

today's hotelier

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF 

Today's Hotelier Roundtable Hoteliers address the labor shortage in hospitality

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COMPETING
AUDIENCES

Catering to Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers



MARK HOPLAMAZIAN,
President & CEO Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Trends in the
TOP 5 AREAS
of hospitality

Mark Hoplamazian
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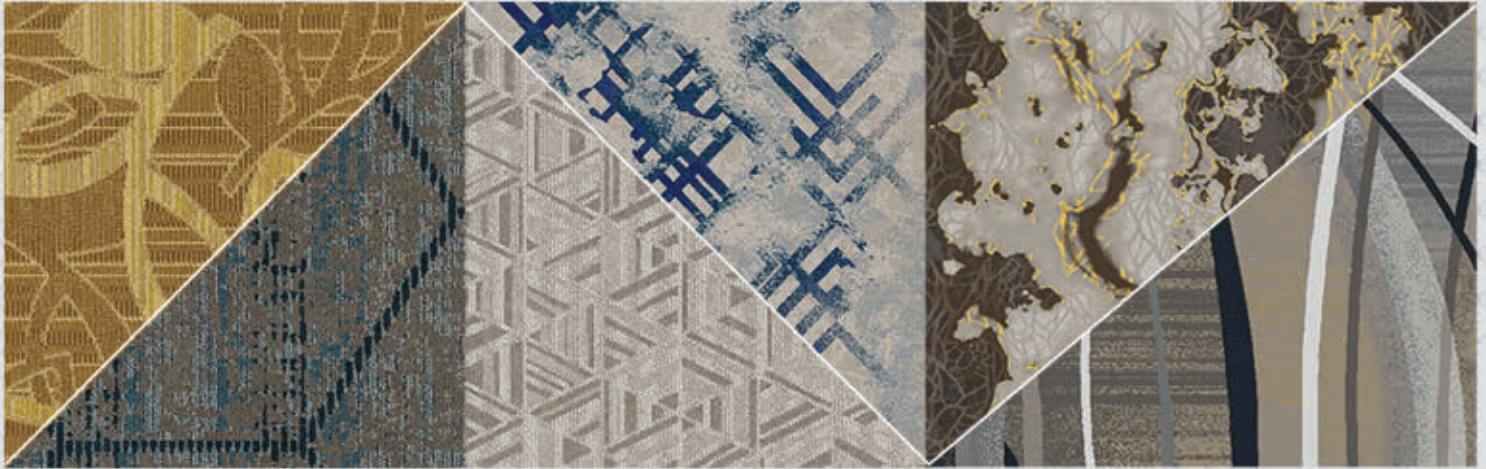
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1100 Abernathy Road,
Suite 725, Atlanta, GA 30328
P: (404) 816-5759
info@aahoa.com
www.aahoa.com

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

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NAYLOR
ASSOCIATION SOLUTIONS
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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

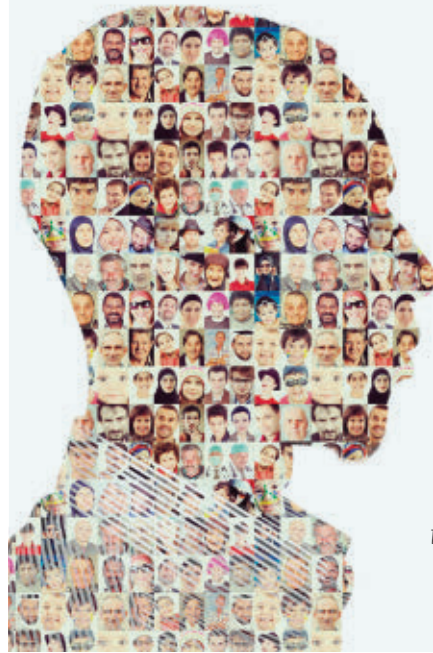
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Cover image: Mark Hoplamazian

Editorial inquiries: todayshotelier@naylor.com
Advertising inquiries: John O'Neil, joneil@naylor.com



What hotels can do to compete with Airbnb

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

HOME-SHARING PLATFORMS have drastically altered the hotel industry. Hotels now compete with local hosts, who post rooms or entire homes on platforms like Airbnb and HomeAway, rather than just their hotel counterparts across the street. This change is not necessarily harmful for hotels but it does mean that hotel owners need to update their operations to keep their business fresh, innovative, and competitive in a growing market.

It is no secret that traditional hotels offer travelers the best guest experience possible. When it comes to the quality of rooms, customer service, and access to amenities like pools, gyms, and restaurants, home-sharing hosts do not compare. But there is something else that is drawing consumers, specifically young consumers, into the home-sharing world when they travel. The 2018 State of American Travel report by Morning Consult finds that younger Americans are much more likely to use Airbnb than older Americans. One component of this is the role that technology plays in planning a stay. As home-sharing platforms are completely digital, guests can use the platforms to not only book a place to stay, but help travelers find out where they want to go.

To actively and successfully compete, hotel owners must embrace the use of technology. There are several ways to do this. One is to highlight the local area on the hotel website; this will not only advertise the hotel itself but it will make the community stand out from other places travelers are considering. Many hotels are even creating phone apps that allow consumers to see booking costs, make reservations, check in, and leave reviews about their stay directly from their smart phones.

The ease of this dynamically engages travelers and could increase the chances of the consumer staying a second time. The information collected from guest reviews is a great way to gauge what they liked, or did not like, about their stay and can be used to make future improvements.

Besides utilizing digital avenues to enhance competition, owners can also focus on rethinking certain design aspects of their hotels. Much of the appeal in booking a stay with an Airbnb host is the incorporation of the local environment. To some travelers, hotels do not always reflect the region or community enough, and opt to stay with a host in order to gain the experience of a local. Boutique hotels often achieve this unique atmosphere for guests by creating spaces that are not labeled as generic, but rather resemble the local culture. Franchise hotels can do this too, even in subtle ways. Everything from incorporating artwork in the lobby and guestrooms that depicts the region to advertising local events will make a guest's experience feel more authentic and immersive.

With the rise of Airbnb and HomeAway, hoteliers need to take a look at their strategies for success and consider if changes need to be made to maintain a prominent role in the market. By increasing digital awareness and promoting hotels as facets of the community, hotel owners can make their hotels the go-to accommodation for tourists. A proactive approach is the only way for hotels to stay ahead of the game, regardless of who they are competing against.

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Importance of being politically active

CHIP ROGERS
AAHOA President & CEO

IN 2017, THE HOTEL INDUSTRY scored a huge win when Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. AAHOA members were instrumental in conveying to our lawmakers the importance of reducing the tax burden on small business owners and how this legislation would boost the success of American communities. Now, hoteliers are putting their tax savings to use by reinvesting into their businesses by hiring new employees, raising wages, and making capital improvements.

AAHOA continues to work hard to raise awareness on our issues within state houses and in Washington, D.C., but the approaching midterm elections are where we need to take our activism next. So many of our most pressing issues still need Congress' attention. Whether it is promoting a statutory fix of the disputed joint-employer definition, promoting common sense ADA reform, or making the new tax reform provisions permanent, there is a lot to be done, and your voice impacts who is making the decisions on these issues.

But for this to be possible, the candidates who are committed to promoting the interests of hoteliers need to make it into office. First and foremost, do research into the candidates who are running in your state's elections. This could consist of anything from checking out their past voting records to finding out what groups or businesses, if any, are endorsing them. It is essential to have a clear understanding of what kind of issues each candidate finds most important and what initiatives they plan to support if they win that seat in November.

Too often, many Americans assume that either their candidate is safe or that their one vote will not make a difference

“AAHOA continues to work hard to raise awareness on our issues within the state houses and in Washington, D.C.”

in the outcome of a race. Neither are true. In today's tense political climate, races are getting more competitive and could swing either way, even in areas that are considered “safe” for a specific party. After the tax reform victory, we need to maintain the positive and business-friendly momentum that is currently on Capitol Hill. In this past year alone, we witnessed how pro-growth policy-making spurs the economic strength of our nation and keeps our small businesses thriving.

