

# today's hotelier

September 2018 | todayshotelier.com

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF 

**The path to  
hospitality  
leadership for  
five successful  
women**

**COMMON  
GROUND**  
Restore our Parks and  
Public Lands Act

**Encouraging  
repeat  
bookings**  
through loyalty  
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1100 Abernathy Road, Suite 725  
Atlanta, GA 30328  
P: (404) 816-5759  
info@aahoa.com  
www.aahoa.com

**AAHOA STAFF CONTRIBUTORS**

**Peter Clerkin**  
Director of Communications

**Rachel Humphrey**  
COO & Vice President for Franchise Relations

**Alexandra Rodriguez**  
Director of Marketing

**Chip Rogers**  
President & CEO

**Kati Siconolfi**  
Director, State and Local Government Affairs

**Kathryn Stone**  
Chief of Staff

**Today's Hotelier** is published by  
**NAYLOR**  
ASSOCIATION SOLUTIONS  
5950 NW First Place  
Gainesville, FL 32607  
P: (800) 369-6220  
www.naylor.com  
todayshotelier@naylor.com

**NAYLOR STAFF CONTRIBUTORS**

**Dave Evans**  
Publisher

**Sunny Goel**  
Design/Layout

**Zohreen Ismail**  
Managing Editor

**Kira Krewson**  
Sales Manager

**Niki Roldan**  
Project Coordinator

**John O'Neil**  
Advertising Director

**Nancy Taylor**  
Senior Marketing Specialist

**Chris Zabel**  
Advertising Associate

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# Contents

## FEATURES



**12**  
The Pioneer Woman  
Boarding House  
Q&A with Ree Drummond  
by ZOHREEN ISMAIL

**14**

**Common ground**  
Restore our Parks and Public Lands Act  
by PETER CLERKIN

**16**

**The path to hospitality leadership for five successful women**  
by LARRY MOGELONSKY

**22**

**Harnessing big data from online travel agencies**  
by LINDA ERBELE

**24**

**Encouraging repeat bookings through loyalty programs and data science**  
by JAMES CARELESS

## COLUMNS

**10 A SPECIAL TRIBUTE**  
In memory of Lee Dushoff and Jay Schultz  
by RAJIV TRIVEDI

**26 FINANCE**  
Why are floating-rate commercial real estate loans in the news and are they better for hotel financing than a fixed-rate loan?  
by RUSHI SHAH

**28 SMALL BUSINESS**  
Labor Day: A time to push for \$50,000 careers  
by ALFREDO ORTIZ

**30 MARKETING**  
Amid a proliferation of U.S. hotels, there are ways to gain a competitive edge  
by IGNACIO EDENBURG

**34 LEADERSHIP**  
Hotel executives dedicated to sustainability  
by ZOHREEN ISMAIL

**38 F&B**  
A digital edge for hotel F&B programs  
by DANIELLE GILLESPIE

## DEPARTMENTS

**4**  
LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**6**  
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

**8**  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

**42**  
AAHOA CLUB BLUE, PLATINUM, GOLD & SILVER MEMBERS

**44**  
AAHOA @ INDUSTRY EVENTS

**47**  
CLASSIFIEDS

**50**  
ADVERTISER INDEX

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Editorial inquiries: [todayshotelier@naylor.com](mailto:todayshotelier@naylor.com)  
Advertising inquiries: [John O'Neil, joneil@naylor.com](mailto:John O'Neil, joneil@naylor.com)



## Data analytics keep hoteliers one step ahead

**HITESH (HP) PATEL**  
AAHOA Chairman (2018-2019)

**T**HE EVOLUTION OF BIG data continues to change the way that hoteliers can monitor the health of their businesses and interpret industry trends. Knowing how disparate pieces of information are related and fit together to form a coherent picture of one's business, guest behavior, or even how the market performs can provide hoteliers with a distinct competitive advantage. But with the ability to aggregate so much information, how does a small business owner even begin to make sense of it all?

Understanding how information is being harnessed and analyzed before it is shared with customers is important when deciding how one will apply it to his or her business. The idea of processing so much information can be intimidating, but AAHOA members can use services and reports provided by STR and CBRE to make sense of it all and make informed business decisions. These reports are developed through enhanced data analytics that can show various economic histories, trends/phenomena, and future projections. Tools like these enable our businesses to be more innovative and react more efficiently to market demands.

STR is great for helping hoteliers understand how their business compares to their competitors. This platform allows the user to see a detailed report of their daily and monthly performance and how that pairs up with other hoteliers in the same area. Each month STR sends a report that outlines total revenues, occupancy rates, and other indicators to develop a comprehensive outlook on how their hotel is performing in the local market. This is

an essential, easy-to-understand aid for hoteliers to identify their strengths and their weaknesses, which means that they will know what works and what needs to be re-evaluated for optimal success.

To take a broader look at the lodging market throughout the U.S. or within certain geographic areas, AAHOA members can use CBRE. This platform focuses primarily on long term projections for the industry through its specialized "Hotel Horizons" analytic center. Here, users can generate expectations on what the next one to five years is going to look like in the overall market based upon data compiled from the last five years. To make it as comprehensive and personalized as possible, the user can pick the specific class of hotels they want to look at, such as luxury or mid-scale and they can choose the strength of the economy as well as the region they are in. Any possible scenario can be created which is why CBRE is a game changer for hotel owners.

With these tools in hand, hoteliers can create internal business strategies to stay competitive and make informed decisions about how to prepare for potential changes in the economy. At AAHOA, we know that this knowledge is the key to sustainability and upward growth within the hotel industry. That is why we continue to work to make it easier for members to learn how to use these data platforms. I encourage all AAHOA members to take advantage of these tools to help you make money, save money, and protect your investments.

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## Tax Reform 2.0 means small business success

**CHIP ROGERS**  
AAHOA President & CEO

**T**HE TAX CUTS AND JOBS Act provided long-needed relief to America's small business owners and spurred record-breaking economic growth. The economy grew at an astonishing 4.1 percent during quarter two and exhibits no signs of slowing down. Businesses are using their savings to innovate, expand, and compete on a higher level than they have in decades; contributing substantially to America's economic revival.

For hoteliers, tax reform continues to be invaluable to growing their businesses. Across the United States hotel owners are capitalizing on their newfound savings by investing in their businesses by capital improvements, hiring new employees, and boosting employee wages and expanding benefits. Business owners are not simply lining their own pockets with their tax savings; instead they are creating jobs, developing their properties, and investing in the local community.

To put this massive growth into perspective, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the average job growth per month is 215,000. This number is up from the monthly average of 182,000 in 2017 and reflects the positive changes that are happening within the economy, thanks in large part to tax reform. At 3.9 percent, America is seeing its lowest unemployment rate in years.

But there is an expiration date looming over this success. Many of the pro-growth provisions in the tax code are set to expire in 2025. This includes the 20 percent deduction for pass-throughs, the elimination of the Alternative Minimum Tax, and reduced rates for individuals. Temporary tax cuts may help promote growth for the next several years, but losing these provisions will result in serious economic

consequences. Consequently, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady recently announced a "Tax Reform 2.0" package, to prevent economic uncertainty and make these important provisions permanent. Congress recognizes that small businesses can only thrive if they can rely on a consistent, equitable, and predictable tax code. Otherwise, the threat of tax hikes will decrease investments in business development and deeply damage business confidence.

It's not only businesses that will hurt if Congress fails to make tax cuts permanent. According to a CareerBuilder report, 58 percent of companies plan to give their employees raises during 2018 and 25 percent expect to increase starting salaries. Tax reform boosted business resources and now American workers are reaping the benefits. If Congress allows these essential provisions to lapse, employees will see their weekly paychecks shrink and their annual tax bill go up.

AAHOA's 18,000 members know that this is not in the best interest of their business or their employees and are going to make their voice heard on Capitol Hill this month. Hundreds of hoteliers will meet with their representatives to discuss the issues that are most important to them at AAHOA's 2018 Legislative Action Summit and "Tax Reform 2.0" is sure to be at the top of everyone's list.

Congress and President Trump proved to Americans that the success of small business is a priority for our nation's lawmakers in passing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. "Tax Reform 2.0" will solidify this priority, and ensure it is a long-term commitment to America's small business owners.

## 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH

1

AAHOA and AH&LA will be hosting the Legislative Action Summit on Sept. 12-13, 2018 in Washington, D.C. Don't miss the chance to unite with other industry professionals and show lawmakers the strength of our industry. Visit [www.aahoa.com/2018las](http://www.aahoa.com/2018las) to register.

2

Don't miss these AAHOA Brand Alliance Meetings:

- G6 Hospitality Brand Alliance Meeting will be held in Cancun, Mexico on Sept. 24.
- Best Western Brand Alliance Meeting will be held in Grapevine, TX on Oct. 1.

3

Join us at the Red Roof Headquarters on Sept. 20-21 for a day of professional development. Red Roof executives will speak on various topics such as the history of the brand, architecture, design and construction, brand management, and more. Seating is limited, visit the AAHOA events page at [aahoa.com](http://aahoa.com) to register.

