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unite to make an impact on
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..... Scholarship for
..... Compassionate
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THE C-SUITE

The importance of nurturing
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Contents

FEATURES



16 Young, driven, and in charge

Young professionals share what it means to reach goals and define their own success

by MONIQUE ROY

20

Game on!

How youth sports teams are bringing opportunities to hotel owners

by NICK FORTUNA

24

Training and transformation

How learning and professional development grow your employees and your business

by LOUCRETIA WYLIE

30

Investing in the future of our industry

AAHOA's past, present, and future unite to make an impact on tomorrow's hospitality leaders

by HEATHER CARNES

COLUMNS

12 THE G-SUITE Nurturing franchise relationships is critical

by PHIL HUGH

14 COMMON GROUND The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

by TONI-ANNE BARRY

32 FINANCE Turning a family business into a family empire

by RUSHI SHAH

34 SMALL BUSINESS Labor Day: A time to highlight American workers

by ALFREDO ORTIZ

35 BY THE NUMBERS AAHOA assistantship and scholarship endowment

36 TRENDS Investing in the guest experience

by SARAH DINGER

38 ADA Quiz: Serving guests with disabilities and their service animals

by DAY AL-MOHAMED and BRUNA E. PEDRINI

40 CITY SPOTLIGHT Phoenix

by ASIF LAKHANI

42 GUEST EXPERIENCE Sustaining guests in a sustainable age

by GIUSEPPE PINNA

44 LEADERSHIP Women in hospitality leadership

by NIMISHA PATEL

DEPARTMENTS

6
LETTER FROM THE CHAIRWOMAN

8
LETTER FROM THE INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO

10
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

46
AAHOA CLUB BLUE, PLATINUM & SILVER MEMBERS

48
AAHOA @ INDUSTRY EVENTS

50
AAHOA VENDOR PARTNERS

55
CLASSIFIEDS

58
ADVERTISERS INDEX

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Trendsetters build communities at work

JAGRUTI PANWALA
AAHOA Chairwoman (2019-2020)

“When your employees feel valued, seen, and part of a team, they are more eager to go to work each day and put their all in.”

MANY OF US STARTED our careers with little to no idea what the industry was really like. Much of my own learning curve started out with trial and error until I figured out what worked and what didn't. This process took years, and to this day I am still learning. Throughout my career, I consistently looked to my peers, other hoteliers who were just starting out, and those who had more experience under their belts to help shape my own business endeavors. To me, having role models was a key aspect of my success, and it's important to always remember that you are never too experienced to take lessons from others.

One of the lessons I learned early on was the importance of creating a community between staff members. When your employees feel valued, seen, and part of a team, they are more eager to go to work each day and put their all in. Having committed and passionate employees makes managing your businesses easier and more efficient. Your employees are responsible for everything that keeps your property running, from housekeeping to maintenance to front desk service, their dedication makes all hotel duties run smoother. Fostering a workplace environment that supports and encourages your staff is essential to your business and can truly set your property apart from the competition.

It's also a great draw for guests. Think of when you travel: The hotels you remember fondly are the ones where the front desk

service was personal, you always received a smile, and it was obvious the staff enjoyed their work. This makes a hotel stand out and become a true trendsetter. This may not seem like revolutionary advice, but too often, hotel staff become complacent in their work when they don't feel a sense of community. This leads to subpar performance, high turnover rates, and eventually the suffering of a property.

Now, this is only one piece of guidance I offer today. But as AAHOA Members, we have an arsenal of information at our disposal that we can and should all take advantage of. From our online learning resources that touch on every aspect of hotel management to the industry events that take place around the country, this is where you can take part in new educational sessions that are built specifically to enhance your businesses and meet other hoteliers who are on this journey, too.

It is my sincere hope that all AAHOA Members keep the drive to advance themselves and keep their businesses alive. Getting too comfortable in certain business practices can inhibit growth and reduce your ability to keep up with the industry. I want to specifically urge our young professionals who are just joining this industry to stay motivated, and don't shy away from a learning curve because you think it's too hard. I promise you it's not. As the next generation of AAHOA Members rises through the ranks, it is up to us to instill in them the importance of lifelong learning and to do that, we all must continue our own educational journeys. ■

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How AAHOA works for you

RACHEL HUMPHREY
AAHOA Interim President & CEO

“At AAHOA, we offer all members a plethora of educational resources through our AAHOA HOTEL OWNERS ACADEMY™ that are always available to access.”

AT TIMES, IT SEEMS ALMOST impossible to keep up with how fast our industry is changing. New technological developments and evolving industry trends can make hoteliers overwhelmed if changes occur too fast and too often. For you to stay on top of industry advancements and keep your businesses growing strong, it is absolutely essential for you to utilize the tools and resources at your disposal.

At AAHOA, we offer all members a plethora of educational resources through our AAHOA HOTEL OWNERS ACADEMY™ that are always accessible. Here, members can watch webinars on a variety of subjects that touch on every segment of our industry. Topics range from ADA compliance to financial management to understanding how to best utilize social media to brand and market your business. Members can also participate in exclusive workshops that teach participants the A to Z of development and financial topics. These educational tools are some of the most valuable benefits of AAHOA membership. Taking the time to explore this treasure trove of knowledge can help your business thrive in new ways by opening doors to business techniques that will bring in more guests, allow you to appeal to more job seekers, and create a desirable brand.

Outside of AAHOA, state and local hospitality associations generally offer educational and professional development

resources that are uniquely tailored to your local industry. Whether it is education on specific regulations in your state and what that means for your business or new local travel trends they're seeing and how to cater to them, your state association can better able you to navigate and understand the pulse of travel and tourism near you. Hotels in the Northeast and the Midwest will both benefit from financial management tools but will likely vary on marketing methods that are best suited to promote their business. Check with your state and local associations today to see what educational tools they offer to members like yourself, and if you're not already a member, seek them out and consider the benefits of joining. There are also exceptional certificate programs from revenue management to industry analytics that provide specific knowledge to help your business thrive.

Finally, one of the most important professional development tools you have is other hoteliers. If you're not learning from each other, you're missing a critical resource for professional growth. No hotelier is ever too experienced to continue learning and adapting. In our ever-changing industry, being open-minded and eager to learn new ideas can bring the success of your business to new heights. Take the first step today and look into our resources as well as the local state associations you may be a part of. All of these tools exist first and foremost to help your business be the best it can be. ■

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH

1

September Regionals

Join AAHOA at one of its three Regional Conferences & Trade Shows this month: North Central (Indianapolis, IN), September 5
Central Midwest (Overland Park, Kansas), September 17
North Central (Southfield, Michigan), September 19

2

Legislative Action Summit

AAHOA and AHLA are combining forces to show legislators on Capitol Hill the collective strength of our industry and the vital role it plays in the economy. Join us in Washington, D.C., September 10-11, for what could be your most important meeting of the year.

3

Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics (CHIA)

Join AAHOA in Orlando, September 17-18, for the only hotel-related certification for industry professionals that focuses specifically on analytics. Registration is capped at the first 50 participants, so register today!

4

Lodging Conference

Join Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala, Vice Chairman Biran Patel, Treasurer Vinay Patel, Secretary Nishant (Neal) Patel, and Interim President & CEO Rachel Humphrey, in Phoenix September 23-26, where they're featured speakers discussing the latest in hotel development, finance, franchising, management, construction, design, and operations.

5

Wyndham Conference

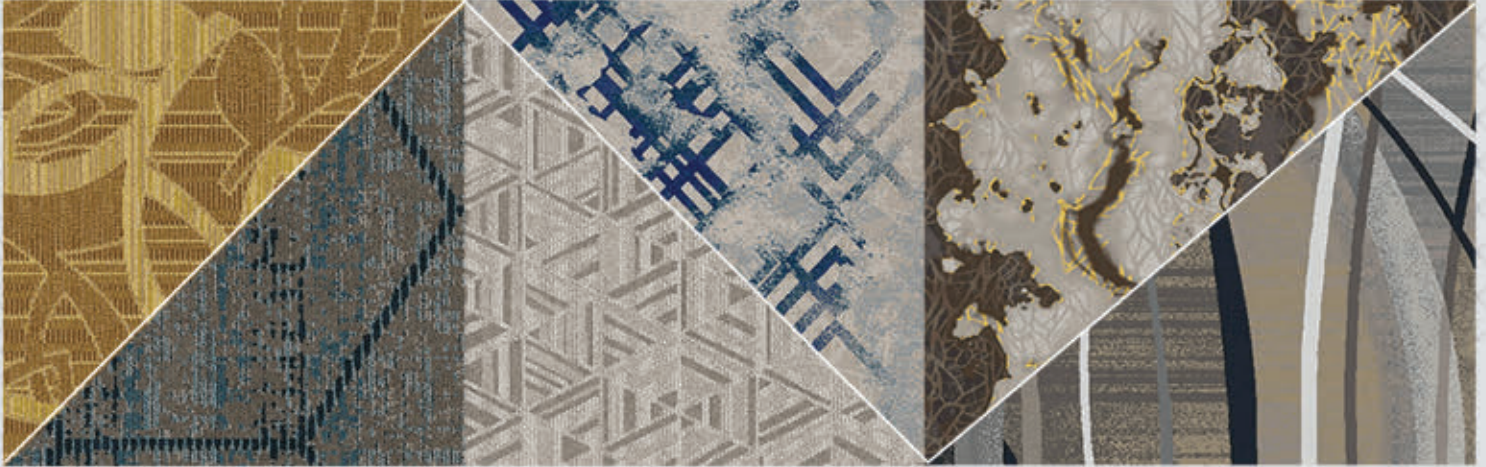
Wyndham owners attending the Wyndham Hotel & Resorts Conference are invited to attend the AAHOA Wyndham Brand Alliance Meeting on September 26, and the AAHOA Women Hotelier Networking Reception on September 24, all taking place in Las Vegas.

