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# HOTEL MANAGEMENT

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HOTEL 48 LEX

## BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

THE PROS AND CONS OF TAKING  
A BRANDED HOTEL INDEPENDENT

### DON'T GET LOCKED OUT

Rethinking mobile-access adoption

ARTFULLY  
DONE

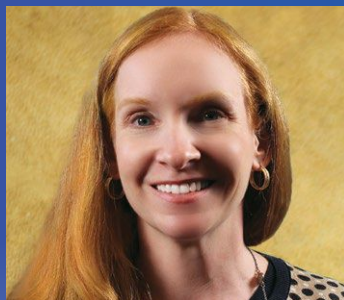
#### ONE-ON-ONE WITH WYNDHAM HOTEL GROUP'S CHIP OHLSSON

The EVP and chief development officer, who returned two years ago to the company that launched his hotel career, takes a look at the industry's switch from a deal-hunting mentality to a value-focused hunger and the unpredictability of the market.



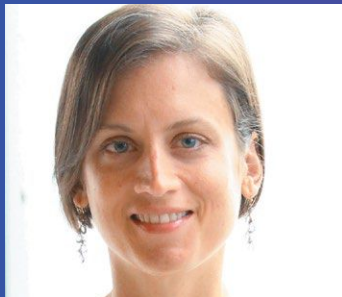
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30

INFLUENTIAL  
WOMEN IN  
HOSPITALITY



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# HM

## HOTEL MANAGEMENT

# 30

## INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY

Choosing 30 trailblazing women in hospitality is no easy task—and that is a good thing, we say. The hospitality industry, not unlike other industries, historically has had a scarcity of influential women among its ranks—those who are turned to for leadership, for direction, for prudent input. Fortunately, this is changing, with many more women in the types of positions that they always deserved but were not awarded due to a rather intransigent corporate mentality. Now, women make up a greater proportion of executive-level roles, which is why it is so difficult to only choose 30 women for our list. However, we feel that these select women are blazing a path not only in hospitality, but in business.

**HEATHER BALSLEY**

IHG

**PAMELA BARNHILL**

IBC

**PEGGY BERG**

Castell Project

**JANIS CANNON**

Choice Hotels International

**SONIA CHENG**

Rosewood Hotel Group

**MARY BETH CUTSHALL**

HVMG

**DOROTHY DOWLING**

Best Western

**KATHLEEN****CHIECHI FLORES**

Trump Hotels

**ANDREA FOSTER**

Marcus Hotels &amp; Resorts

**KRISSY GATHRIGHT**

Apple REIT

**CINDY ESTIS GREEN**

Kalibri Labs

**KATE HENRIKSEN**

RLJ Lodging Trust

**LAURA HERZOG**

Wynn Hotels

**AMANDA HITE**

STR

**LISA HOLLADAY**

Marriott International

**AMY JAKUBOWSKI**

Wilson Associates

**ALEXANDRA JARITZ**

Hilton

**ANGELA KOROMPILAS**

American Hotel Register

**KAY LANG**

Kay Lang &amp; Associates

**STEPHANIE LINNARTZ**

Marriott International

**KATHERINE LUGAR**

AH&amp;LA

**MARINA MACDONALD**

Red Roof Inn

**MELISSA MAHER**

Expedia

**GAIL MANDEL**

Wyndham Destination Network

**JAGRUTI PANWALA**

AAHOA

**ALLISON REID**

Kimpton Hotels &amp; Restaurants

**MICHELLE RUSSO**

hotelAVE

**STACY SILVER**

Silver Hospitality Group

**JULIENNE SMITH**

Hyatt Hotels Corporation

**LINDSEY UEBERROTH**

Preferred Hotels &amp; Resorts

**HEATHER BALSLEY**, SVP, AMERICAS BRANDS & MARKETING, INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

At IHG, Heather Balsley leads brand management, loyalty, partnerships, marketing and brand operations for the company's Americas region, working with IHG's global brand leadership and Americas functional teams to develop and deliver localized brand strategies. Inspiration and influence, Balsley said, are at the core of her job. "Being in a region that is heavily franchised, influence is essential to how we work and our success working with hotels and owners," she said. "I measure influence by this simple question: Have we made our guests, operators and owners' lives better? Each has a different measure of success, but when the answer is 'yes' to any of these, we are influencing the industry. And when our decisions are guided by what's best for guests, operators and owners, influencing is pretty easy because they know we're trying to drive value for them." Balsley advises up-and-coming women in the industry to be prepared to constantly listen, learn and adapt. "This industry is deeply complex with many forces at play that change the competitive landscape every day," she said. "I've found that the strongest leaders are those who constantly look to learn what's new, invest in listening to our guests, customers and owners, and always seek to get better with new solutions and strategies. Also remember to continue to focus on balance. I've learned over the years that I am far more productive and creative when I've invested in staying healthy and recharging by spending time with my family."