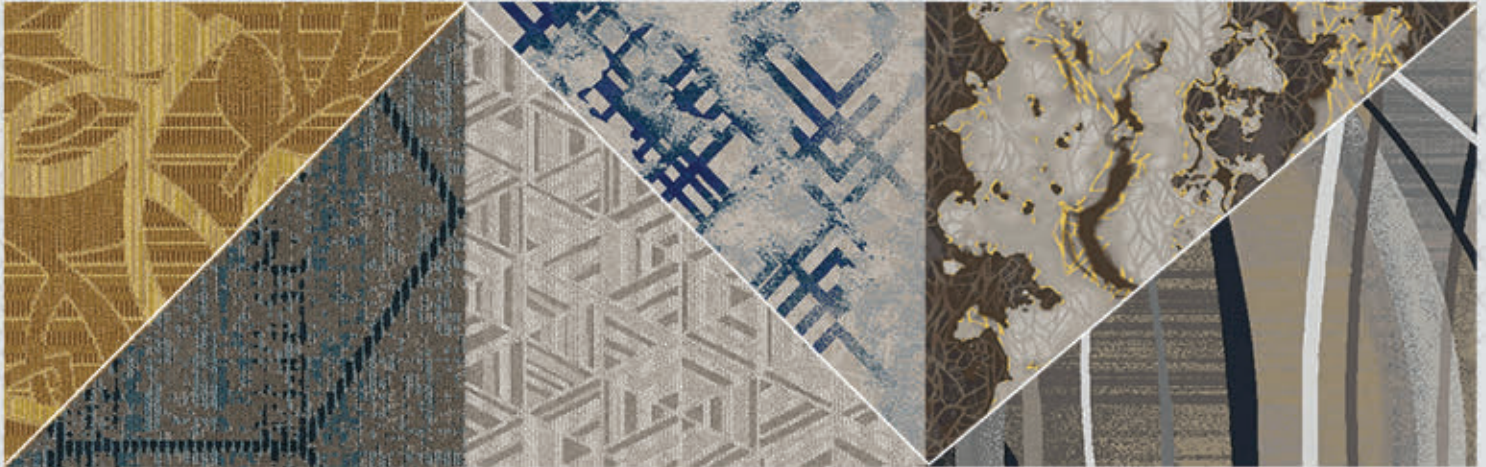
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This year, The Lodging Conference will be held on Sept. 24-27, 2018 in Phoenix, AZ at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa. All five AAHOA officers will be guest speakers at the conference. Visit [www.lodgingconference.com](http://www.lodgingconference.com) for a full agenda and list of speakers.

5

Learn how to stay on top of the trends, embrace new technologies, and create new opportunities for business growth in AAHOA's Technology Leadership Workshop in Palo Alto, CA on Sept. 17. Seats are limited to the first 100 registrants.

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# The role parks play: Hoteliers, tourists, and the economy

by PETER CLERKIN



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**L**AST MONTH, AS WILDFIRES raced through parts of the American west, the National Park Service closed parts of Yosemite National Park. Disappointed tourists packed up their cars and campers when they could not visit iconic areas such as Yosemite Valley, and local businesses outside the park faced fewer guests, more cancellations, declining revenues, and no timetable for when the park might reopen. The closure highlighted the vital role that visitors to National Parks play in supporting local businesses, especially during the high season.

Hoteliers are acutely aware of the role parks play in drawing visitors and continue to keep a keen eye on issues that may affect the number of visitors. The wildfires will eventually be extinguished, and the guests will return, but there are other issues that may deter or limit the number of visitors to the parks, the most glaring of which is an infrastructure maintenance backlog totaling nearly \$12 billion.

Last year, the Department of Interior proposed raising entry fees at 17 of the most popular National Parks as part

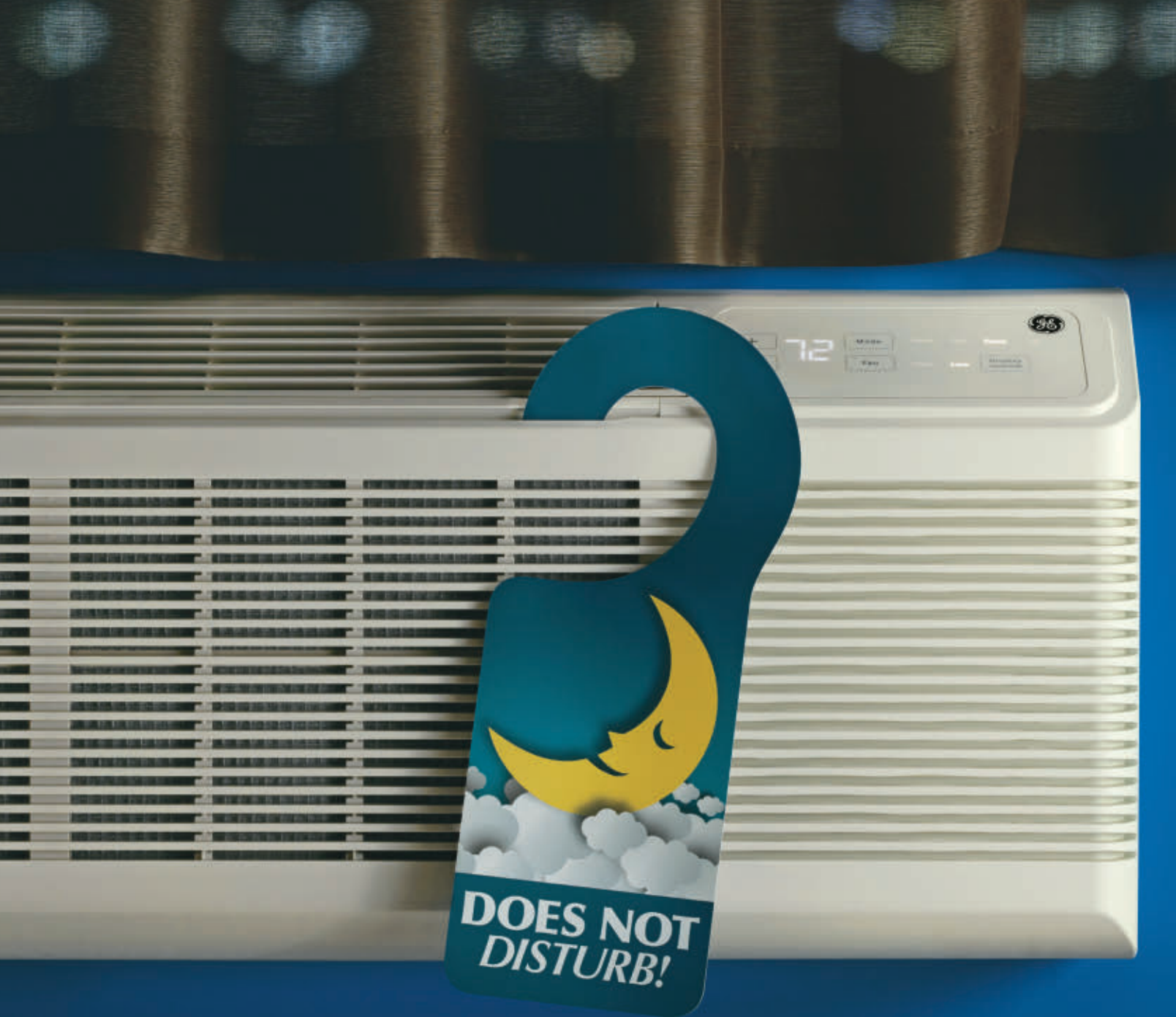
of a revenue generating scheme to address the maintenance backlog. In some instances, the entry fees would increase over 200 percent. Asking visitors to pay an additional \$60 to \$100 could mean that visitors stay an extra night at a local hotel, dine at a local restaurant, or purchase souvenirs. Interior backed off their proposed plan after an overwhelmingly negative reaction during the public comment period. Even if entry fees were increased as proposed, it would hardly put a dent in funding the backlogged maintenance projects. While the entry fees to the parks would remain reasonable and accessible to most visitors, a funding solution to the maintenance backlog still needed to be created.

Completing the needed infrastructure improvements would create substantial economic growth. A study by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that fully funding the maintenance backlog would create roughly 110,000 jobs, 36 percent of which would be in the gateway communities surrounding the parks.

This summer, a bipartisan group of legislators introduced bills in the House and Senate that will create a dedicated funding stream to address

the maintenance backlog. Senators Mark Warner (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Angus King (I-ME) introduced the Restore Our Parks Act in the Senate, and House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act in the House. The House bill would establish the National Park Service and Public Lands Restoration Fund. The bill would use revenues from federal energy development that is not otherwise allocated while protecting payments to states and other funds. Marcia Argust, director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' Restore America's Parks campaign noted that the bill, "...combines the best of previous deferred-maintenance bills and provides a significant and consistent funding to address the backlog."

