

# today's hotelier

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF AAHOA

## COVER FEATURE HISTORY IN THE MAKING

### JAGRUTI PANWALA

*AAHOA's next leader highlights the importance of ambition, compassion, and contribution to propel the association into the future*

### C-SUITE

The "experience generation"  
with Geoff Ballotti  
President and CEO  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

### SMALL BUSINESS

Encouraging youth  
employment

### FEATURE

Connecting young and old:  
Marketing your hotel to  
different generations  
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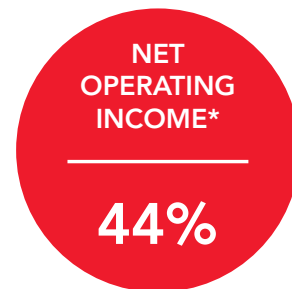
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# HISTORY in the MAKING

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## Progress keeps AAHOA going

**JAGRUTI PANWALA**  
AAHOA Chairwoman (2019-2020)

**I**'M EXCITED TO BE STEPPING INTO the position of Chairwoman at such a transformative time for AAHOA. This year brings new opportunities and changes that I'm eager to be a part of. AAHOA achieved its most successful year to date in 2018, and I thank HP for his wonderful work as Chairman. His leadership, along with the dedication of my fellow AAHOA Officers, the Board of Directors, and Ambassadors allowed us to usher in this new chapter.

Our 30th anniversary is the perfect time to reflect on our history as an association and begin thinking about what we want to focus on in the future as the stewards of AAHOA. We have come this far and built AAHOA to what it is today only because we have been steadfast in our desire for improvement, achievement, and long-term growth. At this pivotal point in our history, we must ensure that the next 30 years are even more successful than our last.

It's a responsibility that all of us share equally because AAHOA is uniquely different from other trade associations. We aren't a group of hotel owners who simply joined an association; we are an association formed by the efforts of each individual hotelier, and that means every member plays a fundamental role in its success. AAHOA's story is our story, and it will continue to reflect our efforts in the years to come.

I believe that one of AAHOA's most important priorities is the education of the next generation of hoteliers. Our children and grandchildren, as well as other young entrepreneurs, may not be starting their businesses from scratch with little to no experience like many of us did, but equipping them with the know-how that we gained through the years can help them reach their goals. AAHOA can, and should, be the resource that provides them with the tools they need to learn how to facilitate brand relationships, manage a

portfolio, and adapt to changing trends in the industry.

It's also important in this regard for AAHOA to help promote diversity within the industry and the association. In recent years, the hotel industry has made great strides in opening the door to a more diverse array of hoteliers. More women are taking the leap toward hotel ownership, and it's important that AAHOA spearheads outreach and support for these entrepreneurs. As hoteliers who often run family businesses, it's up to us to offer encouragement for the business endeavors of our daughters and sons.

Successful stewardship requires us to protect and promote all of the good that AAHOA accomplishes through our many community and advocacy initiatives. Whether it's increasing the number of hoteliers and employees who have taken BEST Inhospitality to Human Trafficking Training, sponsored by AAHOA, or Polaris, growing attendance at our state Lobby Days, or doubling our AAHOA PAC contributions, these are goals that will bring AAHOA to new heights. If reaching these goals means that we have to make changes to our current processes, that's OK. Change means progress, and progress means success.

It's my hope in this 30th year that we think big. Instead of being content with the accomplishments we have made to this point, we must continue to set new goals and put in the effort it takes to achieve them. I want each of us to look back at the work we did with AAHOA with pride, and inspire our children and grandchildren to be dreamers, innovators, and self-starters. We must be proactive in the creation of our path ahead and build the future we want to see together. I thank each of you for the good work you do, and I look forward to all of the successes we will achieve together this year. ■

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## Building relationships with lawmakers

**RACHEL HUMPHREY**  
AAHOA Interim President & CEO

**A**AHOA MEMBERS ARE EXPERIENCED relationship builders. Getting a business off the ground and maintaining it through the years requires hoteliers to create a network of reliable brand partners, vendors, and contractors. These connections enable our members to grow their portfolios and expand their business initiatives, but hoteliers shouldn't narrow their focus to only industry insiders. It's just as important to build relationships outside of the industry, especially with lawmakers whose decisions directly impact the business environment in their local area.

Many Americans, including small business owners, assume once their legislators are elected, they have no way to influence their policy positions. This isn't the case. Constituents are the lifeblood of every elected official, and their opinions can affect policy as long as they engage with lawmakers to help them understand the real impact of certain legislation. In this way, AAHOA Members are an exceptionally unique and valuable constituency. It's important to remember that lawmakers are not experts in every policy area and as small business owners, job creators, and economic contributors, hoteliers can offer officials an informed perspective on a range of issues.

The most effective way for hoteliers to form relationships is by addressing the issues that are most important through real-life stories. When it comes time to support or oppose making the small business tax cuts permanent, legislators will remember the hotel owner in their district who reinvested their tax savings back into their business by hiring new employees, raising wages, and expanding. They will remember the hotelier from their hometown who is concerned about the future of the franchise model because of an unclear joint-employer

standard. Fostering relationships with lawmakers humanizes issues that are too often overshadowed by partisanship.

Whether at the local, state, or federal level, your business and all hoteliers benefit from increased representation of the hotel industry. Highlighting AAHOA's efforts on human trafficking prevention, for example, can directly impact the way legislators perceive the role of hotels in human trafficking cases. Many state legislatures are currently considering holding hotels liable if a trafficker uses the premises to move or exploit victims. In reality, hoteliers are working hard to combat trafficking in every way they can, including completing AAHOA's awareness training offered through our partnerships with Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking (BEST) and Polaris. Instead of working separately to achieve the same goal, hoteliers can bridge this gap and show state officials that our industry can be a resource for them in their efforts to bring trafficking to an end.

I encourage every AAHOA Member to start engaging with their elected officials if they haven't already. AAHOA offers several opportunities for members throughout the year to make this possible. In March, nearly 200 hoteliers convened in Washington D.C. for AAHOA's Spring National Advocacy Conference (SNAC), where members met one on one with members of Congress and their staffs to talk about our most important issues. Along with state Lobby Days that take place during the year, the next opportunity for members to come speak with legislators is at the 2019 Legislative Action Summit this fall. Your actions can make a real difference in policy decisions that affect America's hoteliers and the future of our industry. Be sure to reach out to AAHOA's advocacy team for more information on how you can get involved. ■

## 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH

1

AAHOA is partnering with NCRLA to host the North Carolina State Capitol Lobby Day in Raleigh on May 1.

2

AAHOA will host a Brand Alliance Meeting at the Choice Hotels Conference in Las Vegas on May 2.

3

AAHOA Treasurer Vinay Patel will share "Winning Strategies for Buying and Selling Hotels" at the Meet the Money Conference in Los Angeles on May 7.

4

AAHOA Vice Chairman Biran Patel and Treasurer Vinay Patel will speak at HD Expo in Las Vegas on May 16.

5

AAHOA is partnering with CHLA to host the North Pacific & South Pacific Regional Conference & Trade Shows in San Jose on May 21, and in Anaheim on May 23, respectively.

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# Promoting international tourism through Brand USA

by TONI-ANNE BARRY



**T**HE FLOW OF INTERNATIONAL travelers into the United States is not only essential for the travel industry, but it's a key driver of the U.S. economy. In 2009, Brand USA was established through the *Travel Promotion Act* to increase awareness of the U.S. as a top vacation destination for foreign tourists. The national organization is a public-private partnership that markets the U.S. through digital, print, and broadcast campaigns across the globe to bring more tourists to our shores.

One of the most important aspects of Brand USA is that it functions at no cost to taxpayers. It's funded through a combination of fees levied on travelers coming into the U.S. and contributions from 800 partner organizations. The funding structure is a resounding success; with every dollar contributed to Brand USA, another \$29 is generated for the U.S. economy. In 2017 alone, for example, the \$140 million investment

into Brand USA resulted in \$4.1 billion in visitor spending.

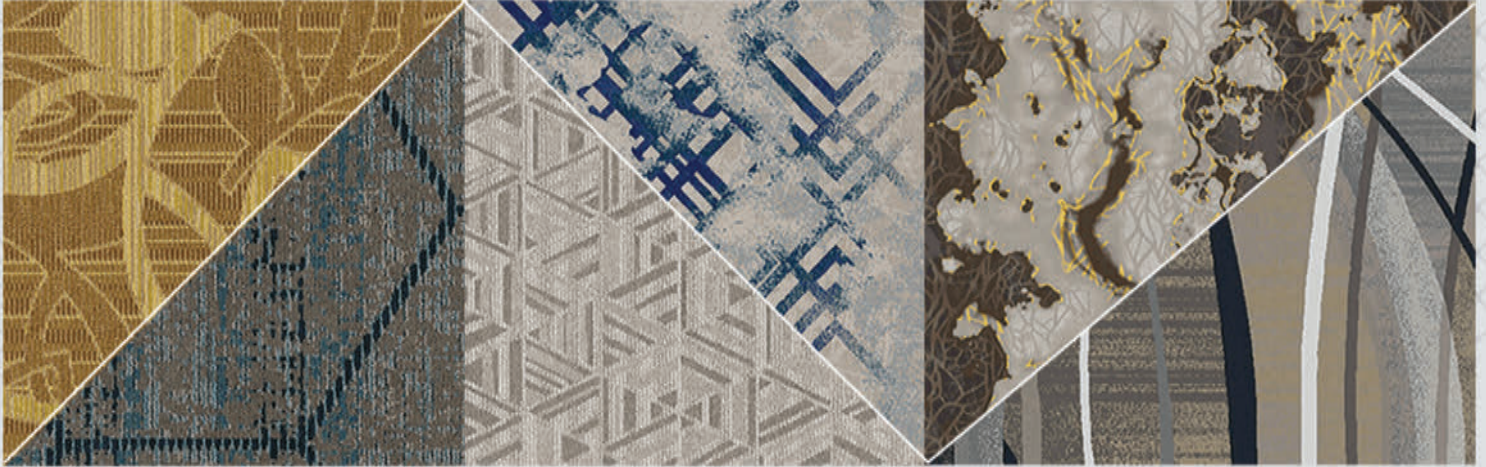
This boost to the economy directly stimulates job creation within the travel industry. The U.S. Travel Association estimates that Brand USA investment results in the creation of an additional 51,000 American jobs each year and supports thousands more. And the effects are more widespread than just within the tourism sector, with substantial increases to local, state, and federal tax revenue. Since 2013, these foreign travelers brought in more than \$5 billion in tax dollars that help grow local economies all across America.

Despite the clear and consistent success of Brand USA, the program is in danger. Starting in 2020, the federal funding from the fees levied on international travelers is set to be diverted to the general fund, rather than Brand USA. This

expiration date threatens to chip away at a massive economic contributor. The travel and tourism industry will suffer due to the loss of an essential consumer base, and the entire U.S. economy will take a hard hit.

For hoteliers, this issue is a top priority. At the 2019 AAHOA Spring National Advocacy Conference, almost 200 AAHOA Members met with their representatives and senators to bring awareness to this issue. Hoteliers spoke firsthand about how important international travel is to their businesses and to their bottom lines. It's up to Congress to recognize the value of Brand USA and reauthorize it before the 2020 funding expiration date. For a long-term solution, Congress must establish a dedicated funding mechanism specifically for Brand USA. At a time when there are few issues that are truly bipartisan, all lawmakers can and should support the continued promotion of international travel into the U.S. for the benefit of all American industries and our economy. ■

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# The experience generation

by GEOFF BALLOTTI, PRESIDENT and CEO, WYNDHAM HOTELS & RESORTS and CHAIR, AMERICAN HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION



**T**ODAY, CONSUMERS want to spend their money on experiences rather than material things, experiences which occupy a spot on our social media pages forever. According to McKinsey, over the past several years, consumption on experiences such as day-tripping to amusement parks, visiting museums, and eating at unique restaurants has grown nearly four times faster than consumption of goods.

That's good news for us in the hotel industry because travel is the most coveted experience of our generation.

This generation's affinity for experiences is resulting in an entirely new "traveling class" – the 1.3 billion people around the world who choose to spend their expendable income on travel. This is an emerging category of society that is crossing borders for the first time, trekking to new continents, and most important, staying in our hotels.

As hoteliers, we are the lucky ones. We are members of an industry that continues to grow and, as it does, we contribute to the growth of entire generations of travelers.

Our growing industry puts \$600 billion into the U.S. economy each year, contributes 10 percent of the global GDP, and supports nine million American jobs. This industry opens up opportunities and launches careers. A career in hospitality is the ultimate experience and the lifeblood for so many of us who started our first job as a bellhop, a housekeeper or a dishwasher – as I did years ago – and launched into a lifelong calling owning or operating hotels.

In my opinion, there is no better career path; those of us who own, operate or work in hotels are the ones empowering the world to have those coveted travel experiences. That notion is so important to our business that it's reflected in the new mission statement for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, which we established after our spinoff into an independent company last year: We make hotel travel possible for all.

Yet, for an industry that supports nine million jobs in the U.S. alone, there remain 900,000 vacancies.

It's one of the most pervasive issues for hoteliers today. A report from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation shows that over 50 percent

of the Gen Z demographic – the largest generation in the U.S. – is interested in pursuing a career in hospitality. Nevertheless, our industry faces a workforce shortage, leaving hoteliers struggling to find both skilled labor to build hotels and the right talent to staff them.

## PLANTING ROOTS IN HOSPITALITY

I'm reminded every day of the incredible people this industry attracts, and it is due in large part to AAHOA and its members, who have played a significant role in opening up opportunities for new demographics over the past 30 years of its history.

For an entire generation of hoteliers who came up in the '70s and '80s, this industry represents the American Dream. In 1984, Michael Leven and Henry Silverman of Days Inn realized some of their most successful franchisees in the U.S. all had roots in Gujarat, India. Though they were achieving success with their hotels, they were battling discrimination and cultural challenges to do so. Leven and Silverman got their Days Inn franchisees together – with the support of leaders like H.P. Rama and



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“We can empower the next generation to become tomorrow’s hotel industry leaders. But first, we have to get them in the door.”

Ravi Patel – to voice those challenges and needs for advocacy to form what would, in 1989, become one of the most influential forces in hospitality: the Asian American Hotel Owners Association.

Members of that generation are often referred to as “accidental hoteliers” – men and women whose roots and training were in other industries, but who found a place in hospitality and made a name for themselves here.

That first generation of AAHOA Members created a transformational shift in the industry, and their presence in hospitality is no accident. They overcame hardship and discrimination, and together created a new avenue for advocacy and sponsorship. Who better to welcome travelers through their doors than those with a culture rooted in hospitality, family values, and hard work?

Not only has this generation built the foundation for hospitality today, but they have created a lasting legacy for the next generation. Those first American Dreamers paved a well-worn path for their children and grandchildren, and today, they are passing the baton to the next generations to continue their lasting legacy.

### LEAVING A LEGACY

As we approach the close of Wyndham’s first full year as an independent hotel company, I often reflect about the journey of those hoteliers, many of whom helped build our company’s foundation as they were building their own. Those first Days Inn owners who launched AAHOA, and later expanded their business to own multiple hotels across a number of recognized brands, represent a turning point for this industry.

Take Champ Patel, who opened his first independent hotel in 1979 – and

later his first Days Inn in 1989 – and has continued growing his portfolio with diverse investments across multiple segments and hotel brands. Today, his company, Champion Hotels, is the largest privately held hotel operator in the United States, with more than 150 franchised locations.

Champ’s son, Harshil Patel, is a trailblazer in his own right. Harshil’s needs and expectations as a hotelier are different than those of his father, a situation many second-generation hoteliers in the U.S. are experiencing as they advance their family’s business. This next generation of hoteliers expects more options, seamless technology, and brands they can believe in, recognizing the impact of the experience economy and the demand for authentic travel experiences – and they are innovating at a faster pace than ever before to deliver them.

At Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, we’re thinking differently about how we can offer this generation support as its brand partner, including how we can attract new owners to our family of brands. We’ve designed a new journey for the franchisees entering into a partnership with our brands, empowering smart investment among a generation of entrepreneurs that is savvier than ever.

As one of the only hotel companies to support first-time hoteliers, we remain inclusive for entrepreneurs at all levels and create possibilities for growth through our brand portfolio. This new ownership experience creates a dynamic of partnership starting with the first handshake. Our team – newly bolstered by category-killers in construction and design from La Quinta by Wyndham – supports the investment process through research

and development expertise, prioritizing quality and endurance to create lasting legacies for our brands and our owners.

### THE NEXT GENERATION

That legacy is our lasting impact. AAHOA’s mission to promote and protect its members has shaped hospitality in the U.S. today, and its member base has grown such that AAHOA Members own half of the hotels in the U.S. That tremendous growth is a direct result of the opportunity the organization created for the beginning generations of Asian American hoteliers in the U.S.

