I have taken a quiet approach to its development without much exposure to media or external communication." Despite operating quietly, Randhir's approach has not hindered the success of AM Hotel Kollektion. In fact, it has been a contributing factor, with the company receiving numerous guest review-based awards over the years. Their guests have been their biggest advocates, and their enduring success has been validated through successive Traveller's Choice awards. Ten of their hotels have consistently received these awards, a testament to the tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of their team.

As the founder of AM Hotel Kollektion, Randhir has always been driven by his commitment to delivering exceptional value and creating unforgettable experiences for guests. He says, "We strive to deliver exceptional value and create unforgettable experiences for our guests. Our commitment to providing

unique and authentic experiences at each of our properties drives us to constantly innovate and explore new ideas to enhance our guests' stay and ensure their loyalty."

As a seasoned leader in the hospitality industry, Randhir's advice to new leaders entering the industry is: "Prioritize ethics, have clarity in communication, maintain a positive and flexible attitude towards customers and service teams, recognize that we are in a people business, see technology as an enabler, and always focus on the basics such as providing a

good night's sleep and wholesome meals to customers."



Strings Attached: How the String Theory Shapes Our Understanding of the World

- Written by contributing writer, Dr. Raul V. Rodriguez, Vice President, Woxsen University



About the Author:

Dr. Raul Villamarin Rodriguez is the Vice President of Woxsen University. Dr. Rodríguez is an Adjunct Professor at Universidad del Externado, Colombia, and member of the International Advisory Board at IBS Ranepa, Russian Federation, and a member of the IAB, University of Pécs Faculty of Business and Economics. He is also a member of the Advisory Board at PUCPR, Brazil, and Milpark Business School, South Africa, along with PetThinQ Inc, Upmore Global, and SpaceBasic, Inc

Dr. Raul has a scholarship named after him in ZIBS, China.

He is also part of the PRME i5 Expert Pedagogy Group - India representative.

He holds two honorary titles as Steven Pinker Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Classavo Chair Professorship in Integrative Research and Digital Learning.

The string theory is a fascinating concept in physics that aims to explain the fundamental nature of matter and energy in the universe. It suggests that all particles in the universe are composed of tiny, vibrating strings, each with their unique vibrational pattern, which gives them their unique properties.

From a corporate perspective, string theory can inspire innovation and creativity in the tech industry. Just as the theory suggests that everything in the universe is connected, tech companies can apply this principle to develop interconnected systems and technologies. For example, Apple's ecosystem of interconnected devices, including iPhones, iPads, and Macs, is based on the principle of connectivity and interdependence, inspired by the string theory.

By understanding the underlying principles that govern the universe, business leaders can develop a shared language and understanding that can bring people from different departments and backgrounds together, leading to

better collaboration, productivity, and success.

Zena Hitz, with "Lost in Thought: The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life," argues that the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual curiosity is essential for a fulfilling life. Similarly, the string theory teaches us that everything in the universe is interconnected and interdependent.

Similarly, Paul Bloom, in his book "How Pleasure Works: The New Science of Why We Like What We Like," suggests that our motivations are not just about pleasure but also about a sense of purpose and meaning. Lastly, Durkheim and Bourdieu, two sociologists, argued that our motivations are shaped by our social and cultural environments.

In conclusion, the string theory is a powerful concept that can drive our motivation and focus in life. By understanding the fundamental principles that govern the universe, we can develop a deeper sense of purpose and meaning, explore new ideas, push ourselves to greater heights, create new technologies and innovations, and bridge cultural and social boundaries.



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Culinary Creativity and Unbridled Imagination: Jean-Georges Vongerichten

Jean-Georges Vongerichten is one of the world's most famous chefs, a savvy businessman, and a restaurateur responsible for the success of over 60 restaurants worldwide. His signature cuisine has revolutionized the industry, abandoning the traditional use of meat stocks and creams in favor of intense flavors and textures from vegetable juices, fruit essences, light broths, and herbal vinaigrettes. Jean-Georges is involved in every aspect of his restaurants, creating enduring concepts, menus, architectural designs, and staff selections. He has published several cookbooks reflecting his influential cooking style and has appeared on numerous TV shows, including Top Chef, The Food Network, and NBC's Late Night with Jimmy Fallon.

By Sherlyn Gomes

Jean-Georges Vongerichten, the world-renowned chef and restaurateur, was born and raised in Alsace, France. His formative years were steeped in the traditions of French cuisine, with the kitchen serving as the focal point of his family's home. Vongerichten's mother and grandmother would prepare lunch each day for the 50 employees of their family-owned business, instilling in him a love for food that would shape his future career.

"We were feeding 35 people for lunch," Vongerichten said. "There was a lot of food on the table at 12:30. By 12:45; it was gone. And we never went to restaurants. The family was too big."

Within Vongerichten's childhood memories of food lies the spark that ignited his passion for culinary creativity. His mother's cooking was a source of inspiration, particularly her use of a unique Alsatian vinegar known as Melfor, infused with honey, plant extracts, and fruit essences. This early

exposure to complex and layered flavors has profoundly impacted Vongerichten's culinary style. Today, his dishes are renowned for their bold and amplified flavors, which reflect his unbridled imagination and commitment to pushing the boundaries of modern cuisine.

However, to celebrate his 16th birthday, Vongerichten's parents took him to the acclaimed Auberge de l'Ill, a 3-star Michelin-rated restaurant. Reminiscing that day, he says, "Forty-five years later, that meal in 1973 remains one of the most enduring memories of my life." This experience solidified his decision to pursue a career in the culinary arts.

Recalling the incident that pushed him into the culinary world, Vongerichten says, "When Chef Haerberlin came to the table, my father said to him, 'This guy's good for nothing,' tilting his head at me. He wasn't kidding—he really meant it. 'Do you need anyone to wash dishes or peel potatoes?' he asked with a laugh as a joke. But the chef said, 'Actually, I'm looking for an apprentice.'"

From that moment on, Vongerichten knew he belonged in the culinary world. "I felt it then, even though I couldn't articulate it. The food was intense and exquisite, the room beautiful, and the service was like a choreographed dance. It was pure luxury, like being in the greatest movie ever. At that moment, I knew my future: this was where I belonged."