BONUS

HX: The Hotel Experience

Powered by AAHOA, and with an all-new educational lineup, HX will be taking place November 10-11, in beautiful NYC. Attend the expo for free, and save on your full conference pass with the exclusive promo code, AAHOA19.

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The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: Revisiting an error in business expensing

by TONI-ANNE BARRY



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THE TAX CUTS AND JOBS Act (TCJA) continues to be a victory for American small business owners. The 20-percent small business deduction and reduced individual income rates make it easier for owners to expand their businesses and for entrepreneurs to take the plunge and start one of their own. With this simplified and fairer tax code, America now has the best environment for business development in years. And the results are speaking for themselves. More jobs are being created, wages are rising, and businesses are rapidly expanding. The intent of the TCJA to bolster Main Street is clearly working, but the legislation did fall short in one major area that is crucial to so many American small businesses – business expensing.

Now, only certain business expensing falls into this category, specifically investments under the qualified improvement property (QIP) umbrella. QIP investments are considered improvements to interior portions of a commercial building after the initial construction and opening of that building. For example, if a hotelier opens a property and a year later replaces a faulty AC unit with a new one, this is

considered a QIP investment. To AAHOA Members, making QIP investments is a constant and crucial aspect of running their businesses. Hoteliers are continuously improving their properties through renovations and the purchase of new equipment to keep their hotels up to date. Being able to expense these investments enables business owners to continue enhancing their properties by making it easier and more cost effective.

Prior to the enactment of the TCJA, these expenses were eligible for 50-percent bonus depreciation with a cost-recovery period of 15 years. The intent, but unfortunately not the outcome, of the TCJA was to increase the level of bonus depreciation to 100 percent. To help put this into perspective, the Tax Foundation estimates that a \$100 investment under the old law would have an \$84.38 cost recovery with a \$5.47 tax bill. Under the intended TCJA provisions, the cost recovery would be the full \$100 and a \$0 tax bill. Unfortunately, when the law was written, it actually increased the cost recovery period to 39 years and did not implement full bonus depreciation. With this language enacted into law, the Tax Foundation found that a \$100 investment has a mere \$41.12 cost recovery and a \$12.15 tax bill, an unquestionably dismal result. While most provisions

of the TCJA have helped spur business growth, this error is holding businesses back from making needed renovations and other capital improvements.

Bipartisan solutions to this harmful error are working their way through the Senate and the House. Senators Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Doug Jones (D-AL) introduced S. 803, the Restoring Investment in Improvements Act, to correct the inaccurate language. This legislation would return the cost recovery period to 15 years and would implement 100-percent bonus depreciation on QIP investments.

Bipartisan support for this fix also exists in the House, where Representatives Walorski (R-IN) and Jimmy Panetta (DA-CA) introduced H.R. 186, identical to the Senate bill. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle in both chambers are voicing their support for this pro-small business initiative because they recognize the important role business expensing plays in the success of American businesses.

If this legislation is signed into law, AAHOA Members and all American small business owners will experience even greater tax relief that will allow them to continue to reinvest in their businesses and strengthen their local economies. ■

To learn more about this topic, read [Common Ground](#) on page 14.

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Nurturing franchise relationships is critical

by PHIL HUGH, CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, RED ROOF

FRANCHISEES AND FRANCHISE relationships are an incredible driver of success and growth for hotel brands. Hotel companies that embrace and nurture their franchisees with a mix of revenue-minded services, touchpoints, and engagement will be especially rewarded.

Hotels that operate with a franchise model must work closely with current franchisees to drive revenue and limit the number of properties their operational team serves per franchise owner to ensure personalized, specific-to-property results. We applaud and strongly endorse Franchise Advisory Councils or similar groups. They facilitate open communication and collaboration and are vital in promoting inclusion, communication, systems for success, and recommendations for marketing support. Through these open lines of communication, brand decisions are made with the success of each property in mind.

GROWING DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS

The Red Roof® Forum on Leadership for Women Entrepreneurs is one example of how we sought to grow deeper relationships with franchisees. Suggested by our franchise partners, the forum was developed to help women hospitality professionals tackle, discuss, and find solutions to business, workplace, and work-life balance as well as equip them with the fundamentals in driving top-line revenue, mentoring, and growing employees.

Through panels and a speaker series, the forum shares tools to help women entrepreneurs manage and grow their hotel business more effectively and to rise in the ranks. Specialists also counsel



PHIL HUGH,
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, RED ROOF

participants on how to grow their business with acquisitions and investments and provide guidance on the marketplace challenges of increased competition, the growth of third-party booking channels, and the mounting expectations of guests. The forum serves as a platform for women to learn, grow, and evolve.

RESPONDING TO THE MARKET

To retain franchise engagement and interest, hotel brands must also offer new product opportunities for current and potential franchise owners. At Red Roof, we've moved into the extended-stay market, a sector that has grown immensely in the past few

years. Extended-stay properties currently make up more than a quarter of all hotel development projects in the U.S. pipeline, according to Lodging Econometrics. We have entered this market with our new sub-brand, HomeTowne Studios by Red Roof. We've also introduced The Red Collection®, unique city-center hotels with a focus on locations in major cities, state capitals, and resort destinations.

HAPPY FRANCHISEES MAKE HAPPY FRANCHISORS

Nurturing strong franchise relationships has led to a happy and satisfied system of franchisees. Recently, the vast majority of Red Roof franchisees gave our key top-line drivers – communications, driving business through the brand, well-managed brand quality, service quality, services for the money, and overall performance – a franchise satisfaction rating of 86 percent.

At Red Roof, we've built our franchise business around the motto, "Genuine Relationships. Real Results.®" Aside from the strength of the brand, the strength and depth of the relationship Red Roof has with franchisees helps drive profitable growth. It's truly genuine relationships that foster the collaboration for winning in the marketplace.

AAHOA Members/franchise owners make up a considerable percentage of our owners and investors; working with AAHOA has been integral to our growth and is another proof point of how strong and deep relationships drive continued success. But we also understand that we have a lot left to do. If Red Roof's story were a novel, we are at the beginning. We're depending on our franchisees and franchise relationships to help us complete the remainder of our story. ■



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86% FRANCHISEE SATISFACTION*

It's no coincidence that Red Roof's foray into the extended stay market comes at a time when extended stay is the fastest growing category and continues to outperform expectations. In fact, Red Roof recently invested \$60 million in a renovation program to launch HomeTowne Studios by Red Roof® and now has over 50 properties open in more than 35 markets. Each offering the amenities guests want including upgraded décor, kitchenette, on-site laundry facilities, free Wi-Fi and more while continuing Red Roof's

tradition of clean, comfortable accommodations at an unmatched value. At the same time, franchisees get the benefits of Red Roof's brand awareness, a nationally deployed business-to-business sales force and a highly successful loyalty program travelers appreciate. And that's in addition to our award-winning marketing department and a dedicated website based on our fastest in-class with mobile first technology. Best of all, these exceptional services are offered at some of the lowest fees in the industry.

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*Red Roof Franchisee Survey 2018. This is not an offer. No offer or sale of a franchise will be made except by a Franchise Disclosure Document first filed and registered with the applicable authorities. For New York: An offering can only be made by a prospectus filed first with the Department of Law for the State of New York. Such filing does not constitute approval by the Department of Law. For Minnesota: #F-5824. Red Roof Franchising, LLC, 7815 Walton Pkwy, New Albany, OH 43054. © 2019 Red Roof Franchising, LLC

COMMON GROUND

The historic changes in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

by TONI-ANNE BARRY



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These days, it seems like politicians cannot agree about anything. Common Ground profiles members of opposing parties who are working together to advance issues important to hoteliers.

THE ISSUE

The historic changes in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) directly help American small businesses thrive, but the legislation is not without error. Unfortunately, one provision that was intended to increase the ability of small business owners to write off their expenses did the exact opposite, and made these write-offs more restrictive. This error specifically affects investments in qualified improvement property (QIP), which are defined as any improvements to the interior of a commercial building, with some exceptions.

Prior to the TCJA, small businesses were eligible for 50-percent bonus depreciation over a 15-year recovery period. The goal of the TCJA was to bring the bonus depreciation up to 100 percent on all QIP investments. Instead, the bill increased the recovery period to 39 years and did not implement full

bonus depreciation. For small business owners like AAHOA Members, this makes renovation projects more costly and disincentives investment.

COMMON GROUND

Senators Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Doug Jones (D-AL) introduced the Restoring Investment in Improvements Act to address this issue. The legislation would reduce cost recovery from a 39-year period to a 15-year period and would make these investments eligible for 100-percent bonus depreciation. With this error fixed, small business owners are better able to make improvements and updates to their properties to stay competitive in their markets. Representatives Jackie Walorski (R-IN) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) introduced this legislation in the House. ■



Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA)

First Elected: 2011

Committees: Finance; Budget; and Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

“As a former restaurant owner, I know keeping a small business alive is always a challenge. The federal tax code should not make

it more difficult for a restaurateur or a retailer. Capital invested in a company should be fully deductible at the time of the investment. This helps make the investment affordable. Our simple, bipartisan fix recognizes the economic benefits from immediate expensing and will help grow the economy and create jobs.”