The bills are gathering broader bipartisan support including that of 20 senators, 66 House Members, Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, and numerous conservation groups. Both bills are expected to pass, and, after conference, to be sent to the President's desk. ■



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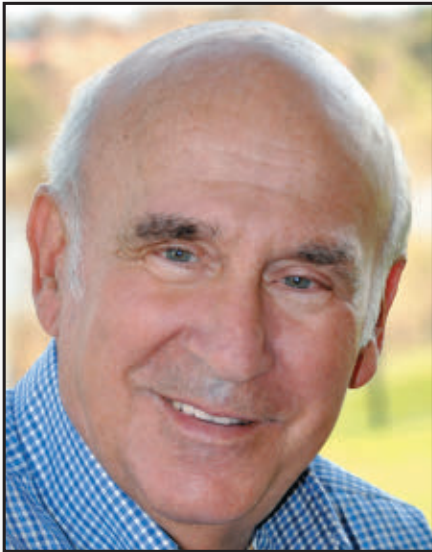
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# IN MEMORY OF Lee Dushoff and Jay Schultz

by RAJIV TRIVEDI, PRESIDENT AT LA QUINTA BRANDS WYNDHAM HOTELS AND RESORTS



Lee Dushoff



Jay Schultz

**T**HE HOTEL INDUSTRY lost two icons recently. Their contributions have shaped our industry, the successes we have attained and more importantly, the high standards by which we govern our personal relationships and the industry. Lee Dushoff and Jay Schultz will be dearly missed.

I knew Lee Dushoff for almost all of my adulthood. I affectionately called Lee my American father. A man of impeccable character, a selfless, giving, caring, loving individual who made a positive difference in many lives and companies without any preconditions. Being Asian American, I know firsthand how instrumental Lee was in shaping AAHOA and advancing the interests of the Asian American community in the hospitality industry today.

I had the honor and privilege to be with him a week before his passing and

even then, he was more concerned about my wellbeing – and that is Lee. He always thought about others ahead of himself. He always found time to make others feel better. He made himself available at any time to anyone to brighten their day. Thank you, Lee, for the time you gave to us. We will always cherish those wonderful moments.

Jay Schultz and I grew up in the industry together. He was a dedicated father and husband and always reminded me and everybody that family comes first. Jay was always humble, giving, caring, and patient. He had an unforgettable personal touch. I am sure many of our industry colleagues felt that Jay was their best friend. I don't recall any industry event at which I did not receive a hug from Jay. Even with health challenges, Jay always was present at industry events and made himself available to everyone. Simply put, he cared, and

he cared about others more than himself. In many ways Jay reshaped the way our industry writes and thinks about itself through his reporting, editing, and business management of some of the industry's most successful publications. I will never forget his contagious smile and humble presence. A brilliant mind that continued to offer guidance to his team and the industry until the last day of his life.

Jay and Lee will be missed, but always remembered. You will always be in our lives.

Donations in Jay's memory can be made to the American Diabetes Association at [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org). Donations in Lee's memory can be made to Germantown Jewish Centre, 400 W. Ellet Street, Philadelphia, PA 19119 or Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia Oxford Mills, 100 W. Oxford Street, Suite E-1300, Philadelphia, PA 19122. ■



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# The Pioneer Woman **BOARDING HOUSE**

by ZOHREEN ISMAIL

## QA

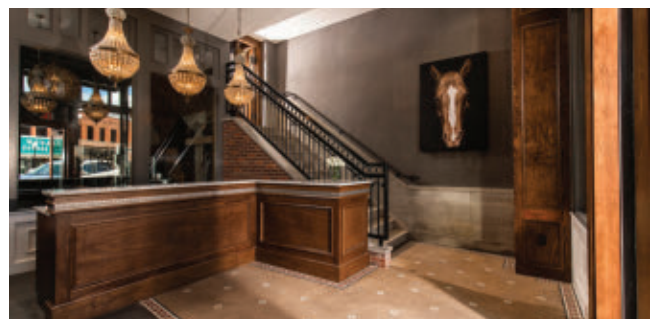
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE PIONEER WOMAN AND BOARDING HOUSE



**REE DRUMMOND**, popularly known as the Pioneer Woman, recently stepped into the hospitality industry with the opening of her eight-room hotel located in Pawhuska, OK. She is known for her delicious recipes, strong family values, and creative twist on just about anything! The Boarding House reflects just that, and Ree is proud to be stepping into an industry centered around providing a memorable guest experience. *Today's Hotelier* caught up with Ree Drummond and asked her to share all about her new hotel. Find out what sets the Boarding House apart from other hotels, and how Ree has become an innovator, leader, and trendsetter across multiple industries.

### **WHAT INSPIRED YOU WHEN DESIGNING THE BOARDING HOUSE?**

My husband Ladd and I split the hotel in half and each designed four rooms. The four Ladd designed are decidedly masculine, with wood finishes, leather furniture, and clean lines. In my four rooms, I exercised my femininity in noticeable ways: crystal chandeliers, soft fabrics, vivid colors, and curved lines. In the end, each of the rooms is unique, which was how we wanted it. We want guests to want to come back, if for no other reason but to be able to stay in a different suite than the one they had before.



### **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STYLE OF THE BOARDING HOUSE?**

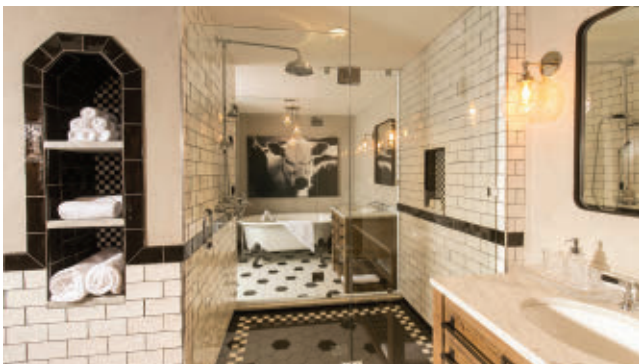
We describe it as a 'Cowboy Luxury' hotel, but luxury can sometimes connote a level of 'niceness' that is intimidating. I might instead describe it as 'Refined Country.' All the surfaces are durable and easy – nothing delicate or breakable. Guests should feel free to unpack and really live in the room without worrying about breaking or scratching anything. That's how our house on the ranch is – it has to be able to stand up to cowboy boots, dirt, and spurs.



**BEING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, WHAT CHALLENGES CAN YOU FORESEE?**

Our primary goal when planning the Boarding House was to provide a guest experience like no other. Since we only have eight rooms, this admittedly is much easier to do, but service and hospitality has come to be our defining quality, even more so than the decor and comforts of our room. We want each guest to feel nurtured and cared for, so we begin by calling them a few days before their stay in order to ask if they have any special requests, and if there’s anything we can do for them during their stay that will make them feel more at home. We truly want them to enter a haven when they stay with us, and whether that means coffee brought to them at 7:49 a.m. (or whatever time they specify), or if they want a certain kind of flower in their room, we will do our best to make sure they feel valued and appreciated.

The only challenge I foresee with this approach is scalability – i.e. if we decide to take our hotel concept to another city on a larger level. But now that I’ve seen the powerful impact this level of service has on our guests, I wouldn’t want to run a hotel any other way.



**WHAT IS THE MAIN TAKEAWAY YOU HOPE YOUR GUESTS LEAVE WITH WHEN THEY STAY AT THE BOARDING HOUSE?**

What I want most is for our guests to feel that we have loved having them with us – and I truly believe that our staff feels honored to host each and every guest. I want our guests to drive (or fly) home after their stay and feel like they have had an unforgettable experience.



**WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR HOTEL OWNERS AND HOW TO MAKE THEIR PROPERTIES STAND OUT?**

My advice would be to look at each guest as a brand new, blank canvas. It’s easy to get mired in the cumulative effect of hundreds or thousands of guests and to start looking at guests as a number. But at The Boarding House, we try to remain cognizant that each guest who comes to stay with us is coming for the first time – and their experience is 100 percent fresh and unique to them. Nothing that happened before they arrived (and nothing that will happen after their visit) matters to them; the only thing that matters to them is the experience they have, and they deserve for that to be special. Keeping that in mind prevents us from getting into rote routines or habits.



**SO FAR, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING INVOLVED IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?**

What I love about the hospitality industry is making people feel welcomed. Whether it is a local resident of our small town of Pawhuska, or a couple visiting from 250 miles away, it is so gratifying to watch them arrive at our hotel, restaurant and/or store with a smile...but leave with an even bigger smile. If we can send our guests away feeling like they’ve had a special day (or weekend), I know we’ve done our job.



**HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE WORD ‘TRENDSETTER’?**

Hmmm. I suppose a trendsetter would be a person who decides to take a risk on something new, despite precedent or convention. There probably would have been more logical, practical, and financially beneficial ways for us to approach our service model at The Boarding House...but where would be the fun in that? ■

## COMMON GROUND

# Restore our Parks and Public Lands Act

by PETER CLERKIN



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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:

Addressing the nearly \$12 billion maintenance backlog at our National Parks.

Currently, there is a backlog of deferred maintenance on vital infrastructure at our national parks that will cost about \$12 billion to repair. Our national parks help visitors connect with and understand our nation's unique beauty, history, and wonder. They also help grow and sustain numerous small businesses which provide essential services such as lodging and hospitality in the gateway communities around the parks. A study commissioned by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that, if the funds are invested to address the backlog,

over 110,000 jobs could be created, 36 percent of which would be in communities around the parks.