**PAMELA BARNHILL, PRESIDENT AND COO OF IBC HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGIES**

In 2002, Pamela Barnhill joined her father at InnSuites Hospitality Trust, and rose up through the ranks to become president and COO. At the same time, she founded IBC Hospitality Technologies, which gave her a unique perspective as both a supplier and as an owner-operator. She has also served as a board member for the Independent Lodging Industry Association since 2011. Influence, Barnhill said, is about working with people as much as possible. "Help train and motivate them, share ideas and collaborate," she said. To stay ahead of the curve, she uses all of her positions—service provider, owner-operator and association member—to share ideas and keep up to date on the latest trends. "Collaboration provides an interesting perspective," she said. "It's not just one-sided." Measuring influence in her different roles can take different forms, from determining guest satisfaction at InnSuites' properties, keeping employee turnover low and keeping hotels' satisfaction with IBC's services high. "We started the software and services business not only for ourselves but for other hoteliers in the Independent Lodging Industry Association," she said. When talking with other members, several said that they felt like they were operating on an island. "I said, 'So do I,'" she recalled. While they commiserated, they also developed a concept for mutual support. "What if we help each other out? Hotelier helping hotelier." As a result, IBC's software helps with revenue and distribution that can drive down operating and marketing costs. "Software and collaboration lowers the cost of doing business," she said.



**PEGGY BERG, PRESIDENT, CASTELL PROJECT**

Castell builders are athletes who stand atop each others' shoulders to create a human tower, a concept that Peggy Berg modeled her newest venture after. The Castell Project is a nonprofit group that promotes diversity in hospitality by providing companies in the industry with tools to develop high-profile women within their organizations. Berg, founder of global business consulting firm The Highland Group, said she spends each day thinking about what she can do to elevate women in hospitality. "Women dominate the bottom of the industry," Berg said. "We are 59 percent of all of hospitality's employees, and 65 percent or more of all hospitality industry college classes. Our pipeline is enormous and talented, but as you get to the VP level our representation falls to 29 percent, SVP is even lower and at the CEO level it's 4.5 percent." She is inspired each day by speaking with the people she is working to elevate, and is encouraged by the reception and interest she encounters while trying to make Castell Project a fixture in the industry. "The women we are working with are dynamite," Berg said. "I'm very interested in seeing the industry address this issue. I'll be working to get information out there." If Berg could offer any advice for women starting out in the hospitality industry, it would be this: "Burn no bridges. We are a small industry."



**JANIS CANNON, SVP, UPSCALE BRANDS, CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL**

Janis Cannon joined Choice Hotels International in April 2016 after serving as VP and global brand leader for InterContinental Hotels Group's upscale brand portfolio. At Choice, she now oversees the company's Ascend and Cambria brands. "I'm somebody that's never satisfied with the status quo," she said. "For me, the gift and the opportunity is really in the ability to create things that are new and different." Cannon seeks growth opportunities in people, Choice's brands and in the overall business, examining growing markets and determining what product will attract the right customers. "And our customers are both our franchisees or owner-operators as well as the guests that stay in our hotels," she said. "Where do we find who will be the right owner or investor to partner with us on building a hotel or placing a hotel in that market? And then with our existing properties and our existing assets, how do we help them leverage what we have available to them and so can make their business stronger?" When Choice opens a hotel, Cannon said, the company isn't just taking care of its guests but taking care of the property's employees—"people that might not have had the opportunity to have a job and have a safe environment to work in, in a place where they can progress. And so that to me probably drives me more than anything else."



**SONIA CHENG, CEO, ROSEWOOD HOTEL GROUP**

Sonia Cheng is not only the leader of Rosewood Hotel Group, she's also executive director of New World Development Company and New World China Land, which makes up one of the largest conglomerates in Hong Kong. Though there is a lot going on under the hood, Cheng said Rosewood's driving philosophy is "relationship hospitality," so it is important to her to stay personal in all aspects of the business. "As CEO, I am very focused on the vision and trajectory of the brand. I strive to foster meaningful relationships with everyone I work with and instill in them the confidence to connect on a similar level with their co-workers and our guests," she said. She admitted that the hospitality industry can be tremendously demanding. "I've learned that creativity, energy and sound decision-making are critical—and as a leader you have to give yourself the space and time to reflect and even consciously focus elsewhere periodically." Cheng uses that time away from the core business of hospitality to re-energize and come up with new ideas for keeping hospitality concepts fresh for guests. She said that inspiration is important because today's travelers are on the hunt for inspired experiences, which can only be delivered when there is an authentic connection between the guest and the brand. "Rosewood Hotel Group is my overwhelming passion and my greatest satisfaction is finding new ways to take our brands to the next level," Cheng said. "That's my favorite occupation!"