Sen. Doug Jones (D-AL)

First Elected: 2017

Committees: Aging; Armed Services; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

“Making sure our local small businesses can invest in themselves is critical for the economic success of Alabama’s communities. That’s why this bipartisan legislation is so important: to make sure the tax code works as intended, and restaurants, retailers, and other businesses can make the improvements they need to make their stores competitive, vibrant, and safe.”

making sure the tax code works as intended, and restaurants, retailers, and other businesses can make the improvements they need to make their stores competitive, vibrant, and safe.”

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**YOUNG, DRIVEN,
AND IN CHARGE**

Young professionals share what it means to reach goals and define their own success

by MONIQUE ROY



LIVERTOON/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

BEING YOUNG, PROFESSIONAL, AND SUCCESSFUL in the hospitality industry is filled with great opportunities, but the job isn't always glamorous. In fact, it can be quite difficult to succeed, requiring a lot of hard work and long hours.

SUCCESS IS SUBJECTIVE

According to Neel Parikh, director of acquisitions at KPG Hotels, which owns and operates more than 35 hotels primarily across the East Coast, each person should define success in their own way. "Success follows accomplishing goals and objectives we set for ourselves, and a good work/life balance is also very important," he said. "An individual should work hard to achieve personal and professional success."

The hotel industry is a 24/7 lifestyle, involving weekends and late nights. However, it takes more than just long hours. Being successful also involves adapting to the fast pace of the industry and the ever-changing landscape.

"Emerging technologies force you to analyze your goals continuously, and you need to adapt to these changes constantly," Parikh said.

Keeping up also involves analyzing economic trends, which forces you to re-evaluate your own objectives. It is important to gather nuggets of information by talking to different people in the industry who may have a better understanding of certain challenges and situations. Parikh added that taking time to read is also critical to learning and gaining new perspectives.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH

Many hoteliers would agree that success cannot be measured by how many hotels you own. "Success is relative to each individual," Purvi Panwala said.

Panwala currently serves as AAHOA's Young Professional Director Eastern Division and is the president and CEO of Purvi LLC. Her recent experience includes management of Hotel BPM, a boutique hotel in Brooklyn, NY; repositioning and management of The Lincoln, an independent hotel in the Philadelphia market; and development of a franchised asset.

"To me, success happens when you have a specific goal, whether it's business, personal, or spiritual, and you are able to achieve that goal for a favorable outcome in a sustainable way," Panwala said. "No goal is too big or too small, but you can only achieve success if it's realistic. If you're able to create a plan and implement it, I believe you are one step closer to being successful and defining your success."

Panwala, who was born into the hotel industry, grew up seeing how much hard work went into building the family business. After realizing that she wanted to pursue other things, Panwala decided to attend college instead. After graduating, she started her career working at other jobs, but she was always drawn back to the industry and the family business. She eventually figured out that the family business was the right path for her, so she began to learn about creating structures and efficiencies in the business.

Panwala joined AAHOA to educate herself on the industry. By combining resources, all the young professionals involved have a chance to grow together. “When you have the right people surrounding you who share the same vision, companies are then able to create and work toward common goals to bring that vision to fruition,” Panwala said.

One of the biggest challenges many entrepreneurs face in the hotel industry is being able to clearly communicate their vision in a way that everyone can understand. Another challenge is finding those key people you want on your team to help water the garden you’ve planted.

“Having the right systems and people in place to balance a company’s growth is extremely important,” Panwala said. “In my opinion, it can make or break your growth.”

Something Panwala has always mentioned to others is the word “luck.” She explained that luck is when preparation meets opportunity. “Always prepare yourself with knowledge and position yourself for the opportunity to create your own luck...or success,” she said.

Panwala says networking is key. Figure out gaps in your business and link with people who can help you.

FOUR-FACTOR SUCCESS

Bijal Patel, chief operating officer of Coast Redwood Hospitality and a third-generation hotelier, explains there are four factors to achieving success.

1. **Take responsibility.** If you make a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
2. **Respect others.** Business partners need to be respected to establish your credibility.
3. **Establish priorities.** Working in the hotel industry is extremely busy, and things can get muddled with work and family time. Carve out time for yourself to avoid burn out.
4. **Work hard and be persistent.** It takes lots of hard work and persistence to attain success and survive in the industry.

As vice chairman of the California Hotel & Lodging Association (CHLA) and soon to be the first chairman under 30 years old, Patel may be young, but he has the depth of experience to provide sound advice. He suggests young professionals work toward defining opportunities before competitors do. The hotel industry can be a complex business and it’s always changing. New markets open and old ones close.

“You have to be quick, confident, and you have to do your homework,” Patel said. “You need to have a strategy, and execution is a key part of it. You also have to accept failure and be willing to take great risks. You have to put your bottom on the line.”

For Patel, success was not an easy road. The start of his career was marked by pain and a lot of hard work. The loss of his mom to pancreatic cancer 16 years ago and wanting to assist his father catapulted him into the industry. He didn’t have a lot of time to learn the ropes. He had to lead half of his family’s business in an instant, overlooking a big property



“To me, success happens when you have a specific goal, whether it’s business, personal, or spiritual, and you are able to achieve that goal for a favorable outcome in a sustainable way.”

– PURVI PANWALA

renovation and a repositioning at only 18 years old while he attended college three hours away. Nothing could prepare him for this situation.

“Being a young professional in the industry is difficult, but the industry accepts us, those who are second- and third-generation hoteliers,” Patel said.

Working in a fast-paced industry and living in a tech-savvy world has made our patience shorter. “We live in an instant-gratification society, and we don’t always look at the long term,” Patel said. “Success in the industry is a long-term game. Individuals need to focus on hard work and dedication, and it takes a long time to build success. Young professionals should focus on growing in the industry at a sustainable pace, not focusing on capturing homerun deals.”

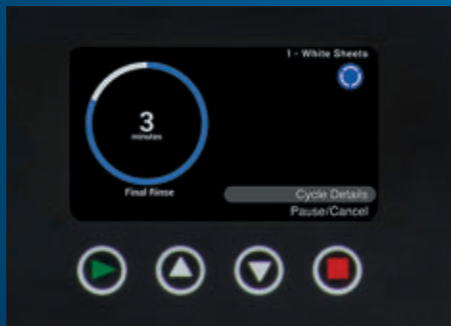


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SURPRISING STATISTICS

The high cost of youth sports, combined with the trend of young athletes focusing on one sport year round, is having a profound effect on participation rates. Consider these statistics:

- ❖ **FIFTY PERCENT** of injuries to young athletes are the result of overuse, with joint injuries to the knees, shoulders, and elbows among the most common problems, according to Mark Hyman, assistant teaching professor of management and tourism studies at George Washington University.
- ❖ **SEVENTY PERCENT** of kids stop playing organized sports by age 13, mostly because they can't afford to be on a traveling team, have sustained an injury, or are mentally burned out by highly competitive youth sports leagues, Hyman said. "That statistic is a real indictment of our system."
- ❖ In 2017, U.S. children ages 6 to 12 played an **AVERAGE OF 1.85 TEAM SPORTS**, down from 2.11 in 2011, according to the Aspen Institute's 2018 "State of Play" report.
- ❖ The less affluent a kid's family is, the less likely she will participate in team sports, according to the Aspen Institute. In 2017, only **34.1 PERCENT** of children ages 6 to 12 from families that make less than \$25,000 a year played a team sport, down from **41.9 PERCENT** in 2011. For families making \$25,000 to \$49,999, the participation rate dropped to 44.6 percent from 47.8 percent. For families making \$50,000 to \$74,999, the rate dropped to 56.6 percent from 59.6 percent. Conversely, for families making \$75,000 to \$99,999, the participation rate increased to **64 PERCENT** from 61.5 percent. And for families making more than \$100,000, the rate rose to **69 PERCENT** from 66.4 percent.



ON!

How youth sports teams are bringing opportunities to hotel owners

by NICK FORTUNA

TWENTY YEARS AGO, BEING A LITTLE LEAGUE ballplayer meant signing up for your town's rec league and hoping to make the local all-star team. But these days, parents of young, aspiring athletes aren't getting off nearly that easily. If your kid is serious about his sport, plan on spending thousands of dollars per season, using most of your vacation time to travel for tournaments, and logging hundreds of miles in your car.

Marty Maciaszek, director of the team dealer division of the National Sporting Goods Association, has been traveling to baseball tournaments with his 15-year-old son for years. He said being on any traveling team likely will cost at least \$2,000 a season due to registration fees, sporting goods, hotel stays, and meals on the road. For parents of athletes in premier leagues, the cost easily can surpass \$10,000 a year, with teams playing year round and traveling once a month or more, either by car or by plane.

According to a 2018 report by HBO's "Real Sports," total spending in the United States on youth sports is estimated at \$17 billion annually, and the high cost has led to an 8-percent decrease in youth sports participation over the past decade.