## COMMON GROUND:

In July 2018, U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act to establish the National Park Service and Public Lands Restoration Fund. Similar to the Restore Our Parks Act introduced in the Senate in June, this bill addresses the maintenance backlog by using federal energy development revenues to fund the repairs. ■



### Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ)

First Elected: 2002

*"The idea of dedicating energy development funds to conservation goes back to the creation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 1964. I'm pleased to join Chairman Bishop to add overdue*

*maintenance and repair work at national parks and public lands to the list of projects eligible for this dedicated funding. Chairman Bishop and I share a commitment to providing visitors, both now and in the future, a world-class parks system."*



### Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT)

First Elected: 2002

*"Our parks are national treasures. Let's start treating them that way. This bipartisan bill will put us on the path to improving our parks for future generations."*



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<sup>1</sup>Cost comparison will be based on a calculation of the overall cost for comparable services, as determined by the processing statements you provide, and will exclude all one time fees. Cost comparison results are estimates only and do not guarantee savings. In addition, inaccuracies in the comparison may occur due to pricing variances and complexities in the statements provided.

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FEATURE


THE  
PATH  
TO

# HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP FOR FIVE SUCCESSFUL WOMEN

by LARRY MOGELONSKY, MBA, P. ENG.



**1 Jagruti Panwala**  
Vice Chairwoman  
AAHOA



**2 Alexandra Jaritz**  
Senior Vice President and  
Global Head, TRU by Hilton



**3 Dorraine Lallani**  
Director of Asset Management,  
Westmont Hospitality Group



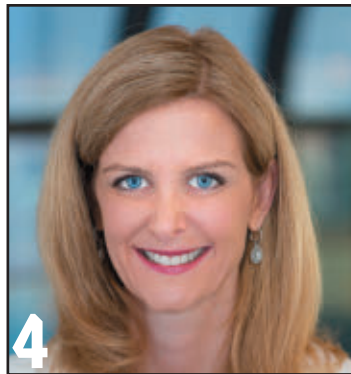
**4 Katherine Lugar**  
President and CEO, American  
Hotel & Lodging Association  
(AH&LA)



**5 Marilou Halvorsen**  
President and CEO, New Jersey  
Restaurant and Hospitality  
Association

THE CALENDAR YEAR of 2018 has already proven to be a watershed moment for increasing diversity in the workplace and shattering the glass ceiling of gender bias. What started in Hollywood with #metoo and the Time's Up movement has had profound repercussions across many other industries as professionals around the world have come to understand that a more inclusive work environment is also a healthier and more profitable one.

But how has hospitality reacted to this sea change? To help shed some light on how women can navigate a hospitality career and how to make the workplace more accepting for all, *Today's Hotelier* recruited five top executives for an interview on the subject.



**TELL US A BIT ABOUT HOW YOU STARTED OUT AND YOUR CAREER IN HOSPITALITY.**



**JP:** My family had a hotel, so I guess you could say that I've been in the hospitality business since I was 19! I've done everything from front desk to manager to partner. There is tremendous potential for a woman to grow in this business.



**AJ:** My father was a general manager and so I ended up traveling throughout Southeast Asia, India, Germany and other countries. In those days, the GM typically lived in the hotel, and therefore so did I; hotels are in my DNA! My official start was an internship with Four Seasons before I tried my hand at Wall Street, but my passion for hospitality soon drove me back to hotels. I'm quite lucky in that from a young age I had the opportunity to see other cultures and to understand the stories behind every person – how they did their jobs, their struggles and how they endured in their daily lives – and this has shaped me as a leader and as a mother.



**DL:** I don't really have a traditional hospitality background. I was working for a CPA. She had a contract with my current employer, Westmont, and made the introductions for me. Now, I'm approaching 35 years at Westmont and no two days are the same for me.

**KL:** My background is in public affairs and advocacy. I had worked in government and with several firms that represented the industry with government. AH&LA was looking to both understand Washington and, at the same time, to recognize the potential for the industry. But all of the work that I have ever done has been consumer-facing, and hospitality is a business of people taking care of people. That was tops for me. Then there were the groups that make up our industry – the brands, owner and management companies. All of these had to be aligned for common goals, with a common narrative.



**MH:** Like many, my first experience in hospitality was as a hostess in a restaurant, and when I was in college I had a part-time job as a bartender. One of my early jobs was working for Radio City Music Hall in New York City as their event manager handling everything from the Grammys to corporate activities. I left that to work for an events company, but with children I recognized that a life on the road was not for me. As I was involved with the New Jersey Tourism Association, I joined a family run attractions business as their marketing director. After 13 years, I was ready for something new and joined my current association.



## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY IN TERMS OF LEADERSHIP ROLE AVAILABILITY, GENDER BIAS AND HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED?



**MH:** Let me start with a funny story about prejudice. I volunteered to become a member of the Gaming Commission in New Jersey. I was the first female member since the group's inception in 1942. The board I joined comprised five men plus myself. We all had official board titles and I was appointed to the position of secretary. To the men on the commission, this seemed logical. Then the chairman passed away, and as secretary I immediately assumed the role of chair. Quite the opposite of prejudice, they were delighted! This aside, there is often an unconscious bias that some retain, and we cannot get rid of it. I have been fortunate that, with few small exceptions, I have never felt any discrimination because I am a woman.



**DL:** Traditional careers for women were not in business. I started as an administrative assistant some 35 years ago, and there were few women in the senior ranks. In terms of gender bias, we have had to work twice as hard to get to where we are. But that is the past. Today, I would say that we are approaching a level of equality between men and women in our business. We don't yet have half of our general managers as female, but it is inevitable that this day will come.



**KL:** Hotels are embracing diversity, but there is more work to be done, in particular at the board level. There is proof that diverse executive teams and boards means better decisions and, ultimately, improved profitability. There is certainly more room for upward mobility and opportunities for women, but we are not fully satisfied, nor should we stop the conversation.

The reality here is that women are typically the caregivers, both to their children and often to their parents in their later year, and this raises challenges insofar as the long hours that someone typically puts into their career as well as the ability to change locations. We need to find flexible solutions, perhaps through technology, and this may mean undertaking new ways of doing business.

**AJ:** We have come a long way in this industry, but the degree of gender bias depends on the company. At Hilton, the experience has been positive. The reality is that women still have roles as mothers. Hilton gives us the flexibility in our environment and the ability to balance the needs of a mother with the needs of the job. There is no judgement; no stigma attached to these duties. In fact, last year we launched a program called Thrive@Hilton that enables Team Members to balance their busy lives and flourish in body, mind and spirit.

**JP:** I've been in business for 20 years. When I joined AAHOA eight years ago, there were two to three women in the top 100. We are not at parity with men, but today there are many more. Looking at the brands, I see more doors opening now, but I believe that in the past we did not create a welcoming environment for women. AAHOA creates educational events that are excellent tools for women. In the past, we had a hard time finding suitable panelists. That was 10 years ago, but things have changed. We now have 8-10 women's leadership panels per year. We need to provide a platform for diversity and we need to ask for what we want. And we have to do more than just talk, we have to implement. Once you have diversity at the top, it will work out because everything flows from the top downwards.



## HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE YOUNG WOMEN PURSUING CAREERS IN HOSPITALITY AND CONTINUE TO PROMOTE EQUALITY?



**MH:** At the moment, my entire staff, save for an intern, are women. The decision was unconscious; it was just that we hired the best candidates and that is the way it worked out. In any business, decisions are better when both men and women participate. For another point, we have to be respectful of younger men as we want to avoid what was being done to us in the past.



**DL:** I would encourage young women to come into the industry, but to come with an open mind. See the opportunity. Work hard, perhaps harder than anyone else. There may still be some detractors, especially with some of the old guard or more conservative senior staff. But don't let them dissuade you. The future for this industry is our youth, and we need bright, enthusiastic women as leaders. This industry is an ideal one for women to thrive and prosper.

**JP:** We have a roadmap and a platform. Next is getting more qualified women to participate in our industry. AAHOA has over 18,000 members, all of which are hotel owners and most of which are husband and wife teams with the bulk of operations managed by the wife. So, you see in many ways we are much more progressive than the brands in terms of female business participation! But, for the first time in 30 years, AAHOA has a female officer (me), and this is a big step forward. This was a milestone for the board as it took one small element of negativity out of the AAHOA.

**AJ:** My encouragement would be to first not go in with a hat on that says, "I am a woman." Be good at what you do, work hard and do something that you have a real passion for. Then recognize that challenges can be overcome, but you must persevere through both good and bad times. Forget five-year or ten-year plans. Rather, think about opportunities that come your way in this ever-changing environment. Do not stay overly concerned about your functional area. Be curious; be



respectful. Remember that everyone can teach you something; what not to do is sometimes as important as what to do.



**KL:** This is already a fantastic field for women and one that is continually improving. Harness your passion for hospitality. You can contribute, and you will be valued for this. Look for balance between business and your own personal lives. We need you! ■



One of the world's most published writers in hospitality, Larry Mogelonsky is the principal of Hotel Mogel Consulting Limited, a Toronto-based consulting practice. His experience encompasses hotel properties around the world, both branded and independent, and ranging from luxury and boutique to select-service. Larry is also on several boards for companies focused on hotel technology. His work includes four books. You can reach Larry at [larry@hotelmogel.com](mailto:larry@hotelmogel.com).