Vongerichten then began his culinary journey as an apprentice to Chef Paul Haerberlin in a work-study program at Auberge de l'Ill, following which he worked under the tutelage of culinary legends like Paul Bocuse and Master Chef Louis Outhier at L'Oasis in southern France. With his impressive three-star Michelin background, he embarked on a new adventure to Asia. He continued to hone his skills at renowned establishments like the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, the Meridien Hotel in Singapore, and the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong.



I felt it then, even though I couldn't articulate it. The food was intense and exquisite, the room beautiful, and the service was like a choreographed dance. It was pure luxury, like being in the greatest movie ever. At that moment, I knew my future: this was where I belonged.



During his time working with Outhier, Vongerichten was involved in opening ten restaurants worldwide between 1980 and 1985, including establishments at prestigious hotels such as the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, the Meridien Hotel in Singapore, and the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong.

In 1985, Vongerichten arrived in the United States to work as a consulting chef under the mentorship of Louis Outhier. After opening Le Marquis de Lafayette restaurant in Boston, he relocated to New York City to become the executive chef at Lafayette in the Drake Swissôtel. It was there that Vongerichten's unique interpretation of classical French cuisine earned him widespread recognition, including a four-star rating from The New York Times at the age of 29.

During his time at the Lafayette in the Drake Hotel, Vongerichten first crossed paths with his future business partner, Phil Suarez. Suarez was a frequent diner at the restaurant, often accompanied by celebrity guests like Michael Jackson, and would give Vongerichten his business card each time he visited. After accumulating 25 cards, Vongerichten decided to approach Suarez about it. "Finally," Vongerichten recounted, "I said to him, 'Phil, I have 25 of your cards.'"

Today, they operate an impressive 38 restaurants worldwide, each offering its unique style and cuisine. For example, JG Tokyo is a small restaurant with only 14 counter seats that serve Vongerichten's take on sushi, while Jean-Georges Philadelphia is a fine-dining establishment that can accommodate 120 guests and features a bar and lounge situated over 1,000 feet above ground level. Vongerichten's approach to innovation and culinary excellence has been a driving force behind the success of its restaurants. He explains, "We are always evolving... It's not a job; it's a lifestyle."

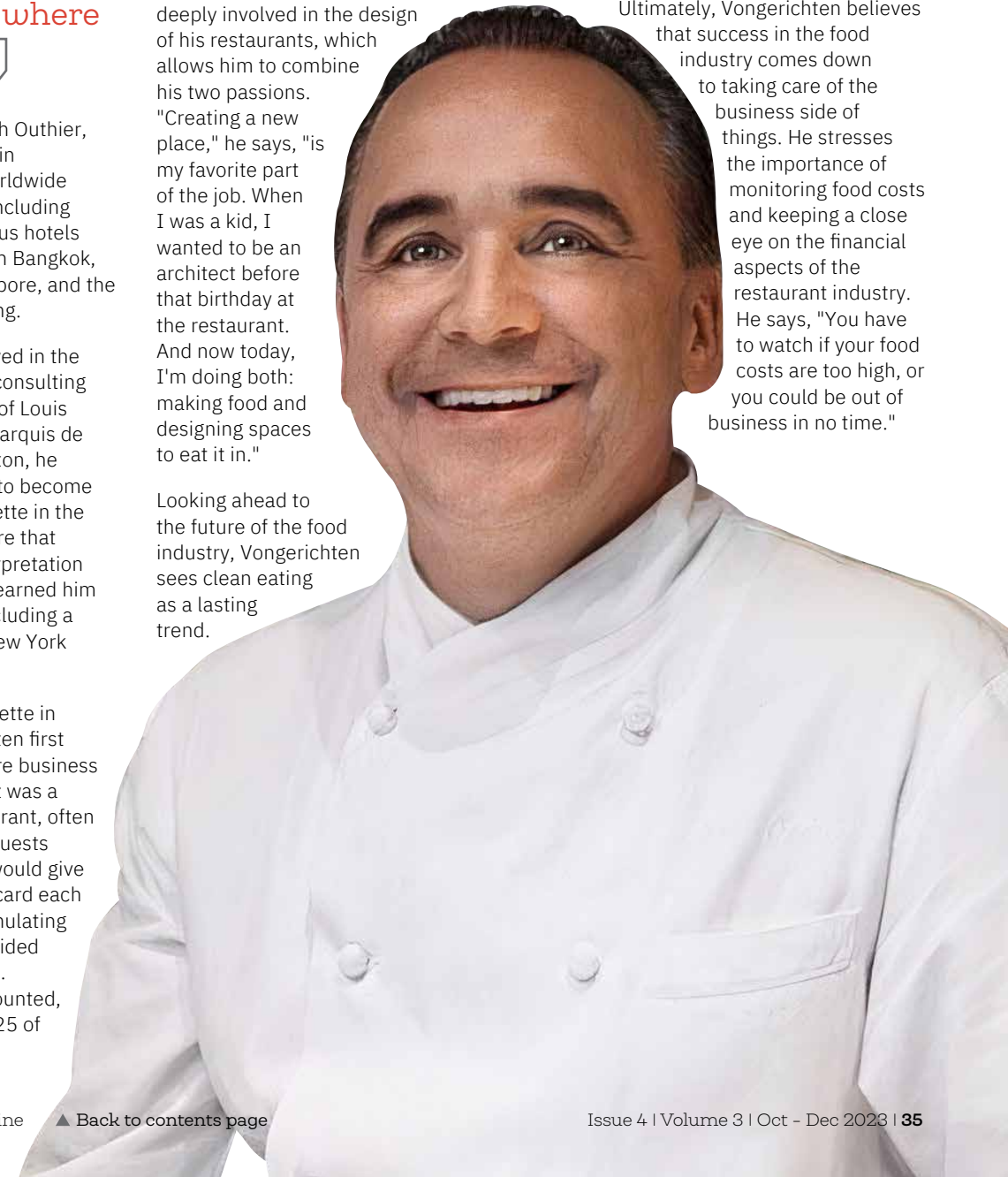
For Vongerichten, the creative process doesn't end with the food. He's also deeply involved in the design of his restaurants, which allows him to combine his two passions. "Creating a new place," he says, "is my favorite part of the job. When I was a kid, I wanted to be an architect before that birthday at the restaurant. And now today, I'm doing both: making food and designing spaces to eat it in."

