

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN HOTEL + LODGING ASSOCIATION

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LODGING

BUILDING A
BRAND
8 INGREDIENTS
TO SUCCESS

KEYS TO
EFFECTIVELY
HANDLE A
CRISIS

TUNE UP
YOUR HOTEL
TO GET MORE
REVENUE

CAPTURE
MORE
LEISURE
BUSINESS

A GUIDE TO WHAT
YOUR GUESTS ARE
LOOKING FOR **NOW**

JAMIE SABATIER
PRESIDENT AND COO,
DESTINATION HOTELS & RESORTS

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Checking in Lindsey Ueberroth



FAST FACTS

Title: CEO, Preferred Hotel Group

Years with company: 10

First hotel job: Management trainee, DoubleTree Pasadena

Hometown: Newport Beach, Calif.

Hotel must-haves: Good hairdryer, good bathroom lighting, good WiFi, and easy-to-access outlets

Best advice she ever got: "It's better to be tired than bored. The minute you're bored, you've lost your passion."

IN FEBRUARY, PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP announced the promotion of Lindsey Ueberroth, 38, to CEO. The move is part of a carefully planned and anticipated succession of leadership as the independent hotel company enters its 10th year of private ownership by the Ueberroth family. In 2013, Preferred generated \$834 million in revenue on behalf of member hotels—an increase of 14 percent over 2012—and welcomed 126 new properties. With Lindsey at the helm, the company is in a prime position to grow.

What are your key goals as CEO?

I want to continue to build on the momentum of everything we have achieved to date and set the tone for the next 10 years. There are certain things we're very focused on—the Chinese market is one we're putting a lot of effort into. I'd love to continue to see a lot more hard flags go independent. We're putting a lot of focus on our development team to not only be able to do that but really be able to support it so it's truly a viable option for hoteliers. I want to elevate Preferred Hotel Group's profile to be one that's synonymous with an iconic global hospitality brand. At the end of the day, it's about driving financial success to our hotel partners.

What's in the pipeline for 2014?

We've planned out about 125 new properties, which is pretty strong growth. We're trying to get into markets that we may not have as strong of a presence right now. Definitely Latin America is a big focus for us—we've got a nice presence down there but we would like to grow it; parts of the Middle East and northeastern Africa that are starting to grow pretty rapidly; and obviously China alone will add quite a few hotels.

How has the relaunch of Preferred's guest loyalty program strengthened the company?

The relaunch of iPrefer was a big marker for the company last year. Being the first independent hotel company to have a global points-based program has definitely caught people's eye. It's been successful in a lot of ways. We're seeing a lot of new members join, and we're seeing the buying behavior change. Ownership and manage-

ment companies that previously may not have considered an independent because they know how important these loyalty programs are have been a plus for us.

Do you think there will be a bigger shift of branded hotels becoming independent?

More and more hotel owners are really recognizing the value proposition of being independent and working with a soft brand like Preferred. And more than ever, you see all the chains are getting into the "independent" world, so the consumer really likes this authentic, one-of-a-kind experience.

How does it impact you when the major brands want a piece of the soft branding pie?

Competition is always healthy. It's funny, 10 years ago when my family got into the business, our competition was the other soft brands, and now today we are competing head on with the chains. So on one hand, I could say it's flattering that they recognized it's a growing segment, and it's what the consumer wants. On the other hand, it keeps us on our toes. But I definitely see this as a positive thing.

What are some key ingredients to running a successful family business?

We've worked with several outside consultants who helped us put in place best practices, and a lot of that is creating boundaries and having family meetings. We put a lot of effort into making sure we can separate the two, so when we spend time as a family, we're just enjoying our time together, and it's not all about work.

BOTTOM LINE

\$834
MILLION

Revenue Preferred Hotel Group generated in 2013 on behalf of its member hotels, an increase of 14 percent over 2012. The company represents 650 independent hotels, resorts, and serviced residences in 85 countries.