

# Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure Index

The 2020 Edition from WiHTL and The MBS Group



# Foreword

Over the last few years the hospitality, travel and leisure industry has made significant progress towards the creation of diverse and inclusive environments and taken progressive steps in particular in terms of gender representation at leadership level. The impact of the pandemic in 2020, which has seen the industry endure multiple lockdowns, extensive restructuring, furloughing, home working and subsequently a recession, has had a disproportionate effect on women and people from ethnic minorities, severely interrupting or putting on hold careers and slowing down or stopping altogether investment in future leaders. However, if we are able to harness the benefits and mitigate the risks, this crisis might be the catalyst for more positive gendered and ethnic change. The Index highlights the broad and deep female talent pool we have within our industry and aims to inspire more women to pursue a career within the sector and to reach the most senior levels within their organisation.

The business imperative and competitive advantage from realising women's and all underrepresented groups' potential across the industry remains strong and it is against this background that I am delighted to launch the 2020 Edition of the Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index.

This second edition of the Index has once again unearthed the rich and diverse female talent we have across our industry,

highlighting the profiles of women distinguished for their commercial and operational excellence, industry and social impact, achievements, resilience and commitment to the industry. The aim of the Index is to share their stories which will undoubtedly inspire other women to join and progress within the industry.

For the first time, we have also identified a group of Advocates for Change, men and women who are passionate about promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace and through their words and actions create the momentum for cultural shift and tangible results across their respective organisation and the whole hospitality, travel and leisure industry.

The Index is not exhaustive or definitive, and was compiled by soliciting nominations from a variety of different sources. All those featured in the Index have been interviewed by the MBS team and have been included on the basis of rigorous criteria. I am forever grateful to the team at The MBS Group for their unwavering commitment and dedication to highlighting the stories and showcasing the varied careers of these formidable and talented people. I would like to thank Elliott Goldstein, Sam Seigler and all at The MBS Group for their insight and support.



**Tea Colaianni**  
Founder and Chair  
WiHTL

# Introduction

The MBS Group is once again delighted to partner with WiHTL to launch the Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure Index for 2020.

Following on from last year's inaugural Index, this publication aims to highlight the depth and breadth of female talent in the sector – not profiling the 'top' women, but instead demonstrating that inspiring individuals can be found from all parts of the sector, across all disciplines and functions.

2020 has been one of the most turbulent years the hospitality, travel and leisure sector has ever seen. Earlier this year, research from The MBS Group, WiHTL and PwC found that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women and those from ethnic minorities in the sector, and that diversity and inclusion strategies have slipped down the corporate agenda as leaders focus on business survival. Notably, strong female or ethnic minority role models have exited, budgets to achieve D&I goals have been slashed, and initiatives to encourage diversity have been put on hold.

With this in mind, it is now more important than ever to highlight – and celebrate – the diverse range of women demonstrating excellence in their field in hospitality, travel and leisure. Over the course of the last few months, we have sought nominations from the sector, identifying women who stand out from their peer group and excel in any one of the following areas: leadership, commercial impact, entrepreneurialism and innovation, making a wider contribution to the sector or making a wider contribution to society at large.

Previous research from The MBS Group found that, despite significant progress over the last three years, only 31.2% of senior leadership roles are filled by women in HTL, and that a significant barrier to progression for women in the industry is a lack of visible role models. By highlighting these phenomenal individuals, it is my hope that this Index will inspire ambitious women to pursue a career in the sector – whether that's joining from outside or continuing to progress within it.

This year, we have also included a selection of Advocates for Change: 10 men and women who are playing a central role in moving the dial on diversity in hospitality, travel and leisure. These leaders are committed to creating a culture of inclusion and belonging, and are leveraging their senior positions to drive lasting positive change.