Keep in mind that the outcome of the midterm elections could drastically change the landscape of Congress and shift its priorities. The policies that made our economy so strong could be upended by politicians who do not prioritize entrepreneurship and free enterprise. Make every effort to go into that voting booth with an educated and informed decision about who you want to represent you and America's small business owners. Your vote is how you make sure that the candidates who will protect and promote your interests are given a fighting chance to secure the most influential positions in America.

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH

1

AAHOA will host a one-day workshop on Oct. 22 titled, *Secure your Legacy: Estate Planning, Business Succession & Tax Strategies*. Learn about the importance of having a plan in place, getting started and helpful tax strategies to secure your family and business.

2

Join AAHOA in Birmingham, Alabama with Regional Director Nitin (Nick) Patel and the Alabama Panhandle Region Ambassadors for the Regional Conference and Trade Show on Nov. 14 from 1:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. The registration deadline is Nov. 13, visit www.aahoa.com to register.

3

Don't miss HX: The Hotel Experience Conference being held this year in New York City from Nov. 11-12. Experience the opportunity to see products and services, attend educational sessions, and network with industry professionals. Don't forget to use promo code “AAHOA18” for complimentary registration.

4

Hear from La Quinta executives on the history of the brand, development, architecture, design and construction, brand management, the future of the company and more! The La Quinta brand development day is being held at the La Quinta corporate office in Dallas, Texas on Oct. 5.

5

The Independent Hoteliers Conference and Women Hoteliers Conference will be held Oct. 26-27 at the Charlotte Convention Center. The conference schedules include a networking reception, government affairs update, human trafficking awareness training, technology demos, and more.



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Back of the house tours

by PETER CLERKIN



Re. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)

ONE OF THE PITFALLS OF working in an industry for a long time, whether it is hospitality, technology, finance, or even politics, is that one can easily forget that outsiders do not necessarily see or even understand the inner workings of or the day-to-day fundamentals that drive a business. Think of the hotel industry as a watch. Just as the watchmaker knows about all the levers, the gears, the springs, the plates, and the wheels, all the things that make the watch work, the hotelier knows how different staff and services come together to create a great customer experience. But like many people who look at a watch just see the dial, the hands, the case, and the crown, many guests or people outside the industry don't see past the guest experience or the hotel itself to understand what makes it so great. What is clear to a hotelier or employee may not even register with a guest. AAHOA is working hard to bridge this gap for our lawmakers and to help them understand our industry and what makes for a great guest experience.

AAHOA first began organizing back of the house tours for Members of Congress in 2015. The principle is simple: take a lawmaker and show them how a hotel really works. From staffing the front desk to turning over rooms, the range of jobs at a hotel can demonstrate to an industry outsider everything that goes into delivering a great guest experience. One of the points that AAHOA's advocacy team drives home time and again is that hoteliers are uniquely positioned to inform their legislators about the needs of the industry. Hoteliers can best illustrate firsthand how laws and



Re. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)



Tom Cole (R-OK)

regulations affect their workers and their bottom line, for how can someone who knows nothing about something create laws that affect it? (The answer, quite regrettably, is very easily, which is why advocacy and building relationships with lawmakers are so important.)

While back of the house tours provide an excellent opportunity for AAHOA members to showcase their industry to elected officials, incorporating a roundtable with fellow hoteliers and the civic leaders following such a tour is a great way to hold a meaningful discussion about issues affecting the industry. In Cincinnati earlier this year, AAHOA government affairs staff helped organize a tour and roundtable with Cincinnati hoteliers and Congressman Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) at a Holiday Inn Express & Suites. Additional tours and roundtables took place with Oklahoma Representatives

“Hoteliers can best illustrate firsthand how laws and regulations affect their workers and their bottom line, for how can someone who knows nothing about something create laws that affect it?”

Tom Cole (OK-4), Frank Lucas (OK-3), and Steve Russell (OK-5), and Florida Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL-12).

Back of the house tours are not the only way to communicate to elected officials how hotels operate and what public policies may benefit the industry and its workers. Developing and maintaining a relationship with elected officials, whether they’re members of the local council, state assembly, or even Congress, is key to helping lawmakers

understand how their laws affect the hotel industry. Whether one writes, calls, or visits their elected officials, building the relationship and sharing one’s views on issues such as occupancy taxes, the impact of short-term rentals, and the hotel industry’s proactive efforts to prevent human trafficking is key to ensuring that lawmakers are armed with the right knowledge before they vote on legislation that will impact small businesses. ■

→ MARK HOPLAMAZIAN

CONSUMER TRENDS

by MARK HOPLAMAZIAN
PRESIDENT AND CEO
HYATT HOTELS CORPORATION



SOME OF THE BEST ADVICE I've ever received is that we have two ears and one mouth, and we should use them in that proportion. Success in our business requires empathy – for colleagues, guests, owners, and shareholders – and it's why my Hyatt colleagues and I engage in a lot of listening. It allows us to keep a pulse on what's important to our customers and influencing their behavior. These six global consumer trends are examples of how we can listen to our guests, even when they're not "saying" anything.

1 Embracing Experiences – No longer just checking destinations off their bucket lists, consumers' bucket lists are now full of unique experiences that will define them. This is great news for travel, which has always been inherently experiential, but we as hoteliers need to keep upping the ante...whether that's enabling guests to immerse themselves in local culture during a business trip or creating a family vacation they'll be talking about for years. To that end, we recently launched FIND, a curated selection of experiences for World of Hyatt members ranging from a Taste of Buddhism bicycle tour in Siem Reap to a paragliding tandem flight session in Los Angeles.

2 24/7 Digital Ubiquity – Our desire to always stay connected has made Wi-Fi a basic essential, for our hotel

guests but also as the backbone for delivering new services. The Wi-Fi at Hyatt hotels now remembers each guest's device after the first sign-in, removing the need to sign in on their next stay...even at a different location. We've also grown the ways guests can communicate with us on their terms, expanding to more social media channels and in-app chat.

3 Changing the Face of the Consumer – Our guest base is changing, particularly as Chinese outbound travel booms to an expected 234 million by 2020. More than half of those Chinese travelers are Millennials. We must cater to these new consumers, by adopting their preferred mobile payment methods and enabling more exploration.

4 My Life, My Way – People generally expect to get what they want, how they want, and when they want it. Just consider that nearly two-thirds of U.S. households have Amazon Prime! Travelers expect nothing less in our hotels, and it's up to us to offer tools that make personalization easy. For example, we've been expanding the capabilities of our Hyatt mobile app so it does everything from requesting a forgotten toothbrush to streaming Netflix on the guestroom TV.

5 Conscious Consumerism – More consumers want to do business with brands who share their values and purpose-led lifestyles. Hyatt's purpose is clear – we care for people

so they can be their best – and we use that as the guide for all we do. It drives how we work together as a Hyatt family, how we operate as a company, and how we treat our planet. Recently, our purpose spurred Hyatt's efforts to eliminate plastic straws and drink stirrers at hotels worldwide, providing eco-friendly alternatives on request.

6 Wellbeing – Similarly, Hyatt recently expanded into the wellbeing space because we believe wellbeing is the foundation for being your best self. Today's consumers are placing more emphasis on being purposeful and productive, balancing life's stresses and meaningfully engaging with their loved ones and communities. We view wellbeing as more than what you do; it's how you feel. Building on the strength of our Miraval and exhale brands as well as our long-standing philosophy: *Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served.* We are working to help guests find travel experiences that enhance their wellbeing, rather than disrupt it.

Across each of these trends, one thing is clear: with so much access to information and choice, travelers' expectations are higher than ever. At home and on the road, they want a seamless experience that fits their unique lifestyle and identity. I'm proud to say that our focus on listening and taking meaningful action has set Hyatt hotels up to rising to the occasion. ■

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COMMON GROUND

The Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel (JOLT) 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:

Strengthening and Updating the Visa Waiver Program

International inbound travel to the United States is critical to the travel and tourism industry. Approximately 1.2 million American jobs are directly supported by this segment of travel, and the average visitor spends \$4,500 during their visits. Unfortunately, the process to obtain a visa is outdated and needlessly complicated, and much can be done to grow the number of international visitors and increase America's share of the global travel market.