**MARY BETH CUTSHALL**, SVP & CHIEF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, HVMG

In many respects, leadership is about thinking ahead and connecting the dots that lead a company to success—dots that aren't always readily apparent. Mary Beth Cutshall has been hard at work in hospitality for more than 28 years, and she prides herself on being able to take creative ideas from her team and chart a path to completion. "I measure influence by someone's ability to help the industry shift and evolve," Cutshall said. "It also involves being a spokesperson for where that evolution is moving toward, where exactly it is evolving and being able to see and measure that shift." Cutshall joined HVMG in 2011 as VP of acquisitions and business development, and she said she never would have gotten to where she is today if she hadn't followed her intuition. "It was always there, and there were times I doubted it," she said. "Looking back, I would have listened to my intuition more—and I wouldn't have worn high heels as much as I did when I was younger! Twelve-hour days at conferences in high heels would eventually catch up to me!" Above everything, Cutshall is inspired by her two children, Bella and Dominic, and strives to be a role model for them. "There are other folks ahead on the path who are able to make things happen, and I draw energy from them, but being a role model for my kids and doing the best for them is my inspiration," she said.



**DOROTHY DOWLING**, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, BEST WESTERN HOTELS & RESORTS

As the person responsible for delivering the voice of a hotel brand to guests, Dorothy Dowling said she has to stay on top of emerging trends, technologies and the interests of the general public to keep hotels current. She makes use of modern technology in her daily life to have a better understanding of what it is guests are using at home—such as Alexa, Google Home and Xbox—to paint a picture of how these comforts can be put to use on the road. "A successful leader recognizes the importance of being able to influence individuals and understands that persuasive selling is part of all of our jobs," Dowling said. "Influencing also means helping our hoteliers understand the changes taking place in our industry and the impact they have on our brand, both in the long and short term." Dowling refers to relationships as the "currency of life," a philosophy that has served her well during her tenure in hospitality, and one she uses to find inspiration daily. "Relationships sustain you, fuel you and balance you. Invest in them as they will define your career and help you constantly evolve your thinking," she said. If she had any advice for the next generation of hoteliers, she would tell them to become a student of the hospitality "game," and immerse themselves in its lessons. "People with a high curiosity quotient have hungry minds and are highly inquisitive, open to new experiences and are agile," she said. "These are the people that will always rise to the top."



**KATHLEEN CHIECHI FLORES**, EVP, NEW BRANDS AND INNOVATION, TRUMP HOTELS

Earlier this year, Kathleen Chiechi Flores became the senior-most woman executive at Trump Hotels, where she serves as EVP of new brands and innovation. Previously, she has held positions in strategy, performance management, human resources and global communications. "In our industry, more than most, I do think it is easier to influence [others]," Flores said. "We unfortunately have seen a lot of 'me-too' initiatives—we tend to follow each other often rather than working to evolve a great concept. I like the idea of putting out great industry-leading initiatives and having others leverage that work to push our industry further in such a way that both the experience for hotel owners and consumers gets better and better every time. I strive to create an environment that not only rewards innovation, creativity and a strong work ethic, but also provides the team with the autonomy and the space to make great things happen," she said. "In providing a good example, and designing a work environment that allows associates to thrive, I am able to help set the stage for the creation and delivery of incredible work that hopefully drives not only our company but that also positively influences our industry." It is not surprising, then, that Flores' advice for the next generation of hoteliers is simple. "Innovate. Work with people that think differently, work differently. Take inspiration from other businesses, big and small, and strive to create something special."



**ANDREA FOSTER**, SVP DEVELOPMENT, MARCUS HOTELS & RESORTS

As a 20-year hospitality veteran, Andrea Foster is responsible for marketing Marcus Hotels & Resorts' management capabilities and identifying and securing potential acquisition, joint-venture and third-party management opportunities for the company. "First and foremost, I create advocates," Foster said. To do that, she collects information from her colleagues, and, in turn, provides information, rationale and background on any given project to the company. "As I do that, I communicate my passion for initiatives," she said. "It translates and resonates." Engagement, Foster believes, is the best metric of influence. "Engagement is demonstrated when others lean into an idea or opportunity," she said. "It could be your colleagues or your partners. When they lean in, you know your influence is successful and that it is resonating." Success, then, can be measured by everyone on the team winning. "I'm inspired by that win," she said. "I'm inspired to serve others. Life is service." But success in hospitality isn't all about teamwork, and women need self-confidence to succeed. "Don't be afraid to try new things, to be courageous, to never be afraid to fail, to pursue opportunities despite uncertainty, to trust your instincts," Foster said. "This approach, the idea of not being afraid, has served me well. I wish I had embraced it earlier." Setting an example for others—or walking the talk, as she describes it—is also vital. "As I am influencing others, I am setting the example I want to see," she said.




**KRISSY GATHRIGHT, EVP & COO, APPLE HOSPITALITY REIT**

For Krissy Gathright, influence is measured through demand and impact. “Influential individuals are those whose participation is in demand as their involvement is more likely to lead to a successful outcome,” she said. Having that successful outcome is what pushes her to do her best. “I am very passionate about driving innovation and using a team approach to find the most efficient and effective ways to create value,” she said. “I try to lead by example and am not afraid to dig into the details to uncover opportunities and to gain and share knowledge to maximize impact.” Gathright would love to see more women in leadership positions in the hospitality industry because she feels strongly that the sector would benefit as a result. “Considering that women play a very significant role in travel choice and experience, it only makes sense to me that the industry would be better served by having more women in senior leadership positions whose input can help improve the collective customer experience,” she said. Her advice for women seeking leadership roles starts with seeking greater knowledge, which often involves getting into the details. “Find a way to focus those learnings in an area you feel you can make an impact, especially where you have identified a need that has not been met. Challenge yourself to share your knowledge with those around you even in a public setting, which can at times be daunting.”


