

S L O W

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A Globe-Trotting CEO

The title of Chief Executive Officer is a big deal – it's a heavy burden for anyone to carry. With the vision, direction, success, and actions of a company resting squarely on the CEO's shoulders, the position should come with a "Warning: Stress" sign. Not having met many CEOs, I expected them all to be over-tired, caffeine addicts, racing through life trying to keep their fingers on all the pulses.

Meeting the CEO of Preferred Hotels and Resorts, Lindsey Ueberroth, was a completely different experience. The pristine calm of Ueberroth's demeanour meant that our chat went off without a hitch, and I got a look inside the life of a modern-day Superwoman.

It was a sunny afternoon at Boschendal Farm, a Preferred Hotels & Resorts member in the wineland region of the Western Cape. The illustrious hotel brand was celebrating its 50th anniversary with a global road trip, visiting a selection of their very best properties. We all sat down to an impressive presentation on the immense scope of Preferred's network – a truly global company. Lunch was served, and over glasses of wine, we all got to know the charismatic leader of one of the most impressive independent hotel portfolios in the world.

Born in Tarzana, California, Ueberroth explained that her early life was filled with travel. "My father has always been in the travel and hospitality business, so as a result, we ended up moving [to] and living in some really unique places." She went on to explain that she attended high school in Hawaii, and

after that she chose Forest Wake University in North Carolina as her *alma mater*. "At that stage in my life, I did not know that I would want to be in the hospitality industry, but I did grow up in it. Every holiday was spent travelling – visiting the hotels just as much as the local sites. Hospitality was in my blood, I just didn't know to what extent."

Ueberroth explained that her father, John, was very clever in involving her in the business. He would take her to business meetings and on business trips, asking her opinion more and more as she got older. After the year 2000, John increasingly started acquiring travel-related businesses and Ueberroth found herself "accidentally" working for her father. "I did Change Management, and that's really what he needed help with, and that began my first foray into the travel business."

The hotel business was a different story. "My father was approached by Preferred, which used to be owned by the hotel members, and after 9/11, they were looking for someone to buy or take over the company. My father was very smart and said, 'It would be really cool if you'd come to a few meetings with me.' And I fell hook, line, and sinker for the company and for what it did."

The role of mentorship has played a particularly large role in Ueberroth's career, and it's something that she is proud to say Preferred Hotels and Resorts has taken on-board too. "My dad is definitely at the top of the list of my mentors. I tell fathers this all the time: They can make all the difference in a daughter's life. My father always taught

me that I could do anything that I wanted."

When asked about whether having a mentor was important in her industry, she replied, "It's critical. I have lots of mentors and they support me in different facets of my life, and I think that having a business mentor is particularly great." Preferred Hotels and Resorts does not have an official mentorship programme, but it is "worked it into the company culture", according to Ueberroth, and one of her right-hand men is proof of that. Saurabh Rai, Executive Vice President for South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Australasia, started at the company in 2008 "at almost base-level" and, through mentorship from more senior staff members, now sits in one of the highest positions at Preferred Hotels.

Ueberroth champions young talent at Preferred Hotels and Resorts and says that her company values loyalty, and makes sure to grow talent within the business structure.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary, Preferred Hotels & Resorts has launched a Golden Anniversary offer. Throughout 2018, guests will be rewarded with the best available rate, plus a USD\$50 hotel credit or a complimentary 50-minute activity at more than 250 participating hotels around the world.

For more information on the Preferred Hotels and Resorts portfolio, please visit www.preferredhotels.com.

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