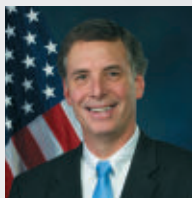
COMMON GROUND:

The Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act promotes international travel to the United States by expanding the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The legislation would bring U.S. visa regulations into the 21st century and make it easier for international visitors to travel in and out of the country while maintaining necessary security protocols. Currently, with the VWP citizens of 38 countries can travel to the U.S. for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa. The JOLT Act would bring more travelers to the U.S. by extending the VWP to select countries and streamlining the process for traveling to the U.S. and helping the nation claim a greater share of the global travel market. ■



Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL)

First Elected: 2008
“As members of Congress, we want two things: to keep our constituents safe from harm, and to help them achieve the American Dream. The JOLT Act accomplishes both of those objectives by stimulating economic activity and improving national security. By updating outdated visa laws, we can drive tourism and job growth in our cities and assist the U.S. intelligence community with their mission to spot and stop terrorist threats.”



Rep. Tom Rice (R-SC)

First Elected: 2012
“The JOLT Act will enhance our economic competitiveness and strengthen national security by modernizing the VWP, which facilitates streamlined travel into the United States for pre-approved travelers from member countries. Expanding the VWP will support the U.S. travel industry, create American jobs, and bring more tourism dollars to South Carolina- all while bolstering our homeland security and counterterrorism efforts.”



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FEATURE

DESIGNING

FOR

COMPETING

AUDIENCES



CATERING TO MILLENNIALS, GEN XERS, AND BABY BOOMERS

by JUSTIN VELLUCCI

A

ALARM CLOCKS.

For Meagan Johnson, the major focal point or fulcrum of inter-generational design in the hotel and hospitality industry boils down to alarm clocks.

Johnson, a Generation Xer, professional speaker and generational

humorist from Phoenix, AZ, shares a story about a time she was staying in a hotel in the Boston, MA area and the room simply didn't have a clock anywhere in it – not a clock on the wall, not a clock on the table by her bed-side, not a clock to be seen. Everyone, especially members of younger generations, travel with a smartphone with a built-in alarm these days, right? The problem was that, when she called the front desk to request one, they didn't have any. To make matters worse, they didn't understand why she'd need a clock in the first place.

"It's not about alienating one generation to make another happy – that's not sustainable," Johnson says. "You want to connect with all of the generations, all of the people."

And such is the battle for the contemporary designer, property manager and

"It's not about alienating one generation to make another happy – that's not sustainable. You want to connect with all of the generations, all of the people."



hotel staff: how to cater to Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, while also appealing to Millennials and the increasingly present Generation Z, born from around 1998 to around 2016. What's the right way to do it?

The questions even have vexed researchers. A study such as the one published in 2011 by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst picks apart the generational differences between

hotel employees – and differs on whether they impact operations. A more recent study, completed in 2017 at MODUL University Vienna, looked specifically at Millennial hotel preferences and found that “reference room price and travel mode influence Generation Y’s hotel considerations independently.” They also determined more study on the topic was necessary.

To Johnson, every generation leaves its mark.

When Baby Boomers were entering their early middle age, say the 30s and 40s, in the 1980s, they became increasingly health-conscious. Enter the hotel gym, the non-smoking room, and the smoke-free airline flight.

Generation X, with its alternative tendencies, marked the death of the stale floral pattern on hotel bedding; suddenly, hotel linens became sophisticated.

What about Millennials? Their sense of collaboration has encouraged hotels to design and create more open spaces, not to mention make the customers’ visits more experiential – enter local cuisine, wine-tastings, and even food trucks. And Millennials’ love of technology has made free Wi-Fi a necessity for those who want to compete for the youth market.

Thanks to this adoption of generational preferences, many hotels are even transforming into destinations for local residents. Gone are the days of the stingy hotel restaurant or the shady hotel bar.

“They are enjoyable spaces to be in now,” Johnson says. “You even see older, established hotels making these changes, so they’re a reflection of their place.”

David Stillman has been studying the sometimes-subtle, sometimes-dramatic differences between generations since 1995. A self-proclaimed Gen Xer, he speaks and works nationally and internationally with his 19-year-old son, Jonah; they refer to themselves as the first Gen X/Gen Z speaking duo.



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For Stillman, Baby Boomers, a generation focused on keeping up with the Joneses, stick with brand names. To top it all off, they aspire to, some day, stay at premium-brand hotels like the Ritz Carlton. And age is ever-present.

“Baby Boomers are of a generation that is raging against aging,” he says. “If it’s cool, it’s okay, as long as it doesn’t make them feel old. They don’t want rails in the tubs.”

But what hoteliers need to realize, Stillman stresses, is that Baby Boomers aren’t necessarily their big

“The question every hotel employee has to ask is ‘How is our customer service?’ The smart ones are starting to ask, ‘What is our customer service?’ – not ‘How is it?’”

audience anymore. Younger generations, more skeptical generations, are today’s parents.

“If you’re planning for family vacations, you’re targeting a Millennial,” he adds. “Collaboration really is huge with

them. And they trust their peers, not the experts. Those experts, even travel agents? The younger you go, the less weight they have.”

Across the board, experts agreed, hotel patrons want clean rooms and

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good customer service, but they need to analyze just how they define that. Many people travelling around the United States today might not want a call to the room after they check in. And, though Millennials and Gen Zers might do away with the check-in desk and conduct transactions instead on tablets or phones, à la an Apple Store, that approach won't fly with everybody.

“They have to have a fundamental shift in how they ask themselves questions,” Stillman explains. “The question every hotel employee has to ask is, ‘How is our customer service?’ The smart ones are starting to ask, ‘What is our customer service?’ – not ‘How is it?’”

To Stillman, who lives in Minneapolis, the absolute essential part of any hotel is its workout facility and gym, and not just a room with some bar-bells. That’s not so

“My dad’s generation? They go on recommendations. And, when they find one, they stick with it. Millennials? They’re willing to try different things.”

with Jonah, his Gen Z son, a digital native who’s grown up in the world where Wi-Fi and smartphones know no bounds.

“Jonah looks at properties and is looking for something new he hasn’t seen before – and he wants things customized for him,” Stillman says. “The basics [for hotel staff] sound silly. You’ve got two ears and one mouth for a reason – just listen. Your goal isn’t to treat everyone the same.”

Stillman says nobody and no brand arguably might be better at playing the generational design game than Virgin Hotels, with whom he has worked in the past. Which begs the question: why?

Teddy Mayer, the Vice President of Design for Virgin Hotels, says Virgin is ahead of the generational design curve because his company is attentive to create a colorful prism of spaces that can accommodate different types and groups of people simultaneously.

Virgin Hotels’ lobbies and entrances feature a multi-space suite of rooms with a club bar at its heart. One space, a kind of library, offers the environment of a casual coffee shop, perfect for a Millennial to pull up a couch and whip out their MacBook. A “kitchen” space offers casual dining. And “the shag room,” as Mayer dubbed it, is more posh and a kind of after-hours lounge.

“This all helps people hack their environment – we offer them flexibility,” he says. “We love the idea of putting the experience in the hands of our guests.”

That brings us to Scott Schaedle. A former art student and graphic designer,



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this Millennial with what he called “an entrepreneurial spirit” founded Quore Systems, one of the hospitality industry’s providers of hotel management software, back in 2012.

But, at first, he was just Scott, another employee at another Tennessee hotel.

“I was just working and thought, ‘Why don’t we have a piece of software to run this?’” laughs Schaedle. “[I thought] ‘Maybe there’s something more efficient out there.’ The reason I created Quore is because nobody was using the mobile devices, even though we all had mobile phones. I was like, ‘I can figure this out!’ Six months later, I had the first prototype.”

Today, Quore is used on the back-end for hotel operations by more than 65,000 users in 3,100 different hotel properties. Schaedle said the software works and helps staffers work more efficiently because, quite simply, it makes sense.

“The user experience is probably the most important part of the software,” he shares. “I’ve always believed the same thing: a designer’s job is to make something easy and engaging to use.”