**CINDY ESTIS GREEN, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, KALIBRI LABS**

Cindy Estis Green launched Kalibri Labs—a data analytics company geared toward the hospitality industry—in 2012 after spending years in the field. As the CEO, she influences the company by staying connected to the team’s activities, promoting personal development for team members in their areas of discipline and acting as a spokesperson for the industry. “I have experience and a skill set in an area that I realized can help mitigate some challenges facing hospitality today,” she said. “I wake up every day and can’t wait to get to work and move a little closer to meeting the objectives of making a difference. I am very self-motivated and when I set my sights on a target, I have a lot of persistence and a lot of energy that I train on that objective. I try not to focus on the hurdles which are inevitably on the path; I just try to work through them quickly and keep my eye constantly on the finish line.” Green suggests that up-and-coming leaders focus more on where they go than on where they studied. “Keep in mind that what you end up doing for most of your career may not exist when you graduate from university, so don’t worry if the work you do in your first five years isn’t something you want to do for the next 20,” she said. “Find a path that makes you want to jump out of bed so you can get to it. When you learn what you love to spend time on, the career opportunities will be clearer and easier to achieve.”


**KATE HENRIKSEN, SVP OF INVESTMENT ANALYSIS AND PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT, RLJ LODGING TRUST**

In the hospitality industry, a thoughtful mentor goes a long way to a mentee’s success. Kate Henriksen was lucky enough to have two important mentors, both women, whom she points to as helping her along her way. Fifteen years now with real estate investment trust RLJ, and you can see their impact. She points to one, Anne Lloyd-Jones, whom Henriksen worked with at HVS. “I have been fortunate to work for companies and leaders that support professional women and their development,” Henriksen said. “When I was at HVS, many of the different offices were led by women.” Still, Henriksen said there is room in the hospitality industry for more women in leadership positions. “The floodgates haven’t opened, but the pipeline looks better,” she said. “There are a number of smart women coming up the ranks.” Henriksen is one. She plays a pivotal role in RLJ’s acquisition and divestment strategies and currently plays a part in RLJ’s merger with FelCor Lodging Trust. “My voice is heard,” she said. Sometimes, however, she has to speak louder, she said, in a business where men still have sway. “In order for my voice to be heard, I have to be more prepared and think three steps ahead,” Henriksen said. “There’s a need to show yourself and be firm because there are times when people might look to the male standing next to you, even if you are the one with the idea or responsibility.”


**LAURA HERZOG, VP OF PURCHASING, WYNN DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT**

Laura Herzog has held her position at Wynn for 11 years, and stays focused on her influence at the company. “I feel strongly that it is not always what we do, but how we do it that makes the greatest impression,” she said. “As a leader, you need to set an example and treat those around you with respect. From my own team to other departments within the company to outside vendors or manufacturers, I make every effort to value and fully understand all of their contributions and then coordinate the strengths of each to end at the best result.” Herzog said that in purchasing and project management, she has a measurable financial influence on the company daily. “From an industry standpoint, reputation and relationships are assets that are critically important. Expertise, rational approach and integrity are part of a foundation that continues to build and develop,” she said. “I measure the concept of personal influence by the company I keep, by how I contribute to the success of those around me, and by intending to leave every situation better than I found it.” While the path to leadership hasn’t always been smooth, Herzog appreciates the challenges she has overcome. “Every bump in the road, every travesty, every challenge creates your path in life,” she said. “In fact, I would argue that the challenges and hard lessons learned are even more influential than the successes in many cases. I have made mistakes, but I can’t say that I regret them as they have all contributed to where I am right now.”





EVENT COVERAGE NASHVILLE

**AMANDA HITE**, PRESIDENT & CEO, STR

Amanda Hite had a nontraditional entry into the hospitality industry. The former director of research for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce joined STR in 2006 at the behest of founder Randy Smith without a formal job description or any particular responsibilities. Her sole focus the first year? Learn the industry and the inner workings of STR. “I think it was brave on both parts,” she said. “It speaks to the culture of STR. It’s about the environment and the people and when Randy sees someone that is very good, we make sure that we seize the talent and we’ll figure out what we need and what we can teach them.” Five short years after joining STR, Hite was promoted to president and COO of the company, then was promoted again in 2016 to her current role. Her advice for aspiring leaders is to always focus on communication. “Articulating what you want and what you’re interested in is so important from day one of entering the workforce,” she said. “People don’t tell you to do that enough. For me, growing up in the South as a woman, we definitely were not taught to be super-vocal in professional settings and that was something that I learned quickly. It’s so important to make sure that people know you’re interested so that you are considered for opportunities. That’s how you learn and get the support you need to keep growing.”