Looking ahead to the future of the food industry, Vongerichten sees clean eating as a lasting trend.

He believes that people are increasingly seeking a more balanced diet and are interested in the origins of their food. He says, "People are open for vegan, they're open for vegetarian, but what they really want is flavor. And vegetables are better now than 20 years ago. I would say 70 percent of the farms in Union Square Market are organic now, and they were not twenty years ago."

Regarding his efforts to promote sustainable practices, Vongerichten says, "That's my new combat, every day, is to try to have non-GMO, all-sustainable, 100 percent organic, which is a process. But we must train the new generation to be in that direction."

Ultimately, Vongerichten believes that success in the food industry comes down to taking care of the business side of things. He stresses the importance of monitoring food costs and keeping a close eye on the financial aspects of the restaurant industry. He says, "You have to watch if your food costs are too high, or you could be out of business in no time."



Elevating Your Customer Service, One Guest at A Time

- Written by contributing writer, **Micah Solomon**, Customer Service Consultant, Trainer, and Bestselling Author



Micah Solomon

About the Author:

Micah Solomon is a hands-on customer service consultant, trainer and training designer, keynote speaker, and one of the world's leading experts on customer service, company culture, and the customer experience. Termed "the world's #1 customer service turnaround expert" by Inc. Magazine, he's been named by The Financial Post as "The New Guru of Customer Service Excellence." A bestselling author, Micah's five books have been translated in more than a half-dozen languages and are the recipients of multiple awards.

When my ConsultantPhone rings (it's like the Batphone but notably less exciting) and I slide down the pole to assist a new client, the call is often from a hotel or other high-touch business that was once thriving but is starting to lose its way with its guests.

My line of work is what I refer to as customer service transformation consulting. In other words, I work hand in hand with companies to solidify and improve their customer service and their relationship with their guests.

While sometimes my work involves moving an organization from strength to greater strength, just as often I'm brought in when things are going inexplicably south at a previously thriving company in hospitality or another service-intensive field, and it's looking like customer service is where the problem lies.

Unfortunately, the focus and attentiveness that are necessary for exceptional guest service tend to slide over time. Employees lapse into inappropriate language that guests find off-putting. Managers busy themselves with paperwork in their office hideaways rather than coming out into the open to greet even longtime or VIP customers—and they're certainly nowhere to be found if a customer conflict ever erupts and needs smoothing over. Jackie and Joanne, the quirky, charismatic telephone operators who knew the name and backstory of every customer who called in, are edged into retirement and replaced (although, in reality, they're irreplaceable) with low-paid rookies or a voice jail system.

Is such lowering of standards inevitable? Decidedly not—if you stubbornly stick to your guns. The mantra that's needed is this: If you would've done something for your first guest, you'll find a way to keep doing it for your ten thousandth, without rushing, without cutting corners, and without doing anything that would

The secret, in other words, is to never stop believing in the importance of the individual customer and the importance of every individual interaction, no matter how many customers your organization has grown to serve. Don't fall into the trap of thinking there's an infinite supply

of new customers out there for the taking if only your marketing and sales departments would do their jobs, seeking out and converting more leads.

Tell yourself instead that not only are guests a limited commodity, there's no such thing as "guests" in the plural. Rather, there's just one guest: the one who's being served right now. Advocating and sustaining this attitude of treating each guest like the only one in the world is one of the most important leadership responsibilities in any organization, and it's one of the key weapons in the battle to avoid losing guests through perceived (and, perhaps, actual) indifference.

(It's also the most cost-effective way to grow. For comparison: How much did you spend on marketing last year? Advertising? Sales? I bet your investments there were sizeable. Developing a true customer focus is far and away the most effective, affordable way to keep the revenue flowing, especially in our era, where guest choices are influenced more than anything by "word of thumb.")

One hotelier I often hold up as an exemplar of my one-guest-at-a-time customer service approach is Daniel Hostettler, the President and CEO of The Boca Raton, the renovated and rebranded 950-key South Florida resort owned by Michael Dell. Hostettler, a Swiss-trained, Florida-based hotelier who may be his generation's most prominent entrée into the iconography of hospitality leadership, has brought home at least eight Forbes Travel Guide Five Star ratings in his career, including now, right out of the gate two for the just-opened The Boca Raton, one for The Beach Club (one of the five hotels within The Boca Raton's compound) and another five stars for the resort's 50,000-square-foot Spa Palmera. And, as far as the future, Hostettler has set a truly ambitious goal. "Our mantra here, admittedly ambitious, is 'Five [Five-Star ratings] by 2025!'"



Hotelier Daniel Hostettler

As Hostettler often says, no detail is too small when you're aiming to be rated as Five Star. And "the details that matter most are all related to our interactions with guests, one at a time: do we answer the phone before the fourth ring? Do we make eye contact? Do we smile? When a request comes in, does the employee who receives it own it, rather than giving the guest a runaround?" Luxury hospitality, he continues, needs to be achingly personal and personable. With no guest ever feeling like an interruption or like the employee assisting them has other priorities, other things on their mind." In addition to proper hiring, customer service training, and supervision, Hostettler uses well-thought-out technology, ideally concealed from the guest's view, to aid this personalization," he said. This includes facial recognition and opt-in technology on guests' phones. And, coming soon, The Boca Raton will be deploying location-based beacons. "As a guest approaches one of our restaurants' host or hostess station, they'll be prompted with the approaching guest's name and other information that's unique to that guest, including whether they're a first-time or a returning guest," Hostettler added. Based on that last item, the host/ess can offer a greeting of either, "Welcome, Mr. Solomon," or "Welcome back, Mr. Solomon."



Figure 2 The Boca Raton resort's Beach Club hotel, the recent recipient of a Forbes Five Star award

"Perhaps this seems like a small thing," he continued, "but extraordinary, personalized service is truly our unique selling proposition."