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# WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP

## BY THE NUMBERS

**53**

PERCENT

of all hospitality industry employees are women.

**5**

PERCENT

of Hotel Company CEOs are Women

**73**

PERCENT

of women in the hospitality industry desire to continually move up in their careers



Almost

**7** out of **10**

**Hospitality Students Are Female**

### Women's Share of "Chief" Level Hospitality Jobs - By Field



Source: The Castell Project - Women in Hospitality Leadership Report 2017 [www.castellproject.org](http://www.castellproject.org)

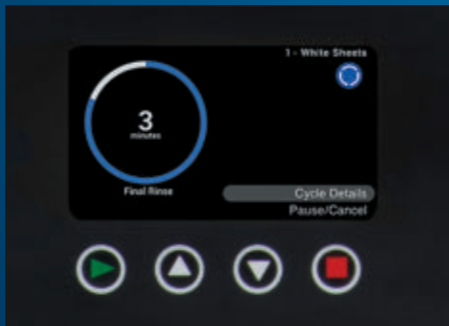


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# HARNESSING BIG DATA FROM ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCIES

by LINDA ERBELE

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**C**OST-EFFECTIVE MARKETING IS SOMETHING everyone struggles with – where to focus your efforts to get the best value from your dollar. There’s help available right on your keyboard. The cost of much of it is only a little time.

The online travel agencies (OTAs) whose reviews you have been responding to also have a surprising amount of information that can help you pinpoint your marketing efforts and greatly impact your revenue.

They each have site-specific statistics as well as articles, case studies and research that outline best practices. The information keeps you up-to-date on the latest trends and can be helpful in training new associates.

There are guides that offer assistance in enhancing your listing with photos and increasing your site’s emotional reach. Yelp.com offers a free 22-page e-book to help business owners understand the ins and outs of their online presence, from setting up Google Alerts to let you know when your business is mentioned online to tracking activity on your page.

But the travel sites can also give you a more detailed look at your individual property’s statistics: where travelers who are booking with you are coming from, how you stack up next to your competition, even who is looking at your site.

Yelp business owners have access to their Activity Feed, showing them the city and demographics of people who have called the business recently from a mobile phone, mapped

directions to the site or clicked through to the owner's website.

As part of its Partner Central offerings, Expedia will give you the patterns of your guests – where they are from, who they travel with and the kinds of trips they plan.

TripAdvisor, with its Business Advantage program, has analytics that include who is clicking on your special offers.

Utilizing the data that's offered by the OTAs can expand your reach and fill those empty rooms. The information is already being collected. You can access it by burrowing a little deeper into those sites.

"It can help you understand your market better," says Stephanie Boyle, TripAdvisor's industry outreach associate director. "For example, you may have thought you were marketing to families but are getting more reviews from groups of friends."

Both TripAdvisor and Expedia offer free widgets for your website that allow a visitor to your website to see the latest reviews of your property at a glance.

"It's a streaming feed, so you don't have to update it," Boyle adds. "That gives travelers the reassurance and the measure of confidence that they tend to want. Travelers do check reviews."

In addition, TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence award badge, given to businesses that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews, can be added to the business website.

Yelp for Business Owners allows you to embed specific reviews and add a Yelp badge on your website. In addition, you can add check-in offers, Yelp Deals or a Request a Quote button to your Yelp Business Page.

Expedia has a Call-to-Action button, offering special deals that you can add to encourage travelers to click on your site.

To help increase visibility, TripAdvisor offers sponsored placements, which put the business at the top of the listing in a search of the area. The sponsored ads show up on a rotating basis with other sponsored businesses.

"Just to clarify – you cannot buy your way to the top," Boyle says. "There are different ways to sort results: best value, traveler reviews, booking popularity, location, etc." But, she adds, "We create a targeted ad. We only show that ad when people are looking at dates in your location that you have availability. So you are not paying for an ad when you wouldn't have any room availability."

Business owners set a maximum monthly budget for their sponsored ads and can cancel at any time.

Expedia also offers a pay-per-click media solution. TripAdvisor's Business Advantage subscription gives owners access to its Analytics Suite, with competitor benchmarking data, as well as the ability to add direct contact details and special offers to the hotel's TripAdvisor listing.

Both Expedia and TripAdvisor offer the ability to create competitor sets, so hotel owners can monitor their performance next to that of 10 or 20 of their fellow hotels.

Based on the hotels you have identified, Expedia will send you Price Optimization Alerts, letting you know when your

rate is either higher than others or lower. Its Partner Reporting feature offers a comparative look at your year-to-date room nights and average daily rate versus those of your competitors.

In addition, Expedia offers a Market Occupancy Forecast so you can make informed decisions about future dates. The Property Analytics report shows how your property is appearing on Expedia and your conversion rate of "lookers to bookers." It also helps you identify high-value travelers. You can set the frequency of the notifications and alerts that you receive.

One thing that is unique about working with Expedia, says Chris Rennix, senior owner relations manager, is that the company works to create and iterate its tools in partnership with hotel owners.

"These products were not developed in a vacuum," he adds. "They were suggested by a group of highly engaged hotel owners from all over the world that sit with us as we develop them."

Expedia's council of hotel owners aims to help attract a diverse group of travelers, generate global demand and utilize its tools and team to drive optimal profits.

One result of that partnership with hotels is Expedia's Rev +, a set of tools that provide price recommendations, occupancy forecasts and revenue opportunity guidance.

"Our marketing tools for small hotels to get better insight into the hotels around them can be leveraged at no cost," Rennix says.

Some of the deeper analysis opportunities with TripAdvisor have varying pricing levels, depending on the location and other factors of the specific property.

Those wanting a broader look at their market and the competition or better understanding of a market in a different geographical area will need a more sophisticated level of data, such as that offered by Lodging Econometrics, a real estate intelligence firm. Through its team of researchers located across the globe, the company offers trend reports and location-specific analysis to help owners understand what new supply will be impacting their market, says Bruce Ford, senior vice president and director of global business development.

"Understanding renovations and conversions that are happening to the existing supply in your competitive set [helps] you to better compete," he adds. "Curb appeal is still an impact. When you get to the hotel, you still look at the appearance of the building."

Hotel owners don't go into the business to spend their time on social media. But responding to reviews is an essential part of the business. Utilizing the data that is already collected by online booking apps to get ahead of the competition just makes sense.

"From an owner's perspective, they should be aware of what is [said] about their hotel, whether from a social media outlet or not," Ford says. "You can't control how they're feeling when they arrive. But you can control how they feel when they leave. Taking care of the guest is still the number one thing." ■

*Linda Erbele is an Atlanta-based freelance writer.*

FEATURE

# ENCOURAGING REPEAT BOOKINGS THROUGH LOYALTY PROGRAMS AND DATA SCIENCE

End-to-end personalized service makes guests happy and devoted

by JAMES CARELESS

**O**NCE UPON A TIME, HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAMS WERE all about rewarding regular guests with points and that was about it. Then loyalty programs such as Hilton Honors, Marriott Rewards and Wyndham Rewards, among others, started enhancing the programs and offering new services through their smartphone apps, and everything changed.

For example, the downloadable Hilton Honors app provides users with the ability to choose the room they want, check in remotely and even turn their smartphone into a “digital key” to open the room door. The Hilton app also allows users to “order extras like food, drinks, extra pillows and more to be in your room when you arrive,” says the Hilton Honors Android app download page at Google Play, all while receiving “our best rate guaranteed – with no hidden booking fees.”

The customer data collected by loyalty programs is what makes their exceptional offerings possible. “All the information that a guest provides helps the hotel operator provide

them with truly personalized service,” says Cindy Estis Green, CEO of Kalibri Labs. This enhanced service “gives that guest many reasons to be loyal to this operator and their hotels, whether they are frequent stayers or just occasional travelers.”

## THE INDUSTRY TRENDSETTER

According to Estis Green, the growing popularity of loyalty programs among consumers is a major trend driving customer bookings today. Loyalty apps are an important aspect of this trend, because they make booking rooms easy and convenient.

Hotel-branded apps used by loyalty members are also very good for business. Thanks to the convenience and personalization, these programs are motivating loyalty members to book rooms with hotel operators directly, rather than using third-party sites that charge commission fees to hotels. The result is more money in operators’ pockets, and better control of their guests’ booking experiences.

“These mobile apps are extremely effective as booking generators for hotel operators,” says Estis Green. “These apps encourage users to be loyal to a specific hotel brand, which is key to making them repeat customers.”

### TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE

The hotel business is an industry where happy customers translate into high occupancy rates and respectable revenues (assuming that the rooms, amenities and premium services have been priced with a profit margin built in). This is why loyalty programs are popular with hoteliers and guests alike: because they provide tangible benefits for everyone.

Beyond the benefits to hoteliers already noted, loyalty programs and their apps harness the power of convenience to boost customer fidelity; to increase the likelihood that they will stay with the same hotel operator again and again.