"It's just amazing how drastically youth sports have changed and how much of a business it has become," Maciaszek said. "You have communities building these huge facilities that can accommodate just about any travel sport that you can imagine."

DREAMING BIG

Tom Farrey, executive director of the Sports & Society Program at the Aspen Institute, said young kids increasingly are specializing in one sport and playing it year round in an effort to get some of the \$2.9 billion in athletic scholarships awarded annually by colleges and universities. Many parents have heard the statistic that only 2 percent of high-school athletes will get athletic scholarships, and that the cost of youth sports over time could rival that of college tuition. Still, their children have big dreams, so how do you put a price on that?

"The youth sports landscape has been transformed by the chase for the athletic scholarship," Farrey said. "The odds are incredibly long of playing at the Division I level, and there's really not as much scholarship money out there as parents think. But parents began to see the potential return on investment, and that is what has driven the formation of these



YOSHITAKA OKINO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Catering to the youth sports market

Marty Maciaszek of the National Sporting Goods Association says the following hotel facility features are especially attractive to traveling youth sports teams:

- ✓ Clean rooms in a safe environment
- ✓ Conveniently located near sports facilities and restaurants
- ✓ Affordability
- ✓ Two beds in a room so families can share one room, or suites
- ✓ Free breakfast buffet that begins early since games can start as early as 8 a.m., or grab-and-go meal options
- ✓ Kitchen in the room so families can avoid the expense of eating every meal at a restaurant

- ✓ A large, clean pool for kids to relax and play in after games
- ✓ Ample, clean laundry facilities to wash uniforms each day
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Ample, safe parking

Here are a few features that typically are unimportant to these customers:

- ✗ Luxury rooms
- ✗ High-end food-and-beverage offerings
- ✗ Amenities such as spas and gyms
- ✗ Stylish architecture and layout reflective of the hotel's locale

“Often, one or two parents volunteer to book accommodations for the whole team throughout the season, Maciaszek said.”

travel teams, pushing down, down, down to as young as second grade.”

CAPITALIZE ON SPORTS TOURISM

The booming youth sports industry has cities and towns across America looking to cash in on “sports tourism,” as families skip the traditional summer beach vacation in favor of “tournications,” trips to big youth sports tournaments. In some cases, these new sports facilities are creating demand for more budget and midlevel hotels.

One example is Grand Park in Westfield, IN, where cornfields have been transformed into a 400-acre youth sports complex featuring 34 soccer fields and 26 baseball diamonds. Mayor Andy Cook told “Real Sports” that in 2016, the facility hosted 1.2 million visitors who spent \$145 million in the community.

Similarly, in North Carolina, the new Rocky Mount Event Center covers 165,000 square feet and features eight basketball courts that can be converted into 16 volleyball courts.

Supersized youth sports complexes seemingly are popping up everywhere, as evidenced by the Youth Baseball Nationals, which in 2020 will host major tournaments in Myrtle Beach, SC; Sparks, NV; Elizabethtown, KY; Salisbury, MD; Sanford, FL.; and Gulfport, MS. The famous line from “Field of Dreams” seems to hold true: If you build it, they will come.

A typical tournament will last from Thursday through Sunday, though weeklong tournaments such as the Youth Baseball Nationals are common. Often, one or two parents volunteer to book accommodations for the whole team throughout the season, Maciaszek said.

Owners of existing hotels will want to link up with the administrators of these sports complexes and tournaments to get a piece of the sports-tourism pie. Most events have several preferred hotels with which they have negotiated for reduced rates. Event administrators also can help hotel owners and investors determine whether there will be enough demand for additional hotels near new sports complexes.

With so many youth sports facilities being built, all of those athletes and their families need a place to stay, presenting an opportunity for hotel owners.

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TRAINING AND TRANSFORMATION

How learning and professional development grow your employees and your business

by LOUCRETIA WYLIE

HOSPITALITY BOASTS A WIDE GAP BETWEEN lowest and highest average salary, so it's no surprise that the trends in hospitality education are also inconsistent. Many of those in various hotel management positions report a broad assortment of levels of formal and informal education. According to PayScale.com, U.S. hotel general managers' salaries range from \$39,000 to \$121,000. While there are multiple levels of management to consider, the salary range for others in adjacent and similar roles in other industries does not vary as much.

The hospitality industry has seen decreases in the number of students graduating but increases in the number of available jobs. Seasoned managers in hospitality look at experience and continuing education as vital.

EDUCATION COUNTS

One such manager for Holiday Inn, Janet Price, said, "My Bachelor of Science in business definitely helped me find my first few jobs in travel sales, but the hands-on experiences I got in entry-level sales jobs have been infinitely more valuable." Price has been a manager in several different hotel departments for about 10 years. Before that, she accumulated five years of sales experience. Price currently works for a large national hotel chain as a guest services manager, working with companies who hold rooms for business travel as a concierge. But her job is so much more than that as Price helps facilitate needs and requests on a large scale as well.

Price said she considered an MBA after her first few years in management but opted for corporate leadership training within her employer's framework. As far as Price's staff is



concerned, she said she often sends them to professional development and continuing education courses in topics such as customer service, communications, guest discretion, and facility safety.

THE NEED FOR EDUCATION RISES

In 2017, PEW Research findings revealed that only 28 percent of hotel employees had undertaken any continuing education in the 12 months prior to the survey. Hotel chains, individual resorts, and facilities are scrambling to keep up with training initiatives to match the demands of a rapidly growing workforce. U.S. Labor Board statistics show that by 2024, the hospitality industry will add another million jobs. In addition to this growth, other challenges are creeping into the immediate view. With the rise of social media and reliance on online

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communication platforms, our industry has seen a noticeable increase in sharing economy companies like VRBO, Airbnb, HomeAway, and FlipKey. Private accommodation markets have seen a 100-percent increase in the U.S. travel industry since 2016. Services like these rely primarily on customer service, with flexibility and affordability coming in a close second and third. An unsure economy, drastic changes in spending, and the next generation of adults reprioritizing how disposable income is spent is shaping how our industry is growing.

LEARNING ON THE JOB

In spite of the more than 85,000 undergraduate and graduate hotel and restaurant management degrees awarded in 2018, formal education (in the form of college, university, or institutes) is more often the exception and not the rule. Many hotel workers do not specifically study hospitality management, or they have little to no formal education. Most learn the job as they go. With the exception of roles that require specialized certificates or training (like accounting, culinary services, and safety or security officers, for example), it is suggested that a little less than 85 percent of hospitality employees receive all official job training once hired, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and a survey conducted by American Hotel Lodging Association.

HANDS-ON HOSPITALITY

This can be anecdotally evidenced by seasoned manager for Drury Hotels, Beth Wyatt. "All of the best lessons I've learned have been in hands-on situations," Wyatt said. "I have been able to move up in my hotel because I learned how to do my job and relate to my department better than those who have the degree but no real-world experience. Ultimately, I even make the same salary as my 'better-educated' peers."

Wyatt also takes every opportunity for free continuing education that Drury offers. She keeps an eye out for free sessions from civic organizations, such as a safety session Homeland Security is offering locally next month.

Mike Kurts, a retired bed and breakfast manager and previous Hilton employee, said, “Before I got my first job as a customer service manager at a chain, I graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts. I made almost nothing. I started taking some courses hotel upper management offered. I gained human resources credits, and basic accounting skills, and I learned how to improve my customer relations skills. I knew how to cook and handle day-to-day operations for hotels, B&Bs, and restaurants, but I needed to learn how to deal with people better.”

Kurts said he almost envies those going into the hotel business in today’s market. The technology alone would have made his first job, with a national chain in a moderately sized Midwest city, incredibly more efficient. “I would have loved

to be able to book and order and do all the things customers want online,” he said.

A GROWING INDUSTRY

In spite of the nation’s fluctuating economy, statistics show there is an almost 3-percent yearly increase in available positions in the hotel workforce, and the need for educational opportunities will grow in tandem. Both traditional and non-traditional educational opportunities in hospitality are growing as the industry grows, but workers and employers still seek new, innovative training programs and professional development.

Regardless of growth or fluctuations in the industry, training employees will always be the key to meeting higher customer service standards and growing the prestige that comes with a successful hotel business. ■



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COVER FEATURE

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY

AAHOA's past, present, and future unite to make an impact on tomorrow's hospitality leaders

by HEATHER CARNES

AAHOA NOT ONLY INVESTS IN ITS MEMBERS, IT ALSO invests in the future of the hospitality industry.

In our commitment to the next generation and America's future hoteliers, AAHOA has partnered with Kennesaw State University Michael A. Leven School of Management, Entrepreneurship, and Hospitality, and the University of Houston Conrad Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management to provide scholarships to exceptional students.

Thanks to many AAHOA leaders – both past and present – these scholarships are changing the lives of hospitality students and will have a lasting impact on the future of our industry.

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP

Michael A. Leven School of Management, Entrepreneurship, and Hospitality

What will be one of the signature scholarships given each year, the Michael Leven and Lee Dushoff AAHOA Scholarship for Compassionate Leadership was created in partnership with KSU. The scholarship was created to honor Mike Leven and

Lee Dushoff and the major contributions they made and the critical roles they played in the founding of

AAHOA more than 30 years ago. Launched at the 2019 AAHOA Convention & Trade Show, it will support students seeking an undergraduate degree in hospitality management.