**LISA HOLLADAY**, VP & GLOBAL BRAND LEADER, RITZ-CARLTON, ST. REGIS, RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE, BULGARI

The head of the Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis Hotels & Resorts, Ritz-Carlton Reserve and Bulgari Hotels & Resorts brands spent 12 years “growing up” at Mercedes-Benz USA before joining the hotel industry—and she is right where she wants to be. “My current position is my dream job,” she said. “With my role at Marriott International, I’m fortunate to be able to combine my passion for travel and luxury brands. I made the change from the automotive industry to hospitality because I believe in the power of travel to break down barriers and build connections with others.” In Holladay’s opinion, alignment is more important than influence, at least internally. “I try to create a culture of transparency and positivity,” she said. “If we all have what is best for our company, brands and teams as a priority, it is about sharing our passion and perspective to come to the best decisions.” Holladay attributes part of her success to mentors she has had over the years, beginning with her parents. “I strive to seek out those individuals who have expertise in diverse areas and are willing to share their time and experience with me,” she said. “Learning from their experience and using their successes as motivation have helped me grow and achieve personal and professional goals.” Her advice for women who want to become leaders? “Seize every opportunity you have, be curious, ask questions and listen.”

**AMY JAKUBOWSKI**, MANAGING DIRECTOR, DESIGN DIRECTOR, WILSON ASSOCIATES

To influence her team at Wilson Associates, Amy Jakubowski does everything, including taking out the garbage. “I try to mentor, teach and inspire,” she said. “I proactively approach every challenge with a positive attitude.” True influence goes beyond completing a successful project, but can be found in the moments when an individual challenges her client or her company to get successful results. “When your client can embrace a new idea, it’s exciting,” she said. “As designers, we should always challenge and guide. We’re not just guiding to be trendy, but guiding away from matching the next trend. Everyone is chasing after the next Moxy, but you want to be ahead of that. Be the innovator.” To that end, Jakubowski tries to stay on top of “everything” and asks lots of questions. “What is the new thing? How does it apply here—or does it even apply here? We have to question ourselves when we look at new ideas. Am I being trendy and cute? Am I solving the problem for this hotel and client? Is this the right material and application for this project? We have to look at it from big to micro.” Asking these kinds of questions is vital for success, Jakubowski believes. “There are no stupid questions, and the more you learn, the better you will be,” she said. “I drove people insane with my questions, but you learn from it. We have a lot to learn and we want to share and pass it along.”

**ALEXANDRA JARITZ**, GLOBAL HEAD, TRU BY HILTON

As a brand strategist and marketing expert, Alexandra Jaritz is driving the development of Hilton’s new Tru brand—but she doesn’t like to call herself an influencer. “Influence sounds like a singular action,” she said. Instead, she listens, guides and inspires colleagues, team members, franchise owners and external agency partners. “I like to say we make each other better,” she said. “By first listening to their perspectives, I have a solid foundation to make decisions, and ultimately they’re more vested in the outcomes. This allows me—and all of us—to continue to disrupt the midscale segment in meaningful ways. Is this influence? Sure. But it’s born of so much more.” Jaritz encourages the next generation of leaders to find a strong work-life balance. “I haven’t always been good at this, but I am getting much, much better now thanks to my 6-year-old daughter,” she said. “I have learned how to prioritize, what to prioritize and what to let go. The healthier I am with this better balance, the more productive I am at work. The more fun I have in life, the stronger mind I have day-to-day. I wish those starting out in the industry today understood that this balance fuels both your creative and analytical sides. Words like joy and love are not just fluff words; they are critical to work into your daily life in meaningful ways.”





**ANGELA KOROMPILAS**  
PRESIDENT AND  
CEO, AMERICAN  
HOTEL REGISTER  
COMPANY

We've highlighted Angela Korompilas, the president and CEO of American Hotel Register Company, in these pages before. So it was a no-brainer that she'd crack our list of influential women in hospitality. Korompilas

has been with the company for 20-plus years, assumed the CEO role in 2014 and is now not only undertaking a SAP transformation, but expanding the company globally into Asia. If anyone knows a thing or two about what it takes to succeed on the highest rungs of the corporate ladder, it's her. "Opportunities do exist now at the senior level within the hospitality industry," she said. "But when I started out 20 years ago, there weren't as many women in senior-level roles." That has certainly changed and Korompilas is representative of that. She credits much of her success not to what she says, but what she hears. "It starts with listening and understanding the needs of your customers, associates and suppliers," she said. Beyond her attentiveness, Korompilas' strength as a leader comes through in the passion she shows for her job. "It is pretty obvious to those who spend time with me and that can be infectious and contagious," she said of her zeal. Her biggest piece of advice for those making their way in the industry is to always nurture your reputation. "It's the one thing you can control," she said. "People will always remember you."