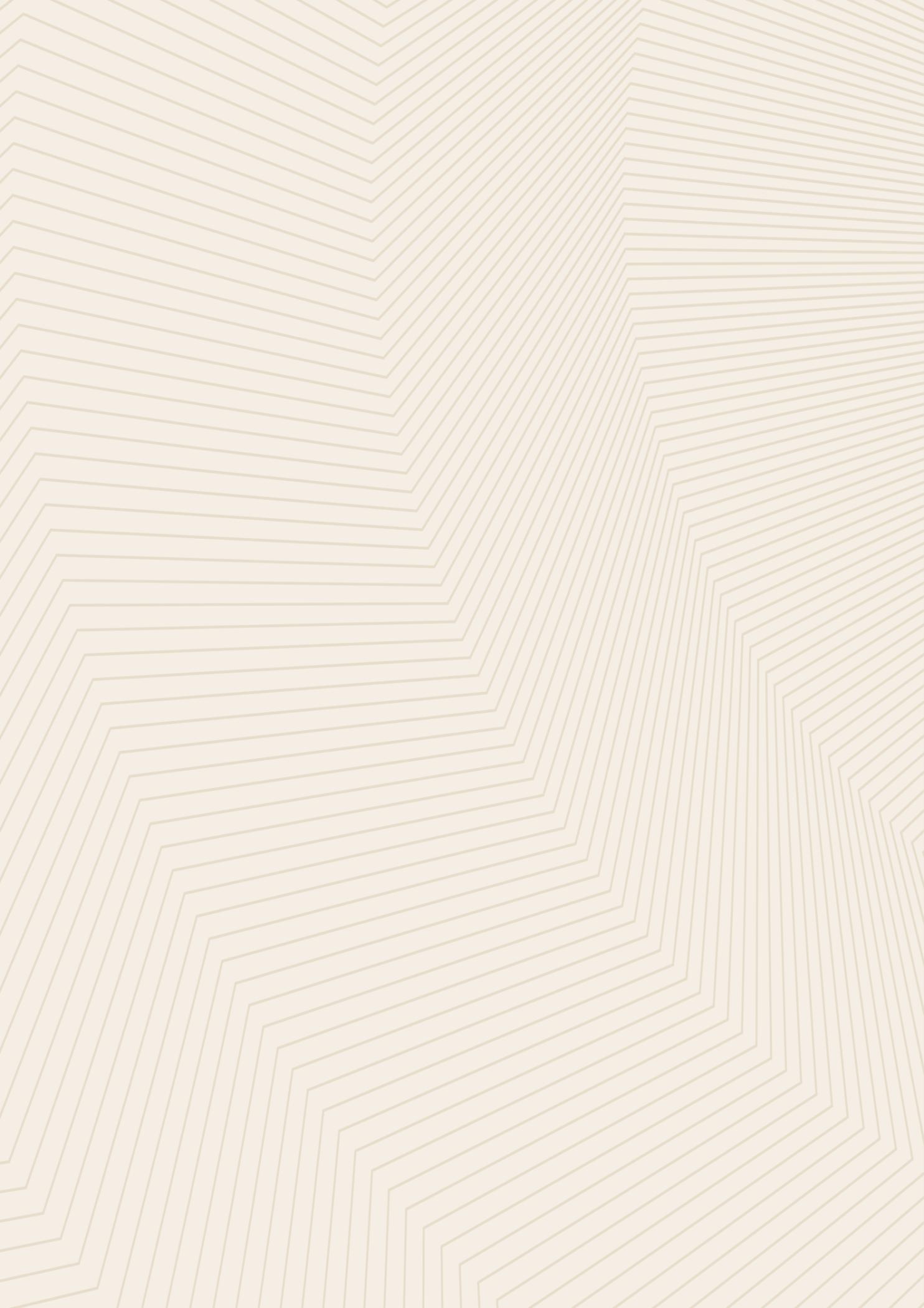
In what has otherwise been a challenging year, it has been a privilege to hear the stories of the Women to Watch and Advocates for Change. Through every conversation, I've been struck by the optimism and passion that exists in the sector.

Finally, I would like to thank Tea Colaianni, whose passion and commitment to diversity is an inspiration to us all. Through WiHTL, she is pushing the sector forward in a real and practical way.



**Sam Seigler**

Director, Hospitality,  
Travel and Leisure  
The MBS Group



# Women to Watch

## Inspiring female role models from across the industry

Over the past few months, we have sought nominations for distinguished women from the hospitality, travel and leisure sector. These women were nominated and selected because of their inspiring leadership, their commercial impact, their track record for entrepreneurialism and innovation

or their wider contribution to the sector or society at large. This index is not exhaustive, nor ranked in any way, but instead aims to demonstrate the depth and breadth of female talent that exists in the sector, across all disciplines and functions.



# Yusra Ali

Company WiHTL / Oxford Brookes University / Job Title Member of the Advisory Board / Final year student, BSc. (Hons) in International Hospitality Management



I grew up in Dubai, where hospitality is all around you. I decided to pursue it more academically through a travel and tourism A Level module, which interested me so much that I won an award for my achievement. I'm currently in my fourth

year at the Oxford School of Hospitality Management, doing a BSc in international hospitality management. I had to do a placement within it, so my first experience of the industry was a year spent at the Hilton Metropole London. As I rotated through food and beverage and front of house, I fell in love with the industry. When I returned to university, one of my lecturers introduced me to the work WiHTL is doing, and the minute class ended I ran away to sign up. I had previously struggled to see a clear path from intern to the next stage of my career, so it's been amazing to get stuck into initiatives that help young women and ethnic minorities progress. On the side, I work as a bartender at Stonegate, where I love chatting to interesting people. It's great to have access to both the corporate and operational sides of the industry, and which has given me the confidence to question my managers on what they're doing for ethnic minorities, and how I can help.

### What do you find most rewarding in your degree?

Hospitality gives me a creative outlet. While other academic disciplines give you a fixed brief to work to, this industry gives me more flexibility in the way I work.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

When you interview for a new company, ask what they're doing to promote people from diverse backgrounds. If the answer is nothing, know that the company's not for you and you deserve better.

### What are you doing to diversify hospitality?

I'm working on our Ethnic Minorities Future Leaders initiative, which aims to

boost disproportionately low ethnic minority representation at senior leadership levels. My job is to get the word out by contacting student unions and Afro-Caribbean societies.

### What are the biggest barriers to entry for ethnic minorities in hospitality?

So often, diverse recruitment initiatives are nothing more than marketing gimmicks that don't reach the people they're meant to be targeting. If more companies sent members of their teams out into universities and schools to tell students from ethnic minorities what opportunities they have, I think change would happen.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Dr Yuval Noah Harari.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I would have to say the Front of House Director at Hilton London Metropole, Narel Vilisoni. Her ability to balance creating a fun working environment for the team with a

no-nonsense but fair approach is inspiring.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I used to enjoy a teaspoon of honey in my tea until I was recently informed that 1 teaspoon of honey is the lifework of 12 bees. That really put things into perspective when it comes to appreciating the natural world around us.