“AAHOA is a symbol of building a bridge between newly arrived

immigrant hoteliers and the mainstream of the hotel industry, representing a unified force to remove the prejudice, bias, and stereotypes that existed three decades ago,” AAHOA Past Chairman Hasmukh (HP) Rama said. “Mike and Lee provided much-needed direction and leadership in building that bridge, helping break the stereotypes and bias. Having worked closely with both Mike and Lee, I feel strongly about ensuring their legacies endure.”

In addition to AAHOA's contribution, AAHOA Members can also contribute to this legacy. Tax-deductible contributions on behalf of AAHOA Members and Industry Partners will be instrumental in creating a sizeable endowment that will provide scholarships for students for many years to come.

“JP Rama and I made an initial donation of \$51,000, and other AAHOA leaders are generously contributing to this AAHOA Scholarship Fund,” Rama said. “I request all hoteliers to help the future leaders of our industry create opportunities for their own success; the students who earn these scholarships will help carry on the tradition of open, innovative, tolerant thought that both these great men brought to our industry.”

In just a few short months, the scholarship fund has nearly tripled in size, thanks to the generosity of industry supporters and AAHOA Members.

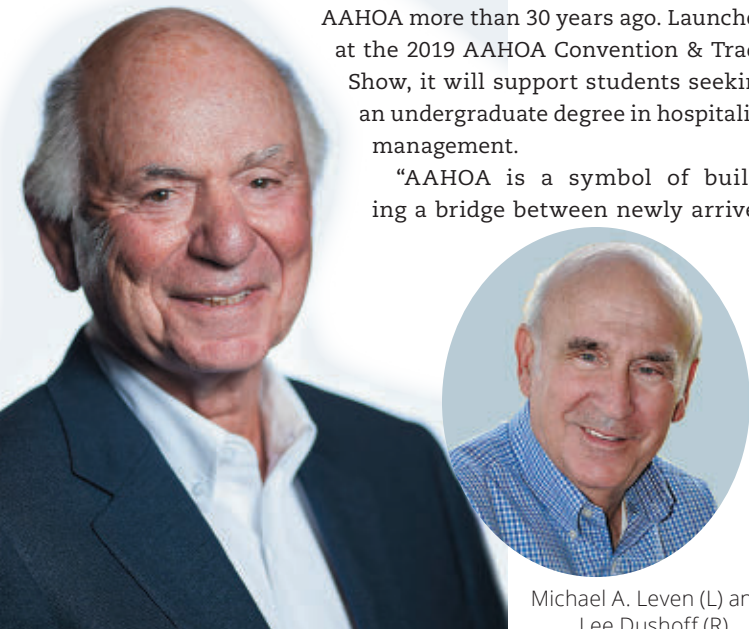
To learn more, visit community.kennesaw.edu/aahoa, or contact Seth Walker, director of Development for the Coles College of Business, at swalk165@kennesaw.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SCHOLARSHIP

Conrad Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management

AAHOA, in partnership with the University of Houston, created the AAHOA Student Assistantship and Scholarship Endowment to assist students pursuing a future in the hospitality industry. Each academic year, \$25,000 is awarded to eligible students, and to date, the endowment has awarded scholarships to 25 students.

Three recent scholarship recipients (Quincy Reynolds, Parmveer Lidhar, and Chelsea Lawson) attended the 2019 AAHOA Convention & Trade Show earlier this year, where they got to learn more about the industry and speak directly to attendees about their studies and promising futures.



Michael A. Leven (L) and Lee Dushoff (R)

“Hospitality is an industry of innovation and leadership, and everything that led to the formation of AAHOA told me that this organization was founded on the desire to share the ideals that were going to become the future,” Quincy Reynolds said. “I was absolutely humbled to be selected as a recipient of the AAHOA scholarship because it means that I have been inducted into a cohort that has never trembled in the face of adversity and always strives to drive forward this amazing industry that we all love.”

To learn more, contact Joel Jaffe at jajaffe@uh.edu.

REALIZING THEIR OWN DREAMS

AAHOA’s scholarship initiatives are creating opportunities for those seeking hospitality education, helping them realize their own American Dream. AAHOA looks forward to seeing what you accomplish and how you impact the industry for years to come. Congratulations to all scholarship recipients! ■

Thank you to KSU scholarship contributors*

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**As of July 31, 2019*

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Michael A. Leven School of Management, Entrepreneurship, and Hospitality

As Kennesaw State University prepares to launch its new hospitality degree, AAHOA has pledged its support by establishing an annual scholarship for exceptional student leaders within the program.

I had the pleasure of attending AAHOA’s annual conference, where we were able to announce the scholarship’s creation and the launch of our global fundraising campaign. The money we raise will join AAHOA’s contribution, as well as a generous donation from Elaine Dushoff, in endowing the new scholarship in perpetuity.

MORE THAN JUST A SCHOLARSHIP

The goal of the Scholarship for Compassionate Leadership is to help prepare the next generation of professionals to guide the industry. Students in KSU’s hospitality management degree program will be the managers and owners of tomorrow, and it is very important that these students have every opportunity to succeed.

That is why scholarship recipients will receive more than tuition assistance. AAHOA will also invite the students to visit the organization’s Atlanta headquarters, meet with the Board of Directors, and attend their annual convention and trade show. These experiences will provide recipients with valuable real-world insight into how the hotel business operates.

HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION

The availability of this scholarship could make all the difference for bright hospitality management majors who may be facing financial difficulties.

While potentially helping first-generation college students succeed is attractive to KSU and AAHOA, as we work together to develop the scholarship’s application requirements, the most important thing is ensuring the award goes to students who demonstrate true leadership potential and a capacity for compassion.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

As director of the Leven School, I am passionate about creating new student opportunities.

The hospitality industry is a massive player in the Southeast’s economy, and its influence is only going to grow. Initiatives like our new undergraduate degree in hospitality management, and the launch of this corresponding scholarship program, will ensure our university continues to provide the industry with a talented, highly energized workforce.

Leven and Dushoff changed the course of the hotel business. With the establishment of this scholarship, they will inspire future generations of hospitality professionals to do the same.

Robin Cheramie, PhD

Interim Dean and Professor, Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University

Turning a family business into a family empire

How trendsetting owners use finance to their advantage

by RUSHI SHAH

FLAMINGO IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

THE COMMERCIAL REAL estate industry has come a long way. It has evolved and matured over time, empowered by the ready access to information. Today, it is an impressive \$16-trillion marketplace with hospitality assets making up about \$2 trillion in valuation (source: NAREIT). This growth has prompted institutional capital to pour funds into the industry. This capital surge has enabled hotel and commercial real estate sponsors and owners to acquire larger assets in bigger markets using relatively fewer of their own investment dollars. Historically, these premium assets were out of reach for everyone except private equity firms and larger institutions. Now, with access to the new dry powder, entrepreneurial owner/operators are able to take advantage of these opportunities and capture significant upside while limiting their downside.

There are a number of ways to leverage this availability of sophisticated capital, each with its own risk and reward. Let's take a look at some of the most common structures, including limited partnership-general partnership, joint venture partnership, fund, private vs. public real estate investment trusts (REIT), preferred equity or mezzanine debt, and bifurcation of ground lease and leasehold.

LIMITED PARTNERSHIP-GENERAL PARTNERSHIP (LP-GP)

LP-GP structure is the most traditional way to use other people's money to fund a project or acquisition. Under this structure, the general partner (GP) can raise capital for a property purchase from anyone who is interested in taking advantage of the potential upside as a limited partner. As limited partners, these persons do not have decision-making power and

their liability does not extend beyond the amount of capital they invested. Unlike the GP, they do not sign on the loan as guarantors and do not need to provide any type of contingent liability to the lender or any other party. Likewise, they do not have any legal liability from the operations of the asset. In exchange for bearing the largest share of the risk, the GP typically receives an additional return on his or her invested capital in the form of a Promote. This type of fundraising structure is straightforward and can usually be put in place through a private placement memorandum or PPM.

JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP

A joint venture partnership structure is similar to a LP-GP, except the limited partner is typically one institutional investor instead of multiple individual investors. The institutional investor will also usually provide help with the financing guaranty, as well as carry

some legal and operational liability. Joint venture investors look for opportunities that will deliver a mid-level, double-digit internal rate of return or IRR. IRR is the measure of annualized returns achieved over a period of time. JV partners will also likely dip into the sponsor's share of return. To be joint-venture worthy, assets should be located in major markets with captive demand drivers and significant upside.

FUNDS

Many savvy entrepreneurs leverage their capital and track records to raise a fund to take advantage of bigger investment opportunities. A successful owner/operator will first need to establish an infrastructure for managing and investing as a fund, identify the target asset types and markets, and define a capital deployment strategy to purchase those assets. Then the fund will need to raise between \$50 million and \$250 million in capital. The fund manager generally charges a management fee of 2 percent on assets under management, and 20 percent of all profits above an 8-percent return are returned to the investor. This structure allows for a more permanent availability of capital and also affords the fund manager some discretion over how he or she deploys the capital. Because of the start-up costs to create the required infrastructure, a fund strategy can be more expensive to implement than other structures and carries some execution risk in case the fund manager is unsuccessful in raising necessary capital.

REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUSTS (REIT)

Public markets have always been a sought-after venue in which to raise permanent capital. One way sophisticated borrowers can take advantage of public markets is to create a REIT. Under a REIT structure in the U.S., 90 percent of the net income is required to be

distributed back to the investors in the form of dividends. There are two flavors of REIT: public and private. Both types raise money from investors, but a public REIT is listed on the market and a private REIT is not. A REIT is the most expensive way to raise capital because it typically involves a banker and legal costs are high. As a general rule of thumb, in order to make economic sense, a REIT must raise \$100 million or more. A typical REIT yields about 8 percent of the book value to its investors.

PREFERRED EQUITY OR MEZZANINE DEBT

Both preferred equity and mezzanine debt often are the go-to when owners are looking to acquire an asset using higher leverage than traditional financing. Owners may be able to capitalize up to 85 percent of the total capital required for the purchase. In exchange for allowing the higher leverage, the preferred equity or mezzanine debt investor will demand at least low, double-digit returns. Investors that deal in this layer of the capital stack typically prefer larger, well-branded assets in major metro areas. In most cases, mezzanine debt needs to be approved by the senior lender. As a result, Wall Street tends to prefer preferred equity over a mezzanine loan because the senior lender has less say over a preferred-equity investor than over a mezzanine-debt investor.

GROUND LEASE BIFURCATION

Ground lease bifurcation is one of the newest and best ways to own assets with less skin in the game. By closing two loans on the same asset, one on the land (the leased-fee entity) and one on the building and operations (the leasehold entity), a lender can isolate the higher risk of the operating business and more accurately calculate the land's valuation. This arbitrage allows an owner to achieve higher levels of leverage because Wall Street prefers to

offer the senior loan on the less-risky land since the loan sits at the top of the capital stack for repayment. This security results in more attractive terms and higher leverage for borrowers. There are also pockets of capital available for the lease-hold financing for better assets.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF STRUCTURED FINANCE TRENDS

Trendsetter owners who want to take advantage of these capital structures should always keep in mind that there is no free lunch within the market. There is always a tradeoff between risk and reward. If you are making a profit using investors' capital, inevitably you will have to share the upside. Limiting the amount of upside you share is possible, but in exchange the amount of leverage you achieve is also likely to be limited. Each structure has repercussions when it's time to recapitalize or refinance, so it is critical to examine all possible exit scenarios and determine how they align with your business goals. To find the optimal structure and avoid unnecessary hiccups, it's smart to work with an expert intermediary who has done it before. ■



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.



Labor Day: A time to highlight American workers

by ALFREDO ORTIZ

SEPTEMBER MARKS THE 125th Labor Day celebration in the U.S., a federal holiday intended to commemorate the American worker. The festivities also provide ample opportunity to highlight hardworking Americans who apply their professional expertise, skills, and time in the hotel industry.

Hotel businesses belong to the leisure and hospitality sector of the U.S. economy, which according to the latest data, employs more than 16 million people. These include Americans working at hotels and other businesses that often contribute to a traveler's experience, such as restaurants and other entertainment venues.

Thankfully, this dedicated group of employees, whose industry contributes billions of dollars annually to the economy, is thriving. In 2019, the unemployment rate for those in the leisure and hospitality industry dropped to a level not seen since the 20th century. Moreover, year-over-year wage growth for these positions has increased by

more than 3 percent every month since May 2018.

SECURING A STRONG ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

For those Americans looking to jump into the industry, there are more than a million unfilled positions currently available that will provide an opportunity to kick-start a successful career.

But what can AAHOA Members do to secure a strong economic outlook? Well, just as their colleagues of the past helped fight for employment rights and humane working conditions, new policies to bolster the economy can be advocated for in the present.

For example, hotel businesses and their employees could unite against efforts to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Many people employed in the industry already make well-above that level, but that's because they merit the pay with skill and experience. Forcing businesses to pay entry-level employees high wages not only will discourage hiring young, less-experienced people to begin with,

it will negatively impact the bottom line of businesses and, therefore, their employees.

In fact, the macro ramifications are noted in a recent report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. The investigation concluded that raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour at the federal level would cost the country 1.3 million jobs (up to 3.7 million) and reduce net family income by \$9 billion a year.

REDUCING BUDGETARY STRAIN

Other opportunities for hotel industry workers to improve their own economic future is to engage in other areas of public debate – including tax and health care policy.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act – legislation enacted last year that has acted as rocket fuel for the economy – is scheduled to expire in 2025. Extending the newly lowered tax rates and other measures that have encouraged business expansion will go a long way to secure a bright economic future. Furthermore, helping to expand the use of new avenues to acquire more affordable health care – including association health plans* (AHPs) and health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs) – will reduce budgetary strain on business owners and employees alike.

This month, people from across the country celebrated previous advancements spurred by American workers. But just because we've already come a long way doesn't mean there aren't more threats to tackle and progress to be made. ■

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

*AAHOA has partnered with UnitedHealthcare to provide members with special insurance pricing and offers for your business and employees. Check out aahoa.com/membership/member-benefits to learn more about how you can offer this AHP in your business today!



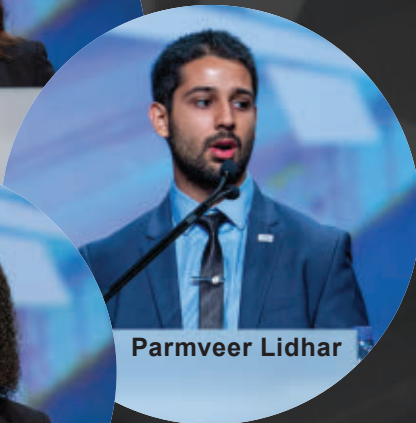
ASSISTANTSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

In order to encourage and support the future leaders of the hospitality industry, AAHOA has partnered with the University of Houston Conrad Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management to provide a scholarship and assistantship endowment for deserving undergraduate students interested in pursuing a career in hospitality.

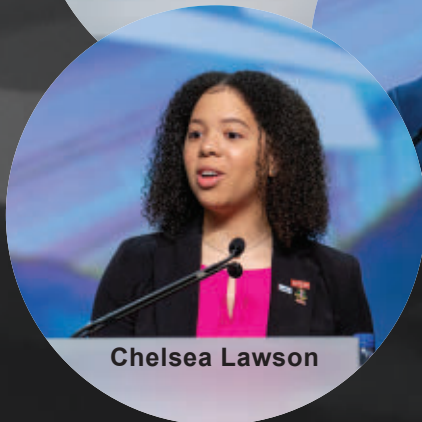
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Investing in the guest experience

by SARAH DINGER, MY PLACE HOTELS SVP OF BRAND MANAGEMENT

ANON_TAE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

WRITING about trendsetting and writing about being trendy are very different things. Nonetheless, I'm pleased to hear others are picking up on our commitment to the guest room, and the outstanding discussions and reception that have occurred as a result.

But before our commitment to the guest room was referred to as trendsetting, it was called contrarian, and before that, maybe just common-sense hospitality. It wasn't a position we procured to differentiate ourselves while our competitors made significant investments in the public spaces, but it did make us standouts in the eyes of those who matter to us most.

ADD SOME OOMPH

While it may seem contrarian or even anti-trend to some, our approach and our subsequent cost have hardly changed since we launched the franchise system in 2014. In fact, the typical cost of our brand FF&E package did not increase with the release of our generation II lobby in 2017, while it increased value for guests and properties across the board. Our latest release of the generation II guest room follows in similar fashion, but it was developed with a bit more ease and a lot more oomph.

By listening to our guests, operators, and franchisees, we found our most valuable touchpoints were indeed in the guest rooms. While there are considerably many more touchpoints in the

guest room than the lobby, the guest room refresh came along much easier for two reasons.

1. We do not increase cost where we do not see value. As franchisees and operators themselves, our founders have held steadfast to this principle since Day 1. As employee No. 1, I can speak to the extent in which we've committed to that principle.

When it comes to common space investments, we believe there is value but only to a point. So we made simple changes to improve both operational and consumer experiences, while using the opportunity to modernize the finishes and open up the floor plan. Feedback hasn't differed between the generation II lobby and its predecessor, and we don't expect it to. Not seeing much value increase aside from lifting the initial impression of the hotel, we overcame the challenge to produce simple but significant modifications without increasing cost. When it came to the guest room refresh, the changes remained simple and significant, but the opportunity to increase value was abundant.

2. We don't fix what's not broken. Materially, the guest room is what our guests loved most about their My Place experience. Since the beginning, our recliners, beds, and bedding have not only been complimented, but purchased by guests, franchisees, and staff alike. And I can't name all the other ways guests have identified the smaller details we've placed as refreshing additions to their guest room experience. It wasn't only satisfying to improve what our guests already enjoy, but it was

genuinely exciting to create so much value with simple adjustments.

DON'T MISS AN OPPORTUNITY

Regardless of the differences in cost and process, the two developments together address a shift in consumer behavior and an opportunity to maximize revenue. By offering daily, weekly, and monthly rates from the start, we developed a diverse and loyal customer base that consists mostly of transient guests staying 2–3 days. With a healthy fraction of long-term guests staying an average of 12 days on the weekly rate, and 74 days on the monthly, our hotels have an exceptional opportunity to maximize revenue on the nightly rates.

As the extended-stay segment continues to experience unprecedented growth, it's no secret that the affinity for extended-stay accommodations, particularly within the business and leisure segments, has grown. In recognizing that we had the built-in efficiency to cater to guests in all tiers while maximizing dollars on the last rooms, our refreshes were designed to deepen our appeal to a broadening base of both weekday and weekend travelers.