And this is the crux of the matter—the opportunity and challenge. Treating a guest as your only guest, focusing on what your guest needs beyond a secure lock on the door, an appropriate room rate, a decent meal or meal recommendation, and so forth, is where

you'll find the opportunity to distinguish yourself in hospitality—to build an advantage that competitors will find harder to knock off than the momentary advantages of perks like two-for-one desserts.



Post-Pandemic Landscape: The Future Of Group Travel

- Written by contributing writer **Jonathan Abraham**, CEO and co-founder of Joyned



About the Author:

Johnathan Abraham is the CEO and co-founder of Joyned – a SaaS solution for travel websites that enables users to book together, taking the group booking experience to the next level.

It goes without saying that the pandemic had a tremendous impact on the travel industry, with group travel hit harder than almost any other segment. Fortunately, the sector is recovering from this turbulence and 2023 promises to be a good year for travel.

In fact, group travel is on the rise again as people are looking to reconnect and bond with others after a long period of isolation. Recent reports show that 50% of people hope to take at least one holiday with friends before the end of the year, while the number of families planning to travel together is expected to rise by 25% annually.

Whether it's family, friends, or colleagues, one thing is certain – demand for group travel will continue to accelerate. So, how can travel websites enhance their booking experience to cater to the needs of group travellers?

Next generation travellers

The next-gen demographic largely comprises Millennials and Gen Z – digital natives, who are 1.5 times more likely to call themselves adventurous than older people.

Next-gen travellers opt to organise their trips entirely online, with 45% of UK travellers comfortable researching, planning and booking trips directly from their mobile phones. What's more, keen to make up for lost time following the COVID-19 restrictions, the next-gen have rediscovered the value of relationships and choose to travel in groups.

Evolving the group booking experience

The problem is: most travel sites are simply not designed to address the needs of groups; instead, they are created with solo travellers in mind. For people in disparate locations, discussing travel plans can turn into a really frustrating experience.

That's why travel sites need to integrate real-time social interaction for their users, enabling group members to organise their trip on the site exclusively and make a final reservation together with ease.

Many forward-thinking online travel companies are already actively achieving this through integrating off-the-shelf software solutions such as Joyned Booking, which provides a real-time, secure area on the travel site for groups to discuss and make travel bookings.

Travel sites providing better customer experience through a social group booking function keep travellers on their websites for longer, securing bookings and increasing revenue, profitability, and loyalty. Additionally, websites using this software can obtain critical data such as price perception and sentiment analysis, giving them access to a comprehensive overview of the customer booking journey.

Group travel shaping the Future of Hospitality

Group travel is set to play an important role in shaping the future of hospitality, with more and more people opting to travel and book together online. Travel sites keen to exploit this opportunity are already reaping the benefits of social group booking software, with those who want to secure their share of the market urged to invest in such technology.



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Wendy Kallergis: A Trailblazer In Miami's Hospitality Scene

Wendy Kallergis is a renowned figure in the hospitality industry, serving as the President and CEO of the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association (GMBHA). She has an extensive background in the industry, having worked for various prestigious hotels and resorts, including The Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons. Her expertise and commitment to the industry have garnered numerous accolades, including the South Florida Business Journal's Influential Business Women Award and the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Women in Lodging Connect Leader of the Year Award. Wendy continues to be a driving force in the hospitality industry, advocating for social justice and empowering workers.

By Sherlyn Gomes

Wendy Kallergis grew up in a family of restaurateurs and learned from an early age to appreciate the power of food and the importance of hospitality. Wendy and her sister were raised in the kitchen, and it wasn't long before they were put to work. As she grew older, Wendy's passion for hospitality only intensified. And so, at just 11 years old, she began working alongside her sister at her parents' restaurant, Checkmate Steakhouse. It was hard work, but it was also exhilarating and she found herself excited by the fast-paced and dynamic environment of hospitality.

After completing a Bachelor of Arts in the French Language from George Washington University, however, Wendy wasn't content with theoretical knowledge; she wanted to learn how to cook like a true French chef. And so she enrolled in the prestigious Cordon Bleu L'Ecole de Cuisine, where she spent two years honing her skills in the kitchen. It was a grueling experience, with extended hours, intense pressure, and exacting standards. But Wendy was up to the challenge and emerged victorious from the program.

Wendy knew that to truly excel in the hospitality industry; she had to challenge herself and continuously pursue

professional development opportunities. And so after completing her studies at Cordon Bleu L'Ecole de Cuisine in Paris, she continued to seek educational experiences that would expand her knowledge and skills.

One such opportunity came from the Modern Gourmet Cooking School in Annecy, France. There, Wendy obtained not only a Diplome Professional Chef but also a Diplome Professional Teacher, further solidifying her position as an expert in the field.

Reflecting on her journey in the industry, Wendy credits her passion for French cooking as the driving force behind her success. She says, "During my senior year at George Washington University, I became the head chef of a catering company in Georgetown after returning from Paris. When I relocated to Miami, I aspired to continue cooking professionally, but at that time, it was challenging for women chefs to secure employment in Miami." She continued, "So, I began teaching cooking classes at a local school. Eventually, I worked at various restaurants and hotels and later transitioned into catering management." Her extensive catering career included serving as Catering & Convention Services Manager for the Hotel Inter-Continental and Assistant Director of Catering at the

Biltmore Hotel. Wendy also worked with high-end establishments such as Gene's Catering, The Mayfair House, Delano, and The Grand Bay Hotels, where she supervised hundreds of weddings and special events, including two Super Bowls and several Lipton/Ericsson Tennis Tournaments.

But her expertise in managing high-end establishments was truly demonstrated during her six-year tenure as General Manager of the Miami City Club. Under her leadership, the club became a premier destination for business professionals and socialites alike, with a reputation for exceptional service and attention to detail.

Reflecting on her experiences in the industry, Wendy says, "Hospitality is all about creating unforgettable experiences for people, whether it's through food, drink, or the overall atmosphere. It's a challenging industry, but also incredibly rewarding when you see the joy and satisfaction on your guests' faces."