“If you have to create a training manual,” he adds, echoing the words of the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs, “you failed.”

Keeping it simple and engaging was particularly important for hotel staff, some of whom are older and technology-averse, and others who come from a mix of different cultural backgrounds with different relationships to technology.

What has Quore taught Schaedle about hotel patrons?

“[People my age] go to the travel sites and review user ratings every time,” he says. “My dad’s generation? They go on recommendations. And, when they find one, they stick with it. Millennials? They’re willing to try different things.”

Which brings us back to Johnson and the alarm clocks.

She’s quick to note that not every change made for a younger generation alienates its elders, whether they be Baby Boomers or Gen Xers. She recently stayed in a boutique hotel and expected to be surrounded by nothing but young people. Not so; quite the contrary.

“It was filled with Baby Boomers. Now, there was an Eagles concert in town,” she laughs. “But the Baby Boomers were enjoying the space’s pool tables as much as the Millennials.”

And let us not forget free Wi-Fi, created for a younger, tech-savvy set of hotel patrons but serving all of them.

“See, we all benefitted from the change instigated by a younger generation,” Johnson says.

Then, again, when asked for one piece of advice for hotel designers, owners, and staff aspiring to simultaneously engage an audience consisting of different generations, Johnson cited what could be called the Golden Rule.

“If you’re a Baby Boomer, a Millennial, a Gen Xer or a Gen Zer,” she says, “we all want good customer service.” ■

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FEATURE

TODAY'S HOTELIER ROUNDTABLE

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Hoteliers address the labor shortage in hospitality

by PETER CLERKIN

Pictured from left to right: O'Mally Foster, Vision Hospitality; Keith Cline, CorePoint Lodging; Heetesh Patel, Neves Investments; Hitesh (HP) Patel, Capital City Hospitality Group, AAHOA; Dinesh Rama, NewGen Worldwide; Ricky Raman, PeachState Hospitality; Jyoti Sarolia, Ellis Hospitality LLC; Azim Saju, HDG Hotels; Chip Rogers, AAHOA

WHEN IT COMES TO THE ECONOMY, THE headlines talk of a booming stock market, low unemployment, significant and steady job growth, and people keeping more of their paychecks thanks to tax reform. But even when things are great, there are challenges in the workforce, and in the hotel industry, one of the most significant challenges is labor. From workforce shortages and worker retention to finding the best employees, *Today's Hotelier* wanted to get a sense of how the industry is getting ahead of these issues.

In late July, *Today's Hotelier* held its first ever roundtable at the AAHOA headquarters in Atlanta where industry experts and insiders shared their perspectives on labor trends, workplace culture, and what the future holds for workers and hoteliers as the industry evolves. Access Point Financial sponsored the roundtable. As an AAHOA Silver Member, they are also a long-time supporter of AAHOA's annual convention and trade show.

In the early part of 2010, as the nation emerged from the economic downturn, many believed that the new normal for full employment would be in the range of five to seven percent

unemployment. Skepticism of the economy returning to pre-2008 strength remained high; however, a decade removed from the financial crisis that brought the global economy to its knees, the nation is seeing unprecedented and unexpected growth. Second quarter GDP sat north of four percent, and the latest figures show unemployment at four percent nationally. It's even lower in certain metro areas, such as Atlanta where the jobless rate is 3.5 percent. But what does this mean for the hotel industry?

Chip Rogers, AAHOA president and CEO, served as the roundtable moderator and began by asking participants about the challenges that low unemployment presents when filling entry-level jobs. Many shared their difficulties in hiring and retaining employees in entry-level positions, such as housekeeping but the discussion took a quick and surprising turn towards a broader examination of workplace culture and how it can make or break a solid corps of talented and dedicated workers.

"The biggest challenge across segments is in housekeeping," noted Keith Cline, president and CEO of CorePoint Lodging. Difficulties for companies include determining how they can enrich a worker's life aside from a paycheck. He added that

the wage pressure in the labor shortages is manifesting itself in overtime and contract labor.

Azim Saju, principal of HDG Hotels, observed, “There’s more demand for labor. The labor force, especially Millennials, want more from a job than just a paycheck. Retaining top talent is exceptionally challenging, and recruiting is hard – people want to work for a company that has a mission, a vision, core values, and compensation that will keep them there for a long time.” Building a workplace culture that helps employees understand how their role fits into the bigger picture requires a change in the dialogue. Dinesh (Dan) Rama, president and managing director for NewGen Worldwide, noting that hotels would often cycle through the same workers as they competed for their labor, asked, “When do the economics fall apart when it comes to hotels swapping staff for hourly raises of 10 cents, 20 cents, or 30 cents?”

Countering the nickel and dime mindset that leads employees to switch jobs frequently is challenging; however, O’Mally Foster, vice president of culture and talent resources at Vision Hospitality Group, spoke about Vision’s multifaceted approach to workplace culture building that helps them retain employees. “People want to have their life outside work. Culturally, if you have a sound, focused culture, that says, all the other things, someone can offer 10 cents more, but are they offering you the family environment that we have? Are they offering you a place where you belong, where you feel connected? That is what helped us maintain the staff that we have.” He also spoke about how Vision found success in partnering with local high schools and a vocational course that highlights the opportunities for advancement in the industry.

Other participants echoed this sentiment of helping employees escape a shortsighted mindset and focus on who they are, where they are within a company, and where they have the potential to go rather than the particular job they perform.

AAHOA Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel, president of Capital City Hospitality Group, suggested that companies can set themselves apart by creating an environment of respect for employees and recognizing their work-life needs. He cited flexible work hours as an example, noting that his company allows employees to create a schedule. This can be particularly beneficial to single parents or students who might not be able to work a traditional six- or eight-hour block. Patel noted that this approach greatly helped in the retention of housekeepers, and pointed out that, because of more precise check-in times, some of his employees are able to fill PM housekeeping shifts.

Heetesh Patel, chief executive officer at Renal Management Company, said, “Celebrating employees through birthday parties and monthly events helps create more of a family environment. This translates directly to higher survey scores for job satisfaction.” He added, “The dividends it pays by having the commitment from our staff has been monumental for us...For us, it’s invaluable to build that family atmosphere from the beginning.”

Panelists talked about the younger generation and what steps hotels could take to make careers more attractive to

them. “Millennials want to know that the work they do has an actual impact – they don’t just want a job,” said Dan Rama. Azim Saju noted that educating employees about the causes a company supports and encouraging them to get involved in their communities as well contributed to a greater sense of mission and purpose.

While much of the early discussions centered around creating a workplace culture and how that can retain workers, moderator Chip Rogers pressed panelists about recruiting. According to every panelist, making clear the opportunities for advancement within an organization is one of the surest ways to attract and retain employees. Keith Cline said, “It’s impossible to be an employer of choice if you have no examples of advancement in your organization.” Ricky Raman, chief operating officer at PeachState Hospitality agreed, “You’ve got to show them that opportunity in-house.”

Building upon the earlier discussion of workplace culture, O’Mally Foster suggested that replacing the sterility and box checking of the interview process by allowing prospective hires to observe and immerse themselves in the workplace culture before an interview could allow for a better assessment of whether an employee would be a good fit. “Let them really get involved in [the culture]. Then you sit down and converse with them about their thoughts about what went on...and really get that organic conversation going on.”

Jyoti Sarolia, chief operating officer at Ellis Hospitality LLC highlighted her practice of asking prospective hires to take fifteen minutes to walk around the property before their scheduled interview. “After allowing them that time to engage with the property and employees, the interviewee is given a series of questions to assess how they would react in the environment.” She noted that this initial interview process is successful in identifying those individuals in whom the company wants to invest. “A lot of it is a sense of what you feel,” said Heetesh Patel. “Their resume can’t determine if you should hire them.”