While our industry will see many more advancements in terms of technology and innovative solutions, which really excites me, I believe we should always advance sensibly and be careful to not manufacture trends. At the end of the day, if we all hope our hotels will be like homes to the weary traveler, then our progress should make them feel more like one. ■



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Serving guests with disabilities and their service animals: Test your knowledge

by DAY AL-MOHAMED & BRUNA E. PEDRINI

- 1. A woman enters the hotel carrying a small dog she says is a service dog. There are no visible signs the woman has a disability. The hotel has a no-pets policy.**

 - Ask for documentation to prove it is a service animal.
 - Refuse her stay. Service dogs work for blind people or people in wheelchairs.
 - Ask about her disability.
 - Ask "Is that a service dog?" and "What task does the dog do for you?"
- 2. Which are requirements for a service animal?**

 - Trained, well-behaved, and non-disruptive.
 - Under the handler's control at all times.
 - Identified by a harness or documentation.
 - A, B, and C
 - A and B only
- 3. Can pet-friendly hotels require all animals to stay on specific floors?**

 - Yes. We're meeting the needs of all our customers and some have allergies.
 - No. The hotel may designate pet floors, but a service dog is not a pet.
- 4. Housekeeping knocks and no one answers. Housekeeping enters and sees a dog alone in a non-pet room. Is this ok?**

 - No. Service animals must be with their handlers at all times.
 - Only if the handler let the front desk know they'd be leaving their service animal in the room.
 - Yes. But the handler should have put up the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.
 - It depends on what the service animal is used for.
- 5. A staff member reports that a guest in a wheelchair is in the lobby. Their service dog keeps growling at other guests.**

 - There is nothing you can do because it is a service dog.
 - There is nothing you can do unless the dog bites someone.
 - Ask the guest with the disability to leave.
 - Ask the guest with the disability to either control their dog or remove the dog from the premises. ■



Answers: 1D; 2E; 3B; 4A; 5D

5 right answers: Well done! Be sure you share your knowledge.

3-4 right answers: You've got the basics, but make sure you consider all the nuances. Find information to help you meet the needs of disabled guests with service animals in the August issue of *Today's Hotelier*.

1-2 right answers: This is not easy, but you're working things out. Learn more in our ADA webinar series on AAHOA.com. These 20-minute resources can help get you and your staff up to speed.



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PHOENIX

by ASIF LAKHANI



JEREMY JANUS PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

WHEN THINKING about major cities in the U.S., Phoenix isn't likely one that comes to mind. As of the 2017 Census, however, Arizona's capital city is actually the fifth largest by population in the entire country. Phoenix's land area is also among the top five of U.S. cities, and it has hosted its fair share of major events to solidify its reputation.

Phoenix has hosted multiple college football playoff games and Super Bowls, with both events scheduled to return to the city in late 2019 and early 2023, respectively. Phoenix also will host the NCAA Men's Final Four in 2024. On a smaller scale, the Greater Phoenix region hosts MLB's Cactus League (spring training) annually for more than a dozen teams. Cactus League games drew a record-high 1.9 million visitors in 2017. The 2018 season had an economic impact of \$644 million, according to a study by Arizona State University.

TOURISM SURGE BOOSTS MARKET, DEVELOPMENT

While Phoenix has always been considered a resort destination, the city is currently in the midst of a renaissance as an urban destination as well, Eric Kerr, the director of Research and Business

Analysis for Visit Phoenix says. The Greater Phoenix area hosted 44 million visitors in 2017 who accounted for more than \$7 billion (estimated) in direct spending, according to a report from Visit Phoenix. Travel and tourism expenditures supported more than 128,000 jobs in Phoenix in 2017, the report says. The city experienced an increase in occupancy rates and room nights sold in 2018 and, as of May 2019, is on pace to beat those numbers.

The Phoenix market is responding positively to the high demand. Nearly 50 properties have undergone or are currently experiencing more than \$650 million in renovations since 2015. In total, Phoenix has approximately 160 hotels and resorts with more than 27,000 rooms, and there are more on the way. Two major hotel openings for this year include a 350-room Great Wolf Lodge in September and a 264-room Marriott in late 2019, which will be the brand's largest full-service hotel in Arizona.

HOME SHARING VS. HOSPITALITY

An interesting thing to note about Phoenix is its stance on home-sharing platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO. Arizona has taken a more welcoming approach to such platforms.

In 2016, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey signed a bill that prohibited local governments

from keeping home-sharing platforms out of their communities. Then, in May 2019, Gov. Ducey signed HB 2672, which added regulations to the local home-sharing economy. Notable changes include the need for a main contact to be listed should an excessive noise (or other) complaint be filed. The bill also requires renters to obtain a tax license before listing their properties, and it prohibits rental properties from being used for events that would require a permit or license. Lastly, the bill also prevents rented properties from being used as retail spaces, restaurants, or banquet halls.

PHOENIX RISING

Ultimately, it's only a matter of time before Phoenix is regularly included in the conversation of premier destinations in the United States. Its grid-layout gives it a true city feel. Coupled with a large population and traditional downtown, it breeds an urban oasis atmosphere.

What's arguably even more impressive about Phoenix is the number of natural parks within close proximity. Camelback Mountain and Saguaro Lake are two gems adored by visitors and travelers alike, and Grand Canyon National Park is just under four hours away.

If the future is as bright as the sun shines in Phoenix, then now is a good time to begin planning a business venture in the Valley of the Sun. ■

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Sustaining guests in a sustainable age

by GIUSEPPE PINNA

PHOTO: JUNCTION/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

CUSTOMERS FAVOR COMPANIES that show concern for the environment.

A 2015 report on global corporate sustainability found that 66 percent of consumers were willing to spend more on a product if it came from a sustainable brand. Among millennials, this measure rose to 73 percent.

A growing number of hotel guests take this movement even further, choosing to identify as “sustainable travelers.” These customers are willing to take fewer vacations to minimize their environmental impact. For the sustainable traveler, a hotel is more than a place to sleep; it’s a reflection of the story they wish to tell about themselves.

While this type of guest may vacation less frequently, they are more inclined to book a longer stay in a single location. Further, they’re willing to spend more to be a part of a responsible brand they trust and respect.

SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Many hotels have cropped up in the wake of this growing trend, actively marketing themselves as “eco-lodges” or “sustainable luxury resorts.” But hotels do not have to completely rebrand to

capture this new wave of conscious consumer. Savvy owners can strategically invest in healthier and more eco-friendly amenities that reinforce this message.

I was raised on a small island off the coast of Italy, far from the bustling cities and industrial pollutants of the mainland. There, I developed a deep respect for the care and protection of natural resources. While my current position as an executive makes travel a necessary part of my job, I bring that same awareness and appreciation for conservation whenever I travel. Small details – like the products and services offered by a particular hotel brand – can add up to tell a story about sustainability.

Most hotels already post signs reminding guests about their environmental impact. Yet a commitment to the health of the customer and the climate isn’t a story that can be told through a single sign reminding guests about laundering policies.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN COMFORT AND CAUSE

To market to the new wave of conscious consumers, hotels must strategically reiterate that message in products and services. The cost of amenities may quickly add up, many go unused, and it’s unclear whether many provide a return

on investment. Which details actually lead to return customers?

A study by Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration found that while free internet was the biggest draw for first-time visitors, complimentary bottled water offered the highest ROI among returning guests. Why? The study’s leading researcher theorized it was the taste. Guests associated the pleasurable flavor with the particular hotel brand. This “pleasure effect” increased the likelihood the guest would book a return stay.

How will this research extend to the growing market of guests who define themselves as sustainable travelers? What’s an eco-conscious customer to say of those single-use plastic water bottles stocked next to the sign about a brand’s commitment to the planet?

While pampering guests with amenities and protecting the planet may seem like a paradox, most customers aren’t totally willing to sacrifice comforts for the cause. Choosing the right amenities can help reinforce existing sustainability goals while still giving guests the gestures they’ve come to expect.

LET YOUR PRODUCTS SPEAK FOR YOU

Stock rooms with responsibly sourced and packaged amenities from brands

that actively demonstrate a commitment to sustainability.

Be sure to select products that reinforce the sustainability message you are trying to convey. Many of these options not only speak to the sustainable guest, but they cut costs in the long run. If your brand doesn't already, consider offering:

- paperless billing services
- vegetarian and local dishes at onsite restaurants
- replacing small toiletries with larger refillable pumps

Hotel brands also should consider seeking out a co-branding relationship with a sustainable company. Labeling your name directly alongside a business known for healthy or eco-friendly practices creates a symbiotic effect for both brands.

DIG INTO THE DETAILS

Be as critical as your guests when reading the label: Look to a company's sustainability goals and practices to make sure they are in line with your hotel's mission statement. Is the amenity packaged in wasteful non-recyclable plastic or does it use compostable materials? Are they committed to fair trade or have they recently been on the hot seat for questionable labor practices? Customers take notice of small details, which can tell a story, not just about the brand that produced the product but also your hotel's choice to partner with it.

Don't forget the real power of an amenity: customer enjoyment. Remember that studies have proven customer loyalty is tied to the power of the "pleasure effect." In order to maximize your investment and secure repeat visits, the product needs to be enjoyable as well as eco-friendly. For example, does the paraben-free lotion smell great, too?

