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RISING STAR ROUNDTABLE
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SPECIAL REPORT

20 next-gen

LEADERS

RISING STARS IDENTIFY BALANCE, MENTORING AND GREATER EQUALITY AMONG CORE VALUES THAT MATTER.

By **JEFF WEINSTEIN**, EDITOR IN CHIEF

DEERS

The next generation of hotel leadership is coming, and more than ever, especially when layering global financial and geopolitical issues on top of the day-to-day challenges of running a hotel company, strong leadership matters. In a competitive, disintermediated industry, what does the future of leadership look like, and what is on their minds? Hint: It's not always technology.

To answer just a few of those questions and more, HOTELS identified 20 rising stars, all 40 and under, and brought some of them together in person and others via a series of interviews to find out what's on their minds. Here, in Q&A format based on a Wall Street Journal-sponsored roundtable held in Los Angeles in January just before the start of the Americas Lodging Investment Summit, we sat down with nine leaders to learn their opinions about career fulfillment, key leadership traits and other

timely and topical issues of the day. Then we offer short takes from 11 more leaders on some of the issues that matter most to them. All 20 leaders are profiled at hotelsm.ag/NextGenList.

HOTELS: What matters most to you to feel fulfilled in your jobs?

Sheila Farahpour: Work-life balance.

Andrea Chapur: Freedom and empowerment.

The way that my dad works is completely different. He'll go to the office at 6 a.m., maybe have fast food, not go work out and leave to the office at 11 p.m. And I feel like now the younger generation only takes care of themselves. They want to have the independence also to travel and have vacation days. My dad hasn't taken vacation in 20 years. That's just crazy.

James Mabey: Younger leaders are very driven, ambitious and focused on one particular goal. What I found to be helpful was letting go of the idea that



MUCH MORE ONLINE

hotelsm.ag/NextGenVid1 and hotelsm.ag/NextGenVid2 to watch short videos with more from roundtable participants

hotelsm.ag/NextGenAudio for annotated audio of the complete roundtable

hotelsm.ag/NextGenList to an index of individual Q&As with all 20 rising stars

What MATTERS

HOTELS asked 11 additional rising star hoteliers not present at the roundtable to comment on what they care about, what keeps them up at night, the impact they want to make on their sector – and how the industry should be shifting to meet this new generation of leaders.

HOTELS: How do company cultures need to shift to attract younger professionals?

Antonia Korosec: It's all about communication and growth. If you're hiring a young manager who's smart, they want to grow with you... We involve the younger managers, getting their opinion. They might be wrong, or they might say, I don't know. But we involve them.

Calvin Anderson: At Red Lion, I bang the drum that we need to behave like a startup. That means if you see the problem, you're part of solving it.

Jai Govindani: Nowadays, people want to be happy at their job and make an impact. If they have an idea they think is worth doing, they expect it to propagate up through the organization and that people will listen because it's a good idea.

Danny Ho: We need to give younger people a lot of chances and a way to build their confidence... When we train the students, they have a lot of questions: Why do we do things this way – can we change? They have their own mindset.

H: What are the needs and priorities of next-gen leaders?

Govindani: They value happiness and work-life balance... Everyone thinks they are entitled and pampered, but one thing they get is happiness, that there is more to life than being at a job every day.

Amruda Nair: The most important thing for me is a need to give back to the community, so we are doing a lot of things at the property level to get that kind of engagement going.

H: Describe things you try to do every day.

Govindani: I watch world news. That's all about perspective. It's easy to live with our offices, salaries, jobs, mortgages – these are all very First World problems, and there's a whole other world out there. And I run, because I have an addictive personality.

Korosec: I try to make sure that I have a personal connection with one of my team members every day. It doesn't matter which level. I try to ask how they're doing, their personal life, how is the job ... so they know we care about the individual and not just the job they're fulfilling.

Michael Innocentin: At the end of every week I block an hour or two to plan out the following week. I also try to take 10 to 15 minutes to reflect on the events of the day to determine if there are areas where I can improve or situations that I can handle differently in the future.

H: What about the business keeps you up at night?