Think about how much has changed over the course of one generation. Since AAHOA was founded 30 years ago, we’ve survived changes such as the dawn of the internet. We’ve evolved through disruptors like TripAdvisor, the OTAs, home sharing, and others. But with all of that change comes progress, and together, we’ve learned and evolved over the past 30 years. In 2019, as we welcome AAHOA’s first female Chair, Jagruti Panwala, we can celebrate how much we’ve achieved while recognizing how far we still have to go.

As this industry continues to grow and our hotels welcome the 1.3 billion travelers visiting new places around the world, we must remember the generation that paved the way and consider our impact on the generations to come.

We can empower the next generation to become tomorrow’s hotel industry leaders. But first, we have to get them in the door. We’re working actively with both AAHOA and the American Hotel & Lodging Association and our peers in the industry to develop leading career development programs to help provide funding, training, apprenticeships, and new opportunities for our industry’s employees.

Together, we have a tremendous opportunity to not only impact the experiences of our guests – the traveling class – but to fuel entrepreneurship around the globe for generations to come. ■



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# COMMON GROUND

## Trademark Licensing Protection Act

by TONI-ANNE BARRY



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These days, it seems like politicians cannot agree about anything. That's because it's convenient for the media to use a gridlock narrative as shorthand for the contrarian and obstinate behavior that defines how our elected representatives address a few big issues. However, a different, more nuanced picture emerges when one takes a closer look at the actual lawmaking process – the pursuit of positive change. Common Ground profiles members of opposing parties who are working together to advance issues important to hoteliers.

### THE ISSUE

#### Trademark Licensing Protection Act

The franchise model is fundamental to the hotel industry. Under this structure, franchisees are independent owners and operators of their hotels and are responsible for all operations of their businesses. Franchisors collect a one-time license fee and monthly royalties for the use of the brand name and to ensure consistent quality through brand standards. This relationship is governed by the Lanham Act of 1946, which allows franchisors to monitor the use of the brand. These brand standards do not result in any direct control of the business but are often cited as evidence to extend joint-employer status to franchisors. This threatens to strip franchisees of

their decision-making authority and result in the loss of control over their business.

### COMMON GROUND

Former Chairman of the House Small Business Committee and current Ranking Member, Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH) co-sponsored H.R. 6695 the Trademark Licensing Protection Act with Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX) in the 115th Congress. The legislation would clarify the Lanham Act of 1946 to ensure that the implementation of brand standards cannot result in the extension of joint-employer status to franchisors. Ultimately, the bill stalled in the House and AAHOA eagerly supports the reintroduction of the act in this Congress. ■



#### Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX)

First Elected: 2005

Committees: Appropriations, Steering and Policy

*“As a former small business owner, I understand that operating a small business is a fundamental pillar of the American dream, and the franchise business model*

*is a great way for aspiring entrepreneurs to achieve this goal. We must ensure that our franchise owners receive fair treatment instead of confusing and arbitrary regulations that hinder them. The Trademark Licensing Protection Act will provide our nation’s small and franchise businesses the certainty necessary to grow and invest in the future of their employees.”*



#### Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH)

First Elected: 1994

Committees: Small Business, Judiciary, Foreign Affairs

*“In an effort to strengthen the protections of small businesses, especially franchisees, we must ensure that the millions of Americans they employ have the provisions*

*and protections they need available to them without risking being considered a joint employer. It’s imperative that Congress restores a common-sense definition of an employer and provides certainty to America’s job creators.”*



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# HISTORY in the MAKING

AAHOA's next leader highlights the importance of ambition, compassion, and contribution to propel the association into the future

by HEATHER CARNES

**H**ER CAREER IN HOSPITALITY BEGAN SIMILARLY TO LEADERS WHO came before her. Driven and hungry for success, she found the path to achieve the American dream through her passion for hospitality. And today, with the same ambition and drive, she's making history.

As a hotelier and president of Wealth Protection Strategies, a financial services firm based outside Philadelphia, Jagruti Panwala grew up with the perception that, regardless of gender or social status, the only limits to success in America are those that one places on him or herself.

With that in mind, and with a career spanning more than 25 years, Panwala is now taking on one of the most significant challenges and opportunities of her career as the first chairwoman of AAHOA.

## **HUMBLE BEGINNINGS**

Born in India, Panwala came to America when she was 15. Her parents, progressive for the time, ingrained in her that whether male or female, if you work hard and are persistent, you can be successful. And these valuable lessons have carried and served her throughout her life and career.

Growing up and working in her father's grocery store, Panwala was exposed to hard work and business from a very young age. Far from the social notion that she grew up with in India, Panwala knew she was destined to experience life differently.



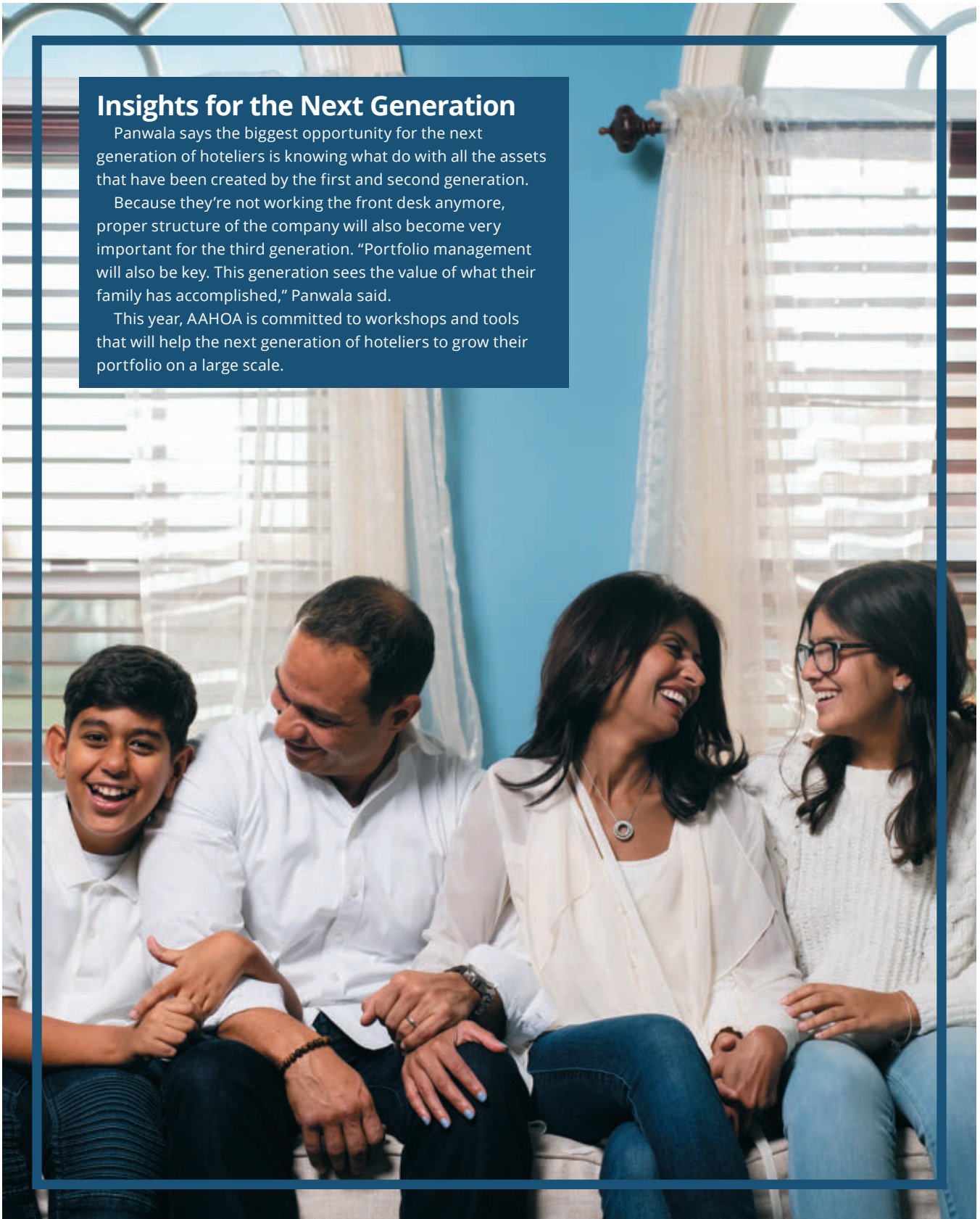
JAGRUTI PANWALA

## Insights for the Next Generation

Panwala says the biggest opportunity for the next generation of hoteliers is knowing what to do with all the assets that have been created by the first and second generation.

Because they're not working the front desk anymore, proper structure of the company will also become very important for the third generation. "Portfolio management will also be key. This generation sees the value of what their family has accomplished," Panwala said.

This year, AAHOA is committed to workshops and tools that will help the next generation of hoteliers to grow their portfolio on a large scale.



Jagruti with her family



Shown here, Jagruti with her uncle, Dhansukh Dadarwala, who helped her get started in the hotel industry.

### A STUMBLE INTO HOSPITALITY

Panwala's entry into the hotel industry was almost by accident. As a recent college graduate selling financial planning services door to door, she entered a small hotel one weekend in 1997 and discovered it was operating at a loss. She knew she could turn it around with her father and uncle's buy-in and help.

So at the age of 22, with ambition and borrowed money, she and her husband purchased their first hotel. Working hard to make their dream a reality, they lived on the property and did whatever it took – housekeeping, front desk, maintenance – to make it successful. “These experiences taught me that no one is above doing the work necessary to make a business successful,” Panwala said.

### AAHOA ENTERS THE PICTURE

Another lesson Panwala's parents instilled in her was the importance of community. “As much as being successful in business was a priority, they taught me the importance of giving back,” she said.

Once she got involved in AAHOA, a lot of things changed. In her first leadership position, she was tasked with getting more women involved. “I went to events, and maybe out of 100 attendees, there were only two or three women,” she said. “And this really surprised me; I was actually shocked.”

She says at the time, AAHOA encouraged open participation regardless of gender, but nobody was really able to break through to see the possibility. “I think members were ready; they were wondering why women weren't in these positions even though they were qualified,” she said.

Knowing she was ready for the challenge, she ran for AAHOA Secretary in 2015, and won. “It's wasn't just about me; as an organization, the vision was there,” she said. “We needed equal participation.”

### CARRYING OUT AAHOA'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

During her tenure as Chairwoman, Panwala will be strategically focused on AAHOA initiatives, including grassroots efforts at the local level, open conversations with OTAs, building and strengthening the AAHOA PAC, and evolving educational programming for hoteliers who have reached the next level of their business.

She says that as the bloodline of the association, the AAHOA political action committee (PAC) grassroots effort is powerful. By raising money from members, instead of large corporate organizations, the PAC's foundation is built on hotel owners from small cities across the country. “When we share our story and how far it's come, it resonates with every single representative,” Panwala said.

There is significant room for growth of the AAHOA PAC, as only 15 percent of AAHOA Members currently donate. “If you think about each property donating \$100, there's no reason why it couldn't be a \$10-million PAC,” she said.

Jagruti is committed to growing AAHOA, primarily through advocacy and increased diversity. She credits previous President and CEO Chip Rogers with emphasizing the importance of political engagement. “He's had such a huge, positive impact on the association and our exposure in the industry,” she said. “And in his words, ‘If anyone thinks that government will get smaller, they're 100 percent wrong,’” she adds. “It's so important for members to recognize the value, stay engaged, and share their story with government leaders.”



Jagruti with her children, Ameena and a then-newborn Ameer.

Growing up in India.



Jagruti, (standing, far right) with her cousins in Surat, India.



Jagruti's parents

### OPEN COMMUNICATION AS A KEY TO SUCCESS

Panwala's dedication to the industry she loves doesn't go unnoticed, and as a businesswoman, mother, and wife, it comes with sacrifice, but it has made her family ties stronger than ever. Spending 150-200 days away from home, she credits open communication as the secret to both professional and personal success.

"I've created a support system on the hotel side, the business side, and at home," she said. While it's been far from easy with a family and small children – and a puppy that she says has become a third child – life can get hectic, but she's found joy and purpose in her journey.

"I always share AAHOA success stories with my daughter," she said. "When she saw a video of me testifying in front of the United States Congress, it was the first time she realized the significance of what I was doing, and that helped me feel less guilt." And with a son with special needs, Panwala considered the impact on him as well. Over time, she recognized that in being away, she was actually able to build confidence in her son to be more independent. "He's doing more on his own now," she said. "I think it has impacted him in a positive way."

### IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Of course, she hasn't done it all alone. "My biggest supporters are my husband and my father," she said. "I couldn't do anything without them."

And while Panwala can list hundreds of other individuals who have helped her along her journey, there are a few who stand out. "Bruce Patel has guided me for years, and I admire what he's done for the organization and for me personally," she said. She also credits women leaders, such as Nancy Patel. "It's so important to have support from other women," she said. "To have her stand next to me, side by side throughout my journey, has been very powerful."

But Panwala doesn't want to be remembered as just "the first chairwoman." Although she takes a lot of pride in the role, she doesn't feel she was elected because she's a woman but rather for a purpose: to show others, especially the second and third generations, that anything in life is possible with hard work and good intentions, and by serving others. ■

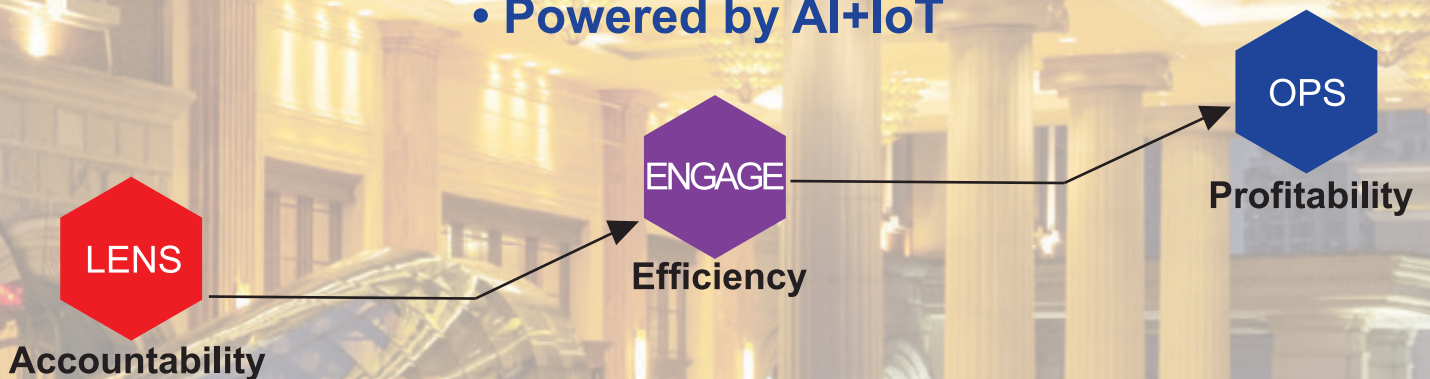
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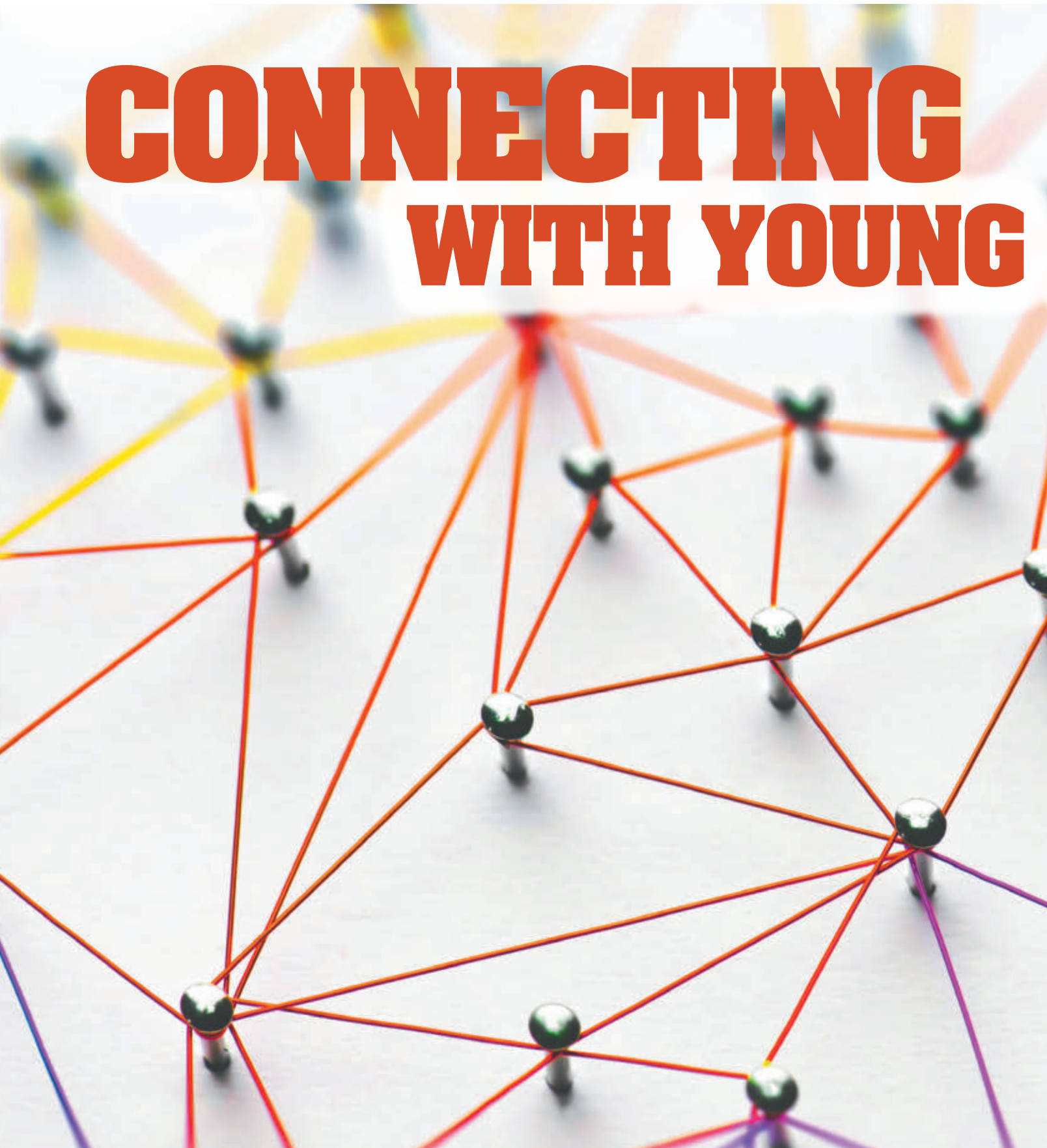
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FEATURE

# CONNECTING WITH YOUNG



# AND OLD

## Marketing your hotel to different generations of travelers

by NICK FORTUNA

There are only so many marketing dollars in any hotel's budget, and it's important to make them count. Here are insights from four hospitality executives into how to reach travelers across a wide range of ages. ►



### **BROADLY SPEAKING, WHAT ARE THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF CUSTOMERS?**

➔ **Brent Bouldin**, Vice President of Marketing, Choice Hotels: Millennials are far more digitally savvy than older people, and they're far less likely to be watching television with the same frequency. So, I think it starts with channel selection in terms of how you reach the different age groups. There are different things that you care about at different phases in your life, and obviously, the younger generation cares a lot more about spending their disposable income on experiences and less on things, so you can play that up in your marketing – about the way your hotel allows people to do more of what they care about. With the older generation, you have people who care about getting close to their friends and family and traveling as a means to maintain those relationships with adult children and grandchildren. So, positioning the property as a means to allow people to connect with the people they care most about is obviously something that's more meaningful to older people than to those who are younger.