Concluding the discussion, panelists spoke to potential changes in the workforce as technology begins to play a greater roll in the hospitality industry. While some jobs will inevitably be lost to automation, panelists agreed that there will ultimately be a hybrid model. Machines are not likely to replace employees entirely, but there will be fewer jobs for people to perform. Efficiencies in room design and cleaning, check-in kiosks, and apps that place food and drink orders are all advancements that pull guests one step back from human interaction, but the panelists seemed hesitant to endorse the likelihood of a fully-automated hospitality future. “There will always need to be people in hotels to deliver authentic experiences, to create some type of relationship with our guests,” said Keith Cline. “It doesn’t matter how much automation you can create, how are you going to have a self-making bed, a self-cleaning bathroom?” said HP Patel. “At the front desk, you could have machines checking people in...for me, I like having that interaction...checking in, going to the bar or restaurant...losing that interaction, that’s not something I’m ready for yet.” ■

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FEATURE

TRENDSPOTTING

What's hot in hotels right now? We tapped a few sources to find out not only what's going in to the guest experience, but what's going into the actual hotels!

by AMY DREW THOMPSON

“TEA. EARL GRAY. HOT.”

It's how Capt. Jean-Luc Picard ordered his beverage aboard Star Trek: The Next Generation's *U.S.S. Enterprise*, where food replicators, the voice-activated insta-chefs of the future, fulfilled orders in seconds.

The world's best F&B staff can't yet deliver chateaubriand and crème brûlée to a guestroom in 60 seconds, but hotel guests are already reaping tech-boosted benefits – in their rooms and beyond.

Technology is hardly the only notable hospitality trend in 2018. Developments in the realm of design, décor, construction, and more, are keeping hoteliers on their toes in their quest to deliver exemplary guest experiences.

TECH TALK

In the guest rooms. At Universal Orlando Resort's Aventura Hotel, designers put this top-tier trend in the must-have column.

“When people travel, they take their technology with them. It's an ever-present part of their lives...and an important part of today's travel experience from the moment an idea for a trip is born,” says managing director Stephen Cummings. “Hotels must be equipped to serve guests in the modern digital age by providing advanced, smart tools and amenities that enhance their stay, particularly in the guestroom, where travelers begin, plan, and end their day.”

As such, in-room tablets are the standard here.

“[They] are a powerful tool,” he says, “loaded with everything guests need for their stay, so it's right at their fingertips and they don't have to spend time searching.”

In the meeting rooms. Events figure big in many hotels' profit margin. Smart properties are implementing the Internet of Things (IoT) to make events flow better than ever. IoT is a system of interrelated computing devices that allows the transfer of data over a network without human interaction.

“The IoT will bring sensors throughout the meeting venue to increase efficiency and improve service,” says Corbin Ball, an international speaker, consultant and writer on events technology. “More efficient, lighting, better AC controls,

security and AV support, smart guest rooms and lobbies, or tech lounges, will be the result.”

At their fingertips. Guest experience? There's an app for that.

“Technology is changing at such a pace, and that's particularly interesting for us in hospitality,” says Charles Fisher, resort manager for the Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort. “When you think about our history, particularly in the luxury market, there's always this perception of formality, but that's changing very rapidly as technology evolves.”

Since launching its Four Seasons Chat app, says Fisher, the number of messages flying through is extraordinary. Requests for more towels, even poolside drink orders, are handled expeditiously.

CHECKING IN

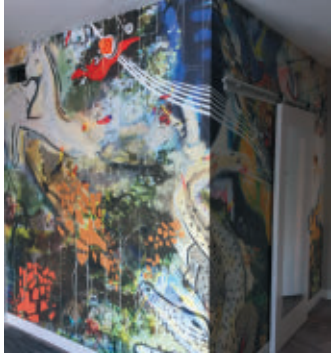
Self-serve. “Unique hotels, like the properties currently open within Tapestry Collection by Hilton, are growing in popularity because they can provide guests with the ability to enhance their stays...Guests are looking for hotels that complement their lifestyle,” says Jenna Hackett, global head for the Hilton brand.

“Guests can find a Tapestry Collection hotel, book, check-in, choose their room based on their preferences and open the door with Digital Key, all through the Hilton app on their mobile device.”

LOOKS THAT FILL (ROOMS) - LOBBIES & OUTDOOR SPACES

The smell of success. Properties intent on stimulating the senses are adding olfactory elements to the guest experience with a signature scent. Fisher says guests enjoy theirs, staffers often field requests for candles they can take home. “It adds to the overall sense of place when you walk into the space.”

Innerspace. Restaurant real estate, in many cases, is being forgone in favor of cleaner, more contemporary gathering spaces in the lobby, says Michael Parks, vice president for Hoar Construction's Florida office. Hoar's recent projects include the Hotel Indigo in Gainesville, FL and the Hotel Alessandra in Houston, TX. “We're seeing a trend of quick-service places, coffee shops and bars that cater to the idea of grabbing a



Hotel Indigo in Gainesville, FL



Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort



The Bernic Hotel New York City, Tapestry Collection by Hilton

drink and hanging out in the lobby before you go up at the end of the night.”

Hilton’s Hackett would likely agree.

“Lobbies aren’t just for check-in anymore. Guests are looking for open, inviting common spaces to relax and mingle... These spaces are even drawing in local residents,” she notes.

Travelers want to experience the hotel in its entirety, she says, not just their rooms.

Parks says modern seating clusters, places to congregate and hang out, are increasingly visible. “Lobbies feel more comfortable and inviting in comparison to the old days where they felt like your grandmother’s living room,” he laughs, “where you didn’t dare sit down.”

OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

Roof positive. If the impressive 360-degree vistas from Orlando’s Aventura Hotel are any indicator, rooftop bars are an advent that’s here to stay.

“The combination of picturesque views, open air, unique cocktail offerings, and creative design attract both hotel guests and locals,” says Hackett of this enduring trend.

Everyone, says Parks, seems to want a rooftop bar.

“They want to put the pool up there, too,” he says, “with glass all around to take advantage of the views as an added amenity.”

All turf, no surf. Artificial turf, too, vastly improved since the days of “your father’s Astroturf,” Parks laughs, is becoming standard in outdoor areas. Soft and clean, with no worry for mud after a rain, these new products, and the techniques for installation, make hoteliers and guests happy.

“There’s a composite substrate that includes sand and some stone beneath which allows it to drain,” he explains. “You roll out this green carpet that looks and feels like grass, it’s got some cushion to it, it’s got drainability, and it’s got a good life span.”

IF YOU BUILD IT

Local color. And flavor, and texture...Parks says the biggest trend he’s noticed is a desire to bring a destination’s local essence into the hotel.

“There’s a sense of place-making, something that adapts to the region or city they are in,” he explains. “For example,

at the Hotel Indigo, they’ve painted murals in the rooms that are rock ‘n’ roll themed – sort of Tom Petty-related, since he is from the area.”

Much like the trends in craft beer or artisanal food, hotels are zoning on what’s local in ways that transcend the F&B.

“Each property wants to feel unique,” says Parks.

Material world. Easy-to-clean hard surfaces are making gains in room design, says Parks. “Everything is becoming sleeker, more minimalist in an effort to feel tidier.” Carpet, he has observed, is on the wane. “We’re seeing more luxury vinyl tile with carpet tiles around the bed, so that when guests get up in the morning, they can still put their feet down on carpet.”

The Hotel Skyler Syracuse, the first to join Tapestry Collection by Hilton, was born as a synagogue in 1922, evolving into a performing arts center before its hotel conversion in 2011. It was Syracuse’s first LEED Platinum Hotel.

“More than 20 percent of the products used to build it contained recycled content and more than 75 of the [construction waste] was recycled,” says Hackett. “The hotel also utilizes organic fabrics, low-emission carpeting and non-toxic house-keeping products in guestrooms.”

Domo arigato. Mr. Roboto is being gainfully employed by construction companies as they bring the architects’ grand plans to life.

“The drone technology that we’re using is primarily for surveying and project documentation,” says Parks. Time-lapse cameras are becoming standard, as well. Paired with drones, the combination allows crews to track progress and keep an eye on things.

Laborers are now employing VR to ensure accuracy during the build. HoloLens, a VR headset with goggles that attach to the hardhat, allows workers to see the construction in the field as is, but with an alternative through the specs.

“They are moving with you, so you are able to stand in the middle of the space and compare what is actually there to the model, which you can see through the goggles in what’s almost an overlay.”