After gaining extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Wendy continued to expand her career by joining the Miami Beach Chamber. As the President and CEO of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, Wendy led the organization to become a dynamic force in the community, promoting economic growth and development, advocating for

business-friendly policies, and providing valuable resources to its members. One of her key initiatives was the launch of the Miami Beach INcard, a discount card program that aimed to promote local businesses and incentivize residents and visitors to shop, dine and explore the city. After serving as the President and CEO of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce for over a decade, Wendy Kallergis took on her next challenge in the hospitality industry. She became the President and CEO of the Greater Miami & the Beaches Hotel Association, the largest hotel lodging group in Miami-Dade County. It is a collective of 180 hoteliers and 300 allied members located throughout Miami-Dade County. Its mission is to foster unity and collaboration among travel, tourism, and hospitality industry professionals and government and business leaders on local, national, and international levels. Through education, advocacy, and networking, the GMBHA strives to elevate the quality of visitor experiences across the region.

Under Kallergis' leadership, the GMBHA launched several initiatives, including the Sustainable Hospitality Council, which aims to promote environmentally sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. She also led the effort to bring the 2020 Democratic National Convention to Miami, showcasing the city's capabilities as a world-class destination for major events.

Furthermore, Wendy has also demonstrated her ability to showcase Miami as a world-class destination for major events. She led the effort to bring the 2020 Democratic National Convention



Hospitality is all about creating unforgettable experiences for people, whether it's through food, drink, or the overall atmosphere. It's a challenging industry, but also incredibly rewarding when you see the joy and satisfaction on your guests' faces.



to Miami, an event that showcased the city's capabilities as a top-tier location for major events.

Wendy's passion for the hospitality industry goes beyond simply filling hotel rooms. She understands the value of cultural tourism and how it can benefit both hotels and destinations. She explains, "Hotels are always looking for opportunities to fill their rooms. Cultural tourists spend more money and stay longer at a destination. Research has shown that one in three tourists attend an arts event or performance while traveling. Pairing hotel nights with tickets to festivals, performances, and museums makes perfect marketing sense." She continued, "Creating unique experiences such as private museum tours and meeting artists for a hotel's most sought-after guests is a mutually beneficial and profitable opportunity that

encourages innovation and valuable relationships."

To offer guidance to budding professionals entering the industry, Wendy emphasizes projecting professionalism and confidence, regardless of attire or location. She explains, "I always believe that budding professionals should project professionalism and confidence, whether they are in their pajamas or business attire. It's a powerful feeling to be in your own space. We're all going through a difficult time, but there's a lot of opportunity for growth and exchanging ideas, especially with budding professionals from different countries. So, get up, get dressed, and enthusiastically tackle your day. And remember, I'm here to support you in any way I can through webinars or motivating conversations.

Don't let fear hold you back; embrace the challenges, and make the most of the opportunities that come your way."



Changing the Game:

How Avi Meir is Revolutionizing Travel with Technology

Avi Meir is a seasoned professional in the travel industry, renowned for his expertise in the field. His extensive experience in the travel industry has earned him a reputation as a visionary leader and innovator, driving the industry forward with his pioneering solutions. He is the CEO and co-founder of TravelPerk, a leading platform that simplifies business travel for companies of all sizes. Under Meir's leadership, TravelPerk has raised \$30 million from prominent investors, including Spark Capital, known for backing tech giants like Twitter and Slack. Prior to TravelPerk, Meir successfully sold his startup, Hotel Ninjas, to Booking Holdings in 2014.

By **Elena Arnaiz**



Meir's passion for technology began in childhood, sparking his interest in the tech industry. He started coding at the age of 12, and his love for technology grew from there. However, like all Israeli citizens, Meir was required to complete his national service when he reached the age of service. During his national service, Meir was selected to work as a software developer for the intelligence unit of the Israeli army, which was a prestigious role. This experience played a crucial role in shaping his career trajectory, providing him with valuable technical and leadership skills. Meir's exceptional performance and leadership abilities eventually promoted him to special forces team sergeant.

Reflecting on his time with the army, Meir said, "It's a unique environment that taught me to push myself to the limits as both an individual and a team player. Looking back, it's amazing to think I was only 18." He added, "The elite units are designed to push you to your limit and then push you even further, teaching you that you can achieve anything and deal with everything. It's a great mentality to acquire, but getting to that place is incredibly hard." The challenges and experiences he encountered during his service with the army would prove invaluable in his future career as a tech entrepreneur.

After completing his service with the army, Meir transitioned to operational management at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. Although the position did not involve much technology, it allowed him to gain experience in the travel industry. Meir was struck by the lack of modernization in the industry and saw an opportunity to apply his tech skills to create innovative solutions. He said, "Working for the airport showed me just how much room for modernization there was in the travel market."

It was this realization that sparked Meir's entrepreneurial spirit. He saw an opportunity to combine his love for technology with his newfound interest in travel. He pursued an MBA at IESE Business School to enhance his knowledge and network with world-class entrepreneurs and executives. "It was then that I settled on the idea for my first company - HotelNinjas," he said.

HotelNinjas was a web-based management software provider for hotels, which achieved an enviably quick exit following its launch in 2012. "After two years, I sold the business to Booking.com, and by that stage, I already knew my next challenge was to tackle the huge gap in the business travel sector - to bring an easy-to-use, consumer-grade experience to this £1.3tn industry that was crying out to be disrupted," he explained. This led to the founding of TravelPerk, a one-stop-shop for business travel that has raised \$30 million from investors like Spark Capital, which has also invested in Twitter and Slack.

TravelPerk aims to fix the broken business travel industry worth \$1.5 trillion globally. The company seeks to provide a consumer-like experience to business travel, similar to how leisure travel operates, with a team of experienced professionals from companies like Booking.com; TravelPerk leverages technology and data to revolutionize the industry. The company's goal is to streamline the travel booking process, making it easier, faster, and more cost-effective for businesses of all sizes.

Meir encountered a significant challenge three years after launching the company. Although TravelPerk was growing exponentially, the workforce could not keep up with the increasing demand.

Meir realized he had spent too much time focusing on minor details and not enough on the bigger picture. "Technical people like myself can see people and culture stuff as uninteresting and tend to underinvest in it at the beginning, but they can become the biggest pain points for scaling," he adds.

Nevertheless, he learned a valuable lesson from this experience, which he now shares with other entrepreneurs. Meir advises aspiring business owners to focus on the areas they find boring because these areas are where problems are likely to arise. "Use data and tools to get information on these areas in the same way as you do your product," Meir recommends.