➔ **Dennis Gemberling**, Founder and President, The Perry Group International: For the younger generation, it's all

technology-based these days. A good example is Facebook ads, which have really taken off the past couple of years because millennials are really tuned into social media. Of course, you want to market to them in terms of experiences and not necessarily group tours and that kind of thing like the older generation is used to. Instagram also is one of the dominant players with the younger generation. A picture tells a thousand words, and that's what experiences are all about. Instagram is an ideal platform for the hospitality industry, particularly the hotels and resorts, because you can pretty much tell your story with your photos. Direct mail, which can include email marketing, is a good vehicle to reach the over-55 crowd, and they also respond well to packages, such as guided tours.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST STRATEGY FOR MARKETING TO MILLENNIALS? WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?**

➔ **Melissa Postier**, Director of Brand, Public Relations and Social Media, Hotwire.com: What we're noting about the millennial traveler is that they're still searching for unique experiences, which they often value more than physical products,

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but they're also overwhelmed with the number of options for destinations and travel providers. Therefore, they're looking for easy, streamlined booking experiences and expect clear communication around what a brand offers. For example, the Hotwire brand campaign "4-Star Hotels at 2-Star Prices" has been successful for us because it's simple and an easy way to understand our unique value proposition.

We've also noted that millennial travelers are often more adventurous and willing to try out something unknown. In particular, we're seeing a rising trend of quick, spontaneous trips that last two to three days, which falls right in our sweet spot since Hotwire helps partners fill last-minute inventory that would otherwise go unsold. Millennials care that a brand's messaging feels authentic, so we're making a dedicated effort to talk to our younger consumers about this type of last-minute trip.

➤ **Larry Trabulsi, Executive Vice President, CHMWarnick:** We continue to see a shift away from traditional marketing and more to online, digital, and mobile media. Examples include YouTube videos that can be accessed at any time (including in a formal sales presentation) and are easy to forward. We also continue to see a focus on moments and experiences, whether it is a food presentation, something in a public space like a lobby or in the guestroom. The ideal is that "Instagrammable moment."

### WHAT ABOUT MIDDLE-AGED TRAVELERS, INCLUDING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN?

➤ **Postier:** These travelers are often more value conscious. They know what they want, and they're willing to do a little work to find a good deal on what they're looking for. At Hotwire, we define value as saving our customers money on travel via our opaque Hot Rate deals, but – almost more important – we know that value really exists in the upgrades, more frequent trips, or other experiences they're now able to afford. Our middle-aged consumers also enjoy discussing their knowledge of vacation options with others, so it's important to help them stay in the know and give them that inside travel scoop on the best deals.

➤ **Trabulsi:** Many properties focus on intergenerational travel (parents/kids/grandparents). Keys to executing well include programming assistance (tours, activities, etc.), guestroom setup (clustered rooms, shared rooms, family suites) and pre-arrival communication. Generally speaking, if the kids are happy, the parents and grandparents are happy as well.

### HOW IS MARKETING TO SENIOR TRAVELERS DIFFERENT?

➤ **Postier:** Seniors are an often-overlooked consumer segment of the travel space, and, contrary to what one might expect, senior travelers still enjoy exploring new places and trying new things. They also appreciate a good deal, particularly on

more luxury-oriented travel, and offering multiple lines of business across the travel lifecycle is a great way to provide that. So, for example, if they book a hotel, Hotwire can help them find a discounted car rental nearby, or if they book a flight, we can help them find a hotel, etc.

➤ **Bouldin:** We still have great results reaching the older demographic that's still watching primetime TV and news television, and when we go out with video campaigns on YouTube, that tends to skew younger. So, if the audience or the messaging that we're trying to get around is connecting friends and family, a grandkid with a grandparent, I don't think we'd run that on YouTube, for example. That's just not where that audience is.

People are also living longer, and the definition of "older" continues to change and evolve over time. You always hear that "50 is the new 40" and things like that, so what you see is older people still getting out and living an active lifestyle, and going and doing. I think the things that a 75-year-old person might have cared about 30 or 40 years ago aren't necessarily the same things anymore.

### WHICH GENERATION SEEMS TO BE THE MOST CONSCIOUS OF COST AND RESPONDS BEST TO THAT MARKETING MESSAGE?

➤ **Bouldin:** I don't know that there's one that is more cost-conscious, I think there are different reasons for cost-consciousness. The older the demographic, the more there tends to be that work ethic and value-of-a-dollar mentality that goes all the way back to the World War II generation. The people who lived through the Depression – and a lot of the older generation today are the children of those people – have been raised in that mindset. Millennials and younger generations often have less disposable income because of where they are in their life stage, so they're cost-conscious for a different reason. The definition of value means different things to those two groups, so it comes back to what each cares about. At the end of the day, clean, comfortable rooms in a desirable location are the necessities that matter to everybody, and the things that you layer on top of that – the types of food and amenities that you offer – can vary by the group to which you're trying to market.

### WHICH GENERATION IS MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND TO ADS THAT TOUT A HOTEL'S AMENITIES AND LUXURIOUS SETTING?

➤ **Gemberling:** Predominantly, it's the generation older than 55, the senior crowd, because it's all driven by income, and those folks have the most disposable income. They're also looking for more service-based amenities and things that are going to be maybe less active and more proactive in terms of their needs. Spas are an example of that. ■

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# YOUNGER TRAVELERS

## *by the Numbers*

To better understand younger Americans' attitudes about travel, Expedia and the Center for Generational Kinetics surveyed 1,254 respondents and published their findings in a January 2018 report. The survey defined Generation Z as those born in 1996 or later, making them 23 and younger, and millennials as those born between 1977 and 1995, making them 24-42.

**ONE BIG TAKEAWAY:** Travel is very important to younger Americans, most of whom would prefer to spend their disposable income on new and exciting experiences instead of material possessions. And not surprisingly, social media has a strong influence on their travel decisions. Consider these study findings:

- **65 percent** of millennials say they are currently saving money for travel, vs. 57 percent of American adults at large.
- **71 percent** of Gen Z respondents would be willing to get a part-time job to pay for a trip.
- **49 percent** of both younger generations would be willing to sell some of their clothes or furniture to pay for a trip.
- **45 percent** in Gen Z would be willing to stay off the internet for a week to go on a trip.
- Approximately **two-thirds** in Gen Z are undecided on a destination when they decide to take a trip, illustrating an opportunity to influence through relevant content and advertising. More than **70 percent** are open to help and inspiration when planning a trip, including social media and digital advertising.
- **27 percent** of millennials have posted a potential trip on social media to canvass opinions before booking, and 36 percent in Gen Z have chosen a destination specifically because they saw postings about the destination on social media.
- **42 percent** of millennials have traveled alone for leisure in the past year.
- **A majority** of Gen Z and millennial respondents preferred a long weekend of three to five days as the preferred vacation duration.
- Gen Z is the generation **most likely** to book trips fewer than 30 days out, often within just a week or two of travel.

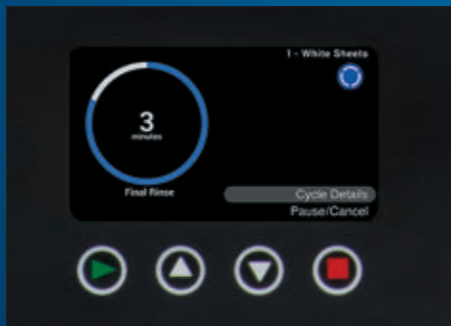


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# GENERATION SECTS



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Talkin' bout my generation.  
And yours. And perhaps  
your grandparents'. Your  
workers are diverse. Their  
strengths are many and  
varied. So, too, are the best  
ways to manage them.

by AMY DREW THOMPSON

**H**OSPITALITY IS A DIVERSE INDUSTRY, IN PARTICULAR when it comes to age. With seniors working longer into their golden years than ever and the first wave of Generation Z already hitting the workforce, leadership teams are finding that it takes an entire toolbox to successfully manage an army made up of – in some cases – five different generations.



### MEET YOUR (EXPERIENCE) MAKERS

The Traditionalists, folks born before 1946, are in many cases still working, and the food and lodging industries have been embracing them.

Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) are still at it, too. Some for necessities – a salary, better health benefits – but even many who can retire choose to keep working; they enjoy it. As the generation that ushered in not just rock ‘n’ roll, but a preponderance of women in the workplace, it’s not surprising that many of these employees are women.

The last three, Generation X (born 1965–1976), Gen Y, more often called Millennials, (born 1977–1995), and Gen Z (born in 1996 and later), are far more tech-familiar, with the latter two leading the pack.

“The most important thing to remember,” says Dorea Mays, associate director of human resources for Rosen Hotels & Resorts, “is that all people are diverse in many aspects, inclusive of age, and you cannot put individuals into a box. A good understanding of the five generations in today’s workforce is

great insight to have as a leader in order to effectively communicate with and manage diverse teams.”

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Carolyn Argo is the director of talent acquisition for Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando Resort. She notes that there are decidedly different tacks for success in managing staff members of different ages, in particular when it comes to their values, communication styles, what motivates them and how they approach tasks. Each, she notes, has its strengths and weaknesses.

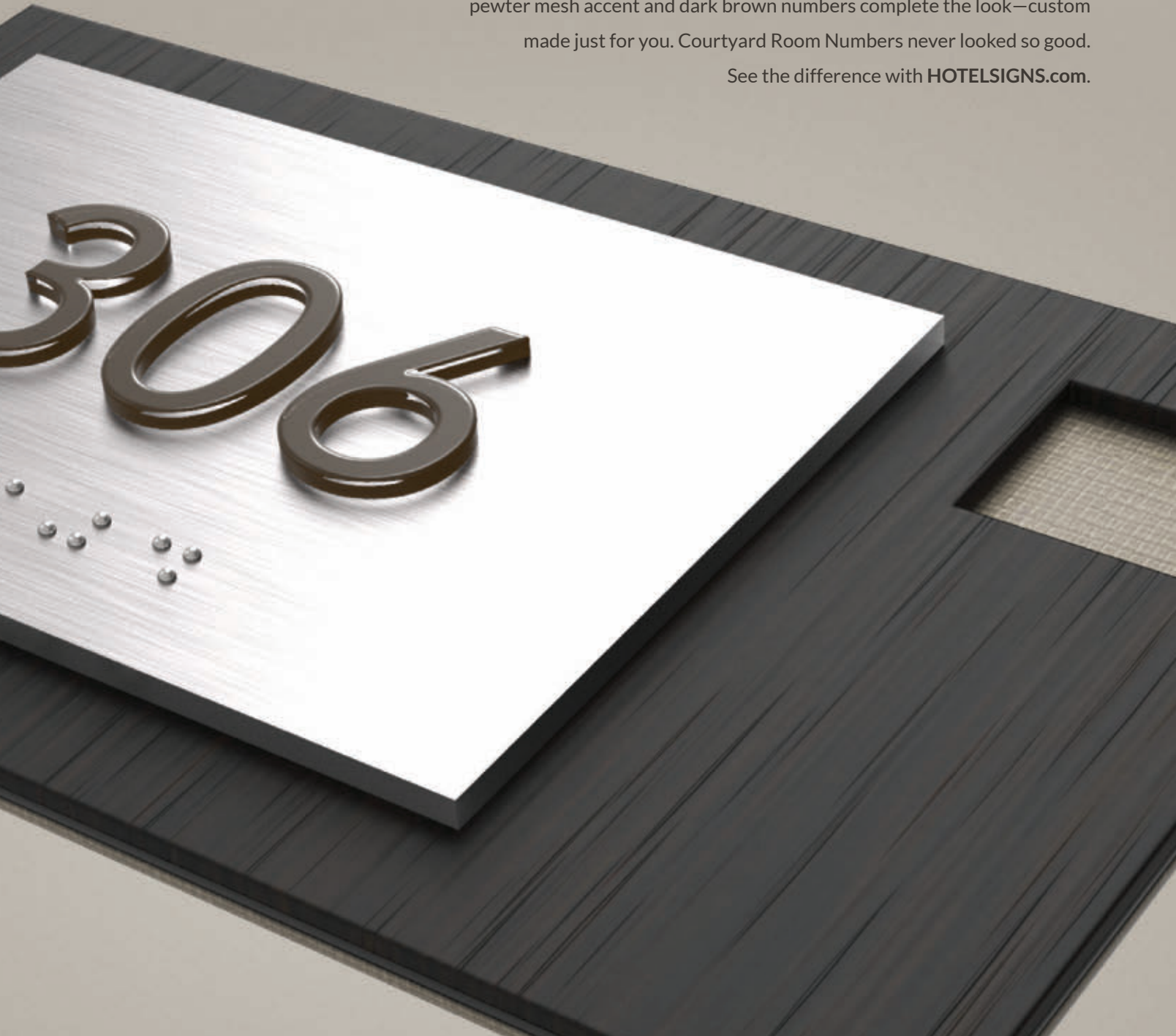
Younger workers, she says, are often thought of as lazy; Argo – a Baby Boomer herself – balks at this idea, noting that they are simply more efficient in some cases.

“For example, I know I can lay out specific goals and a strategy and then let them run with figuring out the specific tactics for how to accomplish it, and they will come up with ideas I would not have thought of myself...I know I bring a wealth of wisdom and experience to the team, but I also know I will never be as tech savvy as the younger generations, so I

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“The most important thing to remember... is that all people are diverse in many aspects, inclusive of age, and you cannot put individuals into a box.”

welcome their skills because it only makes my team stronger and more productive.”

Older workers, she says, are more willing to work longer hours and sacrifice personal time to grow their careers and provide for themselves and their families; they have other strengths that younger staffers more often do not.

“Younger workers have different priorities and values; they want work/life balance and time to travel and enjoy their lives outside of work. This is not necessarily wrong, but it differs from older workers...”

A desire for instant gratification – perhaps borne of social media – also is prevalent among younger generations.

Though Mays is adamant about avoiding the stereotypes that can hamstring workers of different stripes, she has noted an uptick.

“We have vast amounts of recorded information and history on the various demographics, paired with the evolution of society and technology,” she observes. “We have seen the desire for day-to-day feedback and reaffirmation heightened in today’s workplace vs. in the past, when most employees were hesitant to demand that feedback.”

Argo would likely agree, noting that younger workers expect immediate incentives.

“[They] don’t feel they should have to invest time with their employer before being rewarded,” she said.

As such, Argo considers these factors when planning things such as team outings, holiday celebrations, and rewards.

“For example, it’s important to Millennials and Gen Z to give back to their communities, so I have made an effort to coordinate community service opportunities, which were very well received by my younger team members. As a result, they feel more engaged and personally aligned with the company’s values.”