# Beth Anderson

Company Revolution Bars Group / Job Title People Director



Post university I took a job at Cameron's Brewery to fund my master's. I lectured at Hull University on the side but loved hospitality so much that after travelling I applied as a manager at Revolution Bars Group. I was only in operations for 18 months, as my

passion for helping people fulfill their potential soon became clear. I supported many people through our internal leadership program, so when a position in HR became available the HR director called me to say he'd heard about the development I'd been doing across my region and he thought I would suit the 'people space'. Despite having no HR training, I took the plunge, beginning by managing our Trainee Assistant Manager programme. I then progressed to HR Business Partner for the South and later got the opportunity to do a national role as Talent Development Manager. When the People Director role became available, I leapt at the opportunity. Because our CEO was relatively new to the business, he trusted me to act as the custodian of our existing values and culture, role modelling our ethos within the leadership team and ensuring a sense of belonging in every part of the business.

“ We need to do more to prevent people from feeling alienated or uncomfortable

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Helping people overcome hurdles to achieve things they never thought possible. We pride ourselves on our family ethos, so when tough times come those strong personal connections shine through.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Probably helping people develop their capabilities through teaching.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

We've started by establishing a women's book club and showcasing flexible working patterns in both male and female senior leadership; we have held focus groups and are establishing diversity champions in the business. For my CIPD I investigated the general manager diversity gap; consequently we've implemented several measures that have supported a 10%

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Sheryl Sandberg – *Lean In!* This was really eye-opening early in my career.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Emma Woods – just because she's mega! And Rob Pitcher, as I admire his genuine approach to diversity.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Integrity.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Tough one, there's loads, but the research published by MBS, PwC & WiHTL on *Guarding against Unintended Consequences: The Impact of Covid-19 on Gender and Race & Ethnic Diversity in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure* was both insightful and thought provoking.



increase in female General Managers across the business.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

In the late-night sector, the 'boys' club' mentality was very prevalent. We need to do more to prevent people from feeling alienated or uncomfortable. Strong female role models are so important to inspire and encourage their female colleagues!

### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's rebalanced what's important in life: it's become more important to reserve time for friends and family than to work at 100 miles an hour every day. We're continuing to check in with our colleagues' mental health and healthy habits, and how we can facilitate and support those as a business moving forward in a non-lockdown world.



# Libby Andrews

Company Pho Restaurants / Job Title Marketing Director



I worked in restaurants from the age of 14, and all the way through my PR degree at the University of Florida. In the summer before my final year, I came to the UK to do a six-week internship at a boutique PR agency in Shoreditch, which I saw

as an extended holiday – I was a Florida girl through and through! Little did I know I would accept their job offer after graduation and move across the Atlantic. Naïve and fearless, I told my boss I would love to work on food-related brands, so she told me to go out and find them myself, which I did. It was a really exciting time in the London restaurant scene, right at the advent of social media and food blogs. Years later, I moved to New York to do restaurant PR – a steep learning curve in terms of geographical and cultural scale coming from the UK. After a bit of time back in the States I decided London was my home, and so I moved yet again to start in-house at Pho as Head of Marketing. It's been incredible to be part of the monumental growth of what was just a 'baby brand' when I joined. My role has evolved to director level, heading up all communications for our 30 restaurants across the country.

“ Every year that goes by I see more women in senior positions having a voice and showing the rest of us the way

**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

Sharing our love of Vietnamese food with customers, and watching them enjoy it in our busy restaurants, never gets old.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Speak up, be relentless, and be prepared to go above and beyond.

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

Something in fitness, skincare or nutrition.

**What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?**

Moving to a foreign country to start my very first corporate job. Because I was in consumer marketing, I had to understand early on the differences between

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*The Life Changing Magic of Not Giving a F\*ck* by Sarah Knight.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Pho's founders Stephen and Jules. They've built a hugely successful business from the ground up – with integrity – and I am really lucky to work so closely with them every day.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Passion, drive and empathy.

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

That a woman has become Vice President of the United States!

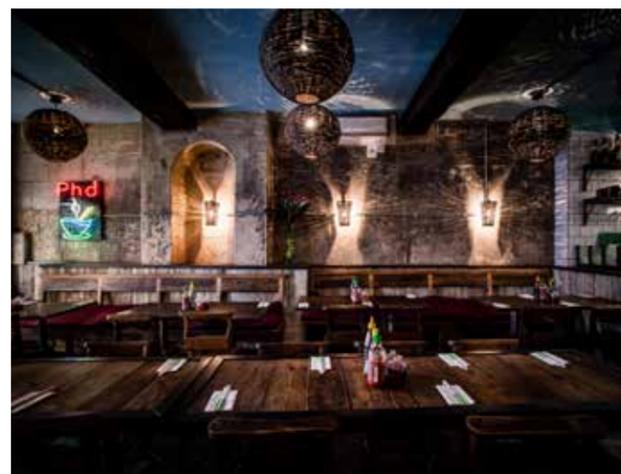
the two cultures. Though it was a huge challenge, I'm grateful that I had that lesson so early on.

**How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in hospitality?**

At my first industry awards events seven years ago, 98% of the speakers and panelists were men. Now, every year that goes by I see more women in senior positions having a voice and showing the rest of us the way.

**How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?**

It's made me realise how much the general public depend on restaurants for their happiness, and how many colleagues have their livelihoods here. It makes me proud that so many people have chosen hospitality as their career path, and I hope we can continue to offer one of the best restaurant scenes in the world.