Anderson: There's a fight to redefine

11 MORE RISING STARS



CALVIN ANDERSON
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
CHIEF OF REVENUE
OPTIMIZATION
RLH CORP., DENVER



MEGAN CARLSON
NATIONAL EVENTS
PLANNING MANAGER,
AMERICAS
HYATT HOTELS, DENVER



CATHERINE DRISCOLL
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSET
MANAGEMENT
APPLE HOSPITALITY REIT,
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



MICHAEL FUERSTMAN
CO-FOUNDER AND
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
PENDRY HOTELS, IRVINE,
CALIFORNIA

“

IT WILL BE THE YEAR OF THE SMALL GUY...

BEING ABLE TO READ AND REACT IN SUCH A RAPIDLY CHANGING TIME IS REALLY AN ADVANTAGE.

- ANDREA OLSHAN

”

what it means to be a brand. It really is an evolve or die world. How do I place my skill sets to make sure I'm relevant for the next 20 years?

Korosec: Staffing. Keeping my team happy and challenged and cared for... I definitely spend most of my time brainstorming on how I can help my team do the best job they can.

Catherine Driscoll: I want to see this industry be able to keep up with the many changes in technology. I want to see us be able to keep up with the changing needs of consumers.

Andrea Olshan: Every day a new flag is competing with us... The gradations are so fine now that I don't know if the consumer gets it — and that makes it hard. Then you have Airbnb, and no one has resolved how to deal with that.

H: Make a prediction about your discipline in the coming year.

Michael Fuerstman: As operators we will continue to be asked to do more with less. We will need to find ways via technology, smarter systems and operations to create better guest experiences, drive more profit and do right by our associates with even less resources than before. That's just the nature of the industry.

Anderson: A lot of autonomous jobs are going to get washed away quickly. Keep that skill set fresh and brushed up, and embrace your creative and visionary sides, because that's the skill set of the future.

Govindani: We aren't moving fast enough as an industry. Many people will still be obsessed with Alexa and Cortana, and we are

chasing down these consumer technologies that have no use in a hotel room.

Innocentini: European privacy legislation, General Data Protection Regulation, will force hospitality companies to revisit data policies even if they are not based in the EU.

Olshan: It will be the year of the small guy... Being able to read and react in such a rapidly changing time is really an advantage — it's no longer 'You're too small,' now it's 'We're so nimble.'

Nicole Young: You will see markets globally that haven't been exposed to revenue management now utilizing this in their operations, in larger South American city centers such as Mexico City and Rio and in parts of Asia such as China and Thailand.

H: What's your best advice to the next generation?

Megan Carlson: Be authentic, be passionate about your life and what you do in this life.

Ho: They need to work hard, not give up so easily, have more passion about their job and work with their heart. I know that's not easy. But there are no shortcuts.

Innocentini: Get active in their organizations and in the industry. If you want to get ahead it is important to have a strong network.

Korosec: If you come in in the morning and you don't want to come to work, you're never going to be happy. We're in an industry where we take care of people. I don't think that you can take care of people if you don't love what you do.



JAI GOVINDANI
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
RED PLANET HOTELS, BANGKOK



DANNY HO
EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF
HOTEL ICON, HONG KONG



MICHAEL INNOCENTINI
VICE PRESIDENT, E-COMMERCE AND DIGITAL
ACCORHOTELS, TORONTO



ANTONIA KOROSEC
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AMRUDA NAIR
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AIANA HOTELS & RESORTS, DOHA, QATAR



ANDREA OLSHAN
CEO
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NICOLE YOUNG
CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF REVENUE MANAGEMENT
ROSEWOOD HOTEL GROUP, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

THE NEXT CURVEBALL

HOW HOTELS CAN
'FUTURE-PROOF'
AGAINST
AS-YET-UNKNOWN
TECHNOLOGY
CHALLENGES.

Contributed by **JULIANA SHALLCROSS**

Upgrading a hotel's technology infrastructure, whether as part of the guest experience or for the back of the house, may cause more than a few hoteliers to groan these days. As technology evolves, IT infrastructure can quickly become inefficient. (Chances are, most hotel infrastructures are already inefficient.) And owners may be reluctant to make another significant investment when they could have to pony up more dollars in just a few years.