It could help with retention; members of these demographics don’t exhibit the loyalty of their mature colleagues. Less fearful of failure, Argo says, “they are more likely to leave if they are dissatisfied with aspects of their current job. Finding ways to keep them motivated is an ongoing priority.”

Conversely, boomers and older generations, she says, are loyal – and take the most pride in a job well done.

“They have a strong work ethic and seek stability, structure, and job security,” she notes, though there is a flip side. “They can be less receptive to change, less flexible, and may be fearful of technology.”

## CROSS (GENERATIONAL) TRAINING

And speaking of, it’s their comfort with precisely that which makes Millennials and Generation Z so darn efficient!

As a result, Argo says, they are more confident and adaptable.

“However, their confidence can lead to a premature sense of entitlement, which can be challenging to manage in a multi-generational setting.”

Indeed, technology and communication can be roadblocks to effective collaboration between the generations; a quick, informal poll of various employees with regard to their feelings about texting would be enough to prove that point! As such, training employees in the areas of personal communication – and the use of technology to do so – can be an effective way to get people thinking about the best ways to work together, and bring them all to the same starting point. As generations learn differently, as well, programs should be designed for inclusion. From classroom settings that appeal to Traditionalists to experience-based learning tools that light fires in Millennial minds, these sessions can double as team-building exercises.

In fact, Mays includes specific training on diversity, generations, effective communication, and listening on her roster of best practices for management teams.

She notes that broad misunderstandings cut a swath across the demographics, though for older workers, most are driven by stereotypes and a lack of recognition of what each person brings to the table.

“I would say we’re in a transition period where companies are realizing the value of experienced associates and seeking out their knowledge to ensure it is transferred to the younger generations.”

Older workers, Argo says, are generally more mature, patient, and respectful than their younger counterparts, which can cause clashes in a multi-generational environment. Stepping to this challenge, she often chooses to pair them together strategically.

“It’s an opportunity to bridge gaps between different generations so they can learn from each other,” she explains. “It helps create mutual understanding and appreciation, which ultimately builds a stronger, more effective team.”

Both Argo and Mays note that a diverse team is vastly superior to the opposite. Despite the pros and cons, the value of employing across all the age demographics cannot be underestimated.

Ultimately, Argo says, it’s up to leaders to take the time to understand their differences and promote the unique strengths that each worker brings to the team.

The focus, Mays says, should always be on ability and performance.

And unless your property’s guests are of a single generation, the value of diversity is a well-savvy manager will learn to tap.

“The difference in ideas that comes from this diversity produces a blueprint that impacts our guests,” Mays says. “And they are also from all age groups.”

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# How have new generations influenced hotel owners & their financing strategies?

by RUSHI SHAH



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**H**OTEL OWNERSHIP has evolved over the years. Thanks to the growth of brands and franchising opportunities, an owner that may have owned only one independent hotel in the past can now tap into resources that make it possible to have an entire portfolio of Marriott and Hilton properties. The same can be said for accessing hotel financing. In the 1990s, a typical hotel wouldn't qualify for a CMBS loan, and balance sheet loan options didn't exist for hospitality assets. Today, capital opportunities have expanded and hotel owners can leverage a plethora of financing mechanisms.

While both of the above elements have contributed to this progression, there is

another underlying reason for the evolution. An industry originally comprised of first-generation immigrants has grown to include their Gen X and millennial children, nieces, and nephews. This influx of new blood and ideas has created a sea of change in hotel owners that has affected their appetite to use more sophisticated financial tools, how they operate their business, and who they trust to guide them in key decision making. Let's take a closer look.

## **BROADER CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE**

The impact of the new generation is obvious as they take on a bigger role in running or growing their families' businesses. But even in situations where the children are not actively involved, they

still have influence. Members of this new generation are typically well educated and bring finance, business, and law degrees from top institutions to the table. They have grown up with technology and know how to use it to access information and compare resources. As a result, they are able to bring a fresh, global, and often more objective perspective to the decision-making process, even indirectly.

## **DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RISK OF RECOURSE**

Historically, hotel assets were financed using an SBA or some form of government guaranteed or community bank financing with full personal guarantees, or recourse. Hotel owners chose these types of loans because they were

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comfortable and familiar. Owners were also operating under the misconception that they would lose their property if they went with a non-recourse loan. Today, non-recourse financing has become more mainstream, and hotel owners are more likely to understand that non-recourse loans will actually help insulate against losing a property by providing leverage to negotiate more effectively with lenders and servicers during adverse market cycles.

This enlightenment is partly due to many owners feeling the realities of suffering through a down cycle with full recourse on their loans. It also is because the new generation is helping instill confidence in how non-recourse financing works, and the benefits of using “other people’s money.” For example, we had a client who hesitated to put on a non-recourse loan on his large hotel property. After consulting with his younger family members, they convinced him to choose a non-recourse loan. This was indeed a wise decision. When his loan was close to maturity, he found out the brand wasn’t going to renew. Because his loan was non-recourse, he had better leverage and was able to negotiate with the servicer at the time of maturity for a principal reduction.

A hotel owner in the past may have also compared the term of a full recourse bank or government-backed loan with a non-recourse Wall Street execution and, if the rates were significantly different, automatically gravitated to the bank or government-backed loan. Fast forward to today and we see a knowledge shift. Now, armed with a broader perspective that draws from experience and the new generation, owners are better able to accurately price the risk of recourse. They understand that there should be at least a 2-percent premium on non-recourse capital compared to loans with personal guaranties attached. In other words, with all else being equal, if a 10-year CMBS loan is available at 5 percent, hotel owners should not even consider a bank loan above 3 percent.

Plus, when there is no burden of personal guaranties, a lender can’t touch the hotel owner’s savings, retirement, house, car, or other personal assets. This makes it easier for owners to build healthy cash coffers for their retirement and families and is a smart strategy for planning for the future. For example, we had a client who had amassed a significant amount of assets and was looking to transition the business to his offspring and retire. While he was willing to hand over the reins to the next generation of capable people in his family, he didn’t want to carry the credit risk. By refinancing to a long-term non-recourse loan, he was able to continue to own the hotel assets and trust his next of kin to handle the operations, without the burden of the personal risk. As an added benefit, he was able to take some cash off the table to diversify away from hotel ownership and monetize the equity he had built up over the years without tax consequences.

### INCREASED OPERATIONAL SOPHISTICATION

Generational change also is evident in how hotels are run day to day. The newer generation has recognized the benefits of more sophisticated operational infrastructure and the need for better internal controls and accounting to grow and scale. Using a separate management company to run the hotel is one example of a growing trend. As a byproduct of elevating their asset operations, hotel owners have opened the door to more sophisticated financing options such as institutional non-recourse financing through CMBS conduit, balance sheet and life company lenders, as well as hedge funds, private equity shops, mezzanine lenders, and REITS.

### INCREASED CRITICAL MASS

Working together, both generations have made taking advantage of the buying power, resources, and information

provided by industry organizations such as AAHOA, local lodging associations, brand gatherings, and other hospitality events a common practice. Together, they have created a critical mass with considerable influence within the industry and over government legislation, politics, and the economy.

### STRATEGIC USE OF OUTSIDE EXPERTISE

Trust must be earned in any industry. People work with people they know and who they’ve worked with in the past. While relationships are still king, no matter the generation, we are seeing an increasing willingness in hotel owners to partner with qualified professionals who can bring the critical experience and expertise they may lack to the table. This is often driven by having next-generation advisors who can help vet the quality, serve as sounding boards and provide a more big-picture, less-emotional perspective. The willingness to effectively leverage qualified outside resources can significantly improve success and create a competitive edge for hotel owners. We see this proven every day when it comes to hotel financing. Knowledge translates into more options and better results. ■



*Rushi Shah is principal and CEO of the commercial mortgage and real estate investment banking firm and AAHOA Club Blue Member Mag Mile Capital.*

*As a leader in hospitality financing, Shah specializes in structuring and placing high-leverage, non-recourse bridge and permanent debt with cash out for full – and limited-service hotels nationwide. Since joining the firm’s predecessor, Aries Capital, in 2015, Shah has structured and closed hundreds of millions in financing for all property types. Shah has held previous positions at Northern Trust and has an MBA from the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business.*

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# Encouraging youth employment

by ALFREDO ORTIZ



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**T**HE SCHOOL YEAR IS coming to a close, which means millions of American teenagers will be dropping their pencils and notebooks in favor of picking up a summer job.

Summer jobs during the teenage years are just about as American as apple pie or an afternoon spent at the baseball park. In fact, in 2017, 35 percent of people between the ages of 16 and 19 years old participated in the seasonal summer-employment ritual.

Encouraging the youth of America to buckle down and hold down seasonal employment during the summer months not only ensures a brighter future for the teenagers themselves, but it's the first step in ensuring that the future U.S. workforce is equipped with the basic skills necessary to successfully keep a job and eventually embark on a career.

We're not talking about learning how to solve calculus problems or how to pen an essay on the political ideology of philosophers from the previous century. We're talking about more basic skills that can be applied to almost any employment opportunity. These include punctuality, dependability, acclimating to the eight-hour workday, and even simply learning the value of hard work.

These may seem like obvious skills to acquire, but people need to learn them somewhere. Some of the most successful people learned these skills and began their careers during either a summer job or similar seasonal part-time employment.

Take, for example, Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest people in the world. He started on his career path by delivering newspapers at the age of 13. Jennifer Aniston, a Hollywood megastar, got her start cleaning houses. And 44th

“It's clear that the road to success always begins with a first job, whether you end up as a manager at a local restaurant or the leader of the free world.”

President of the United States Barack Obama began his working life scooping ice cream at Baskin-Robbins during his teenage years.

It's clear that the road to success always begins with a first job, whether you end up as a manager at a local restaurant or the leader of the free world.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO AAHOA ON 30 YEARS

Marriott International is proud of the strong partnership with AAHOA that has paved the way to new and exciting development opportunities. We commend AAHOA and its mission to advance and protect the business interests of hotel owners and the positive impact it has made on the hospitality community.



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However, a recent trend around summer employment is cause for concern. Since the year 2000, the number of teenagers holding down a summer job has dropped by nearly 17 percentage points. Although no concrete evidence exists, it's likely that the drop in early-age jobs during the past two decades is contributing to the shortage of skilled workers in the labor force.

In fact, according to recent data from the Department of Labor, there are nearly seven million unfilled jobs in the country, many of which are vacant because employers are having a difficult time finding employees who are equipped with the necessary skills to complete the job. While it may seem trivial to connect this major problem to fewer teenagers becoming lifeguards or staffing concession stands during the summer months, attaining that work ethic at a young age can have a major impact on what people pursue in the future.

But what could be causing this teenage job dilemma? One likely factor is a rising minimum wage.

States and municipalities across the country have been raising the minimum wage to as high as \$15 an hour. In fact, in January of this year, 20 states and 23 localities imposed a higher minimum wage.

This policy may be paraded as a pro-worker policy that will push wage levels up, but in reality, it's a change that harms the very people it's trying to help – notably young workers. Because when minimum-wage levels are raised, employers are forced to cut entry-level jobs, and the ones that remain will be reserved for older workers with more experience.

As we enter the summer months, it's important to remember the value of a teenage summer job and the broader benefits that will result from the experience later down the road. It's critical policymakers promote these opportunities, not stifle them. ■

*Alfredo Ortiz is the president and CEO of the Job Creators Network.*

# AAHOA CONVENTION LOCATIONS THROUGH THE YEARS



1993	Atlanta, GA	2007	Charlotte, NC
1994	Nashville, TN	2008	San Antonio, TX
1995	Dallas, TX	2009	Washington D.C.
1996	Orlando, FL	2010	Chicago, IL
1997	San Jose, CA	2011	Las Vegas, NV
1999	Atlanta, GA	2012	Atlanta, GA
2000	Las Vegas, NV	2013	Houston, TX
2001	Atlantic City, NJ	2014	Philadelphia, PA
2002	Nashville, TN	2015	Long Beach, CA
2003	Long Beach, CA	2016	Nashville, TN
2004	Grapevine, TX	2017	San Antonio, TX
2005	Fort Lauderdale, FL	2018	Washington D.C.
2006	Las Vegas, NV	2019	San Diego, CA

# How modern technology allows a hotel to identify with its location

by MARK D. KUHN IV

**W**ITH LOCATIONS dispersed across the globe, Marriott, Hilton, Wyndham, and Best Western are among the biggest hotel chains in the world. But aside from competing with each other, there is another less-talked about consideration involved in designing individual hospitality experiences: connecting a specific hotel with its geographic location.

Hotels increasingly are using the modern technology of today to create unique environments that align directly with a specific hotel's city, town, and state. They are using lobbies, communal areas, bars and restaurants, and turning these spaces into memorable

experiences that not only distinguish their hotel from others, but their own hotels from each other.

## TELLING STORIES WITH SIGNAGE

It's no secret that hotels are increasingly investing in different kinds of digital displays to perform necessary tasks, like wayfinding, event notification, and marketing. What is new, though, is using this technology not just as a means to display information, but as a design element that allows hotels to more deeply identify with their location. Displays are being used to evoke a mood, tell a story, and, in many cases, immerse guests in their unique city and state.

Hotels use signage content to display location-specific imagery. For

example, a hotel in Santa Monica, CA, may invest in a video wall display that shows vivid content of waves breaking in the lobby – a visual unique to their region.

And, in addition to the content shown, there are various types of signage that hotels are investing in to recall their past and create a unique experience in the present. For example, Moxy Hotels' newest downtown Chattanooga location invested in a modern take on an old-school Split Flap train station-style display by Oat Foundry to pay homage to Chattanooga's railroad-rich past.

The display, unique to Moxy Chattanooga, creates an element of anticipation as the flaps turn – like those felt by 20th-century train travelers – captivating the new generation of guests and



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“Displays are being used to evoke a mood, tell a story, and, in many cases, immerse guests in their unique city and state.”

making for the perfect ‘Instagrammable’ moment in the present.

What hotels display – and how they choose to display it – is becoming a unique differentiator among different places.

## ENGAGING IN REAL TIME WITH PEOPLE AND PLACES

In today’s digital climate, linking two people in separate locations is simply a matter of connecting to Wi-Fi. Hotels are increasingly leveraging this interactivity to showcase people and places within their venues to create an experience that could only be had at that particular location.

There is nothing more specific to a location than its people. That’s why hotels are beginning to showcase real-time social media updates through various types of projections and displays. Digital guest boards have the ability to pull directly from social media feeds like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, in real time, and broadcast them in their lobbies, expanding the possibilities of engagement.

Hotels can follow a location tag, hashtag, or location-specific event. For example, a Chicago hotel can follow

and display real-time updates from the Lollapalooza music festival to create excitement for the city’s big event. They can pull real-time weather data in their city and display it, and display interactive city maps with social media posts from those places.

Similarly, Moxy’s recreation areas include a live update board, where guests and non-guests can share their experience, through imagery, with everyone staying in the hotel. This gives visitors a

firsthand glimpse into the life of a local, creating an experience that can only be had at that location, at that moment.

The opportunities are endless for hotels to use this real-time interactivity as a design element that roots the hotel deeply in its geographic location.

## EXPANDING OUTDOORS WITH WIRELESS POS SYSTEMS

Designing a hotel indoors is one thing. But many hotels are looking to bring



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the same indoor hospitality experience outdoors, whether that's within the city they're based in or on the beach outside of their resort.

One such technology that's allowing them to do this is wireless point-of-sale technology such as Square software. This tech is increasingly being used in

unique spaces that further distinguish their location and engage guests with new experiences.

Imagine a hotel in Hawaii with a tiki bar quite literally on the beach. This outdoor bar area has limited functionality because of power and data constraints. But with a wireless

point-of-sale system, it becomes easier for the staff to tend to guests as they roam about the hotel's outdoor bar area. Hospitality venues can leave the wires inside, focus on the aesthetics of their outdoor space, and take the hospitality experience outdoors to truly create a local experience without interruption.

Additionally, hotels can integrate multi-purpose check-in systems with this same technology to allow for check-in anywhere. This helps hotels get creative: Check-in can be outside, in a gallery, or even behind the bar.

The remote flexibility of integrated check-in systems and wireless point-of-sale systems allow hotels to expand beyond their physical walls – and constraining traditions – to fully utilize the space and location they're in.

### FUSING TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN

We're entering the age where technology is not just functional. Designers are increasingly using the technology available today – whether it's social media, sales software with remote capabilities, or nostalgic split-flap signage – to tell more location-specific stories.