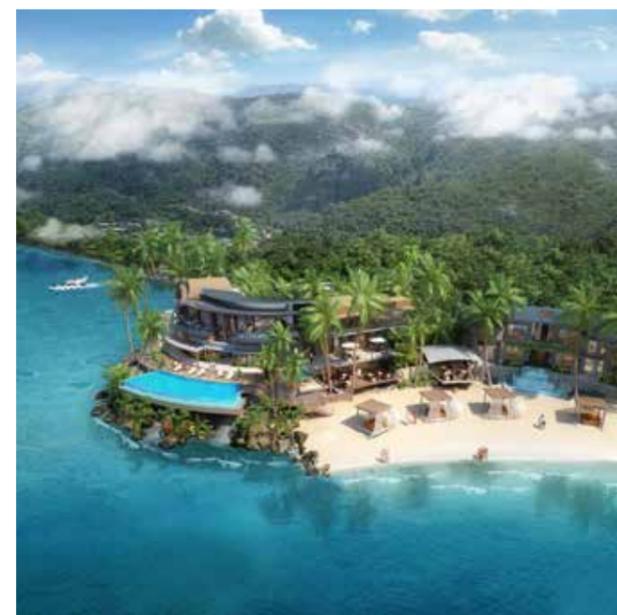
# Joanna Athanasiou

Company Hilton / Job Title Senior Director, Revenue Management Consolidated Centre Operations



I went to college at 16 to study hotel management, so my love for hospitality goes a long way back. I'm really proud to say that my very first job was at Hilton – and I'm still happy to be here, 28 years later! There's been so much variety in the experiences

I've had that I've never wanted to leave. I started as the secretary to the chief engineer at the Hilton in Cyprus which helped get my foot in the door at a worldwide hotel chain. I was then transferred to reservations, and I spent the next 13 years in Cyprus doing a range of roles, culminating in Cluster Revenue Manager for the two hotels on the island. The regional director then told me I needed a bigger pond, so I moved my young family back to the UK as a Revenue Manager for the Hilton London Docklands. That was a lifechanging experience – two years in, I got the chance to work alongside colleagues to create the Revenue Management Consolidated Centre (RMCC). RMCC is based in our European Headquarters and has a remit for managing the revenue and pricing decisions for over 300 hotels across Europe. I held a number of positions since starting the centre, before being promoted to Senior Director and taking the lead of the centre in 2018. I've watched RMCC grow from 5 to 300 hotels, so it's like my baby!



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*What Got You Here Won't Get You There* – by Marshall Goldsmith.

This book was an eye opener for me as it really highlighted the fact that continuous self-improvement is always needed, even when you have already achieved a certain level of success.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Our President & CEO Chris Nassetta – he is an

inspirational leader who has the ability to connect with every Team Member, at every level and make them feel special.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Being inclusive and giving everyone a voice, being authentic and winning the team's trust, embracing change and showing vulnerability. A true leader will foster a culture where everyone feels comfortable to share their opinion.

**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

I'm passionate about nurturing talent amongst my team. I love engaging with every person to find ways to support their development. It's fostering those personal connections that gets me out of bed in the morning.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

You don't have to be 'tough' to prove your worth – believe in yourself and demonstrate care and compassion for whatever you're doing.

**How are you encouraging more women into the sector?**

I've created the first revenue management graduate programme for EMEA at Hilton in an attempt to tap into a new pool and it has paid

dividends – 70% of the intake have been women! I operate an open-door policy, so women in my team know they can come to me and I'll share my own experiences to help them map out their own journeys.

**What career advice would you give your younger self?**

I wish I'd taken more time to look back – in such a fast-paced environment it's hard to carve out the time, but I've learnt recently about the power of pause and how reflecting on wins and losses helps you learn.

“ A true leader will foster a culture where everyone feels comfortable to share their opinion



# Suzanne Baker

Company Stonegate Pub Company / Job Title Commercial Director



I've always been in love with tourism and hospitality, ever since my mother encouraged me to take up a Saturday job cleaning hotel bedrooms. It's an environment I loved – while I was at college studying a BTEC in hotel management, I worked on a reception in Whitby and did silver service near Hull. After college, I did another qualification while working at a Berni Inn, and was invited to join the Grand Metropolitan graduate scheme when I finished. It was a very good starting point, spending seven years doing roles across operations, procurement and marketing. I was approached to join JD

Wetherspoon, which I'd never heard of at the time – I started the day we opened our thirtieth pub, and we had 630 under our belt by the time I left! It was an amazing time to work on the strategy of a growing company. My biggest achievement there was being appointed to the executive board at age 33, when I'd just had my first son. I knew, however, that if I didn't make a change I would never leave, so I joined what was Laurel Pub Company as commercial director. My role involves logistics, procurement, PR, licensing, property and food development, which is where I started off, so I love the breadth it offers. Outside Stonegate, I sit on the UK Hospitality Council Board.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Seeing people have a fantastic time in our venues gives me an unbeatable buzz.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Becoming* by Michelle Obama.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Ian Payne MBE.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Open, honest, someone who demonstrates passion

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

No two ways about it, you have to work hard! You've got to be strict in your organisation and determined to achieve your end goals.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Sometimes I look back and wish I had spent more time with my children when they were small – working wasn't as flexible back then.

and has fun. People work for people.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I loved hearing about the dog who received the animal equivalent of a Victoria Cross.