It’s all about customer convenience: When a loyalty program member can book their next room without hassle through their smartphone, they are far less prone to shop around at other hotel chains. Without realizing it, such a guest is being ‘gated’ to the operator’s properties; creating new sales at minimal cost to the hotel operator.

Loyalty program apps provide hotels with a direct marketing path to the customer. Whenever a hotelier develops a sales promotion to appeal to a specific group of guests, the app on their smartphones provides a consistent, reliable way to get it to them and to know that the guest has indicated an interest in receiving a specific type of offer.

App users definitely benefit loyalty members too, and not just because they make booking easy. The loyalty program extras that these apps provide make members feel important and valued in an increasingly anonymous world.

“The personal service these guests can receive – consistent attention to their individual details and preferences, and the convenience of fast check-in/check-out, access to rooms, pools, and other hotel features – makes the hotel apps irresistible to guests,” says Estis Green. “The value they receive is very real to these customers, as is their level of happiness, satisfaction, and loyalty with the hotels that provide these apps.”

### THE DATA SCIENCE POSSIBILITIES OF LOYALTY PROGRAMS

‘Data science’ is one of Kalibri Labs’ core services to the hotel industry. In this instance, data science refers to crunching all the guest-related information collected by loyalty program operators on an ongoing basis. The more personal selections its members make, the more the hotel learns about their preferences – and how to sell to them.

“Without looking at the specific identities of guests, we can learn important information about the kinds of guests they are – occasional or frequent; budget or luxury minded – and how this relates to their buying decisions at the hotel,” says Estis Green. Such decisions can range from the level of rooms they book and the premium amenities they are willing to pay

for, to the services they use while on the premises, including restaurants, room service and spa treatments.

A loyalty program analysis can tell an operator which types of rooms and services are most popular with guests – and thus worth focusing on. The analysis can also highlight which kinds of guests are most likely to choose certain kinds of rooms and services, and then cross-reference those decisions with their other purchasing choices.

The same analysis can indicate which service offerings aren’t delivering, with related information to indicate whether the offerings can be revived through a few tweaks or dropped altogether.

Personal preferences can provide powerful research insights and marketing opportunities, as well. Something as seemingly small as the type and number of pillows a particular guest prefers – and likes to see on their bed the next time they book a room – can be cross-referenced to their overall booking and ordering behaviors.

In combination with lengths of stay, free/premium on-site services used, and external activities requested (attractions, concerts, shopping, and so forth), this data can give hotel operators tangible, useful data on what appeals to the various groups they cater to, and also yields strategies for how to serve them better and more often.

### LOYALTY PAYS OFF FOR EVERYONE

Thanks to the growing popularity of loyalty programs and their influence on program members, hoteliers are seeing an increase in direct bookings over third-party bookings in recent years, according to the article “Demystifying the Digital Marketplace” in the March 2017 issue of *Today’s Hotelier*.

Hotel apps are playing a big role in driving this direct-booking increase. This is why apps are now being offered by most major U.S. hotel chains.

It is worth noting that apps can boost bookings whether the guest is signed up with a budget hotel loyalty program, or with a five-star chain that puts luxury first at a premium price.

“The person who books \$59-per-night rooms has different priorities and tastes than someone willing to pay \$279 per night,” says Estis Green. “What they have in common is a desire to be treated as if they matter; that their personal choices are worthy of being remembered and catered to by the hotels that they choose. Apps deliver this level of service.”

As far as hoteliers are concerned, loyalty programs in general are worth the investment. This is true whether a hotelier analyzes their loyalty program database for marketing intelligence, or runs the program simply to make guests feel appreciated and valued. After all, happy guests are repeat customers who tell family and friends which hotels make them so happy.

The bottom line: The growing popularity of loyalty programs and the ability to tap the loyalty program benefits through apps is good news for the hotel industry, and the people who rent its rooms. This is a true win-win for both sides of the deal. ■

# Why are **FLOATING-RATE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LOANS** in the news and are they better for hotel financing than a fixed-rate loan?

by RUSHI SHAH

**T**O GAUGE YOUR HEALTH, a doctor assesses your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. When evaluating the economy's health, a telling vital sign is investors' sentiment in the fixed-income market and the amount of returns they are willing to pay in exchange for the commensurate term of the risk. Known as the Yield Curve, it reflects the bond returns at different maturity dates and is a major determinant for the cost of capital for lenders and investors. The Yield Curve's shape is a good barometer of the economic outlook as seen by the traders and investors. Current loan rates for all loan types, including those for commercial real estate refinance and acquisition, are subsequently dependent on it.

At the time of writing, the one-month London Interbank Offering Rate (LIBOR or the rate that banks lend money to each other) is 2.1%, compared to a 5-year LIBOR Swap (the bank-to-bank lending rate for 5 years) rate of 2.95% and 10-year rate of 3% (the bank-to-bank lending rate for 10 years). The difference between the one-month LIBOR rate and the 10-year Swap rate shapes the Yield Curve, and is currently 0.9%. This is a sign of a flat Yield Curve, compared to its peak in the last three years when the difference was much larger at 3%. Historically a flat Yield Curve signals an economic slowdown. For example, in 2008 the curve flat-lined to 0, essentially reflecting the probability of recession. Based on today's Yield Curve, there is plenty of debt capital for deals.

The current Yield Curve's shape also shows there is more investor demand for shorter term floating-rate bonds than longer terms (i.e. 10 years). This has

caused a resurgence of activity in the floating-rate CMBS market, with many fixed-rate loan players, such as global investment banks, getting in on the game. Since floating-rate non-recourse loans were already popular debt fund instruments, this additional capital joins a crowded playing field.

## HOW DO FLOATING-RATE LOANS COMPARE TO FIXED-RATE LOANS?

A typical floating-rate CMBS loan has a 3-year term with two, one-year extension options and allows for a slightly higher leverage in the former of lower debt yield, then typical fixed-rate loans. For example, a 10-year, fixed-rate CMBS loan is usually possible at an 11 debt yield for a select-service hotel, compared to a 3-year, floating-rate CMBS loan at a lower 9 debt yield (debt yield is the property's underwritten net cash flow divided by the loan amount). Why the difference? Investor risk. With the shorter, floating-rate loan investors hold the risk for less time, which allows for a lower debt yield. When the risk is held longer on a 10-year deal, a buffer is added.

Lower risk leads to lower rates. As of writing, floating-rate CMBS loans are pricing as low as one-month LIBOR plus 2% to one-month LIBOR plus 3.5% where current one-month LIBOR is 2.1%. Keep in mind that the rate floats and can change as the one-month LIBOR governed by the Federal Reserve changes. Most floating-rate loans are interest-only and include a rate cap.

Quality hotel assets in good markets with strong sponsorship are eligible for CMBS floating-rate loans. Because these loans are less profitable for lenders, loans \$15 million or higher are preferred. Floating-rate loans can be pre-paid

without penalty typically after the first 18 months.

## ARE SHORT-TERM FLOATING-RATE LOANS BETTER THAN LONGER-TERM, FIXED-RATE CMBS LOANS?

Floating-rate loans are a good alternative if you don't need long-term financing. However, based on today's Yield Curve, a 10-year, fixed-rate loan may better serve you. Currently long-term rates are still lower and short-term rates higher than historic levels. You can lock into a relatively low rate and keep your interest rate costs down longer. At the time of writing a 10-year, non-recourse fixed-rate loan on a quality hospitality asset ranges from 4.9% to 5.4% with a 30-year amortization. You can also remove personal recourse and monetize accrued equity as cash out.

Bottom line, floating-rate loans are another arrow in your financing quiver to target the optimal financing structure for your hotel. ■



*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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# LABOR DAY

## A time to push for \$50,000 careers

by ALFREDO ORTIZ

**T**HE AMERICAN WORKERS and the entrepreneurs that employ them are the heartbeat of our country's economy. Through their hard work and innovation, the U.S. has become an economic powerhouse. This is what we celebrate this Labor Day.

Recent efforts made by the Trump Administration and Congress have unleashed this economic capacity even further. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act – passed and signed into law late last year – and numerous additional efforts to reduce burdensome regulations have thrown economic growth into high-gear. As a result, both businesses and individuals have more money in their pockets to invest and spend.

The outcome has been incredible. The unemployment rate has reached historically low levels, job creation remains strong and the gross domestic product – or the value of all goods and services produced in a given year – is on track to grow by more than three percent.

However, this advancement does not come without repercussions. While past macro-economic concerns have

focused on job creation and too much unemployment, the contemporary equivalent is the exact opposite: too many unfilled jobs and too few available workers.

In fact, as of earlier this year, there were more job openings available than there were unemployed Americans to fill them. While this may seem like a good problem to have and is preferred over the alternative, it's a quandary nonetheless.

The lack of available labor dampens economic improvements that the country could be experiencing. While the economy is growing, it could be growing much faster if businesses were able to access the employees they need to keep up with their expanding operations. In fact, business owners have labeled labor shortages as one of their top concerns.

The solution is to institute public policies that match available jobs with qualified workers who are either currently looking for a job or have dropped out of the labor force altogether due to the economic turbulence experienced over the past decade, which is affirmed by the lower than usual labor force participation rate.