Gone are the days when technology isn't considered an integral part of the unique hospitality experience that significantly distinguishes one hotel from the next. ■

*Mark D. Kuhn IV is the co-founder and CEO of Oat Foundry, an engineering agency that designs and builds cool stuff for hospitality venues. From Split Flap displays to an industrialized cold brew plant, the company is a fully capable engineering design studio in a prototyping and lightscape manufacturing facility. Oat Foundry has become the world's leading provider of Split Flap displays, with displays in operation domestically and internationally, and installations in the United States, the United Kingdom, Costa Rica, Mexico, Canada, Hong Kong, and Azerbaijan.*

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# CHANGES IN ATTITUDE

Three generational planning strategies for long-term success

by TAMARA BALDANZA-DEKKER



**A** SMART BUSINESS POSITIONS itself for success by being multi-generational and thoughtfully finding ways to engage with a wide, diverse audience. Brands that want to build a lasting footprint – ones that won't be washed away with the tide – need to know what they're all about, infuse it into everything they do, and exceed all expectations in the process. That's no easy task. We've worked hard to translate our authentic Margaritaville lifestyle into hotels, resorts, vacation homes, active adult communities, and consumer products, and we've continued to grow while staying true to our core. Here are some lessons we learned along the way that may help other properties achieve similar results.

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## 1. EXPAND YOUR TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC

Any brand that fails to continually recognize and serve new target demographics is destined for stagnation, and in today's ever-evolving landscape, it's necessary to pinpoint your brand's identity and find a way to deliver it in a way that's relevant to tomorrow's travelers.

The song "Margaritaville" has been the soundtrack to family vacations for more than 40 years, which gives us an inherent following of people who grew up listening to Jimmy Buffett and know his lyrics backward and forward. But instead of stopping there, we've intentionally attempted to tap into the feeling of escapism explored in the song's lyrics. And continuing with the theme of expanding the target demographic, we recently launched Margaritaville University, an ambassador program that brings the Margaritaville lifestyle to college campuses across North America, and we have experienced unprecedented success with our active adult communities.

The ways of expanding a target demographic are endless. This could

mean a massive undertaking like branching into new geographic locations or it could be something less drastic like expanding your hotel's presence on the web.

## 2. EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

As you build your portfolio, be sure to explore unexpected coordinates. With a presence in different types of locations, you'll tell your story in fresh and exciting ways while attracting new travelers in the process. If you've been successful with beach resorts, consider branching out to the mountains, the streets of NYC, or lakeside. Or, bring your brand to a surprising location like a cruise ship or airport terminal. As you test these changes in scenery, it's important to remain authentic and true to your DNA while creating a unique, diverse footprint. In Margaritaville, for example, we strive to consistently deliver memorable service, signature design elements, and fun, regardless of the latitude. With more places to vacation and mix business with pleasure, guests will be happier, resulting in increased overall satisfaction and loyalty.

## 3. EXPAND YOUR OFFERINGS

To ensure longevity, there is a lot that brands can do to diversify their actual product offerings. It isn't just about being in unique locations; it's about expanding your offerings and amenities in those locations.

We like to say that Margaritaville is a way of living – with a product for those who want to stay for a night, a week, or forever. By expanding our offerings, we have private vacation homes available to own or rent because there is a demand to permanently live in a vacation state of mind. And to complement our growing collection of hotels and resorts, we entered the upscale select-service hotel market with COMPASS. People want options and adding new extensions of your brand gives this freedom to your guests.

Once your guests arrive, it's important to cater to all ages with creative and engaging activities. Think about amenities like kids' clubs, spas, adult-only pools for parents to sneak away to, and entertainment the whole family can enjoy. By creating spaces where people of all ages can come together, relax, and have a good time, you ensure your brand will maintain its appeal.

When it comes down to it, people pass on the traditions of the brands they connect with most. Be the brand people want to talk about with a smile and then give them plenty to share. ■



*Tamara Baldanza-Dekker is the chief marketing officer of Margaritaville Holdings. She began her 20-year career with Margaritaville in operations*

*and today oversees all branding, marketing, PR, content, and digital initiatives for the company's dynamic portfolio. This includes hotels, resorts, active adult communities, restaurants, vacation ownership properties, consumer products, casinos, the college ambassador program, and more. To learn more, visit [www.margaritaville.com](http://www.margaritaville.com).*

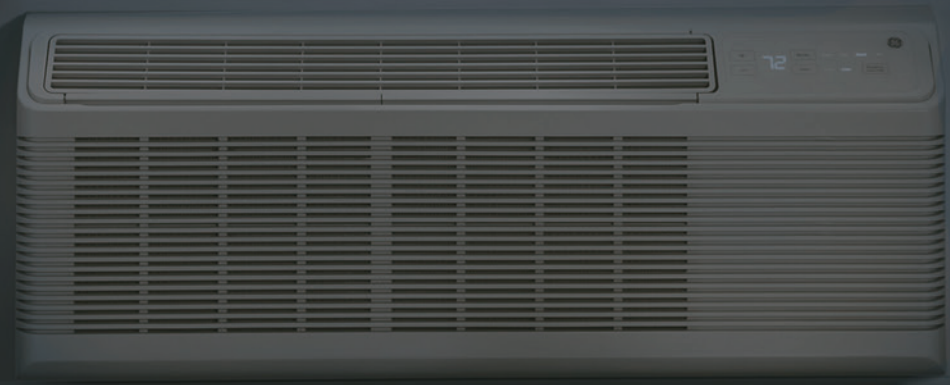


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## Orlando is the Self-Proclaimed and Undisputed Theme Park Capital of the World

by ASIF LAKHANI

**N**ESTLED APPROXIMATELY in the center of the state of Florida, Orlando is home to both Walt Disney World, which features a handful of parks within itself, and Universal Studios, where the Wizarding World of Harry Potter has been enchanting fans for nearly a decade. Other major theme park attractions in Orlando include SeaWorld and LEGOLAND.

So, it should come as no surprise that Orlando was the first U.S. city to exceed 70 million visitors in 2017, according to

the city's tourism bureau, Visit Orlando. Those numbers were enough for Orlando to be ranked fourth on the list of top travel destinations (behind Shanghai, Beijing, and Paris) worldwide, according to a report from the World Travel and Tourism Council published just a year ago.

During a call with reporters in September 2018 regarding Florida tourism numbers, then-Florida Gov. Rick Scott said, "Every 65 to 75 tourists is another Florida job," according to *Orlando Weekly*. Tourism makes up the largest portion of Orlando's payroll and consumer spending numbers, according to the Orlando Data Center.

"Every 65 to 75 tourists is another Florida job."

To date, Orlando has 450 hotels with a total of 120,000 guest rooms, according to Visit Orlando. And there is steady growth on the horizon still.

LEGOLAND has announced it will open the Pirate Island Hotel, equipped with pirate-themed accommodations, in the spring of 2020. The new hotel will be the third on-site accommodation

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at LEGOLAND, according to the press release. It is slated to have 150 rooms, a pool and deck, LEGO models, and unique character experiences.

Elsewhere, Universal recently announced plans to open both hotels in its Endless Summer Resort development by 2020, as well. The Surfside Inn

and Suites, scheduled to open in July 2019, is designed with the surf lifestyle in mind. The second hotel, the Dockside Inn and Suites, opens in May 2020 and boasts of an “escape to the perfect sunset” on the Universal Orlando website. Each hotel features standard rooms for as low as \$85/night and two-bedroom

suites for up to six adults beginning at \$131/night. Universal estimates that the two hotels combined will add an additional 2,050 rooms to the central Florida tourism behemoth of Orlando.

Hotels and resorts aren't the only attractions to be found in Orlando, however. In fact, the city is home to one of the best virtual reality (VR) experiences in America today. Nomadic is a VR arcade that claims to “blur the line” between reality and fantasy for all experience levels. Although the company is based in California, its first stateside gaming experiences can only be found in Orlando for now and at very affordable prices (\$20-\$25 per experience).

Other Orlando attractions include the NASA Kennedy Space Center, where rocket launches and rare artifacts can be viewed by the general public with the cost of admission. The center opened in the 1960s and was an instant sensation. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the building is that it receives no tax money to operate despite being affiliated with NASA. It relies completely on “visitor-generated revenue,” according to its website.

And Florida's natural geography enables a tourism industry unique to itself. The Boggy Creek Airboat rides have been operating for 25 years and allow passengers to experience the wetlands, gators, and sunrises or sunsets in a one-of-a-kind way. Gatorland is another attraction where gators and crocodiles, synonymous with Florida culture, are on full display.

Orlando's scenic views, competitive hotel rates, and accessibility (two major airports) make it an attractive destination for business travel and conferences annually. And AAHOA is proud to visit the city for its annual convention, AAHOACON, in 2020. Although the itinerary has yet to be determined, there will be no shortage of things to do, places to see, or venues to congregate in once AAHOA Members arrive. ■

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# THEY CAN'T COMMUNICATE AND IT'S COSTING YOU

Help employees bridge the generational communication gap and deliver outstanding customer service.

by PAM PAQUET



DIMJ/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

“The importance of good communication among generations doesn’t just apply to employees.”

**A** HOTEL OR HOSPITALITY VENUE IS ONLY as successful as the people working there. From top management and front-line staff to those keeping things running behind the scenes like maintenance or administration, a high standard of customer service and efficiency is necessary for success.

An efficient workplace is built on a number of good practices, and one that is critical is good communication. When efficiency is declining in a business, there is a tendency to shy away from communication and focus instead on the hard facts, like occupancy rates, booking engine stats, and increased sales per room.



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## COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Problematic numbers are analyzed with our eyes, but generational communication problems need to be identified with our ears. Here are three issues, also known as efficiency busters, commonly found in companies:

### EFFICIENCY BUSTER #1: "NOT ME" RESPONSIBILITY

"It's not me" or "It wasn't me" is a familiar efficiency buster. Unfortunately, it is accepted by management and customers because of the false logic often presented. Phrases like: "I am still waiting..." or "I didn't hear back from..." shift the blame to others and is often accepted as truth without further exploration.

### EFFICIENCY BUSTER #2: WHO CARES?

Clarity is essential for efficient working relationships and the best responses are "yes" or "no." When people aren't saying what they mean, the tell-tale signs are replies like "sure," "fine," or "whatever." These are usually passive-aggressive responses – compliance is heard but the follow-through will be absent.

### EFFICIENCY BUSTER #3: DO WHAT I SAY

A third party may hear this efficiency buster as helpful and providing guidance. However, to the receiver, it can sound demeaning and derogatory, and may cause resentment. Preaching comes in a few forms, but phrases generally begin with: "You should...", "You ought to...", or "What I would do is..." The communicator may be oblivious to the negativity, yet the receiver will likely hear inferences of incapability, incompetence, or inexperience.



This attention to the numbers is often easier for hotel management to embrace when there's a need to solve problems. The finite nature of numbers is easier to deal with than human behavior, which lacks certainty. If it's there in black and white, it should be easy to pinpoint and resolve areas that need improvement. Unfortunately, the information gleaned from numbers may highlight where the problem is but not necessarily why it is a problem. Deep research into numbers only gives insights into fluctuations, tendencies, and patterns; not solutions.

The numbers must be put aside and the focus shifted to people and how

they communicate to resolve efficiency problems. People brought together in a business environment – including the hospitality industry, where everyone's goal is to be a great host – are not friends or family members; differences and preferences are evident.

These differences in communication styles can become amplified when employees are from vastly different generations. There can be up to five different generations found in the workplace: Traditionalists (born before 1946), Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1976), Millennials (born 1977–1995), and now Generation Z

(born 1996 and later). Think of your housekeeping team, management team, and front-desk staff. Chances are you have at least two of these generations, if not more, in these areas.

Each generation is unique and has clear preference for communication methods and styles. Older generations will always vote for face-to-face interactions where talk is engaging and purposeful. Generation X likes using technology to talk because it provides efficient communication. Millennials and Generation Z prefer the latest technology or app because interactions can be succinct, sporadic, and inclusive.

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## FINDING SOLUTIONS

**When numbers are put aside and the focus is on listening to staff communicate, the number of efficiency busters may astound even the most successful teams, departments, and companies. How are these problems fixed? With three simple steps.**

### STEP ONE: AWARENESS

This step began by reading this article. Most people are not naturals at understanding communication, so having an awareness of their own habits is key. Know the efficiency busters and be aware of trigger words like: still waiting, should've, couldn't, won't/don't, sure, fine, whatever, etc.

### STEP TWO: PATROLLING

Share the education by helping others recognize when they use one of the trigger words or an efficiency buster. Most times, trigger words are just bad habits that have evolved over time. Rather than being accusatory when a trigger word comes up, try implementing an agreed-upon gesture or signal. Something like raising the pinkie finger or making a timeout sign. The intent is to recognize the error and stop the current direction of the conversation. Help others become aware and make the workplace a positive source of communication.

### STEP THREE: DO OVER

Use recognition in Step Two as an opportunity to have a "do over." Try saying the message again in a way that avoids the efficiency buster or trigger word. There is no limit on time or errors, so start with, "Let me try that again..." If it is difficult, ask for ideas or suggestions to create positive communication that replace the word or get around the efficiency buster.

Effective and efficient communication is a teachable skill that will positively impact customer service, workflow, and human resource metrics. Not taking the time to communicate well will cost you money, customers, bookings, event contracts, and more.

When employees are aware of how they contribute to conversations with people of different generations, help each other identify bad habits, and offer opportunities to change communication, hospitality businesses will thrive and grow more efficient and profitable. Companies can spend time and money on numbers and statistics, but this must be done in tandem with helping staff communicate better with generationally different colleagues and customers.

Since people are unique and generational differences make them categorically different, learning to communicate and work well together is an important skill to foster in the workplace.

The importance of good communication among generations doesn't just apply to employees. It extends to customers, and in the hotel and hospitality industry, the variation of guest generations can fluctuate like a seasonal business. The ability to understand generational communication preferences becomes a critical skill not only for internal company efficiency but also for exemplary customer service.

Obviously, these differences can become problematic and impact business.

Think about the younger generations that are very comfortable, almost experts, with technology talk, but in face-to-face conversations, they freeze, fumble, or accidentally insult others.

Think about Gen Xers who don't want to be told how to do something, so they may snap at overly helpful customers or react badly to supervisors or managers.

Think about the older generations that crave personal interaction and the need to be needed. How will they react when customers don't compliment their expertise and colleagues are too busy with technology to connect?

The goal for every hotel should be to have its guests feel like their needs are understood and anticipated with seamless, exemplary service and memorable exchanges. With this, the right numbers will climb, while the reputation of the venue skyrockets. ■

*Pam Paquet is the chief change officer for Pam Paquet & Associates Performance Management, a firm that specializes in organizational therapy, performance management, and exit-strategy planning. For more information on the concepts discussed here, please contact her at [pam@thepossibilities.ca](mailto:pam@thepossibilities.ca).*

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AJ Patel, President & CEO, created JSK Hospitality and Development companies to both build and manage their private portfolio of 15 Marriott, Hilton and IHG hotels.

AJ's background in engineering from Purdue University has lent to the company's great success in both hotel design and development. Over the years, he has worked his way up in the family business by working multiple hourly positions within the family's hotels. AJ continues to maintain the same hands on approach that has helped him grow the business. His focus remains in the small details of the business that he continues to oversee. It is not uncommon for AJ to be found interacting at the property level.

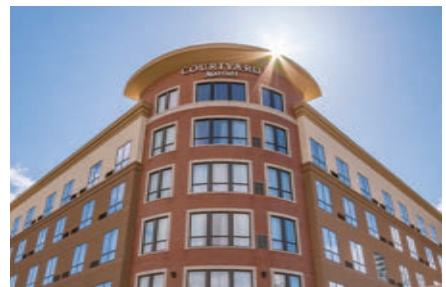
AJ Patel is proud to report "that our company remains 100% family owned with no outside investors." He also notes that "we currently have 4 hotels under construction, with 5 additional in the pipeline."

The companies inspiring executive team compliments the organization with their vast and diverse array of hospitality experience. They're a group of passionately dedicated hoteliers who are a part the company's story line of success.

JSK Hospitality's vision for the future is to maintain a modest private portfolio. AJ Patel states, "JSK is happy with the success we've achieved thus far, we have everything we want. We're now ready to help others who may be struggling with success in the same ways that we did."

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# Don't let labor costs ruin your profitability

by DEL ROSS



FOXY BURROW/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**L**ABOR EXPENSES ARE ON the rise for the third straight year in 2019. Worker scarcity, regulations, and other market conditions are pushing hotel wages up with no end in sight, and

overtime levels plus contractor usage are soaring. As a result, for most hotels, labor expenses are growing five times faster than RevPAR, reducing operation profits and income each month. Combined with rising interest rates and the always-growing cost of distribution,

hotel profitability has never been more at risk, and this is all happening during a good economic cycle.