Investing in healthier and more sustainable amenities can help a hotel reinforce the brand's commitment to global and guest health. By winning over the sustainable traveler, you gain a customer who is more willing to spend more, book a longer stay, and return to a place that prioritizes sustainability. ■



Giuseppe Pinna is vice president with Acqua Smeraldina, a family-owned artesian mineral water company that bottles from a single source on the island of Sardinia, Italy. Born in Sardinia, Giuseppe resides in the U.S., bringing more than 15 years in the food and beverage industry working with hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores. Acqua Smeraldina was recently named the "Best Tasting Water in the World" at the Berkeley Springs International Water Competition.

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Women in hospitality leadership

by NIMISHA PATEL, VUE HOTELS, MANAGING PARTNER, and
AAHOA FEMALE DIRECTOR WESTERN DIVISION



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IS LEADERSHIP AN INHERENT quality? I don't think so.

Whether you are a natural leader or thrown into the role, as hoteliers, we have been given a unique opportunity to lead others. From your independent property owners to your multi-million-dollar portfolio owners, we all step into a role of leadership when we enter our properties each day to serve our consumers and employees.

As a second-generation hotelier – especially as a female – I have been given the rare privilege to experience and witness first-hand the many obstacles, barriers, and successes that come with working in a male-dominated industry like hospitality. I look at my experiences and challenges as lessons learned each and every day.

As a woman in her early 20s, I felt my culture and society had already defined my role for me, one that did not involve working in my father's industry, let alone running businesses of my own. I know there are likely many females in the industry who have faced the same setbacks but have learned to overcome them just the same. Consequently, women in our industry are more likely to face greater difficulty demanding well-earned respect, credit, and authority in the positions that they take on.

Even in 2019 – the age of feminism, the #MeToo movement, and women's

rights altogether – the hospitality industry still falls behind others in creating an inclusive workplace for women to grow and prosper. Though the industry may be moving at a slower pace, we have made incredible strides in recent years to promote women. However, there is still much work to be done.

The hospitality industry has been a male-dominated sphere for decades. Change is inevitable and often necessary in order to maintain a global market and presence. Today, there are 30 percent more females participating in our industry than ever before, according to AHLEF. This phenomenal progress is credited to the women who have refused to accept these stereotypical roles from the past. However, we women are still the minority. Thus, we must keep pushing forward.

Women's progress in the industry must be a team effort. It cannot be achieved by women alone. The real question we should be asking is, "How do we help each other to better represent our industry and succeed as a whole?" When asking women in different roles what qualities helped them reach their goals, many responses were of a similar nature: Taking care of their guests, an entrepreneurial approach to running a hotel, and a penchant for hard work. Having diversity in our industry will only make us stronger and able to sustain success for many years to come.

Today, many organizations have implemented advocacy programs promoting more female leadership in our industry. AAHOA has allocated many of its resources and efforts into hosting numerous women's events to engage and promote involvement and increase exposure across the nation. AHLA hosts a women's leadership conference annually, FORWARD, to recognize women in the hospitality industry, while also championing the next generation of leaders. Several hotel brands are also beginning to promote and host events to better engage the minds of our women leaders.

All in all, these efforts are helping us move the needle in the right direction. They provide women with more exposure and greater mentorship opportunities, and they help unite us to support one another.

After all, when everyone is on the same side, we all win! ■



Nimisha Patel is the managing partner of VUE Hotels which owns, develops, and manages a portfolio of various brands. She currently

holds a position with AAHOA as the Western Division Female Director. Nimisha resides in San Antonio and is married to Ajay Patel. They have three children, Krish, Sai, and Mira.



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AAHOA around the nation



1

1. Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala and Secretary Nishant (Neal) Patel participated in the Hotel Business Roundtable hosted and sponsored by *The Wall Street Journal*, where they shared their insights on hospitality leadership diversity and inclusion, labor issues, company culture, and a host of other topics.



2

2. Gulf Regional Director Nick Zaver hosted the Lake Charles Regional Conference & Trade Show, including the first of this year's AAHOA Young Professional Focus Group gatherings.



3

3. Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala addressed attendees at the Gulf - Lake Charles Regional Conference & Trade Show, hosted by Gulf Regional Director Nick Zaver.



4

4. At the ISHA Summer Meeting in Richmond, VA, Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala spoke about AAHOA's leading role in promoting professional development and education in the hospitality industry.



5



6

5, 6. Regional Director Sandip Patel hosted the Washington, D.C. Area - Baltimore Regional Conference & Trade Show, where Amy Rohrer, president & CEO of the Maryland Hotel Lodging Association, spoke to members about local hospitality industry issues.



7. Gulf Regional Director Nick Zaver held his final Regional Conference & Trade Show of 2019 in Jackson, MS. Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann spoke to members during the business meeting.



8. Members line up for a photo at the Gulf – Jackson Regional Conference & Trade Show, the final Regional Conference of the year for the Gulf Region.



9. Southeast Texas Regional Director Sawan H. Patel was presented a key to the city by Mayor Andy Brauninger during Sawan's Town Hall in Huntsville, TX.



10. Attendees learned about local issues at the Southeast Texas Town Hall in Huntsville, hosted by Southeast Texas Regional Director Sawan H. Patel.



11. The AAHOA Women & Young Professional Hoteliers Development Day at Hyatt drew hoteliers from across the country to Chicago to learn about the brand and its future plans.



12. Young Professional Director Eastern Division Purvi Panwala (from left), Female Director Western Division Nimisha Patel, Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel, and Young Professional Director Western Division Miraj S. Patel shared their insights at the AAHOA Women & Young Professional Hoteliers Development Day at Hyatt.

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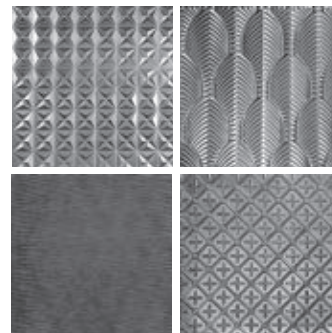
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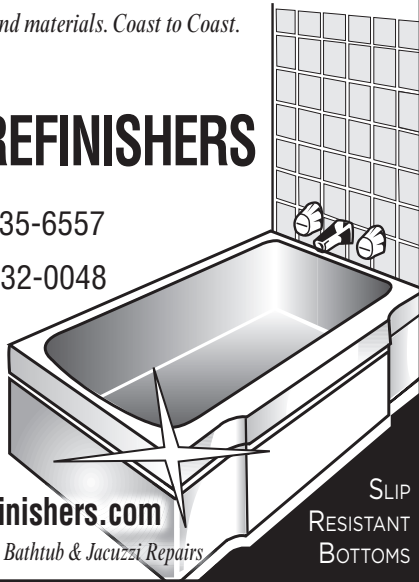
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| www.accesspointfinancial.com | |
| Allbridge..... | 15 |
| allbridge.com | |
| Alliance Laundry Systems-UniMac | 26 |
| unimac.com | |
| Alvi Satellites..... | 11 |
| hospitality.directvdealer.com/AlviSat | |
| Artistic Bath Refinishing..... | 39 |
| artisticbathrefinishings.com | |
| Barot Capital, LLC | 58 |
| barotcapital.com | |
| BMC Cabinetry Inc..... | 58 |
| www.bmccabinetry.com | |
| Chase Merchant Services..... | 3 |
| pages.paymentsolutions.chase.com | |
| Decorative Ceiling Tiles, Inc..... | 56 |
| DecorativeCeilingTiles.net | |
| Delta Faucet Company..... | 4 |
| deltafaucet.com | |
| Dexter Laundry Inc | 19 |
| dexter.com | |
| DISH - EVOLVE | 28-29 |
| dish.com/evolve | |
| Embassy Carpets | 9 |
| embassycarpets.com | |
| First Choice Luxury Vinyl Plank | 56 |
| www.firstchoicelvp.com | |
| Focus Products Group - Hospitality | 37 |
| fpghospitality.com | |
| Giambrone & Saltzman, LLC | 39 |
| www.giambronesaltzman.com | |
| Global Safe Corporation | 57 |
| www.hotelsafes.com | |
| Granite Marble & Etc Inc | 57 |
| granitemarbleetc.com | |
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| Hospitality Designs | 37 |
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| Hotel Vanities International | 39 |
| hotelvanities.com | |
| IHG - InterContinental Hotels Group..... | 23 |
| development.ihg.com | |
| Kinsley Carpet Mills..... | 55 |
| www.kinsleycarpets.com | |
| Matrix Telecom | 57 |
| www.matrixhotelpbx.com | |
| Motel 6 | Inside Front Cover Gatefold |
| www.g6hospitality.com | |
| Natural Stone Gallery..... | 57 |
| nsghospitality.net | |
| Patel & Associates | 39 |
| www.patellaw.net | |
| Ponce D. Moody Funding, LLC..... | 56 |
| www.pdmfunding.net | |
| Radisson Hotels..... | 7 |
| radissonhotelgroup.com | |
| Red Hawk | 43 |
| redhawkus.com | |
| Red Roof Inn | 13 |
| redrooffranchising.com | |
| Tyson Foods, Inc. | 27 |
| tysonhospitality.com | |
| Unique Refinishers | 58 |
| www.uniquerefinishers.com | |
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