The rise of the machines has clearly begun. Tech guru Ball says that artificial intelligence and voice recognition will continue to improve the guest experience; bringing hotel design closer to the ideas we’ve grown accustomed to via “Star Trek” and slowly morphing from fiction into fact. ■

Are non-recourse CMBS fixed-rate loans better than bank loans? Are the risks worth the rewards?

by RUSHI SHAH



NUMBER1411/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

RECENT AND EXPECTED future Fed interest rate hikes continue to weigh heavily on hotel owners as they look to refinance their portfolios, or decide whether to sell or purchase properties. While the peace-of-mind gained by locking into a long-term interest rate and minimizing personal risk is attractive, some hotel owners are cautious about entering into a long-term CMBS fixed-rate loan even though long-term interest rates are historically low compared to the short-term rates. Both experienced and inexperienced borrowers often have misconceptions about how these sophisticated loan types operate.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: LONG-TERM, NON-RECOURSE FIXED-RATE, PERMANENT LOANS (CMBS LOANS) ARE INFLEXIBLE WHEN IT'S TIME TO PRE-PAY AND THEY CAN COST A LOT.

Bottom line, there is no free lunch. When the loan docs are executed, borrowers promise to pay until maturity and investors expect them to hold up their end of the bargain. The good news is, non-recourse, CMBS fixed-rate loans (unlike any other types of loans) are fully-assumable by a buyer in the event

of a sale. If the buyer does not want to assume the loan, it can be pre-paid at either a penalty or benefit depending on the levels of interest rate at the time of pre-payment. This is not necessarily a negative, if you plan to hold your asset long term anyway. Also, the loan can turn into an asset especially if you have a low interest rate. Plus, in exchange you receive a low rate without recourse for a 10-year period, and at a much higher leverage than any comparable solution out in the market.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: CMBS LOAN SERVICERS ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH AND THE LENDER WILL TAKE YOUR PROPERTY IF YOU MISS A PAYMENT.

Not true. Lenders are in the business of making a loan for the bond holders, the servicers are in the business of collecting the payment on behalf of the bond holders. No link in the food chain has any absolute interest to take over the property. If they do ever have to take the property, it's an indicator that they have failed, as it costs significantly more to take over the property than to keep receiving payments. At the end of the day, servicers are simply abiding by what was in the loan agreement established upfront between the lender and

the borrower. There would have to be significant deterioration in the asset's performance to result in loss of the property. Not to mention, other failsafe mechanisms are in place from the very beginning to prevent such an occurrence (i.e. cash management). Historically, in every case where a borrower has lost the property, it has been fully because it was the borrower's intention to give it back/cut their losses. In addition, with increased competition amongst servicers, servicers that don't provide good borrower service, won't receive future servicing assignments from lenders.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: CMBS LOAN COSTS ARE EXPENSIVE AND MY LOCAL BANK CAN GIVE ME A BETTER DEAL.

Expenses for CMBS loans are usually slightly higher than those done by the local bank because they are non-recourse and there is additional paperwork needed to "perfect" the collateral for the Lender. Without the cushion of borrower recourse, only the property is at risk to satisfy the loan. As a result, property due diligence is extremely thorough and lenders require a national appraisal company (which it's interesting to note can result in higher appraised values from time-to-time) and more sophisticated lender legal counsel. Engineering and

environmental reports are also typically slightly more expensive because Lenders rely on them to make reserve decisions. However, for comparable terms, banks can't give borrowers a better deal. Due to regulatory restrictions, it is significantly more expensive or most of the time impossible for banks to provide a 10-year loan for a hospitality asset at as high of leverage as a CMBS loan. Bank loans will typically be shorter term, lower leverage, restrict cash out and require full borrower recourse. Because these are such inferior terms, the bank's risk is lower and that's why they can offer borrowers a lower rate than a non-recourse, 10-year, fixed-rate loan. Plus keep in mind that these one-time costs are amortized over the 10 years of interest rate savings your CMBS financing will enable. While the costs of a bank loan may be lower now, you'll end up paying them all over again when you refinance in five years.

Because CMBS loans are non-recourse, any small increase in rate over a bank loan you do end up paying for the CMBS loan, can lead to a big payoff in the form of accessing trapped equity. Banks don't usually allow cash out. For an incremental cost of maybe 0.5 percent over what their bank offered, we've seen CMBS borrowers free up millions of dollars in accrued equity. As a fundamental rule of finance, debt capital is always cheaper than equity capital. Furthermore, because of the availability of capital and by leveraging the influence of an expert investment banker or financing intermediary in today's marketplace, owners can be more assured of closing by going down the CMBS path, than relying on local bank credit committees who have proven to be flakey at times.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: CMBS LOAN RESERVE REQUIREMENTS ARE BURDENSOME.

To protect investors' rate of return, CMBS conduit lenders push and pull

“Bottom line, there is no free lunch.”

levers to mitigate risk that would otherwise bar borrowers from the closing table. For example, if a hotel PIP is coming due, or historically the property has seasonal dips in cash flow, the lender may require a borrower to set aside ready capital as reserves. These disciplinary savings belong to you and are accessible when you need them, but also assure the lender that your property will weather these costs without cannibalizing your ability to make loan payments. A knowledgeable intermediary may be able to negotiate a lower amount, roll the reserves into the loan so they are financed at the lower long-term interest rate, or even devise a more creative loan structure that eliminates reserves altogether.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: THE CMBS LOAN CASH MANAGEMENT PROCESS IS TOO RESTRICTIVE.

CMBS loans require borrowers to set up a disciplined cash management process to ensure timely payments in the event of distress. As long as the property performs, a good intermediary should be able to negotiate that all hotel income is treated as business as usual. In the case where the hotel's cash flow drops below a certain threshold, the income will merely pass through a lender-mandated account to your operating account. If performance further deteriorates below set thresholds for two consecutive quarters, the income is held in an account controlled by both you and the lender and any surplus cash flow is passed to you after all the expenses to run the hotel are paid, reserves are funded, and monthly P&I payments are made. The original cash flow resumes once performance returns to acceptable levels for an appropriate length of time. Hotels with good

management and consistent income won't need to worry about triggering this check and balance. Your accountant can also work with you to ensure expenses are categorized properly since Capital Expenditures, non-recurring or extraordinary expenses, and personal expenses don't count towards ongoing expenses.

BORROWER ARGUMENT: INTERMEDIARIES ONLY PUSH CMBS LOANS WHEN WE ASK FOR NON-RECOURSE LOANS; THAT'S THE ONLY OPTION AVAILABLE IN THE MARKETPLACE.

At \$100 billion per year, the CMBS market represents the largest volume of all loan types. For qualified assets, however, there are many other flexible, non-recourse debt options available through experienced investment bankers with wide relationships. These include debt funds, life companies, Mortgage REITs, Credit Unions, balance sheet lenders, investment banks' direct lending business units, non-bank finance companies, large family offices, and private equity companies. These alternative capital sources are usually less regulated than community banks and offer attractive features. ■



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

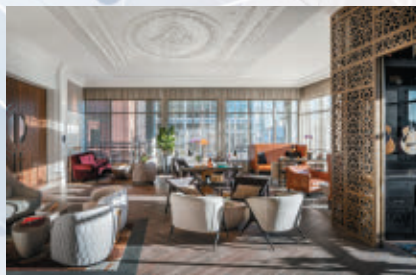
As a leader in hospitality financing, Shah specializes in structuring and placing high-leverage, non-recourse bridge and permanent debt with cash out for full- and limited-service hotels nationwide. Since joining the firm's predecessor Aries Capital in 2015, Shah has structured and closed hundreds of 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.

Hotel design that differentiates: Why local immersion is the answer

by STACI PATTON



ANDREW BORDWIN STUDIO



VS148/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The Elizabeth Hotel

HOW DO YOU TRANSFORM a hotel from a place you stay on the road to a place you never forget, and even better, one that you want to revisit again and again? This question is one many designers in the hospitality industry experience. Hoteliers are looking for innovative ways to differentiate their hotels from all the others on the market. They're looking for ways they can create unforgettable hotel experiences that inspire a sense of authenticity and connect guests to the brand.