Wages are controlled by the market. Beyond using wage comparison tools (LobbyLights.com, for example) to ensure that your hotels' wages are

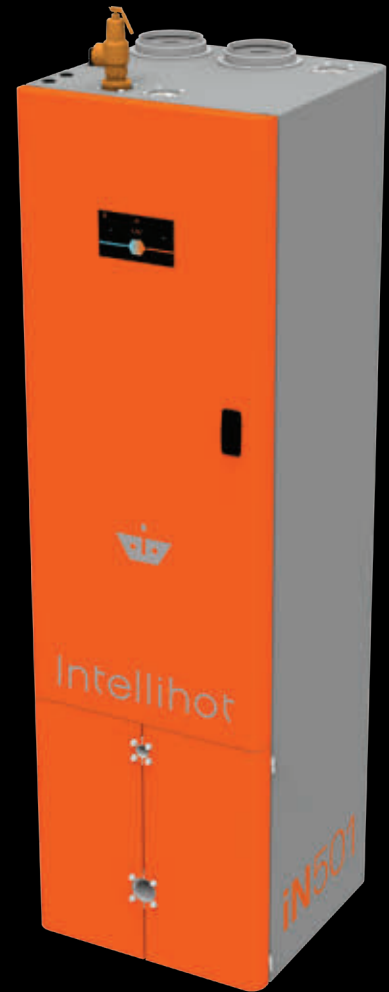
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aligned with those of your competitors, there is little you can do about hourly rates. Fortunately, every hotel can take steps to dramatically reduce overall labor costs without sacrificing service quality or the guest experience. A recent study by the Blackstone Group found that use of labor management techniques can deliver expense reductions of 4 percent to 12 percent for almost any hotel.

“A limited-service hotel should see labor savings of 4-6 percent,” says Michael Escalante, the independent labor management consultant who performed the analysis for Blackstone. “Full-service hotels can save more than twice this amount.”

There are three basic steps to reducing total labor costs:

- **Create labor standards:** Use the staffing guidelines that connect hotel’s positions and key business drivers
- **Connect schedules to labor plans:** Match up the labor standards with operational forecast to produce actionable schedule plans for every department and position
- **Hold teams accountable:** Communicate labor plans and measure real-time performance to obtain optimum performance

### LABOR STANDARDS

Most positions in a hotel are “variable,” meaning that they are linked to a volume-based driver such as arrivals,

departures, restaurant covers, and so on. The staffing rules, or “standards,” for these roles can be documented as a straightforward math equation. For example, the check-in process takes about four minutes and checkout takes about a minute and a half. If you’re expecting 25 guest arrivals and 20 departures during a given period of time, you know that you need 130 minutes of front desk labor ( $25 \times 4 + 20 \times 1.5 = 130$ ) to cover that interval. Creating a similar standard for each staff position – housekeeping, shuttle drivers, restaurant servers, etc. – will make it perfectly clear how much labor is needed within a specific period of time.

### LABOR PLANS AND SCHEDULES

With labor standards in place, match the standards up to daily, weekly, or monthly forecasts to produce labor plans. These plans will outline labor requirements for each hour of each day for every department in the hotel. Labor plans become the scheduling template. Managers will save a lot of time by simply assigning team member names to these schedule templates, and every schedule addresses exactly what labor is needed. A best practice for this kind of “smart scheduling” is to also track the cumulative and forecasted hours per employee, enabling managers to track overtime risk in advance and make adjustments so that the required hours

are distributed among team members in the most effective way possible.

### TEAM-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

Every hotel has a labor budget, but budgets aren’t plans, and they aren’t meant to serve as a guide to scheduling. Labor plans are actionable and measurable – in advance. A well-run hotel will require every manager to check in to their labor performance vs. plan every single day, making adjustments when necessary and annotating the reasons for any exceptions or variances to the plan. “What gets measured, gets managed” is as true for labor management as it is for everything else. In a typical hotel, only the owner and perhaps the regional or general manager track profit performance on a daily basis. By making labor management a part of each manager’s daily process, the entire leadership team will be linked to gross operating profit (GOP) and net operating income (NOI), aligning everyone’s interests and activities to the priorities of the owner.

### MAKING IT REAL

Some hotels use homegrown spreadsheets for labor management. Others put everything on whiteboards in the back office or break room. These methods work, but for most hotels, it’s easier and more cost effective to use specialized technology to implement labor management. For example, Hotel Effectiveness provides labor management technology to more than 3,000 hotels, and for most clients, the inexpensive solution delivers measurable cost savings that are more than eight times the price of the service.

Whether you use Hotel Effectiveness or your own in-house tool, it’s crucial to begin implementing labor management solutions today and to begin enjoying reduced labor expenses right away. ■

*Del Ross is the chief revenue officer for Hotel Effectiveness, a labor-management software provider. For more information, visit [www.hoteffectiveness.com](http://www.hoteffectiveness.com).*



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# THE FIVE-STAR EXPERIENCE

## Establishing a hotel for the ages

by COLLEEN KEATING

**I**N THE TIME SINCE I BEGAN MY CAREER IN this industry 30 years ago, hotels have become increasingly differentiated. From midscale, upper-midscale, upscale, upper-upscale to luxury, today's traveler can find a hotel suited to virtually every travel occasion.

With many different types of travelers – the business traveler, the leisure traveler, or even the traveler who mixes the two together, for example – some wonder whether it makes sense to build hotels that cater to specific age demographics. Would it make sense to create a hotel for, say, retirement-age Baby Boomers or emerging Generation Z, whose older members are now of an age where they can travel independently, and choose and book their own hotel accommodations?

In principle, it's a good question. In practice, I'm not so sure.

It's certainly important to understand the unique opportunities and nuances associated with different generations of guests. However, my sense is that any hotel that caters too heavily to one primary age demographic may do so at the expense of other travelers.



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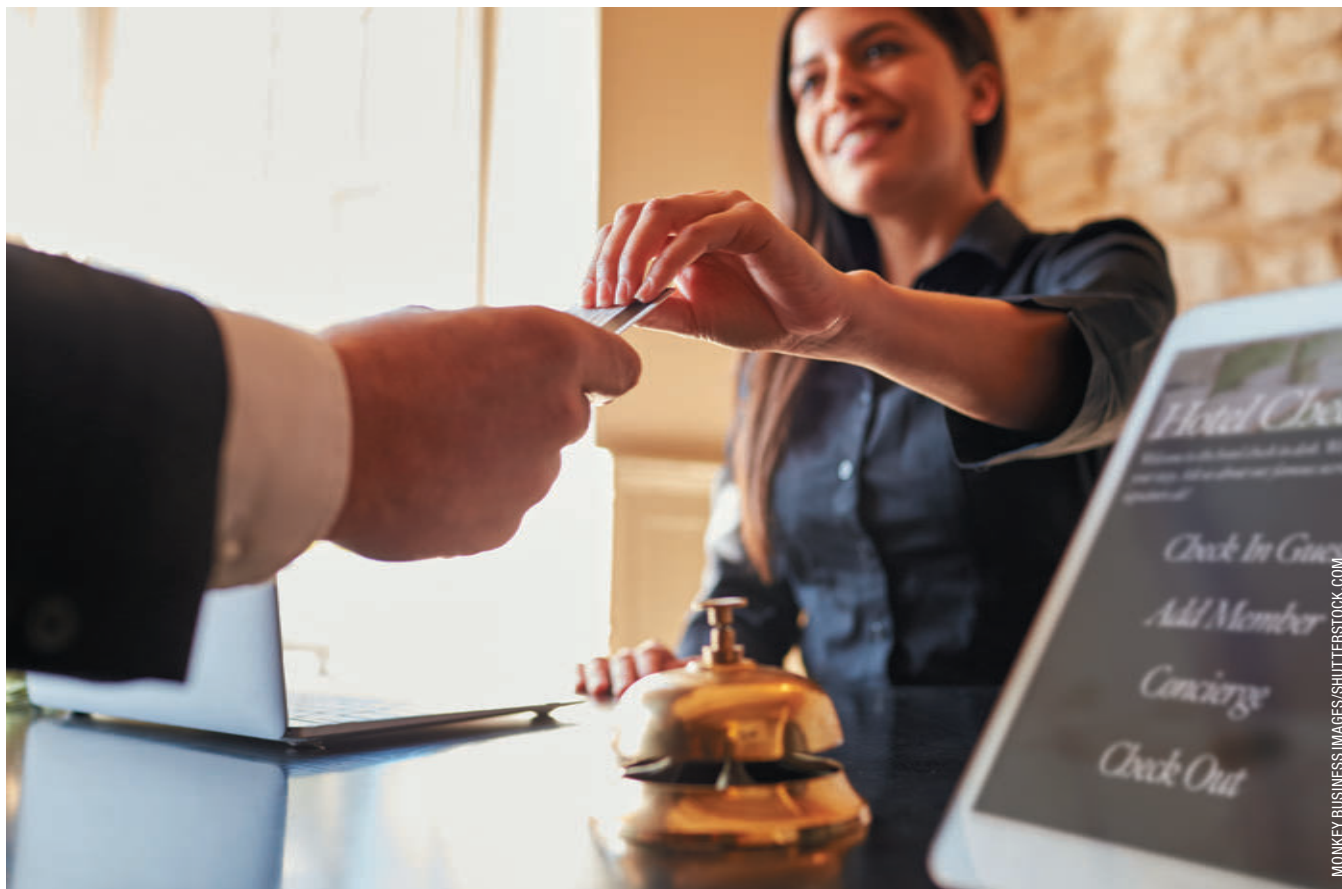


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To do so would be a major gamble. The simple and obvious question: What happens if aging or economic trends impact this group's ability to travel? Dig a little deeper and increasingly complicated questions arise: What happens when the preferences of the targeted generational group evolve over time as they age? How would our industry or an owner of a hotel hedge against dating the property, almost instantly, from the day the front doors open?

The better strategy, in my view, is to adapt constantly and re-invent enthusiastically to keep up with trends, and remain relevant by offering a consistent guest experience regardless of age. It seems to me a hotel that offers *true* hospitality is already creating a deeply personal, inclusive experience for its guests, one that makes every guest under its roof feel comfortable and at home, whether that guest is 5, 35 or 65.

The fact is, true hospitality transcends one age group. Time and time again, we find that the (adult) guests in our hotels generally want the same things, regardless of age. These timeless, universal principles generally fall into the following areas:

### **TRUST AND RELIABILITY**

We know that value and location will always be among the leading drivers for bookings. An almost equally important consideration comes in the form of trust. Regardless of age, people want to feel like they know what they're signing up for.

When guests are checking into our hotels, they're trusting that their room will be spotless and safe. They're relying on our rooms to provide a quiet, great night's sleep, which should be the No. 1 priority of every great hotel, regardless of price point.

They also want to know that they're getting a good quality food and beverage offering appropriate to the hotel segment. They want satisfying options that truly hit the spot, whether that's a "grab-and-go" or full hot breakfast, after-work appetizers and drinks, or a celebratory fine-dining experience for a special occasion.

In addition, today's guests also expect that the rooms will be technology-ready. While there are a range of different ways this comes to life across the different hotel segments, strong and reliable Wi-Fi is consistently the one thing everyone expects to work flawlessly fast. Whether you're a road warrior catching up on important work emails, a wanderlust chronicling your latest adventure in a series of social media posts, or a family with children who want to use their mobile devices for entertainment, Wi-Fi is a must-have.



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# SMART TECHNOLOGY IS MAKING IT EASIER TO PLEASE GENERATIONAL TRAVELERS

Giving guests control over the room environment is a smart first step toward happier guests and better online reviews

by JOHN ATTALA

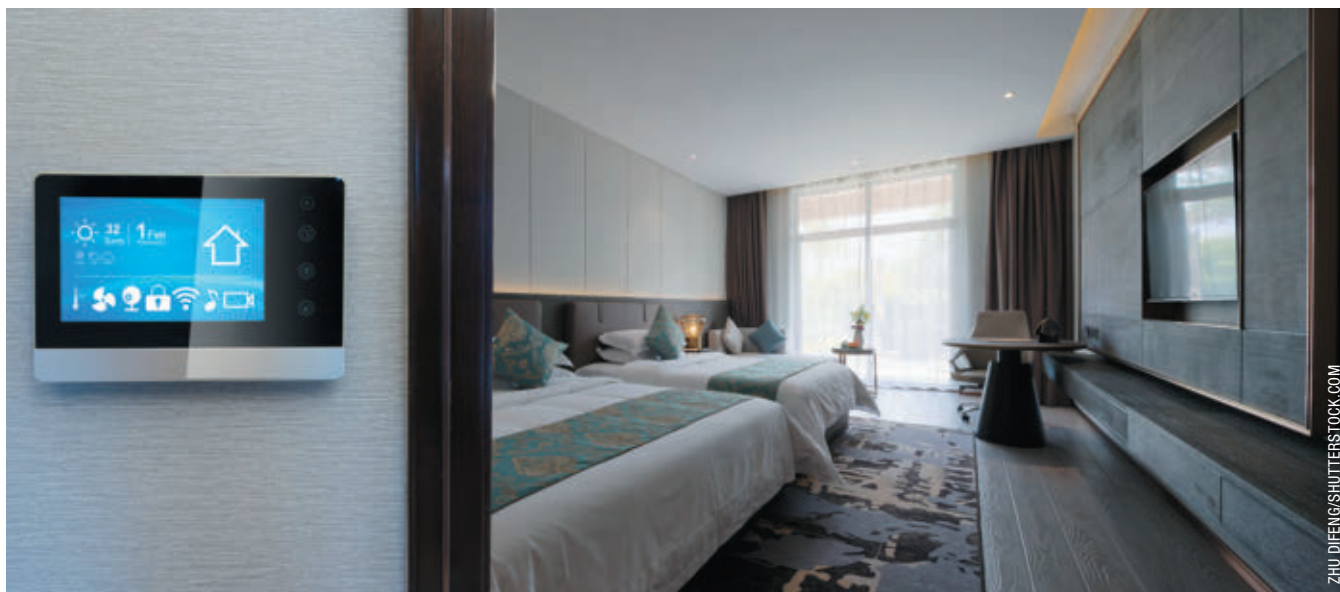


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*“YOU CAN PLEASE SOME OF THE PEOPLE all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all the people all of the time.”* Those words (spoken by John Lyndgate and made famous by Abraham Lincoln) were never truer than they are today in hospitality. Thankfully, smart technology is closing the gap on consumer dissatisfaction, and for the hospitality industry, that’s a huge step forward. With more generations traveling than ever before, technology is providing efficient ways to accommodate the diverse demands and growing expectations of modern hotel guests.

Take smart energy-management systems, for example. Whether a traveler is a Traditionalist (born before 1946), a Baby Boomer (born 1946–1964), GenX (born 1965–1976), Millennial/GenY (born 1977–1995) or GenZ/iGen/Centennial (born 1996 and later), each wants to be able to walk into a hotel room and control the room temperature easily and set it to their own preferred comfort level. For earlier generations, it may mean walking over to the thermostat, reading simple operating instructions, hitting up or down arrows or turning a dial to raise/lower temperature or touching the on/off button to stop the fan or unit altogether. For GenX/GenY and Millennials, it may mean using the hotel’s app on their smartphones or tablets to do the same. As for GenZ/iGen/Centennial guests (as well as older generations), they are or will simply speak commands like: “Alexa, I’m hot. Turn on the air conditioning” or “Alexa, play ‘Baby Shark.’”

While all travelers want to have control of the room environment as stated above, unfortunately, these scenarios are still the exception rather than the rule. Not all hotels make controlling room temperature a pleasing experience. A *Wall Street Journal* article written just two years ago titled “It’s Not You: Hotel Thermostats Really Are Rigged,” reported that hotel HVAC units can leave guests pushing buttons in vain



and searching for overrides of the system. “Rooms don’t get hot enough or cold enough. Ventilation shuts off in the middle of the night. The thermostat says 72 but your sweaty brow says 78. It’s not your imagination. Hotel thermostats often aren’t under your control.”

This needs to change – and change quickly. A 2018 Expedia and The Center for Generational Kinetics study reported that “experiences are top of mind across all generations when it comes to travel, but the nature of those experiences varies greatly.” When it comes to accommodation, the study stated, “All generations tend to value hotel reviews when making their selection, with a string of bad reviews acting as an automatic disqualification.” This means that if a guest has a bad experience with a room thermostat or HVAC unit – which may seem trivial to operators – he or she will have no problem writing a negative review of the hotel or at least reading a negative review about your hotel posted by another disgruntled guest.

Hoteliers who think they are saving money on energy costs by preventing guests from self-operating room temperature controls will soon find out that these negative reviews will cost them much more money in lost business. Giving guests total control of the

room while it’s occupied is table stakes. That means ensuring that it doesn’t take a guest 15 minutes to figure out how to use the thermostat or HVAC system and enabling them to control the room digitally or even by voice.

Because many travelers already have connected homes and rely on voice assistants, they are expecting to have similar experiences when they travel. It’s the “consumerization of technology.” Enabling guests to turn off lights or raise/lower room temperature through a smartphone, tablet, or voice-enabled room assistant is already happening today. More important, it is a personalized convenience that shows travelers you want their stay to be as comfortable as possible. Not requiring them to get out of bed or up from the desk to customize the environment is a great place to start. In some cases, guests can even control room temperature remotely; warming the room while still at dinner so that it’s comfortable upon their return.

### UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTED ROOM

Smart thermostats and occupancy sensors are designed to monitor and respond to fluctuations in occupancy. Smart energy-management systems use sophisticated machine-learning

algorithms to continuously analyze historical thermodynamics, local weather patterns, and peak demand loads to optimize energy consumption in real-time, all year round. Smart-energy savings aren’t just wild speculation. They can reduce hotel energy costs by up to 20 percent and generate some of the fastest payback periods in the industry (between 12 to 24 months). They also can significantly increase the resale value of a hotel.