However, after the minor pitfall, TravelPerk has continued to grow and raise funding from investors like Kinnevik and Battery Ventures despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. To adapt to the chaos caused by the pandemic, the company launched a new product called FlexiPerk, which allowed customers to change or cancel their bookings with no fees. They also introduced a COVID-19 travel restrictions map to help travelers stay informed. Despite the setbacks, Meir remains optimistic about the future of business travel and the role TravelPerk will play in shaping it.

When it comes to entrepreneurship, his advice is simple - dream big and aim high. He says, "Start global from day one; think big. Don't try to be number one in Spain; try to be number one, at least in Europe, if not globally. You cannot be anything less than that in your ambition."



Start global from day one; think big. Don't try to be number one in Spain; try to be number one, at least in Europe, if not globally. You cannot be anything less than that in your ambition.



Breaking Bias: Strategies For Recognizing, Managing And Eliminating Bias In Community Associations

- Written by contributing writers, **Jennifer L. Martin, ESQ., Valeria Oman, ESQ., and Melissa Bauman Ward, ESQ.** This article first appeared in the 'Common Ground' magazine. It is reproduced here with permission.

There's been a lot of buzz about bias lately, most of it negative. We're supposed to identify it, counteract it, and then eliminate it. That's enough to make one avoid the topic altogether in the hopes that avoiding the "Ides of bias will somehow make us less biased. However, the less we focus on and are aware of bias, the harder it is to recognize, identify, and control.

Unintentional bias affects our behavior as individuals, community members, directors, and managers. It affects our communities and interpersonal interactions. Unlawful prejudice and discrimination exposes our communities to legal risk. But there are strategies to combat unlawful bias in our communities, they are reducing the risk of the liability and community harm that it can cause.

WHAT IS BIAS?

Most people equate "bias" with "discrimination" or "prejudice", an incomplete definition. Not all biases are negative, and everyone has them because our biases are shaped by our experiences and culture from birth. Our biases are embodied in our thought processes, or what psychologists call "cognition." A more complete definition of bias is that it is the cognitive assumptions we make when interpreting the world around us based on our thought processes and cultural experience.

Bias is a subset of cognition; explicit and implicit cognition are the ways in which our brains navigate the world around us.

Explicit cognition, or slow thinking, is what we do when we sit down to make a decision or solve a problem thoughtfully. Implicit cognition, or fast thinking, is the kind of automatic, subconscious way we engage with the world around us. Ninety-five percent of our cognition is implicit (fast thinking), which means that it is very powerful.

Having a better understanding of our own fast thinking is crucial to our ability to combat bias.

As with cognition, there are two types of bias: explicit and implicit. Explicit bias is the conscious belief that some generalizations of people or ideas are better than others, while implicit bias consists of attitudes and stereotypes that unconsciously affect our understanding, actions, and decision-making.

Our subconscious, implicit biases may lead us to make assumptions about people based on characteristics like race, ethnicity, gender, age, and appearance, among other things. These biases develop over a lifetime, beginning early through exposure to direct and indirect messages, including how media and news programming portray groups of people.

Everyone has implicit biases. They can affect even those who are committed to being impartial. In fact, if you strongly identify as a fair and impartial person, that can make you more susceptible to acting on implicit biases because you are less likely to allow yourself to be aware of your biases. The good news is that when we know bias is likely to be an

issue - when it is front and center - we can take affirmative steps to minimize its impact in our spheres of influence.

IDENTIFYING BIAS

Learning that we are biased does not make us "bad" people. Rather, that awareness allows us to be mindful of our actions to compensate for our biases. Social scientists have studied bias extensively and have come up with an easy and free series of online tests regarding individual attitudes and bias.

These tests, which address bias in many different categories, provide an opportunity for individuals to access their own bias. The "quizzes" are part of the Implicit Association Test and can be found at implicit.harvard.edu.

Now that we know all have biases, and these biases can be difficult to identify, what can we do about them?

The social media app NextDoor confronted issues of racial bias on its neighborhood boards and came up with an approach that may provide a useful starting point. NextDoor began forcing users to consider a few questions before posting to ensure the issue really was one of crime and safety and not prejudice and bias.

The checklist before posting included reminders to focus on the specific behavior in question, to document facts regarding the situation with specificity, and to question closely whether behaviors were of concern solely because of the race of the person involved.





We encourage community associations to use this type of checklist to ensure that conduct violations are enforced rather than punishing individuals for their status. Focusing on conduct, not status, works effectively to make sure that we consistently and equally enforce the rules of the community without disparate treatment of certain classes.

A community association bias reminder checklist could look like this:

Focus on behavior. What was the person doing that concerned you, and what provisions of the association's governing documents does it violate? If the conduct does not violate a rule or restriction, then why is the association involved? The governing documents are your guide to fair and equal enforcement.

Document the facts. Keep logs of alleged violations. Gather information and documents that relate to the violation. Consider unintended consequences if the complaint is so vague or general that an innocent person could be targeted.

Check your bias. Do not assume there is a rule violation based on someone's race or ethnicity. Racial profiling is expressly

prohibited. Consider whether another's experience and lifestyle, while different from your own, may be acceptable and allowable in your community.

CONCERNING CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of unchecked bias are significant and largely negative. Agencies at both the federal and state level regulate and investigate claims of bias within community associations, and those investigations are costly and rarely end well for the association in question

Department of Housing and Urban Development. Complaints involving discrimination under the federal Fair Housing Act may be handled by HUD and can be filed online.

"Anyone who has been or will be harmed by a discriminatory housing practice may make a claim. In addition to assisting with and prosecuting individual claims brought before it, information disclosed to HUD may be used by the U.S. Department of Justice "in the filing of pattern and practice suits of housing discrimination" and other types of government litigation against people and entities which are found to engage in discriminatory housing practices.



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State fair housing agencies.

Some states have more robust civil rights and housing laws than the federal government. Some of them including California and Washington have state agencies that investigate (air housing claims submitted to HUI. These agencies investigate the allegation(s) of discrimination, which usually involves the community association responding to a lengthy and detailed questionnaire regarding the claims and the association's general processes and procedures.