Enter future-proofing. Used in industries such as architecture, engineering and energy conservation, this strategy predicts trends and develops solutions that can work when needed.

For hotels, future-proofing IT systems comes down to one simple objective — a strong, fast and secure wireless network.

"We tell our hotel owners, 'Let's not skimp on the infrastructure,'" says John Edwards, chief information officer at RLH Corp., Denver. "Because it can really cripple us when we look at changes that we need to make in the future.

"When they say why should we spend another 10 grand on our WiFi networks, we say, 'Look, there are just certain things that cheaper solutions can't do.' And

three years from now, that's really going to be a problem."

'SELF-EXPLANATORY'

Miami-based Menin Hospitality has significantly upgraded the tech infrastructure at its properties with future-proofing as a top priority. That includes moving core systems to the cloud, adding WiFi access points in every guest room on an interference-free 5GHZ band, moving to a EMV/chip system for credit cards, mobile keys, and as a fun entertainment for guests, the services of Shelly, a delivery robot at The Shelbourne in South Beach.

"The benefits (of future-proofing) are self-explanatory," says Jared Galbut, Menin's managing principal. "Systems work as expected, business doesn't grind to a halt, our guests are happy and they have a better tech and media experience at our properties than they would at home."

At MacArthur Place, a historic hotel in Sonoma, California, that is about to be remodeled for the first time in 20 years, technology upgrades will feel like a "natural extension" of the guest experience.

"We will only implement technology that our guests are not only familiar with but that have been tried and tested," says Justin

Bain, director of marketing and brand management at IMH, an Arizona-based real estate investment company that has acquired the hotel. "There is nothing worse than a technology experience gone bad."

When it comes to the all-important WiFi network, Bain says the hotel is emphasizing data transfer, for guests and meetings. "We are installing a system that can handle four to five times more guests than we can accommodate," he says. "It's also extremely scalable, so that when we have large groups we can crank it up to make sure that the WiFi stays stable."

REDUCING COMPLEXITY

Aside from investing in the wireless network, hotels should reduce the complexity of their systems. RLH Corp., which is shifting to a largely franchised operation, has made this a priority for hotels and owners. Edwards says they are focusing on maximizing a hotel's existing tools and technology rather than replacing or adding to them.





Future-proofing as been deployed at Menin Hospitality's Shelbourne.

For example, “we have no plans to add iPads. If I add an iPad in every room, the level of complexity is added to everything from operations to the guest experience. It’s almost exponential,” Edwards explains. “By adding that one iPad, I have a different WiFi infrastructure that I need to build for. I have a different housekeeping plan. I have a different maintenance plan. I have a guest that needs to learn how to work this. Why would I do that? Aren’t guests bringing two to three devices of their own? So my WiFi infrastructure needs to handle that.”

Yet even the WiFi network doesn’t need to be thrown out with last decade’s furniture and linens.

“It’s not about overhauling the WiFi network. It’s redesigning it,” Edwards says. “It’s changing the way we leverage those assets that are already in the hotel.”

BUT DON'T GO OVERBOARD

“The place where cost becomes a concern is adding more systems than there



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— JOHN EDWARDS,
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, RLH CORP.

previously were,” Menin Hospitality’s Galbut explains. “So before, you needed just email, but now you need email and cyber security solutions for messaging. Before you needed conference rooms and a conference phone, and now you need a video conference solution. For us, a cable modem used to be enough for back of house, and now a fiber connection

works, but then we needed a separate fiber connection for guest services and, of course, a third in case any of the primary ones fail.”

Still, Galbut says as long as a hotel picks the right vendor or technology partner, the costs can be minimal.

Learning when to say ‘no’ is important, too. “The temptation of not trying to jump the gun on technology is challenging,” Bain says. “Voice, artificial intelligence, biometric, they are all things we are looking at. But it’s so important that the technology doesn’t feel forced, and again, it must work perfectly.”

RLH Corp. is concentrating on minimizing the impact of changes on guests and owners by communicating what’s happening – and why it’s necessary. “Change is more accepted by our guests than we give them credit for, if the change is communicated correctly,” Edwards says. “And that’s a big part of the future-proofing process for us as an organization.”