The energy savings from IoT technology aren’t limited to smart temperature controls. Smart lighting technology also enables hoteliers to better understand their energy needs, automate consumption, and adapt to real-time changes in occupancy. Like smart temperature controls, smart lighting systems enable hoteliers to set preferred lighting times, track occupancy patterns, and improve overall lighting energy consumption throughout the year. For instance, when the Chatwal Hotel in New York retrofitted approximately 1,300 lamps in the hallways, common areas, and 80 rooms, it saved more than 410,000 annual kilowatt-hours, equating to a 90-percent reduction in lighting energy consumption. Indeed, the Chatwal Hotel saved around \$124,255 in the first year alone.

Just as smart EMSs enable hoteliers to monitor, track, and optimize energy consumption, predictive maintenance allows them to use sensor data to identify wasteful or hazardous trends and alert maintenance staff before a given issue escalates into a much costlier one. So, rather than waiting for a component to break down before being serviced or replaced, IoT technologies are enabling engineering staff to *predict* maintenance needs based on system usage, thereby preventing system failures and reducing the costs of operating a faulty system. A single leaky toilet can cost as much as \$840 per year. Add to that the cost of the water damage that occurs before the leak is detected. By monitoring water lines with smart, low-cost IoT-enabled water meters, hotels can see a return on their water consumption in about four years.

Similarly, some online management platforms continuously collect data related to HVAC runtimes for each unique room and assign them efficiency ratings. This rating is an indicator of how quickly a room can be heated or cooled to the guest's preferred temperature and provides engineering teams with critical alerts when HVAC equipment needs attention.

Not only can data be used to help better accommodate guests needs, but in conjunction with occupancy sensors, it also can be used to automate guest interactions throughout their stay, reducing both friction points and labor costs. In this way, smart technology will continue to make it possible for hotels to predict and personalize several guest services based on previous visits and aggregated guest data.

The end goal of any hotel owner/operator is to “*please all of the people, all of the time.*” Smart technology is bringing the industry closer to that goal. ■

*John Attala is the marketing director for Verdant Environmental Technologies, a provider of energy-management solutions for the hospitality/lodging industry.*

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# STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Reinvent your hotel façade for higher profits

by CHRIS WINTERHALTER

**C**HANGING CONSUMER TASTES AND increased competition from new-build hotels across more brands is convincing established hoteliers to rethink their existing hotels from the outside in – literally.

Hotel exteriors built 10 or more years ago simply don't reflect current design trends, and in many cases, properties such as Gen 1 and Gen 2 Courtyard by Marriott



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require a complete façade redesign to maintain that flag. Plus, as real estate becomes increasingly scarce in overdeveloped regions, land prices continue to escalate. Combine that with construction and material costs continuing to rise and, many times, it's a better option to upgrade the exterior rather than scrap the site and build a new hotel from the ground up.

As older hotels in good sites come to market, an exterior update also is a smart solution for hoteliers buying hotels they're looking to reposition upward.

All these factors have hoteliers investing in reinventing building façades nearly as frequently as their lobbies and guestrooms. A refreshed exterior creates stronger curb appeal, as well as the perceived appearance of a newer, more upscale product that helps keep a property desirable for another 15 to 20 years.

Be warned, however, that renovating a façade requires a wholly different construction skill set than what's required for inside the building. Just because your contractor may do a great job on the interiors doesn't mean they are properly suited to revamp the exterior.

First, alert the brand of your intention to reinvent the hotel's façade. Though there are times when owners feel as if this will pit them against brand stewards, the opposite is typically true. More

“The issue is not if your hotel will need to refresh its façade, it's a matter of *when*.”

than ever, major hotel franchising companies understand the expensive nature of façade redesigns. They will work with you to achieve the brand design intent, while partnering to achieve value-engineered savings. They'll also assist through unexpected issues, changes, and delays if included in communication from the beginning.

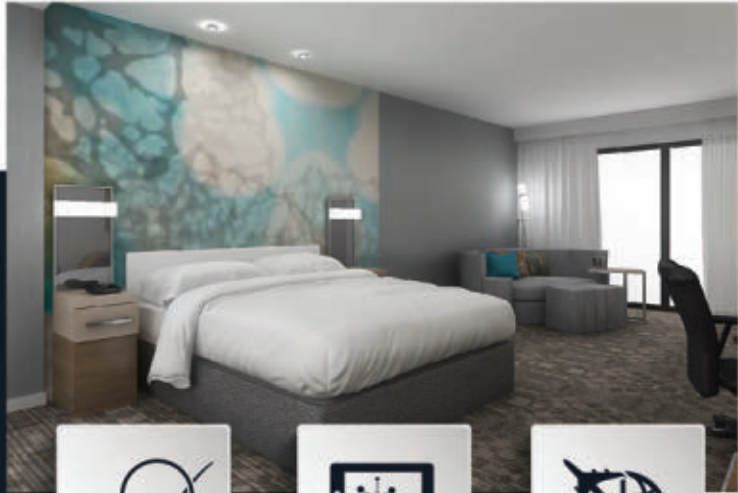
From an ownership perspective, we've seen some owners fail to do exterior work properly because they have hired a contractor who simply didn't understand this highly specific design process. Talk to a general contractor, project management firm, or architect that's done this work before, so they're not learning on your dime. This is essential for creating a realistic budget. Next, put a different contingency in place than you'd do for the interior, which we recommend at

10-15 percent. It's always smarter to have a better buffer than a lower contingency.

Also, the project architect should have previously worked on hotel façades. Architects tend to design to whatever they think is right, which may not always be the most cost-efficient solution. Firms inexperienced with this kind of work don't have a complete understanding of achievable savings during the construction process and are more likely to design in a way they think is wanted by the brand but not actually required. I see this happen regularly; owners get wildly varied prices during the bid process, which can strain construction funds and FF&E/capex reserve. Plus, additional expenses to value-engineer the project after it's already over budget are often incurred.

Other considerations:

- Work out the contract to limit risk on the ownership side, and work in tandem with the brand on specifics required for their approval before work begins. A design build approach with an experienced design build firm is a great solution, especially if you can minimize the budget and the risk.
- Don't just stick to the brand essentials. Get the property inspected to determine if there are problems with the façade or structure, such as moisture issues, the need for a new roof, or site work that may be needed.
- If rebuilding the porte cochère, consider a pre-fabricated unit. This saves significant installation time while minimizing guest interruption. While it may not always save money, there's better consistency and pricing if you have multiple properties in a portfolio and are looking to refresh several at a time.
- Understand the existing condition of the structure to consider the cost



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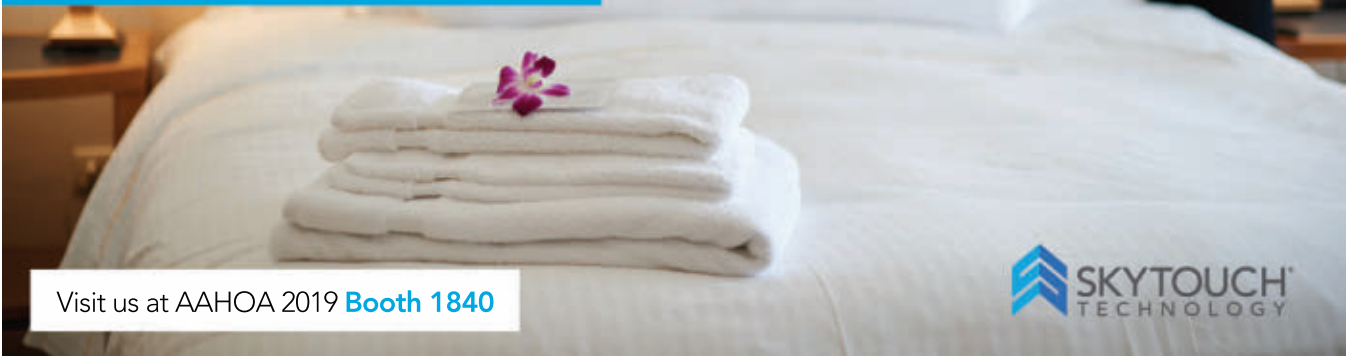
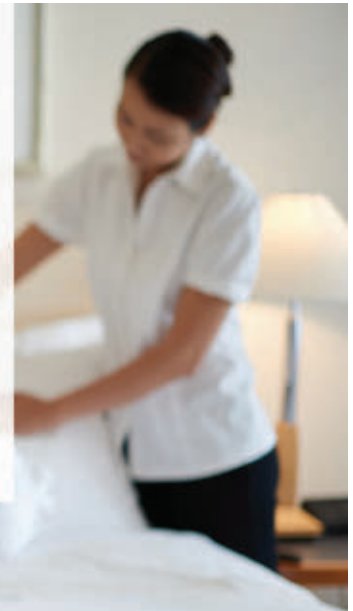
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of both cosmetic and architectural upgrades. Exterior upgrades require a much closer look at the overall structure, which can lead to cost overruns if not prepared during the budgeting and bidding process.

➤ Engage a contractor experienced in working on occupied buildings, for both guest safety and comfort. This means a clear understanding of work hours and a realistic plan.

➤ Give guests a little extra love such as extra food or complimentary cocktails.

➤ Ensure constant communication throughout the process with the construction team, so any potential delay doesn't come to light on day 89 of a proposed 90-day project.

The issue is not *if* your hotel will need to refresh its façade, it's a matter of *when*. Keep these concepts in mind, and you'll save time, money, and hassle during the

process while simultaneously pushing profits. ■

*Chris Winterhalter is the CEO and co-founder of Hotel Rehabs, a nationwide hotel renovation contractor specializing in major branded hotel renovations in the Upper Mid-Scale to Luxury spaces. For more information, visit [www.hotelrehabs.com](http://www.hotelrehabs.com), or find them on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/company/hotelrehabs](http://www.linkedin.com/company/hotelrehabs).*



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# DESTINATION RELAXATION

Turn your traditional hotel gym  
into a wellness oasis

by MILAN JARA



**G**ONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN traditional hotel gyms qualified as “self-care” hotspots for the average traveler.

Most of the time, your typical hotel “gym rat” will be the ultra-determined and motivated health enthusiast who insists that a person can get a good workout in anywhere they go. But that doesn’t mean they enjoy working out and treating themselves to their sacred self-care time in a dingy basement or a windowless room with mirrors on every wall.

If you’re looking to up the ante with your amenities, instead of just offering great deals or the usual free Wi-Fi (even if it is high-speed Internet), it’s time to take a reflective look at just what the guests are using while they stay at your hotel. According to one study conducted by Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, only 22 percent of people actually use the hotel gym.

Why are hotels sinking hundreds of thousands of dollars on creating luxurious experiences from start to finish for their guests if they’re not willing to invest in the one thing many avid travelers search for in a hotel: the gym.

In truth, guests are looking for wellness centers rather than traditional gyms in their hotels of choice because they provide an oasis, an escape, from the outside world while they’re away from home. One treadmill and one set of weights are no longer going to cut it for today’s wellness seeker, so it’s time to shake things up.

When you start considering the next steps to achieving your wellness oasis goals, it’s important to keep the age range you’re appealing to at the forefront. According to a recent study, about 55 percent of travelers are millennials. What exactly does this mean? It means that putting in amenities that address their mind, body, and soul collectively is the way

“In truth, guests are looking for wellness centers rather than traditional gyms in their hotels of choice because they provide an oasis, an escape, from the outside world while they’re away from home.”



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to go! This age group is determined to make sure their entire being is centered and connected at all times! Open up a spot that allows millennials to decompress, reenergize, and reconnect, and you've got yourself a gold mine!

So, how exactly does a traditional gym get transformed into a wellness oasis, a luxurious spot for guests to explore and enjoy during their stay?

### WELLNESS FLOORS + SUITES

Today's society is consumed with the idea of self-care and finding what that means for each and every individual.

And while, realistically, you cannot meet the needs and demands of every single guest (though you certainly can try), you might be on the lookout for options that provide the closest thing possible to individualized care.

One way to do this is to offer a wellness floor that includes wellness suites and rooms specifically designed with a person's overall health and wellness in mind.

Certain amenities or upgrades could be offered on the wellness floor or even in each room, things like air purifiers, essential oil turn-down services, the perfect Thai massage, water filters, an

in-room wellness treatments, possibly in-room spa services, a swimming pool on the balcony, a hot tub, and so much more. The sky really is the limit when it comes to thinking of the perfect place to give your guests a chance to unwind and recharge their minds, bodies, and souls.

Of course, these upgrades come with a higher nightly rate than your average hotel room. But for the health and wellness seeker, the higher rate will not deter them. In fact, the higher nightly rate could possibly encourage them to feel as if they were getting something extra



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special and VIP-like in service (and they absolutely are).

Think of this area as a way to let guests know they deserve the best and are offered the best at your hotel and you are guaranteed to book quicker and more frequently!

### SPA + MEDITATION ROOMS

Nothing screams “wellness” and “self-care” quite like a spa and meditation room.

It’s possible that being a “spa hotel” that offers a spa and meditation room in place of a traditional gym would appeal to a much wider range of people than you might be currently serving to ensure the perfect “pamper party.”

Like with the salon of yesteryear, spas are seen as the ultimate self-care reward that allows a person to escape reality and sink deep into relaxation for an extended period of time. These spa treatments could be add-ons to your guest’s stay or a part of the wellness floor you create.

When a spa is located in such a place that offers easy transitions from the gym to the spa to the room, guests feel transformed from the very beginning. They’re transported to their own slice of heaven, a true self-care moment for each person who enters.

You could offer spa treatments such as steam rooms, massages, whirlpools, cryotherapy, and even hydrotherapy.

Another great option to bring in wellness for the soul and mind to your hotel is through meditation. Guided

meditations, group meditations, or even a meditation room that allows guests to escape the noisy world around them and regroup and regroup is a great option for guests.

### GROUP EXERCISES

Traditional gym rooms can feel intimidating, overwhelming, and sometimes isolating. That is why guests often shy away from using the hotel gym during their stay, leaving you with a room that is unoccupied and devoid of human interaction.

If you are set on having the gym atmosphere in your hotel for those avid gym goers, you could throw in a group exercise schedule to allow others the opportunity to experience the workout with a group of like-minded people rather than alone.

Budgetary reasons may prohibit you from actually hiring a full-time exercise instructor for your hotel. One alternative you could try is to employ one of your staff members for 1–2 days a week to lead group exercises in the gym location or out in the courtyard (depending on your weather). This could be a great way to ease into the idea of having a group-exercise option for your guests and could allow you the chance to see if the idea works for your clientele.

Group exercises take the isolation out of working out and allow your guests to mingle with other guests, while also taking care of themselves at the same time.

### HEALTH FOOD BAR

Continental breakfasts, full bars, and the latest health-food restaurants offer guests from all walks of life the option to enjoy indulgences while at your hotel that they might not experience at home.

Incorporating health-food bars that offer healthier alternatives to snacks such as smoothies, protein shakes, gluten-free, and vegan options, for example, allows your guests to get a fully customizable stay experience while they are on your premises.

Wellness and self-care go from the inside out, including food and beverage. With today’s food options heading toward the healthier side of things, having a health-food bar could up your game in the hotel industry by quite a few points.