**KAY LANG**  
PRINCIPAL IN  
CHARGE, KAY LANG  
+ ASSOCIATES

Kay Lang has been designing hotels for more than 30 years. As principal in charge of the Kay Lang + Associates design firm, she has overseen the creation of independent properties in Southern California, like Paséa

Resort & Spa in Huntington Beach and Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara. When creating a hotel, Lang provides hand sketches during the conceptual and schematic design phases and selects and supervises the color palette through the architectural interior design development and construction documentation. "My leadership style is to inspire, be a generous listener and empower my design group to maximize their unique talents," she said. "I enjoy people, I enjoy what I do, and I tend to smile a lot. I start off each day with a positive attitude and work to create an inclusive environment filled with enthusiasm, creativity and innovation." Lang credits her creativity to her drive. "I never imagine anything other than a successful outcome at the start of each project or initiative," she said. "If the outcome is not as positive as I expected, then I closely examine what I could have done differently. I continually look for opportunities to improve my effectiveness." Lang measures her influence by the recognition of creativity and connectivity to the community in which the projects are located. "I believe that having an unwavering commitment 'to think design differently' and design places or things that impact design beyond just the initial aesthetics is essential," she said.



**STEPHANIE LINNARTZ**  
GLOBAL CHIEF COMMERCIAL  
OFFICER, MARRIOTT  
INTERNATIONAL

Being a strong and effective leader can be challenging at times, but it is also incredibly rewarding, according to Stephanie Linnartz. "I feel very lucky to be surrounded by many strong female leaders at Marriott International and around the travel and hospitality industry in general," she said. "We are all challenged with insecurities of different kinds—no human is immune from that feeling—but it's how we acknowledge those insecurities, persevere despite them and leverage our strengths that really defines us as leaders. It's also about women helping other women—this has always been very important to me throughout my life, whether in school growing up or throughout my professional career—it's about having each other's back and celebrating each other's successes." Linnartz said Marriott doesn't just talk the talk about advancement of women, it walks the walk. "Today, nearly 30 percent of our board of directors is comprised of women, four of our CEO's direct reports are women and we have eight women leading business divisions," she said. "I know a big part of my success at Marriott International is due to the support and friendship I received from various women over the years, especially during some tougher times when I didn't really know how I was going to balance the extensive travel and being a mother to young children." No matter what challenges Linnartz faces, she is sure of one thing: "There's never been a more exciting time to work in the hospitality industry."

## CONGRATULATIONS TO MARY BETH CUTSHALL



ON BEING HONORED AS  
ONE OF THE  
30 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN  
IN HOSPITALITY.

Your leadership as our  
Chief Business Development  
Officer has been most  
appreciated.

YOUR HVMG FAMILY LOOKS FORWARD  
TO YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS.

**HV** HOSPITALITY VENTURES  
**MG** MANAGEMENT GROUP



Finally, everyone  
in the industry  
has learned what  
we've known for  
years.

Congratulations to our CMO,  
Marina MacDonald, one of the most  
influential women in hospitality.

**RedRoof** | **RedRoofPlus+**




**KATHERINE LUGAR, PRESIDENT & CEO, AMERICAN HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION**

Having spent more than 20 years working in private-sector public affairs in Washington, D.C., Katherine Lugar stepped into the role of president and CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging Association with the goal of using the legislative process to improve the lives of hoteliers across the U.S. Achieving that goal isn't something that can be done by accident, and Lugar said she strives to set high expectations for her employees while reminding them to stay focused on their core mission of helping hoteliers. "As leaders, we have to set the tone and create the culture within our organizations," Lugar said. "We have to praise success, provide encouragement and offer support when it's needed." As someone whose life has revolved around advocacy, Lugar said she looks at influence both quantitatively ("Have we achieved the results we wanted to achieve?") and qualitatively ("What kinds of stories are we hearing from industry leaders and people on the ground?"). However, no man—or woman—is an island, and Lugar said she didn't get to this point on her own. She credits her success to the number of voices and perspectives that have informed her decision-making, and she has used them to feed her gut instinct. "The biggest mistakes I've made were when I knew the right answer to something and I didn't listen because I wanted to make someone else happy," Lugar said. "In an industry as diverse as ours, there are a lot of different opinions. Do a lot of listening, and find common ground."


**MARINA MACDONALD, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, RED ROOF INN**

Leading the charge for women leaders in hospitality is a role Marina MacDonald has filled throughout her career. Last year she launched Red Roof's first-ever women's forum to connect women across the company, share knowledge and insights on specific skill sets and encourage entrepreneurial and leadership positions within the industry. "We had an intimate group of 80 women and it was by all accounts a great success," she said. "We're actually doing another session at our brand conference this year and then we'll have a follow-up conference in 2018." Earlier this year she was awarded the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Paving the Way award for her efforts to encourage women to grow their careers and pursue leadership roles. Her influence is widespread, but how does she herself measure influence? "You measure influence by affecting change," she said. "If you can change attitudes or enlighten folks to a different mindset that sparks a change in their behavior, that is influence." The future for women in hospitality is extremely bright and there are endless possibilities, according to MacDonald. "There is nothing in this industry that women can't do. Hard work and continuous learning will bring success," she said. "I've been pleased by the influx of women leaders at Red Roof and specifically I take great pride in trailblazing, mentoring women for future growth and exciting career paths. I love when I see people move up in their career and I had a part in that."