The best strategy to accomplish this goal is to encourage those who don't have a job or are under-employed to gain the necessary skills required for many of the currently open positions, which shouldn't be a difficult task considering that roughly half of the jobs pay \$50,000 or more per year. The best part is many of these jobs don't even require a bachelor's degree, but simply an education from a trade or vocational school, which is much cheaper and takes less time to complete.

Not only will this help businesses fill available positions, but it will also drive up wage levels for employees. When Americans have more skills to offer and the labor market is tight, employers will compete for qualified job candidates by using higher wages, better benefits and even more flexible working hours as bargaining chips.

So this Labor Day, take a moment to appreciate the economic progress we've made over the past year as well as ponder the solutions to the new challenges we must now confront. ■

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

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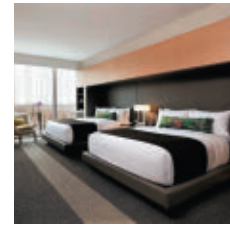
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# Amid a proliferation of U.S. hotels, there are ways to gain a competitive **EDGE**

by IGNACIO EDENBURG



ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF EDENBURG HOSPITALITY

**A**CCORDING TO ANALYSTS at Lodging Econometrics, the U.S. construction of new hotels is up in the first quarter of 2018 with 5,255 projects and a total of 636,174 rooms, up four percent by projects and six percent by rooms year over year. These numbers show healthy growth in the first quarter of 2018, but with so many projects under

construction, what can hotel owners and developers do to stand out from the crowd and maintain a competitive edge?

## SUSTAINABILITY

We're seeing major brands embrace and incorporate eco-friendly elements into the building design, case goods, policies, and practices. With developments in green manufacturing, more hotel properties are working towards

qualifying for LEED certifications. However, hotels don't necessarily need LEED certification to be considered environmentally friendly. Developers can install energy efficient lights, solar panels, or recycled wood and furniture that comes from a factory that operates with clean recycling and combustion of industrial remains. For example, factories used by Edenburg Hospitality use formaldehyde-free wood panels and

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glue, and works with natural veneers and lacquers.

This growing eco-friendly trend is highlighted by the Gold LEED MGM National Harbor situated on the Potomac River just south of Washington D.C., completed in 2016. Another example is the Hyatt Regency Seattle located in downtown Seattle. They include millwork in guestrooms in part, because of

the green certifications issued by the European agencies that oversee the factory the woodwork or building product came from.

Millennials, a target customer base for hotels, are very eco-conscious. As a result, hotels are embracing sustainability and making it the new norm. Having sustainability on the top of their list when searching for hotels,

Millennials often prioritize this over cost. By investing in 'green' hotel furniture, hotel owners are opening up their doors to guests who prioritize having an environmentally-friendly space over other amenities.

**LIFESTYLE AND NEIGHBORHOOD**

Brands have always been hyper competitive, but with so much consolidation in the industry, hotel operators are going above and beyond, providing nice bed sheets, large flat screen TVs, and a good location. We're seeing brands loosening up their design standards in favor of creating a unique experience for guests. For example, staying at a TRYP by Wyndham in New Jersey and a TRYP by Wyndham in Fort Lauderdale the guest can have two completely different experiences. Now, it is more about creating a lifestyle experience for guests and telling the story of the hotel in relation to a neighborhood, art, culture, and technology. For example, Edenburg Hospitality recently completed the interior design and manufactured the furniture and fixtures for the TRYP by Wyndham Maritime hotel located in Fort Lauderdale. To capitalize on the city's top-notch marine industry, the TRYP by Wyndham Maritime on Marina Mile has a nautical and maritime theme throughout the hotel. The design includes exotic fish tanks and wave-like blue sofas adorning the hotel lobby, as well as underwater photographs by noted marine ecologist and photographer Richard Murphy in every guest room. Other design elements include circular light sconces resembling portholes on a ship, and the ceiling above the tapas bar simulates ripples of water. Another good example is Hotel Indigo in Pittsburgh, where the hotel design tells the story of the area's historical steel industry past. Exposed ceilings and steel beams in the lobby remind guests of the property's former life as the J&L Steel mill. The hotel was also designed to evoke memories of the neighborhood's majestic theatre era.

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## TECHNOLOGY

With technology becoming more pervasive and finding itself inside the pockets of almost everyone, it's no surprise to hear tech savvy individuals want to stay at a tech savvy hotel. Hotels that do not embrace new technologies will be left behind. Customers are now using their own devices to check-in at a hotel or download an app that allows guests to control just about everything from air conditioning in their room, to ordering room service. Guests also have the ability to use their own devices to unlock guestroom doors. Hotel brands are incorporating tech into every aspect of the design. Finding developers that can maintain a competitive edge is a great start to ensuring your hotel property is on top of the latest tech. By building smart hotels, such as the Henna Hotel in Japan that is manned only by robots, or replacing Wi-Fi with Li-Fi, which is an internet connection through the lights, the need for creativity is ever increasing when hiring or searching for a developer.

## COMMUNAL SPACES

There is a growing appetite for communal spaces among hotel guests. Hoteliers are turning the lobby into socializing spaces where guests can interact with one another, as well as creating events to bring guests together. The Aloft Hotel has become known for its communal bar area, and the Live at Aloft program features local artists performing in the hotel's lounge. The Element Hotel's new guestroom design features a communal room in the middle of four guestrooms, which allow guests to share a kitchen, dining area, and lounge. Hotel breakfast areas are another trend. It's very rare to find a hotel without that offering these days. ■



*Ignacio Edenburg is founder and CEO of Edenburg Hospitality.*



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# Hotel executives dedicated to sustainability

by ZOHREEN ISMAIL



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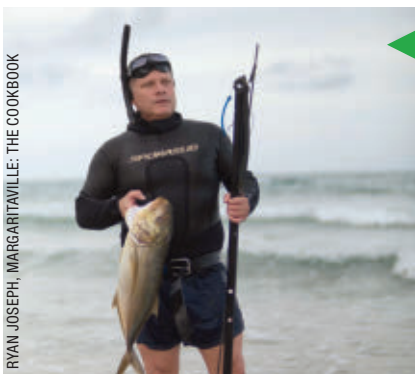
## SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES from *The Ranch* Co-Founder & CEO, **ALEX GLASSCOCK**

From celebrating its bounty with a seasonal menu, to marveling in its splendor each morning on daily hikes, The Ranch's Co-Founder and CEO Alex Glasscock's commitment to the earth can be seen throughout the program. The Ranch, located in Malibu, aims to create a safe place to allow guests to experience personal awareness. Dedicated to preserving and protecting the planet, Alex incorporates sustainable practices into his company at every opportunity. The Ranch's exclusively plant-based menu has a profound

impact on the environment, requiring less land, water and energy to produce. Furthermore, The Ranch has an onsite, certified organic garden that provides the majority of the food used at The Ranch and a system of bee colonies on property that produce around 500 pounds of honey each year. Alex is constantly reviewing The Ranch's methods and programming to improve their sustainability practices and be at the forefront of sustainability in the hospitality sphere. He also emphasizes the importance of educating guests at The Ranch and in the surrounding community on the environmental impact of their choices and ways they can support the planet in their daily lives.



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE RANCH MALIBU



RYAN JOSEPH, MARGARITAVILLE: THE COOKBOOK

## SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES from *Margaritaville Brand* Concept Chef **CARLO SERNAGLIA**

Since the song "Margaritaville" made its debut over 40 years ago, its namesake has become a global lifestyle brand. The company actively works on behalf of several ecological and social causes, with a recent concerted effort focused on one in particular – reducing the population of invasive lionfish.

In 2014, as the Margaritaville team prepared to open its flagship property, Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort, the brand's concept chef, Carlo Sernaglia, developed an all-new casual-luxe restaurant concept, JWB Prime Steak and Seafood. A central component of JWB is its fresh spear-caught fishing program. Working with a dedicated team of local fisherman across South Florida, JWB serves up a fresh spear-caught fish nightly. Lionfish is most

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frequently served and one of the most popular due to the fact it assists in protecting our fragile ecosystems. If you're not near JWV, you can pull a lionfish recipe from *Margaritaville: The Cookbook*, which Chef Carlo authored.

Chef Carlo is instrumental in driving Margaritaville's lionfish efforts. In 2017, he finished second in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Lionfish Challenge, spearing nearly 2,500 lionfish within a two-month period.



**SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES**  
*from Canopy by Hilton*  
**Global Head,**  
**GARY STEFFEN**



Since the launch of Canopy by Hilton in October 2014, the brand's commitment to sustainability and the environment has been part of Canopy by Hilton's DNA. The Canopy by Hilton brand was created following years of research and surveying over 9,000 travelers to fill a void in the lifestyle space. Listening to traveler's wants – including finding ways to incorporate sustainability through filtered water stations and delivering “Break Fast” options in recycled brown bags, Canopy by Hilton has been able to bring sustainability to life while also matching traveler's aspirations. Additionally, Canopy by Hilton makes an effort to find like-minded sustainable partners, such as TradeCraft, who provide locally sourced coffee and tea; Planet Dog, its Paws in the Neighborhood partner and a member of the pet sustainability coalition that enhance dogs lives; Apivita, the Greek sustainable bath amenities business; and Serta, the makers of mattresses crafted from post-industrial recycled steel and wood. All these partners align with the brand's fresh approach to lifestyle hotel offerings which makes a clear difference.