I pledged, however, to never miss a sports day or a nativity, and now I implore my team – both men and women – to promise the same!

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Two years ago, I couldn't understand why we didn't have an internal mentoring programme, so I consulted with our HR department to create our own initiative. I've been mentoring a fantastic general manager to boost her confidence to step up to that next stage.

### What do you hope your company looks like in 5 years' time?

In March, we had just completed the biggest pub merger in UK history. We were just starting on the journey to take Stonegate to another level, with 4,500 sites nationwide, so it was bitterly disappointing to close them all. I hope in five years we will see the investment we need and our big plans coming to fruition.



# Nina Bell

Company Avis Budget Group / Job Title Managing Director – Northern Europe



I started my career in accountancy, but very quickly I realised that it was the forward-looking, decision-making part of finance which appealed most. I moved to Hyundai where my role involved negotiating agreements with Avis, which led to me jumping ship and covering a variety of roles within finance there. Later, I moved into strategy and joined Travelport before rejoining Avis under the previous global CEO. It was a risky move to jump back in, but after a merger with the North American business I felt I still had more to offer to the company. Car rental is a lot more complicated than it seems at first glance, and it's solving the complex equation of flexible supply, demand and pricing that keeps me engaged. Promotion into my current Managing Director role was a huge change in my career given my finance and strategy background, but it is one that I have loved. My team is fantastic, and I really enjoy recruiting and promoting to enhance our strengths, further improve diversity and plug any gaps in our collective skill set. The challenge of navigating four culturally different teams and markets – the UK, Norway, Sweden and Denmark – is fantastic.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Miracle in the Andes* by Nando Parrado, one of the rugby team who led the rescue efforts when their plane crashed in the Andes in 1972.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Ken Lee taught me so much about advertising and building brand

awareness. Much more recently I learnt a great deal from watching Matt Dyer.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I was truly inspired to hear Cori Bush's acceptance speech as the first African American woman, nurse and single mother to represent Missouri in Congress.



### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Make sure you understand how the supply chain fits together – my background in car distribution helped me enormously to understand the numbers. Pick a part of the sector you like and jump in with both feet – you'll learn as you go.

### If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I've been in the industry a long time, and because I can't imagine being anywhere else I'm focusing on giving back through my chairwoman and charity trustee roles.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

When I first started, those conversations weren't

being had anywhere. Now, it's much more mainstream, and I feel very lucky to be at a company with a negative gender pay gap.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I used to lead a Women in Leadership programme where we hosted webinars to showcase inspirational female leaders in the UK and abroad. Now, as a female MD, I've been able to build up my senior team with diversity in mind.

### What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

During the pandemic I've had to make decisions I had never anticipated having to make. From furloughing staff overnight to temporarily closing stores, I've had a crash course in how to react to your environment quickly.

# Ella Bennett

Company easyJet / Job Title Group People Director



## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Make sure you cultivate variety of experiences in as many areas as possible: even if progression feels slow, it will be useful later on. I'd also encourage anyone to build mentor relationships; I had different people to turn to at different times for different reasons, and it's so helpful to have the right person to turn to when you need them.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

If you can accept the uncertain, you can lead others through it. I turned to a mentor who gave me this advice during the sale of Homebase. That stuck with me and has never been more relevant than for the world we have been working in over the last few months.

I started my career at the mental health charity Mind. I wanted to explore the private sector, so after that I spent 15 years at Fujitsu. This was a transformative time in IT when everything shifted towards digital, which stood me in good stead for years to come. I consciously made a move into customer-facing HR, so I joined Home Retail Group and did fascinating work through its acquisition by Sainsbury's. Although working in the HR space revolves around people leadership in every industry, I love organisations which treasure the relationship between the customer and the teams at their heart. Now, I lead the people team at easyJet, where it is a privilege to lead the teams whose phenomenal service sets us apart as a low-cost carrier. Every day is different, ranging from recruitment to long term people strategy, but nothing is more important to understanding your people than spending time with frontline teams.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Michelle Obama's *Becoming*. It was both humbling and inspiring.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I find our female pilots incredibly inspiring, because of the support so many of them have given to encouraging the next generation of women and girls to pursue a career in aviation.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

For me, being a good listener is incredibly important for a leader.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

At easyJet we strongly believe that our people should reflect the diversity

of our customers and the communities in which we operate. Not only does this make good business sense, it is the right thing to do.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Something one of our pilots shared during UK Black History Month on the importance of allyship: "Good allyship is a choice. Good allyship is not convenient. Good allyship is using your privilege to do good. By educating yourself on cultures, experiences, stories and history of people outside of your own social circle, you become a better ally."

Improving the gender balance in the pilot community has been a real focus and we believe that no other airline has been doing more on this issue. Our Amy Johnson Initiative has delivered a whole programme of activities from sponsoring the Girlguiding Aviation Badge to working with training partners to offer scholarships, which have successfully driven a rise in women applying to fly for easyJet, and we have more than doubled the number of female pilots flying for us since 2015.