## CONGRATULATIONS TO KAY LANG



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**MELISSA MAHER**, SVP, GLOBAL PARTNER GROUP, EXPEDIA

Melissa Maher, a high-ranking leader at Expedia, has made it a personal goal of hers to elevate women in leadership within the hospitality and tech industries. She's at the forefront of a new program at Expedia, Leading For Change, with those exact goals. "Right now we are focusing internally on some cool initiatives as well as processes and procedures to help women within [Expedia]," Maher said. "After that, we have plans to extend further into the industry. We would love to be a thought leader in this space." Because Expedia is an online travel agent, Maher said it is important to be nimble and accepting of change, and she finds inspiration in watching her team adapt to influence the industry from the outside. In many ways, Maher is beating the same drum as other leaders at her company, and she draws on the influence of her team, her partners and her leaders, such as recently departed Expedia CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, who Maher said is constantly innovating, thinking about change and taking risks. "They helped change the culture around me to be about testing and learning," she said. "I really enjoyed and adapted to that. It led me to that winning attitude." She said it is important for women who wish to be successful to build upon their personal brand as they grow in experience, and to never stop trying new things. "As I look back on when I started out, I would have taken more risks."

**GAIL MANDEL**, PRESIDENT & CEO, WYNDHAM DESTINATION NETWORK

Gail Mandel is the first woman CEO ever at a Wyndham Worldwide company, a distinction she doesn't boast about, but one, nonetheless, she is rightfully proud of. "I do recognize my role as a role model for others within the organization, but I've always been one to not focus on the female side of my career. The principles that I apply go across gender," Mandel said. As the leader of one of the world's largest providers of vacation accommodations, Mandel said she is guided by five principals, with number-one on the list most distinctive: kill them with competence. "Oftentimes, women feel intimidated when they walk into a room and they're the only woman. By being able to have all the facts straight, that's critical, and that's how I think," she said. Other attributes are exuding confidence, being a good listener, being authentic and emulating great leaders (she cited Wyndham Worldwide CEO Stephen Holmes as one leader she admires and has had great impact on her career). In regard to influence, Mandel said she measures impact by efficacy and achievement of results, citing organic growth of 200 basis points since she assumed her role three years ago. For those coming up, Mandel's advice is rooted in practicality and bluntness. "If you're determined, have the skills and follow some of those principles I outlined, you can be successful, but there's not one formula that works for everybody," she said. "I make choices about my work-life balance, and what works for me and for my family may not work for the next person."



# Congratulations to **ALEXANDRA JARITZ** ON BEING HONORED AS ONE OF THE **30 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY.**

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**JAGRUTI PANWALA**, SECRETARY, ASIAN AMERICAN HOTEL OWNERS ASSOCIATION

"Always be prepared." It's good advice no matter what it is you are doing, but as secretary of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, Jagruti Panwala must be prepared every day as she exerts influence within a group that holds sway over a large swath of the hospitality industry. "No matter what, doing your homework beforehand so that you're knowledgeable going in is always a good thing. I may not know everything about everything, but I like to be prepared when I meet with others or when I'm presenting." Before you can influence, Panwala said, first you must listen. AAHOA has more than 16,000 members, and the needs of these members are diverse and can change from day to day. "I also seek to cultivate strong relationships with the people who work with and for me, industry professionals who are smarter and more knowledgeable than I am and the people who I work for—the consumers." This is important to Panwala because AAHOA as an organization wields a significant measure of influence within hospitality at large, and Panwala's role with the group has helped expand AAHOA's reach and audience, particularly among women hoteliers. "The people I help every day to achieve their personal goals motivate me to do well," Panwala said. "I also want to be a good role model for my children and the young professionals in the hospitality industry. They are my biggest inspiration."

**ALLISON REID**, CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, KIMPTON HOTELS & RESTAURANTS

As CDO at Kimpton, Allison Reid is focused on qualitative growth. "We're focused on growing our footprint in an authentic and meaningful way," she said. "The best way to influence Kimpton is to continually evaluate the market dynamics, listen to your clients and then clearly communicate the unique opportunities and challenges throughout the organization." The best way to influence people, she believes, is to listen to them. "Understand what's important to them, what they need to get done and what motivates them," she said. "Only then can you determine how you can accomplish your goals and objectives by being a true partner with your clients, customers and internal resources." The entire hotel development process is inspirational in and of itself, Reid said, with many people from different fields working together for months, if not years, to see a project through to grand opening. "A new hotel project can transform a neighborhood, providing countless job opportunities, and involves a great deal of creativity," she said. For the future, Reid encourages up-and-coming hoteliers to understand revenue management—and not just the financial side. "You need to know what motivates your customer and how that changes over the years," she said. "It's important to keep on top of trends impacting their buying decisions. The leaders will be the ones who can be nimble and able to react and adjust quickly as the marketplace changes, well before the competition."