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The brand also follows Hilton's initiatives such as “Lightstay,” a proprietary corporate responsibility performance measurement platform which has been recognized for its innovative approach to reducing its environmental impact, and Clean the World soap recycling initiative that has already collected more than one million pounds of partially-used soap, which have been recycled into more than four million new bars of soap, are major aspects to our environmentally responsible practices as well. ■

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# A digital edge for hotel F&B programs

by DANIELLE GILLESPIE

**H**OTELS HAVE BUILT storied reputations around their signature cocktails, aged spirit programs and well-stocked wine cellars. But in the age of Spotify and Airbnb, in which people rely implicitly on digital profiles to create an experience or discover something new, can analog hotels compete?

Even the most delicious wine lists and well-informed staff could benefit from a technological edge, especially as people become more comfortable interacting with a screen than a person.

A survey by CorkGuru found people typically default to wines and beverages

they know when dining out, and 67 percent avoid asking staff for recommendations for a variety of reasons, including not wanting to bother anyone and the fear of looking uninformed. Further, only 15 percent of restaurant-goers say they look to try something new, which begs the question: What good is an extensive wine inventory carefully designed to complement the menu when guests aren't up for it?

Restaurants embracing digital menus and inventory platforms are subtly helping guests overcome their default routines to the benefit of a better guest experience, sales growth and operational efficiencies. Behavior analysis shows that when guests get involved in

the process of a pairing decision – such as seeing a wine label, flavor notes, and ABV – they will often upsell themselves.

David Lamatrice of Bistecca Steakhouse and Wine Bar, located south of Pittsburgh amidst six major hotels, says adopting a digital wine platform has been transformative for his business. Since installing CorkGuru, he's been able to adapt menus to different specials, save on printings costs, and help guests try something new.

"Moving to a digital platform has helped Bistecca Steakhouse engage the locals and travelers that walk through our doors, creating an understanding of patrons that would otherwise go unspoken," said Lamatrice. "Now, we're able to cater menus and communications to engage different crowds, from the early diners to our sporadic road warriors."

Many hotels already have the foundation or hardware to implement this type of technology, which has become increasingly turnkey, and the implications for the broader hotel food and beverage program, including in-room dining are compelling.

Room service menus are inherently limited, and keeping paper wine lists accurate and updated in a hotel of hundreds of rooms is unrealistic. Additionally, much like diners avoid asking for recommendations while dining out, hotel guests are reluctant to



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together we created a plan to help me get through that rough patch. Plus, your ROI is solid because Red Roof is careful about costs - there's not a lot of fat in their expenses They're a true partner and easy to work with." Atul concluded by enthusiastically saying, "Put these benefits against the competition, and Red Roof is a slam dunk."

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attempt to order off-menu in the room – an enduring room-service myth, according to USA Today.

A digital menu/inventory platform allows guests to order from an in-room tablet or TV, upgrade their dining order and enhance their pairing experience beyond what they'll find in the minibar. Hotels can even integrate their ordering system with their website or mobile guest experience – just as guests can check-in and unlock their room with their mobile device, they are also able to pre-order a chilled bottle of Sauvignon Blanc to be waiting in the room by the time they're pulling up to the hotel.

What's more, hotels can input ordering behaviors into their guest profiles to improve future bookings, customize in-room sundries, and alert travelers of specials. Over time, properties build their data sets and can find deeper efficiencies within their inventory and how

they cater to guests. Capturing this information digitally also eliminates the possibility of losing customer intelligence in a phone transaction or random staff encounter within a hotel restaurant.

The potential for business travelers is particularly interesting when you consider hotels outside dense urban markets where dining options are limited and require a drive. Proprietors that cater to a business crowd know that after a day of travel and meetings their guests may wish to catch up on email – with a good glass of wine – from the comfort of their room. With the right technology, hotels can turn every instance of that situation into the sale of a \$40+ bottle of wine, increasing beverage sales.

Hotels already understand how to create incremental value across several aspects of a guest journey – upgrade to a water view, choose a specialty pillow, get the morning paper, order the breakfast

package, etc. A well-timed email prompt can also incentivize a past guest for a return stay.

Bringing similar technology to hotel food and beverage programs would have a compounding effect, giving hotels a greater digital advantage, creating a better guest experience, and ultimately bringing guests back. ■



*Danielle Gillespie is a tech-crazy, wine aficionado with more than 25 years of experience developing commercial software and taking*

*products from inception through deployment. Her experience includes combining technology building blocks to design and deploy cost-effective product solutions for mobile users, like with CorkGuru, a digital marketing platform for the wine industry.*

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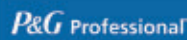
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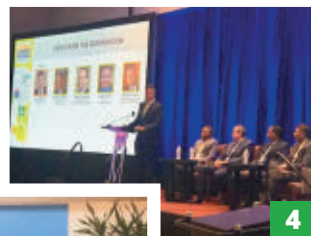
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1. AAHOA Southeast Texas Regional Director Sawan H. Patel sat down with Republican Party National Director of APA Membership Adi Sathi to discuss topics ranging from local, state, and federal elections, immigration, healthcare, tax return, and other important hospitality issues that our industry faces on a daily basis.
2. Two Town Halls were hosted in the North Pacific Region in Santa Clara and Ukiah. North Pacific Regional Director Kamalesh (KP) Patel and the North Pacific ambassadors were excited to discuss a host of topics, which included PAGA (the Private Attorneys General Act) and how it affects our industry, a potential minimum wage increase in California, new Oakland Union recommendations, and other regional updates. Special thanks to John Mavros from Fisher Phillips for joining us in Santa Clara.
3. AAHOA Upper Midwest Regional Director Kalpesh Joshi hosted a successful regional meeting in Minneapolis with a sold-out trade show.
4. AAHOA President & CEO Chip Rogers moderated the View From The Board at the ALIS Summer Update in Atlanta. Panelists Kenneth Fearn, Patrick Pacious, Champ Patel & Mitesh Shah discussed a few of the top major topics in the hospitality industry, such as customer experience, branding, immigration, labor shortages, and the roles of new technology.
5. AAHOA Vice Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala participated in a Hotel Management roundtable in New Jersey, sponsored by Wyndham where she shared her thoughts on diversity in the hospitality industry.
6. AAHOA hosted our Mastering Sales Essentials Workshop in Houston facilitated by Tammy Gillis with Gillis Consulting. AAHOA will host at least five more workshops by the end of 2018.



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7. We'd like to thank the Hyatt executives who took the time to speak with our young professional hoteliers about the Hyatt brands, pipeline, and future plans at the Hyatt Young Professionals Development Day in Chicago. Special thanks to AAHOA Vice Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala and Young Professional Directors Nishant (Neal) Patel and Purvi Panwala for making the event a success.
8. The ALIS Summer Update in Dallas/Frisco kicked off with opening remarks by Jim Burba with Burba Hotel Network and Patrick Mayock with STR, followed by the Capital for Development panel.
9. AAHOA Treasurer Biran Patel and North Texas Regional Director Mayur (Mike) Patel spoke at the Latino Hotel Association Conference in Dallas, where they provided their insights on hotel investments and development.
10. Thank you to everyone who joined us in Jackson for the Gulf-Jackson Regional Meeting, including AAHOA Gulf Regional Director Girish (Gary) Patel, Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel, Secretary Vinay Patel, and the Gulf regional ambassadors.



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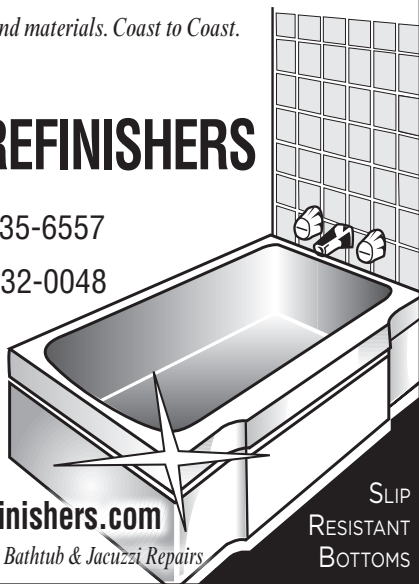
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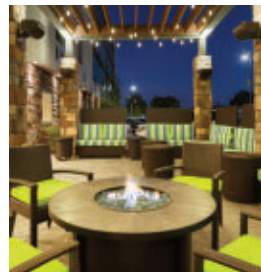
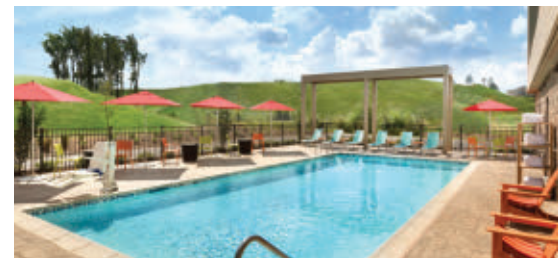
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