With wellness floors/suites, spa/meditation rooms, and health-food bars, your guests are transported to a whole new world when they step foot into your hotel. Their stay and VIP treatment will leave them feeling cared for and like royalty (which every guest should feel like when they leave your front door). ■

*Milan Jara, founder of Decorative Ceiling Tiles, Inc., migrated to the U.S. at age 20 from the Czech Republic and has been serving the hospitality industry for more than 10 years.*

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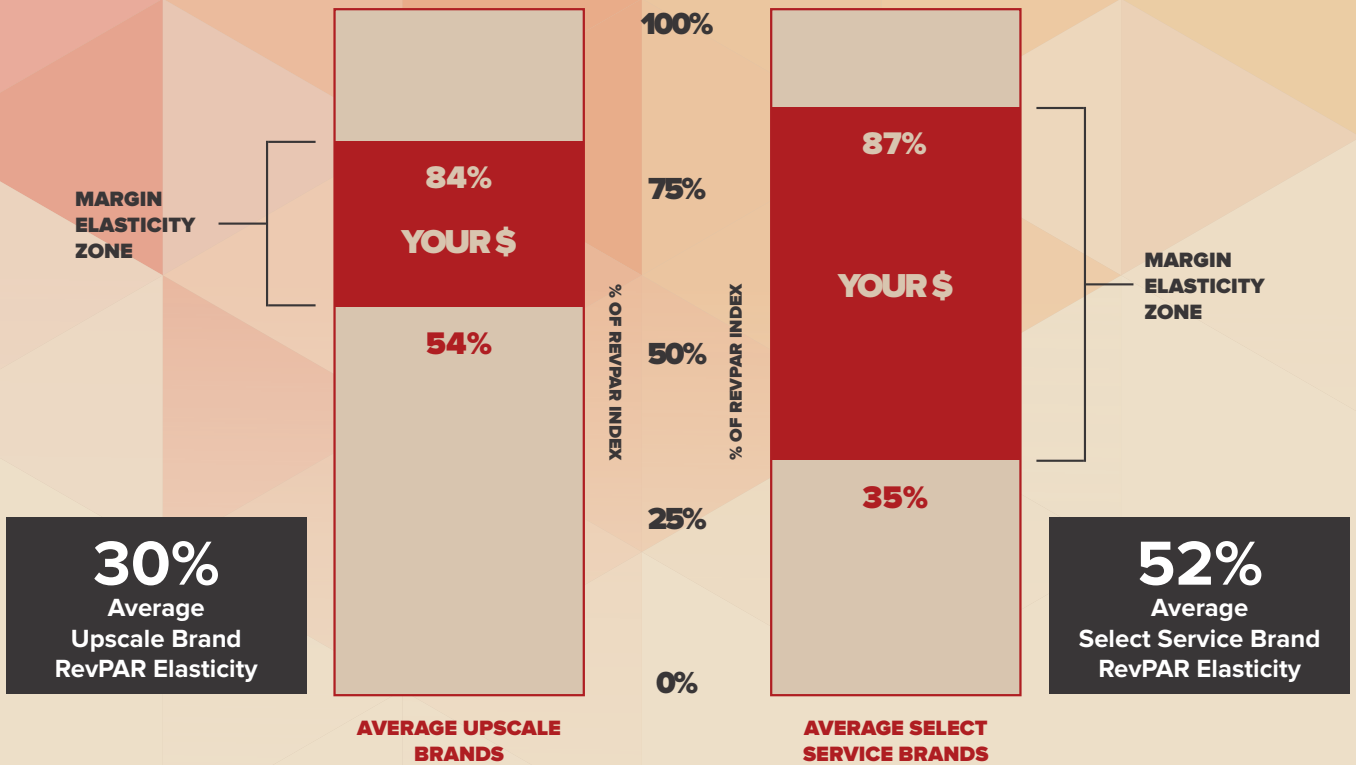
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with staff members of all ages

by CARTER DAVIS

**R**EGARDLESS OF INDUSTRY, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, or the available talent pool, a common, consistent challenge among hiring managers and recruiters has been finding the best people with the most desirable character traits to build a top-performing team. Yet, it's surprising how many employers go about doing this without having a firm plan in place. If you were to ask the general manager of any successful sports team what his or her strategy is for building a championship team, you'd get a host of answers, but surely none of them would say, "Eh, we just wanted warm bodies to fill the vacant spots, and we got lucky."



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Trying to build a winning team without a plan is like trying to sail across the Atlantic Ocean without a map. Or a sail. But the good news is that putting a plan in place for building your team isn't terribly difficult.

And here's the best part: Having a talented and well-trained staff in place puts the business in a better position for growth while simultaneously attracting top employee talent. With demand for top-shelf employees in the hospitality industry at a premium, competition between hotels for those employees can be stiff. So, how can you build the best team possible given the ultra-competitive atmosphere?

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

The obvious (and short) answer to this question is that you need good people. And to get those good people, it's vital to

recognize that all positions within the business are a crucial part of its success. Similarly, hiring managers and recruiters have sometimes expressed biases toward certain age groups of employees: "Millennials are entitled. Gen Xers are stuck in their ways, etc." But any truly successful team must be made up of talented people of all ages, skills, and backgrounds. By making a conscious effort to limit the pool of potential employees to one age bracket, for example, you shortchange yourself, your colleagues, and your guests.

According to a recent white paper published by the Society of Human Resources Managers Foundation, "By removing the lens of age as a way to view existing or potential employees, you can shift the focus to their abilities, skills, experience, and knowledge where it belongs. You also will expand

the talent recruitment pool, which ultimately benefits the organization."

And those benefits can be easily identifiable. "Workers 50+ may increase your revenue by three percent," the SHRM Foundation adds, "and reduce your turnover costs – all while bringing guidance, expertise, and balance to your company."

And beyond the issue of excluding potential employees based on age being a tactic that will shortchange your team from a personnel perspective, this practice opens up employers to a host of legal liabilities.

### GET THERE FROM HERE?

Understanding and acting on the simple concepts of workers of different ages bringing unique skills to the team and implementing a concrete plan for recruiting the most talented team members possible can yield tremendous



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“As humans, we’re all subject to emotions – staff and guests alike. However, the customer is always right, and this means that staff often has to keep emotions in check when presented with a stressed or unhappy guest.”



benefits down the line. Even staff members operating behind the scenes – housekeeping, food prep, purchasing, marketing, accounting, IT, etc. – play a role in the guest experience. Even if they never interact with guests in person, all hires should be treated with equal importance. A strong structure can’t be built on a weak foundation, and negative attitudes or poor performances behind the scenes can quickly infect those in guest-facing roles.

For those staff members in guest-facing roles, it’s important to consider their verbal abilities and capacity for empathy. When confronted with a dissatisfied guest, how will a staffer respond? Does he or she have a listen-first, respond-last personality, or is this someone who tries to find a solution before hearing the problem? Worse, is this someone who passes blame or will this person accept responsibility for failure and work on self-improvement?

As humans, we’re all subject to emotions – staff and guests alike. However, the customer is always right, and this means that staff often has to keep emotions in check when presented with a stressed or unhappy guest.

When faced with these situations – whether it’s the manager, the concierge, or the front desk attendant – the task remains the same: Solve the problem quickly and to the guest’s full satisfaction. Fortunately, this is an ability you can easily identify in the interview

process, even if the applicant has no hospitality industry experience. What problems has this person solved at previous jobs? What challenges has this person faced and overcome? Has this person had to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances before?

As practice shows, people who truly shine in these tense situations are hard to find, but they do exist. And if you are having trouble locating new hires with the exact talents you need, don’t hesitate to look internally for solutions. For example, if you have a behind-the-scenes staffer who consistently displays a knack for solving difficult problems while maintaining an even keel, it’s worthwhile to explore moving that person into a guest-facing role. Sometimes, the best solutions are the ones right under your nose.

Similarly, when filling vacant managerial positions, it can be tempting to look outside the industry for recent college grads with relevant degrees in search of employment. While there’s certainly nothing wrong with that approach, hospitality can be a learn-by-doing industry. And although many higher-education institutions offer a degree program in hospitality management, your next great management hire could be the person who has been parking cars or manning the front desk to make ends meet while pursuing a different course of study in college.

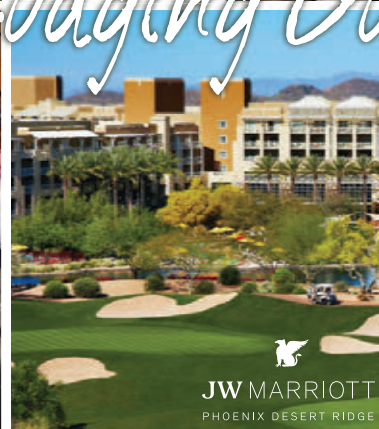
Because every task leaves an imprint on the business, each job is of equal

import with regards to guest experience and quality of service delivered, and awareness of this fact during the interview process offers the interviewer the chance to better tailor the questions for the duties of the job itself. You can always teach skills, but it’s much harder to teach core competencies like initiative, drive, and common sense.

Ultimately, no matter who you hire, the management team is responsible for instilling a sense of ownership and pride among the staff. And a business operated by attentive management will be much more efficient, as that manager can quickly respond to crises in real time. With involved management, conflicts and internal divisions can be identified and remedied at the stage of inception. With an out-of-touch managerial team, problems are much likelier to fester until they’re too large to contain or solve without considerable fallout.

By and large, the competitiveness of any enterprise depends on the abilities of its on-the-ground leadership, and management should continually review the various operational components of the hotel to create and maintain an organizational and operational strategy with a clear goal in mind of ensuring continued profit and growth. But even having the best operational strategy in the world would be useless without the proper team in place to execute the vision.

If you can hire the right people for the right roles, you’ll have a leg up on your competition. ■



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# Using storytelling to increase hotel revenue

by DALE NIXON

**A**S ANY MARKETING PROFESSIONAL can attest, there are countless aspects of effective brand management. And as many hotels are discovering, the art of storytelling can be an indispensable tool in the marketing approach.

## 1 WHY USE STORYTELLING IN MARKETING?

Simply put, a hotel's efforts must go beyond simply offering rooms at a certain price with a few amenities thrown in for good measure. Anyone can do that, and everyone is already doing that. You need to connect with your customer base on an emotional level to make yourself stand out in a crowded and increasingly competitive market.

People tell, and listen to, stories every day – often without even realizing it – and stories resonate with each of us on a deeply human level. The digital age has created myriad opportunities for marketers to incorporate storytelling into their efforts, which dovetails nicely with the wariness that many customers have toward many conventional marketing tactics.

## 2 VISUAL STORYTELLING AND ONLINE HOTEL MARKETING ONLINE

So, what exactly is online storytelling, and how do we use the concept effectively? Essentially, you need to find creative ways to describe your property to someone who wants more than a picture of a room or a list of amenities, being mindful to weave together the different strands that make your property unique



to create an interesting and engaging narrative.

It's not that room pictures or amenities lists aren't important; in the digital age, people are looking to better experience

what you have to offer. For example, you can provide this through a combination of high-resolution photographs combined with riveting narratives. Does your hotel have an especially interesting wellness center or co-workspace? Hire a photographer to capture creative images of the space and write a short narrative that goes into some of the detail of what makes the space so special. Or, you could create a short video walkthrough for any of the unique areas in your hotel. Keep in mind, however, that online attention spans can be relatively short.

### 3 SHAPING YOUR DIGITAL STORY

Your No. 1 job when crafting your story is to create a connection with your audience. People make purchasing decisions based on how they feel, not how they think. If you want to connect with your audience with emotion instead of logic, you need to get to know them first. In a nutshell: Identify the audience you want to pursue, learn what they're looking for, and create content that appeals to them and their needs. Different segments and groups will respond differently to different forms of content, so a shotgun approach that tries to market to everyone at once won't work well for any group. A great story told poorly is often less effective than a poor story told well.

### 4 MAKE YOUR STORIES AUTHENTIC

Your stories should feel real and have a natural flow to them, and stories that come directly from your guests are often better than those that are developed in the lab of a consulting firm. And there's certainly no cause to invent stories; you should have a wealth of stories and experiences at your hotel that are worth sharing. To find them, identify the strongest aspect of your hotel – what's your biggest draw? – and figure out what makes it so interesting. To dip your toe into the shallow end of the storytelling pool,

you might want to start out by recording yourself or your employees talking about what you love about the hotel and posting it as an audio file on your website. Or you could post interesting factoids to your social media account(s) about the hotel from time to time.

### 5 DIFFERENT WAYS TO TELL A STORY

There are countless ways to tell a story, and you'll probably find there are multiple approaches that work for your situation and audience. Will you take advantage of the two-way communication that using social media offers? Maybe you'll even put the call out to your audience to create some content for you. Your methods will depend on your audience and your goals, but it's critical to have a goal that can be measured to determine the effectiveness of your storytelling. Your data collecting should work to steer your storytelling strategy back on course if you find it needs correcting or adjusting.

### 6 "TALENT BORROWS. GENIUS STEALS"

This quote, often attributed to Oscar Wilde, might be somewhat glib, but it offers cutting insight into the creative process. There's no need to reinvent the wheel when so many others are already using storytelling to great effect, and not just those within the hospitality space. Countless multinational brands have managed to engage with their audiences in a tangible way through storytelling and direct-engagement tactics. If you see a company or individual doing this well, take notes and use what works and is practical for you.

People have a ton of options when it comes to hotels, so it's crucial to get creative. Good storytelling can differentiate your hotel from the crowd and allow you to form an emotional connection with your audience. Follow these six tips to use storytelling to increase hotel revenue. ■



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# AAHOA *around the nation*



1. AAHOA Treasurer Biran Patel presented Rep. Steve Chabot with AAHOA's Friend of the Hotelier Award at SNAC2019 for his support of small businesses.
2. AAHOA members from Ohio, including Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel, met with Rep. Steve Chabot to discuss issues important to small business owners in their state.
3. Michele Lieber (BluePoint DC) joined Doyle Bartlett and Chris McCannell (GrayRobinson, P.A.) for our Steps for a Successful Meeting panel, moderated by AAHOA Senior Director of Government & Political Affairs Jordan Heiliczer.
4. AAHOA Members from Vermont met with U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders' staff on Capitol Hill at SNAC2019 .
5. AAHOA Members from Ohio, including Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel, met with Rep. Brad Wenstrup in D.C. at SNAC2019 .
6. AAHOA Members from Arkansas, including Gulf Regional Director Girish (Gary) Patel, met with Sen. Tom Cotton's staff at SNAC2019.



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Gulf - Lake Charles	June 27	Lake Charles, LA
Northeast - Boston	July 9	Boston, MA
Upper Midwest - Minneapolis	July 11	Minneapolis, MN
South Carolina	July 23	Columbia, SC
North Texas	July 30	Irving, TX
North Carolina	August 1	Raleigh, NC
Georgia	August 6	Atlanta, GA
Upper Midwest - Des Moines	August 12	Des Moines, IA
Mid Atlantic	August 14	Cherry Hill, NJ
Northwest	August 20	Portland, OR
Upper Midwest - Elmhurst	August 22	Elmhurst, IL
Washington D.C. Area - Norfolk	August 28	Norfolk, VA
North Central - Indianapolis	September 5	Indianapolis, IN
North Central - Kansas City	September 17	Kansas City, KS
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Mid South	October 24	Nashville, TN
North Central - Cincinnati	November 4	Cincinnati, OH
Florida	November 6	Orlando, FL
Arkansas	November 12	Little Rock, AR
Central Midwest - Oklahoma City	November 19	Oklahoma City, OK



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- 7. AAHOA Members from Texas met with Rep. Lance Gooden at SNAC2019.
- 8. AAHOA members from Arkansas, including Gulf Regional Director Girish (Gary) Patel, met with Congressman French Hill at SNAC2019.
- 9. Female hoteliers met on the Capitol steps in preparation for SNAC2019.
- 10. Vice Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala met with Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) at the SNAC2019 event.
- 11. We celebrated International Women's Day by highlighting an amazing Women Hoteliers Town Hall in Savannah, GA.
- 12. South Central Texas Regional Director Mike Patel, CEO of Visit Corpus Christi Paulette Kluge, Nancy Patel, General Counsel for THLA Justin Bragiel, and Red Roof Director of Franchise Sales Alex Shamsuddin were at the Corpus Christi, TX, Town Hall.
- 13. AAHOA South Central Texas Regional Director Mike Patel hosted a Town Hall in Corpus Christi and co-hosted another in San Antonio with AAHOA Female Director Western Division Nimisha Patel.
- 14. AAHOA Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel joined South Central Texas Regional Director Mike Patel for a Town Hall in Corpus Christi.



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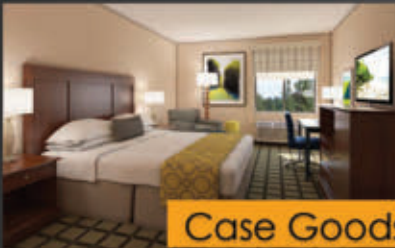


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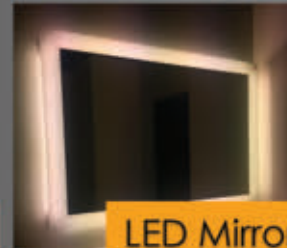
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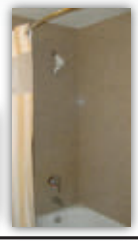


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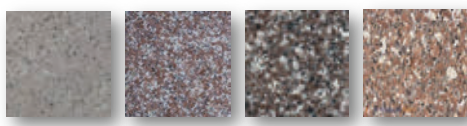


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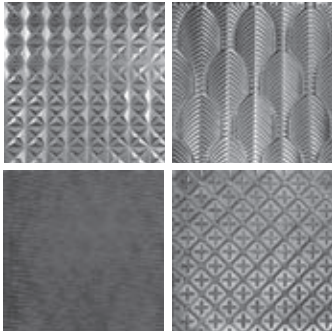


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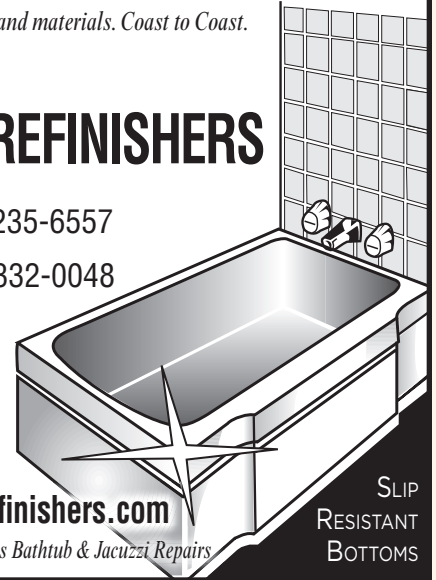
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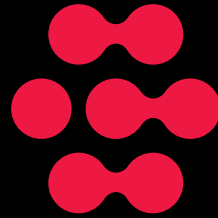
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