Today's guests are looking for something deeper – when they stay a hotel, they want that stay to feel it's an embedded part of the story of a place, especially with boutique brands.

While it seems like a complex problem, the answer is actually quite simple.

Differentiation begins and ends with thoughtful design. Often it means more than just creating a structure that can house great Wi-Fi or a suite of standard amenities. While working with hoteliers to create unique spaces, looking for ways to drive local context that supports and is inspired by the local community is essential. And simply looking at pictures online to make an educated guess about what will or won't work is not sufficient. In order to create an experience reflective of a particular place and way of life, we must take a deeply

immersive approach by approaching local shop owners, visiting performance theaters, interviewing local style makers, gallery curators, and witnessing firsthand the passion people have for their city. Creating a foundation that then informs decisions and allows hoteliers and designers to create homegrown experiences that reflect the rich history and artistic identity of a community.

But it's not just about offering guests these unique amenities – it's about offering guests unique amenities that also feels genuine and provide an exceptional sense of travel and adventure.

What does all of this look like in real life? One example is The Elizabeth Hotel located in Fort Collins, CO, designed by DLR Group and operated by Sage Hospitality. DLR Group's approach to design at The Elizabeth began with gaining a deep understanding of how the culture and aesthetic of the city of Fort Collins was inspired by the Colorado landscape. There was a focus on pairing aged wood and metal materials to create a space that feels handcrafted and rooted in the city's identity. The hotel offers three signature suites – the Beer & Bike Suite, the Music Suite, and the Ram Suite – each of which embody a different aspect of Fort Collins' culture and heritage, connecting locals and visitors to the fabric of the city. One of the most unique offerings in this hotel, and something that is deeply treasured by guests and locals alike is the lending library. Here, music lovers of all

kind can check out a variety of musical instruments and equipment. The lending library also offers a wide selection of vinyl records guests can check-out and play on personal record players found in each of the hotel's guestrooms.

Constantly pushing to discover more about the locale and what the hotel will bring to it, rather than what the community will bring to the hotel. It's a stewardship and storytelling approach to design that often necessitates time to let the cultural approach marinate. And the results of this approach are often ones that feel distinct, calling guests back time and again. ■



Staci is a key leader and award-winning interior designer within DLR Group's Hospitality Studio, working with clients across the country. She understands

that design must support strategy to meet business growth goals, elevate brand recognition, and foster local connections with every hotel guest. Her taste, sense of aesthetics, and engaging personality produce environments that engage clients and deliver memorable experiences. Her expertise includes boutique and branded hotels, restaurants, and gaming environments. A frequent traveler herself, Staci understands the value of exceptional design and how intimate details can enhance the overall guest experience. Get in touch with Staci at spatton@dlrgroup.com.

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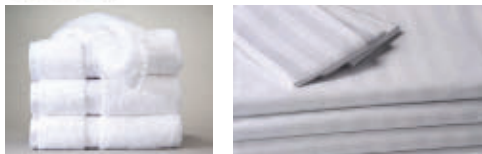
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READY TO REFRESH:

Best bets for ROI before the potential downturn

by JERRY ZEITNER

WHEN IS THE next economic downturn, and how impactful will it be? These are the questions on the minds of professionals across all industries, even as analysts share conflicting data and opinions via a variety of outlets.

Regardless of the outcome, the mere expectation of a potential economic slump is enough to push hoteliers to engage in a renovation. As the thought of a downturn tiptoes into our minds, there is increased pressure around acquiring renovation budget approvals.

Those looking to refresh their properties want to ensure that the funds are allocated prior to a potential recession, and the best time to make these decisions is now – when the industry is performing quite well. And, for owners and developers looking to invest in existing properties as well as forge new partnerships before the current growth cycle slows, there are a number of benefits and challenges to consider based on the type of property and renovation needed.

RENOVATION TYPE: HISTORIC

Historic properties often hold a strong presence in local communities, which makes them prime options for renovation or redevelopment.

The recent renovation of the historic LeVeque Tower in Columbus, OH is one example. Much of the beauty in the building's Art Deco detailing was hidden by office spaces and retail developments. The goal then became to reimagine the property and restore it to its former grandeur while keeping the expectations of today's guest top of mind.

Projects like this one reap many rewards for hotel ownership, but must be handled carefully. Of course, when updating a treasured local building, the community wants to be informed and involved in the process. In the case of Hotel LeVeque, the renovation has been widely applauded, but the relationship between ownership and local community must be closely managed to ensure the public views the project favorably. If all goes as planned, the hotel will not only face less friction locally, but will be able to capitalize on trends of downtown revival to food and beverage options, and other amenities of interest to travelers and locals alike.

Executing historic renovations can be quite profitable, but the process is not without challenges. Historic tax credits are tremendously helpful, but can also put pressure on a tight budget when the wheels of government turn slowly.

Buildings with landmark restrictions can create obstacles as well. During a recent renovation of The Blackstone

Hotel in Chicago, IL, it was required to work around landmarked paneling and light fixtures as they planned and executed fresh, activated public spaces within the property. These unchangeable details can be viewed as challenges that generate creative, innovative results from a design team, but are challenges nonetheless.

RENOVATION TYPE: EXTERIOR CORRIDOR HOTELS

The dusty, forgotten "last resort" options for tired road warriors – exterior corridor hotels – are entering a renaissance. These properties are beginning to attract travelers from a number of demographics, from surfers searching for the next big wave to hip Millennials exploring the country's trendiest neighborhoods.

Successful examples of this type of renovation include the Phoenix Hotel in San Francisco, CA and the Austin Motel in Austin, TX (both part of Bunkhouse Group). It's no secret that these two cities are a draw for Gen Yers; they've been visiting in droves over the last few years.

These two properties take advantage of the desires and expectations of this demographic. This age group craves authenticity and uniqueness, and tends to spend a great deal of time scouring the web (and social media) for hotels that provide the right balance of comfort and edge. Both properties are decidedly funky, embracing a kitschy aesthetic that can be executed fairly inexpensively while still being Instagrammable and on-trend.

The major upside of this renovation type for ownership is clear – rather than spending millions of dollars knocking down the building and starting from scratch, the existing space can be renovated beyond recognition in a matter of months, not years, in a highly cost-effective manner.



Hotel LeVeque in Ohio



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**RENOVATION TYPE:
SELECT-SERVICE**

Select-service properties may make up 80 percent of new hotel construction projects in the United States, but that doesn't mean renovations of these properties aren't happening, too. With the proliferation of newly built hotels in this segment comes an imperative

for existing properties to keep up with the fresh market entry down the road.

When Gettys ONE, a sister brand of The Gettys Group that specializes in interior design for select-service properties, took on the conversion of a former Four Points by Sheraton to become an AC Hotel by Marriott, a locally-inspired select-service property was born.



AC Hotel
Chicago
Downtown



Working within the often-strict design guidelines set forth by each flag can be a challenge, but it is one that will cause the right hospitality design team to rise to the occasion. Even with tight parameters in place, there is an array of methods for renovating these properties to truly differentiate them from others, drawing an impressive ROI for ownership.

Striking a balance between adherence and ingenuity, the design of the AC Hotel Chicago Downtown offers innovative dining options and tech-enabled upgrades that attract budget-conscious young travelers who maintain high expectations for design and experience. From Kallpods throughout the public spaces to canned craft beers at the bar, these small details in select-service properties keep travelers returning again and again. Building loyalty through design is a priority in this segment, and the importance of consistent and frequent property updates will aid in maintaining a high return for hotel owners.

As analysts across all industries brace themselves for the next lull in the economy, hoteliers are fighting to receive renovation budget approvals ahead of time. Whether owners and developers want to update a historic building or upgrade an exterior corridor hotel, the time to plan for those types of renovations is now, while the industry is booming. ■

With 30 years of hospitality industry experience, Jerry has a broad knowledge of hotel operations, program management, design implementation and development. As chief operating officer at The Gettys Group, Jerry leads a team of members who create new brands, design engaging spaces, and bring design visions to life.

