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## Preferred retires Summit, Sterling in a restructure

By Raini Hamdi

PREFERRED Hotel Group (PHG) has restructured its entire portfolio, a move which sees its established brands Summit Hotels and Resorts and Sterling Hotels being retired effective today (Thursday).

In the biggest change since the Ueberroth family acquired the company 10 years ago, all 650 member hotels have been moved to one master brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, under five collections: Legend, LVX (luxury), Lifestyle, Connect and Preferred Residences.



Ueberroth: clarity

President and CEO Lindsey Ueberroth, told *the Daily* yesterday that changing consumer trends, and hotel chains moving into the space by launching collections that cater to independent hotels, triggered the restructuring.

"We thought it was the perfect time for us to clarify our brand, take a legacy brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, which is the most well-known, and elevate it with a strong consumer awareness," said Ueberroth.

"By taking one master brand and creating five collections under it, it would be more intuitive for consumers, who look for different styles of luxury when travelling. When you're travelling with your family, it is different from when you travel with your spouse, for example."

Ueberroth also believes travel

consultants will find the new portfolio to be "much simpler, streamlined and intuitive".

"In addition, we are layering on new experiences like art and culture, wellness, food and wine, adventure, which will enable consultants to better cater to clients. Today, travellers don't just say 'I want to go to Hawaii'. They say 'I enjoy wellness or food and wine, and I'm open (to ideas)'. We have 650 hotels that cater to those experiences."

Asked if Summit and Sterling are up for sale since they have brand equity, she said: "Right now we have no plans to sell them, but who knows what might happen down the road."

She admitted there was "a bit of sadness" among Summit and Sterling partners to part with a brand they have had for 25 years "but once we communicated it to them, all our partners thought this was really a good move".

The challenge now is to communicate it as well to consumers and the travel trade, she said.

Aloysius Lee, CEO of South Beach hotel in Singapore, a new Preferred member, said the development will be under the LVX collection. "We perceive this (move) would allow PHG to focus on different market segments for the respective properties. We expect PHG to drive better results as a result of the rebranding exercise," said Lee.

## Show-stopping sellers

Eugene Tang catches up with sellers as business on the ITB Berlin show floor gets into full swing



Furama Chiang Mai's Wirachart Watthaphanich, Furama Hotels International Management's Shirlena Tan, and Furama RiverFront Singapore's Gerard Lim



Preferred Hotels & Resorts takes a new direction (see page 1). From left: Lindsey Ueberroth, John Ueberroth and Gail Ueberroth