# AHLA and AHLEF Congratulate KATHERINE LUGAR and all the women nominated for this year's 30 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY.

With their leadership we continue to drive forward  
and ensure a successful future for our industry,  
our employees and our valued guests.






**MICHELLE RUSSO, FOUNDER & CEO, HOTELAVE**

In 2003, Michelle Russo founded Hotel Asset Value Enhancement, and since then she has provided standards for the company to ensure high partner and client satisfaction. It's a complicated job, but Russo said she stays on top of things by constantly learning from, engaging with and sharing within the company to "pro-act" and not react to situations. "I have found the best way to influence [within the industry] is through data," Russo said. "[Data] is not emotional... it removes subjectivity. My experience is that data helps create a good partnership to develop and manage the actions to achieve the opportunities." It should come as no surprise that Russo considers herself a puzzle solver, and finding both new solutions and new problems to solve are the largest driving forces behind her success. On top of that, Russo relishes the opportunity to be a part of a team that has material impact on the value creation for a hotel. If she were to offer any advice to her younger self, and by proxy those starting out in the industry, it would be to find your passion and to create your own franchise value and become known in the space you work in. "They say 'find your passion and never work another day in your life,'" Russo said. "It took me over 10 years to find my passion."


**STACY SILVER, PRESIDENT, SILVER HOSPITALITY GROUP**

If there is someone in the hospitality industry you don't know, chances are Stacy Silver does. And if you'd like to meet that person, Silver is the lady who can get it done. All in a day's work for the former editor turned industry relations consultant—though, if you ask her, that is not her preferred moniker. Quite simply, Silver is a connector, and that's how she describes what she does. "I try to understand what people do, what they need and how to help them find that," she said. "Whether it's connecting someone for a new position or introducing two companies that I think would work well together, it's really about connecting people that would work well together." If you happen into any hospitality-focused event, there's a good chance you'll see Silver there, at someone's arm, making sure he or she is talking to the right people. She was able to forge relationships during her time in media, when she'd meet and interview future C-suite execs. "I had the access and they trust me," said Silver, who has a goal of meeting four new people at every event she attends. She counts Marilyn Carlson Nelson, the former CEO of Carlson, as a mentor and inspiration. "Before everyone started talking about work-life balance, Marilyn was talking about how it's important to not just make time for your career, but to make time for your family. I still follow her tips today," Silver said.

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**JULIENNE SMITH**, SVP OF REAL ESTATE AND DEVELOPMENT, HYATT HOTELS CORPORATION

It's a miracle that Julieanne Smith, the SVP of real estate and development for Hyatt Hotels Corporation, not only has the time to do her job, but acquit herself so well within the position. She's a wife, a mother, a mainstay within her yoga community, on her homeowners association board and volunteers in the playroom of a local children's hospital. "And that was just this week," she wryly said. While all the activity can sometimes overwhelm Smith, to hear it from her, she'd not want it any other way. "It is a bit of a self-centered reaction," she continued. "But if I get out of myself and think about others genuinely, I don't feel overwhelmed. My balance comes from making myself useful to others and that starts with taking care of myself first. The airplane instruction of 'put your mask on before putting it on someone else' is 100-percent true." Smith has certainly showed composure and vigor in her 12 years at Hyatt, having been integral in literally writing the book on franchising at the Chicago-headquartered company. Hyatt didn't broadly franchise before 2005, but Smith helped launch Hyatt's select-service brands, laying the groundwork for Hyatt Place and Hyatt House. "We started at zero and a PowerPoint deck," she said. Today, there are more than 350 Hyatt-branded select-service properties worldwide. How she did it? "It's about the details, getting into the weeds, in the trenches," she said. "It's about rolling up your sleeves and being authentic. That drives hotel development."



**LINDSEY UEBERROTH**, PRESIDENT & CEO, PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Question everything. Keep open communication. Empower people to speak their mind. Those are the main tenets that Lindsey Ueberroth, leader of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, believes lead to success. Ueberroth said that she urges fledgling hospitality leaders to seek out mentors and create a support net for inspiration and education because good ideas are everywhere. She speaks from experience, and talks a lot about movement, polling and listening to keep visibility high and ears open for new ideas, because a global company like Preferred—with 35 offices around the world—has a wealth of employees who need to feel heard and updated on the status of the company, industry trends and approaching competition. "When it comes to influence, you can look at results but also the speed at which we are able to innovate," Ueberroth said. "There is so much competition in the hospitality space, so the fact that we are able to keep up and evolve is really a measure of our influence." Ueberroth describes her team as part of her family, which helps inspire her to keep listening and doing more for them every chance she gets. "We have incredible talent, and I work very hard because it's like a family to me," she said. "You want to be proud of who you work for."



## Congratulations to Kay Lang

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