# Sam Bourke

Company ETM / Job Title Director of Sales and Marketing



I have spent over 20 years in retail and hospitality marketing much of it focused on loyalty and digital transformation. I am currently a board director at ETM, a private company with an eclectic collection of premium pubs and restaurants

across London. As an enterprising company, my remit regularly extends beyond marketing and sales which I love. I am also a non-exec director at Wireless Social, so I get to be at the forefront of digital innovation in our industry. Previously, I was a board director of The Restaurant Group where I focused on establishing their digital landscape. I was at global data company Aimia where I worked closely with partners such as Sainsbury's, BP, eBay; and before that Lendlease UK, where I led the marketing for shopping destination, Bluewater.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I enjoy the variety; no two days are the same. We could be opening new venues, pitching for a new concept, launching a new app, developing brilliant menus or working on company values. I love being part of a people driven business where everyone from front of house to the support office works in harmony.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Go for it! It is a fantastic industry. Work hard, be well informed and confident in the importance of your role. Find meaningful ways to communicate the value you add, don't be afraid to challenge or promote what you believe in.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Potentially health and fitness! I am a great believer in the importance of good nutrition and fitness. We underestimate the increased productivity and happiness that can derive from eating well and working out regularly.

### What attracted you to work in HTL?

I felt I could add value – I love meeting guests and understanding their behaviour to predict the next trends. HTL is a sector which needs agility to constantly innovate, challenge and change to exceed consumers' expectations.



## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Debbie Hewitt is a super role model and astute leader.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

A leader who is both inspiring and empathetic.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

There's finally a vaccine! and, how about the turkey dilemma? With people limiting Christmas gatherings this year, turkey farmers are in a spot of bother as they've grown the turkeys to meet usual demand and now they are too big!

### How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I request a balanced list of candidates when I'm recruiting – there should be a neutral playing field and a platform that ensures promotion and opportunity is always based on merit. I aim to be a positive role model for women in the sector and I accept opportunities to speak and share stories so younger women can see that marketing, especially within hospitality, is an exhilarating space to work.

### How do you advocate for women within your organisation?

It is proven that diversity of opinion is backed up by commercial return. As a commercial marketer, I always ensure our teams are balanced to ensure all types of guests are represented. I create opportunity and ensure the women and men in my team have a platform to grow. Several of my direct reports have gone on to leadership roles after I have given them that opportunity.



# Yasmine Bratt

Company Deliveroo / Job Title VP Pricing and Loyalty



I lead loyalty and pricing globally, which entails driving frequency and retention while providing customers great value for money. It's the most exciting job I've ever had – the industry is new and growing and, as a result, fast evolving and complex. So it ticks all my boxes.

Though I grew up in Morocco, my mother's family is from Canada, so travel has always been a central part of my life. At school I discovered an interest in maths and science, so I did a civil engineering degree before going to graduate school to study operations research and transportation. In one of my modules an airline simulation game cropped up, which prompted me to begin a career in airline consulting. While I made a few detours along the way (an MBA followed by a few years of management consulting at BCG), I have largely remained in the travel and hospitality sector, working at Hotels.com/Expedia for a number of years, and now at Deliveroo. Here,



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love feeling that I am playing an active role in making change, both at Deliveroo and more broadly. In such a young industry we're discovering as we go, so by virtue of being a market leader everything we do has impact.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Dare more: dare to say what you think; dare to ask for what you want; dare to take on more challenges. Think through every problem and dare to give your opinion. If you don't have much experience you can still add a lot of value by being a problem solver, by applying a fresh pair of eyes.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Professionally: *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* by Marshall Goldsmith. Well worth a read.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I don't have specific role models. Instead I try to learn from all people around me (my managers, my peers, my team members, my friends)- I pick things they do well/ that I admire about them, and try to emulate.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Humility. Being able to both recognise and acknowledge ones' mistakes helps to build trust.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

That the progress on Covid vaccines looks more promising than we could have expected! This should clear the path for our industry to return to where we can give our customers the experiences they are looking for.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I'd be a maths teacher perhaps – sometimes there's something extremely appealing about a clear-cut right answer!

### How are you encouraging the next generation into the sector?

I think more in terms of women and technology. I've volunteered with underprivileged schoolchildren on and off since university, and now I'm a business advisor at the London Enterprise Advisor Network. I partner with a local school to help them develop their careers program, educating students about their career options and putting them in touch with potential employers and employees.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

It's not limited to our sector, but very often, well-meaning men and women (!) make assumptions about how adequate recent mothers are for the demands of their old jobs, or whether they even want to return to that role. That mindset can result in these women being held at a standstill to 'protect' them, even if they would embrace the challenge.

“ Dare more: dare to say what you think; dare to ask for what you want; dare to take on more challenges

# Sarah Brookes

Company Formula E Holdings / Job Title Chief People Officer



I'm one of the rare people who started off in HR, right from my undergraduate degree. I tried out telecoms and duty free, ending up at an engineering-heavy transport business with 28 women to 760 men! My first management position was at Hammerson shopping centres, where I spent an insightful few years partnering with local authorities to get people into retail employment. Once I jumped into hospitality at De Vere, however, that was it: it got into my blood. As tough as it was, I reflect on my time in hotels with nothing but passion and fondness. That was first experience of seeing the instant impact on

the customer, which sparked a passion in me. There's nowhere to hide in hospitality and leisure, which forces you to zone in on the commercial. After returning to retail I went back into global expansion at Merlin, quickly developing a broader understanding of HR. My heart lives in hospitality: though Formula E is a sporting business, we're ultimately driven by putting on incredible events for our spectators.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Driving the cultural agenda. I'm passionate about brand values, whether that be through a customer lens or a diversity and inclusion one. It's important to me to enable creativity and have fun.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Believe in yourself and stay objective. I have two mantras which speak volumes to me: there's



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I don't have one single book. Each one I have read, has added another layer to my knowledge or depth to my view and understanding of the world. I love plays. Anything from Tennessee Williams through to Shakespeare. And I am always intrigued by writing that explores behaviour and performance – *Black Box Thinking*, Matthew Syed and *Time to Think*, Nancy Klein are big favourites.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

The ability to listen and hear. Humility. Care.