State fair housing agencies operate on the baseline assumption that discrimination in some form is always present. Some agencies offer early mediation or conciliation to settle discrimination claims and whenever possible, communities should pursue these options. Consequences included in settlements often include training and procedural changes as well as fines or financial reimbursement to complaining residents. These consequences are much less significant than those imposed after agency hearing or civil trials.

Community associations should develop strategies to avoid being the subject of such an investigation. These strategies include having counsel review governing documents to eliminate biased language, adopting anti discrimination and anti-harassment policies to discourage discrimination within the community, and consulting with counsel immediately when responding to a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Harassment and discrimination.

In addition to agency actions, community associations can be liable for harassment and discrimination under the federal Fair Housing Act because they are "housing providers." It seems obvious that associations should not engage in discriminatory or harassing conduct toward residents or employees, but case law suggests that many do not get the message. In associations, discriminatory conduct often takes the form of failing to accommodate a disability by allowing policy exceptions, such as maintaining and using assistance animals in developments with rules that prohibit or severely restrict pets. Not only do communities have an obligation to grant exceptions for service animals for physical disabilities (e.g., traditional guide dogs for people with impaired vision or hearing), they also must recognize assistance animals may be needed for emotional support.

Additionally, associations can be liable for harassment, which is a form of discrimination. Federal regulations also state that an association is "directly liable" for "failing to take prompt action to correct and end a discriminatory housing practice by a third-party, where the person knew or should have known of the discriminatory conduct and had the power to correct it." This means that an association is legally obligated to act when someone in the common area harasses another person in a manner that could trigger a discrimination claim. An intense argument in the common area which involves sexual harassment or racially discriminatory language is no longer just a neighbor-to-neighbor dispute or a minor annoyance that can be disregarded.

This rule arose as an extension of HUD's philosophy that all housing providers, including community associations, must provide an environment free of harassment and discrimination. The problem for community associations, of course, is that they do not have control over who lives in the community and how residents behave. Disputes in common areas between residents which contain elements of harassment have now become the community's responsibility.

ELIMINATING BIAS

Community associations can take several steps to combat bias, particularly in their written documents.

Restrictive covenants and redlining

There are still many documents that contain explicitly racist restrictive covenants. These outdated, offensive restrictions often take the form of identifying racial groups that are prohibited. Obviously, such overt racism is a violation of federal law. Despite some progress being made around fair housing laws and practice, the issue of what to do with these odious documents remains.

Encouragingly, in California and Texas, for example, discriminatory covenants are unenforceable as a matter of law and streamlined processes have been enacted by the legislatures to amend documents to eliminate them. Thirteen states have laws that aid in the removal of racially restrictive covenants.

CAI supports legislation that facilitates the removal of racially restrictive covenants from association governing documents without requiring a vote from homeowners as well as legislation that allows community association residents to petition a board to start the removal process. CAI maintains the issue as a state advocacy priority. Racist and gender-biased language. It is easy to fall into the trap of using forms for common, complex documents such as the covenants, conditions, and restrictions without periodically looking at the actual language used in the documents. However, these documents must be updated to reflect current laws and the modern community values of nondiscrimination and elimination of bias.

One example of an unintentional use of a racist term is "grandfathering." In our world, we have used this term to describe a restriction that is not applied to those who took title to property before a certain date. However, the origins of the term are troubling. It was used to describe some Southern states' Tim Crow era laws that required voters to pass literacy tests or meet other voter qualifications; the laws exempted men who were the descendants of those who were eligible to vote before 1867. Obviously, all such exempted men were white, and the practice was a transparent attempt to disenfranchise Black voters.

To eliminate this racist term from our documents, we recommend finding other ways to describe the fact that a newly adopted restriction may not apply to all owners. One alternative is the term "legacy status."

Another example of biased language arises out of the use of male pronouns universally, the awkward "he or she," or the even more awkward but more accurate "he, she, or it."



Everyone has implicit biases. They can affect even those who are committed to being impartial. In fact, if you strongly identify as a fair and impartial person, that can make you more susceptible to acting on implicit biases because you are less likely to allow yourself to be aware of your biases."



Alessandra Alonso: Shattering Gender Barriers in Travel

Alessandra Alonso is an accomplished professional with 20 years of experience in the travel and tourism industry. She is the founder and MD of Women in Travel CIC, a social enterprise that empowers marginalized and underrepresented women to fulfill their economic and individual potential. Alessandra's passion for supporting women and diversity led her to co-found the Shine Awards for Women's Achievement in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality in 2004. She is a renowned keynote speaker and has been recognized for her lifetime dedication to gender empowerment by receiving the JourneyWoman Award in 2021. Alessandra has also been named one of 9 women transforming travel by the Matador Network, one of 50 'most important women in travel' by Wonderlust Travel, and the First Recipient of the 'JourneyWoman Award.'

By **Elena Arnaiz**

Alessandra Alonso's passion for travel and tourism began unexpectedly when she joined the European Commission in Brussels as a trainee. She says, "I was fascinated by the sector's ability to break down barriers, educate on inequalities, and foster connections through shared understanding of different cultures against the backdrop of the beauty and diversity of our natural world."

While at the European Commission in Brussels, she worked for a small unit that was understaffed and under-resourced. Despite being a trainee, she was required to take on real responsibilities and contribute to the team's work. This turned out to be an excellent opportunity for Alessandra to learn and develop new skills. She says, "So I really enjoyed it. And when I went back to London, I worked at the World Travel and Tourism Council, and then to KPMG, where I practically set up the tourist division in the UK and then did a lot of work in Europe as well."

During her time at KPMG, Alessandra developed an appreciation for essential

concepts such as authentic leadership and gender parity. She says, "And it is around that time that I really started to realize the sparsity of women. So, I was working with many companies across cities in a fairly male-dominated environment."

Driven by her passion for promoting gender equality in the workplace, Alessandra launched her first business in 2004 to help companies tap into the entire talent pool rather than just the male half. The business focused on mentoring, coaching, management development, and networking through the first-ever female awards in tourism. She says, "Through my business, I wanted to ensure women had equal opportunities to develop their careers and access leadership positions. When we empower women, I believe we create a ripple effect that positively impacts their families, communities, and society."