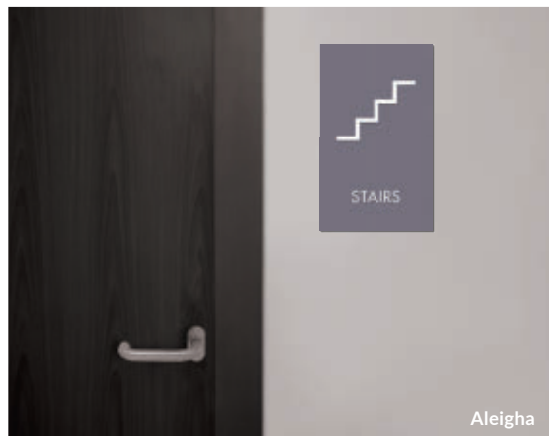


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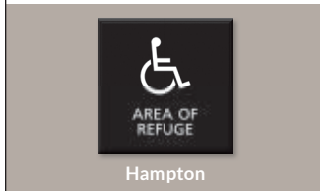
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BEHIND THE SCENES: AAHOA Summer Internship Program

by NATALEE BLOSS

AAHOA HAS BEEN A PART OF MY LIFE for as long as I can remember. I grew up in the hotel business and have always had an interest, but it wasn't until I went on a delegation trip in 2013 with them that I decided this was the industry I wanted to be in. The next year I decided to pursue a career in hospitality, and I enrolled in the Hospitality School at UNLV. Throughout my career thus far, AAHOA has always been a part of my journey, so I wanted to learn first-hand from the best. It has been incredible to see the idea we had come to life this summer, and to be able to play an important role in establishing a formal internship program for the association.

The past 10 weeks have taught me more than I could have ever imagined—not only about the industry, but about myself. AAHOA gave me a chance to be independent, to take risks, and to step outside of my comfort zone. I learned that it's okay to not always know the answer and to make mistakes. I had to put myself out there to see where I fit in with the company's culture. AAHOA has taught me that this business is about people. With the networking opportunities AAHOA has to offer, and the annually changing leadership, it provides a very diverse and broadened opportunity to meet people from all over the world. As a college student and a woman in a previously male-dominated industry, I loved seeing AAHOA's efforts to engage their young professionals and women hoteliers with special events designed just for them, and being able to join AAHOA just before Jagruti Panwala becomes the first Chairwoman. AAHOA is built on entrepreneurship, and they truly embody that in their day-to-day operations. It is the perfect example of how



Summer intern Natalee Bloss with AAHOA President & CEO Chip Rogers

hospitality is everywhere, and anyone can find their place and succeed.

As I approach my college graduation, I've realized that there is a huge difference between what you learn in the classroom and what you learn on the job. I've learned about politics in school, but I never thought that it would matter in my career, let alone that I would ever be having a meeting with my state Senator. I witnessed the powerful presence AAHOA has in Washington, D.C., and the opportunity our members have to make a difference and advocate through our Political Action Committee. I was provided the opportunity to lead a delegation meeting on Capitol Hill to discuss issues relevant to our industry with our nation's leaders. This instilled in me a new interest and confidence that I would not have found otherwise.

I've learned that this industry is small. You never know who you are going to come across. Throughout my summer I noticed how many key hospitality executives visited the office and how strong AAHOA's relationship with these hospitality brands is. I've always heard the saying that "It's not what you know, it's who you know." But this internship has shown me that it's also about who knows you, and small things like having a business card or writing a thank you note can make a big impact on somebody.

Ultimately my internship with AAHOA has taught me that in the hospitality industry, relationships and who you surround yourself with are so important. AAHOA has given me the tools I need to succeed, and a strong foundation of knowledge and experience to shape me into the person and the leader that I want to be. ■



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*"My advice is to **get involved**. Put in the time and energy to take advantage of everything the association offers."*

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AAHOA *around the nation*



1. In the first of a series of four education sessions, four panelists—AAHOA Treasurer Biran Patel, Rajiv Trivedi of La Quinta Inns & Suites, Tina Burnett with G6 Hospitality and AAHOA North Texas Ambassador Raj Chudasama—discussed the importance of choosing the right brand at the Hotel ROI education session at the AAHOA North Texas Regional Meeting.



2. AAHOA North Texas Regional Director Mayur (Mike) Patel and the North Texas Regional Ambassadors held a successful regional meeting in Dallas, TX, following a day of education at the Dallas CHIA.

3. AAHOA Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel, North Central Regional Director Naresh (Nick) Patel, Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel, and North Central Regional Ambassadors met with representatives from Northeast Bank at the North Central Regional Meeting.



4. AAHOA Southeast Texas Regional Director Sawan H. Patel and Young Professional Director Western Division Nishant (Neal) Patel held a Young Professional Hoteliers Town Hall in Houston, TX.



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5. AAHOA Mid South Regional Director Sunil Patel and the Mid South Regional Ambassadors held a successful regional meeting and trade show in Nashville, TN.
6. AAHOA Vice Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala was invited to speak at the U.S. Department of Energy's Better Buildings Summit in Cleveland, where she addressed franchisee engagement and corporate goal setting for greater energy efficiency in the hospitality industry.
7. AAHOA South Central Texas Mike Patel, along with Officers, board members, and ambassadors, held a great event in Austin, TX at the South Central Texas Regional Meeting.
8. Young Professional and Women Hoteliers joined Choice Hotels executives, including President & CEO Pat Pacious, at the Choice headquarters in Bethesda, MD for the Choice Hotels Young Professionals and Women's Development Day.
9. Florida Regional Director Bharat Patel, Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel, and Young Professional Director Eastern Division Purvi Panwala hosted a Young Professionals and Women's Town Hall in Orlando, where attendees discussed a host of topics including health insurance, ADA lawsuits, human trafficking, market trends, and the importance of advocacy.
10. AAHOA hosted the Northwest Charity Golf Tournament in Camas, WA, where attendees and event sponsors raised more than \$100,000. The event—including golf, an auction, dinner, and an awards ceremony—was held to benefit Business Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST), Make-A-Wish® Oregon, and the Doernbecher Foundation.



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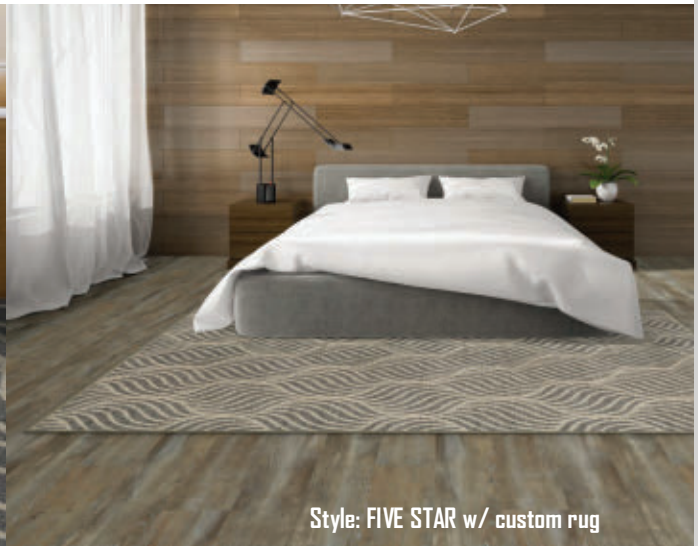
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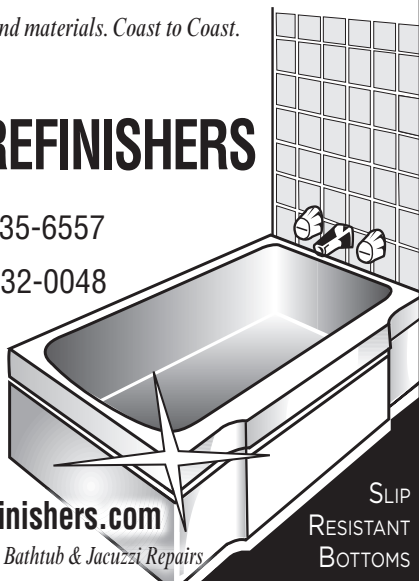
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