And understanding the amplified impact you have when you are a leader – use it responsibly.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

It has to be my very first race with Formula E in Berlin. Not only was it the first time I had seen a FE car 'whiz' around the track (they are very fast!), but we also were able to finish our Season during the pandemic. Remarkable feat by all those involved keeping all safe and well and delivering a super finale.

a place in heaven for women who help other women in business, and Ginger Rogers' quotation that she did the same as Fred but backwards and in high heels.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

We're a business built on environmental and social sustainability. Four women sit on our executive committee, and we're all about encouraging minority groups into the racing industry whether on track or as part of the many people that work in Formula E, through our Positive Futures programme.

“ Have absolute courage in your convictions – if you can't, you need to rethink

## What advice would you give to your younger self?

You can't please everyone, so take a step back and make sure you are doing the 'right thing'. Allow thinking space to yourself and others and let great thinking come out the woodwork. Have absolute courage in your convictions – if you can't, you need to rethink. Work hard and work smart.

# Janet Broomfield

Company Corinthia Hotels / Job Title Director of Global Sales UK & Ireland – Meetings & Incentives



I moved to the UK from Ireland to study hospitality at university, which led to a management traineeship at Forte hotels where I rotated through every department. I absolutely loved the people-facing aspect of customer service, so it was in sales that I set my sights for progression. I moved from Leeds to London with Jumeirah Hotels in my first global sales position, then spent five

years at Marriott as an account director. My next role in the industry was at Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, again in a global sales capacity, before my journey came full circle and I returned to Rocco Forte. This time, I progressed to Director of Global Sales, Conference and Incentive, leaving for Corinthia in 2015. I've been the Director of Global sales here for the last five years and have loved every minute – every hotel is different, and building relationships with clients is so fulfilling. Every day is a different challenge, and over time I've learnt that diplomacy is key – I work on behalf of both the client and the hotel so it's my job to achieve a win-win



outcome for both sides. I feel so lucky to say that I adore every aspect!

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't be afraid to feel uncomfortable, and don't doubt your abilities. No one can be great at everything, but set goals based on your own unique strengths. If you're emotionally intelligent, you'll have ample opportunity to grow in this fantastic, friendly industry!

### How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

There's no way around the fact that, as it stands, 75% of the industry is female but only 20% take up senior positions. I try to advocate for the industry to young women, reassuring them that if they have the confidence, they can overcome the current challenges and have a fantastic career progression.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

It's taken huge strides forwards. Every company

now knows they need to become more diverse, and especially in the global world of hotels, diversity should be the norm. Now, at Corinthia, we celebrate different holidays and events so that every person feels recognised.

### How do you deal with challenges in your job?

It's important to always look on the bright side! Positivity increases our ability to think creatively, so we need to take stock of our successes in this ever-changing industry to stay at the top of our game.

“ I try to advocate for the industry to young women, reassuring them that if they have the confidence, they can overcome the current challenges and have a fantastic career progression

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Unbroken*, a World War Two story about survival, resilience, and redemption. A true story, Louie Zamperini survives a plane crash in the Pacific and spends 47 days on a raft and then survives 2.5 years as a prisoner of war in three brutal Japanese camps. He experienced brutal treatment and after many years living with the nightmare he went back to Japan to forgive all who wronged him and make peace with many of his former tormentors.

This book teaches forgiveness brings more peace than revenge. Forgiveness is the greatest of mental strengths and the strength of the human race.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

In my career I have been very lucky and had some excellent mentors. Honesty, a clear vision, integrity, communication & empathy are key qualities of a leader.

Leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could.



# Dawn Browne

Company Fuller Smith & Turner / Job Title Director – People & Talent



I did a degree in management and food – little did I know how fitting that would be! Straight out of university I joined British Airways, doing seven different jobs over nine years. The responsibility of having to jump on a plane to handle a crisis on a moment's

notice was huge for me. When I transitioned from running projects to leading teams, I discovered that people are what make me tick. I move to set up a new crew base for Qantas and then made the jump out of airlines to Compass Group as head of learning and development. I'd never worked in an HR team before, so it was a true baptism of fire! A career-long fan of consumer-facing industries, I took a similar position at Fuller's before branching back into operations to run our city division. I took on my current role last year, and though it's been nothing like I thought it would be, I've had a unique opportunity to make my mark on the people team.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Grit* by Angela Duckworth. This book sets out to prove that people aren't born with talent but if you find something you love and work really hard at it you can do anything. You can see why that would inspire me.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I love quotes and here is one I saw recently: "If you want to move fast go alone, but if you want to go far go in company."

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Contributing to our special culture and making a difference to other people's lives. When someone in one of our pubs tells me they enjoy working at Fuller's, it makes my day. I am also fortunate enough to lead an amazing team and I love supporting and challenging them to grow their own careers.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Nothing comes on a plate, but if you find something you love and work really hard at it you will be successful. And don't forget to have fun on the way. A career isn't all about climbing the ladder – the joy is in the journey and it doesn't have to be linear.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Something that fulfils the three things I look for in any role – learning, impact and fun.