Building on this experience, Alessandra founded Women in Travel CIC, a social enterprise. The organization is dedicated to empowering women,

particularly marginalized, vulnerable, and underrepresented, to achieve their full economic and individual potential. Women in Travel CIC helps to connect diverse and underserved talent with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Alessandra sees empowered women as a critical component of building thriving communities, and Women in Travel CIC is committed to positively impacting this area.

She says, "Women in Travel is rooted in the belief that women are key to the health and wealth of communities and that there is no sustainable development without empowered women at its heart. Travel and tourism is an industry that continues to experience unprecedented growth and which is inherently female-friendly, so why not leverage its economic and social strength to empower, upskill and uplift women?"

The organization has done incredible work and also went above and beyond to help women during the pandemic in 2020. Women in Travel CIC provided valuable support to women, offering 1,200 hours

of assistance to 250 women. One of the group's successful partnerships has been with Intrepid Travel, which provided training to three tour guides in London. Thanks to their newfound confidence, two of the guides secured full-time jobs.

Sefanit, one of the guides who benefited from the training and mentoring, now runs Shepherd's Bush market tours, showcasing the culture of her home country, Ethiopia. She says, "The training and mentoring have transformed my life. I am also studying and can see a bright future for myself and my daughter."

According to Alessandra, the travel industry has an opportunity to think creatively and expand its horizons to overcome recruitment issues. While the sector is often viewed as inconvenient for those who prefer traditional working hours, embracing flexible working arrangements could yield significant benefits. Alessandra emphasizes that this is not a unique issue to the travel industry and that firms should consider a broader range of candidates to tackle the 'brain drain.' She encourages travel agencies and operators to work with her company to develop solutions to these challenges.

Alessandra's commitment to empowering individuals extends beyond gender equality to promoting tourism as a force

for good. Recounting an incident that has stayed with her, she says, "I remember attending a conference in Africa, probably in Uganda, about 15 or 20 years ago. The focus was on tourism as a vehicle for peace and how it could be a force for good beyond just creating experiences and providing relaxation. As I sat among a group of people sharing our insights and wisdom, I quickly realized that I wasn't the leader in the room, nor did I have any of the answers to their issues." She continued, "It was humbling but empowering to recognize that these people needed to be at the table for these conversations. The power, passion, and sense of community in that room stayed with me throughout my career. It made me realize that assumptions about people's ability to contribute based on economic status, education, or assumed authority can be dismissive and harmful. Instead, we need authentic, connective conversations and explore what tourism can do to make a positive impact."

In addition to providing a platform for women to connect and learn from each other, Women in Travel CIC has also organized various events, workshops, and initiatives to promote career progression. Notably, successful events have already occurred in London and Dubai during the World Travel Market, the premier B2B travel fair globally. Alessandra and her team hope to expand their efforts to include WTM Africa in Cape Town and Latin America in Sao Paulo.

According to Alessandra, to succeed as a female entrepreneur, it's crucial to do more than just being good or even excellent at your work. She says, "It's essential to have strong mentors or sponsors, build a network of contacts, and understand your industry's financial and political landscape. These channels can make a significant difference in achieving your goals and making a positive impact for the benefit of others, especially women."



It's essential to have strong mentors or sponsors, build a network of contacts, and understand your industry's financial and political landscape. These channels can make a significant difference in achieving your goals and making a positive impact for the benefit of others, especially women.



Creating Positive Experiences: The Business Philosophy of Danny Meyer

Danny Meyer is an esteemed restaurateur and business leader who has been at the forefront of the hospitality industry for over thirty years. As the founder and Executive Chairman of Union Square Hospitality Group (USHG), Meyer has become one of the most influential figures in the industry, earning a reputation for his visionary leadership and commitment to creating exceptional dining experiences.

By Sherlyn Gomes

Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Danny developed a love for great food and hospitality from a young age, thanks to his father's travel business that designed custom European trips.

In 1985, at the age of 27, Danny opened his first restaurant, Union Square Cafe, in New York City. Thanks to its welcoming atmosphere, impeccable service, and delicious food, it quickly became a hit. This success led to the opening of several other acclaimed restaurants, including Gramercy Tavern, The Modern, and Maialino. Danny's ventures have also expanded to include Shake Shack, a modern-day 'roadside' burger restaurant that went public in 2015.

Under Danny's leadership, USHG has become known not only for its exceptional restaurants but also for its distinctive culture of Enlightened Hospitality. This principle, which prioritizes employees first and foremost, has been the driving force behind the organization's evolution from a small group of restaurants into a multi-faceted hospitality organization. He explains, "My appreciation of the power of hospitality and my desire to harness it has been the greatest contributors to whatever success my restaurants and businesses have had. I've learned how crucially important it is to put hospitality to work, first for the people who work for me and subsequently for all the other people and stakeholders who are in any way affected by our business—in descending order, our guests, community,

suppliers, and investors. I call this way of setting priorities' enlightened hospitality.' It stands some more traditional business approaches on their head, but it's the foundation of every business decision and every success we've had."

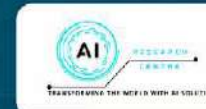
Danny's influence has also extended beyond the world of restaurants. He has invested in numerous ventures, including food service solutions for public and private institutions and large-scale event services. He has also set industry standards in hiring practices, innovative leadership, and corporate responsibility and has addressed a wide range of audiences nationwide.

Danny has taken a leadership role in several organizations, including the New York Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and the Madison Square Park Conservancy, among others. He has also been recognized for his leadership, business achievements, and humanitarianism, receiving the Julia Child Award in 2017, the TIME 100 'Most Influential People' list in 2015, and the IFMA Gold Plate Award in 2000.

He has also published a

groundbreaking business book, *Setting the Table*, which instantly became a New York Times Bestseller and articulates a set of signature business and life principles that translate to various industries.

With a career spanning over thirty years, Danny has transformed the hospitality industry and continues to be an icon. As he reflects on his journey, he says, "In the end, what's most meaningful is creating positive, uplifting outcomes for human experiences and relationships. Business, like life, is all about how you make people feel. It's that simple, and it's that hard."



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