### What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope it will pass the 'mum and dad test'. There are not many industries where you can run a million-pound business in your twenties and learn to be a leader, a marketeer and accountant. I hope in future more people will see that hospitality is a great place for a career.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

It's been hard to shake the perception that as a family-run, heritage organization, diversity is not a priority for us. That couldn't be further from the truth. One of our values is celebrating individuality. For me, it's about having the conversations at every level: whether that's senior women discussing taboo subjects like menopause, or a pub manager giving a radio interview about his experiences of diversity in pubs. There's always more to do, but we are making good progress.



# Rachel Bulford

Company Gatwick Airport / Job Title Director of Retail



**G**rowing up in London, I relished being around all types of people from an early age. I studied theology and religious studies, but it was the cut and thrust of working in industry that appealed. The M&S graduate scheme stood

out as I could work with people in stores early on. I was launched into Oxford Street right in the Christmas rush. I learnt a huge amount about personal resilience over my five years there, especially through helping expansion into Eastern Europe, South Korea and India. It was a fantastic training ground. I wanted to explore retail further, so I joined Burberry to gain perspective in the luxury market. I left to formalise my knowledge through an MBA. I wanted to learn more about strategic decision making so after my MBA I joined strategy consultancy OC&C. Working in consulting was fantastic but it didn't quite satisfy my hankering to implement real change, so I went to Homebase to experience the challenges of leading through a transformation. Most recently, I moved to Gatwick where I'm responsible for retail and hospitality within the airport.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Seeing positive change, whether in my teams, consumer behaviour, or our physical spaces. Our world is ever evolving and adapting to what matters to people is very satisfying.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

It's a vibrant sector which values achievement, so make sure you're delivering what you set out to. Although gender diversity may peter out at the top, don't let that hold you back – it doesn't mean there isn't a place for you.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

The pandemic ripped the rug out from underneath us in a matter of days, leaving a sustained period of challenges in its wake. Hour by hour new information would trickle through.

We had to deal with an unfolding situation with relatively few reference points. It's been a formative experience if there ever was one.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I'm an everywoman ambassador, an organisation showcasing senior female role models across industries, and I was privileged to be a judge for last year's Women in Retail awards. I'm always reflecting on what more I can do. It's often said that "all eyes are on you" when you're a leader. I'm conscious I can influence the diversity agenda through every interaction I have.

## What attracted you to work in travel?

I love working for an airport. It's fascinating to be in such a diverse hubbub of activity, from airfield operations to luxury shopping.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Predictably Irrational* by Dan Ariely.

The book is really fascinating and an amazing insight into decision making and how humans aren't necessarily making the rational choices we think we are.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I recently came across Frans de Waal's TED Talk about leadership in chimpanzee communities.

De Waal explains that the chimpanzees who become alpha males are not necessarily those who are the biggest or strongest. Instead the leaders show generosity and empathy and form successful coalitions with other influential members of the group. Our society often frames leadership as dominant power, but the social behaviour of our close genetic relatives shows us that even in an alpha male society, leadership is much more nuanced.



# Lisa Burger

Company Haven / Job Title Operations Director



**M**y dad was a pilot, and so growing up I aspired to be part of that world. I made sure I did work experience at an airport before my GCSEs and when I left school, I got a place on a youth training scheme at Luton airport. I was young,

keen and with nothing to lose and whilst there I met easyJet founder Stelios Haji-Ioannou. Through that meeting I was given the opportunity to be part of his innovative start-up project and I found myself checking in passengers onto easyJet's first flight in 1995! I spent 11 fantastic years there, helping to launch the airline and lead the operations across Europe. It was amazing to be of a time that shaped what many of us consider commercial air travel to be.

As part of my ongoing development, in 2007 I resumed studying, taking part in a programme at Ashridge. As part of my learning I was asked to read a Starbucks case study. I became so inspired by their culture that I decided I wanted to be a part of it and I joined the business. As Operations Director in London I looked after a huge and growing market. I spent five years in that global, iconic brand. It was a great experience, but I missed travel, and in 2011 I got to pursue my passion, rejoining easyJet to bring the customer back to the heart of the business, in my role as Head of Customer. Following that I joined the board of Addison Lee as COO, this time in my career provided a steep learning curve, my first Board appointment in ground transportation in a hugely competitive environment. Most recently, I'm delighted to have joined Haven, a brand whose culture and product really resonate with me. Being back in the world of making memories for families is where I feel at my best.



“When you take time out, have the confidence that you won't be left behind”

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love being in a position where I can give people the opportunities and platforms to do great things.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

You need resilience to deal with change. When you take time out, have the confidence that you won't be left behind.

## If you weren't in travel and leisure, what would you be doing?

I would have loved to have been on stage!

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's given us the kick to create a more robust, easy, safe and secure way of

operating our business. We'll come through in a stronger position to recover, because of everything from our new digital propositions to a new pool of customers interested in holidaying in the UK.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Stay authentic as a leader, and use your hard work, focus and determination to achieve what you set out to. You have to have gutsy confidence – if I had stopped and thought about every decision I had to make, I'd have scared myself to death!

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I spend time setting up networks to demystify which roles are available in travel. Nothing is given but if women put their hats in the ring, there is a pathway to success. We have incredible role models in this sector who are proof you can be exceptional leaders, mothers, wives and humans all at the same time.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Taming Tigers* by Jim Lawless.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Dame Carolyn McCall.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Trust, respect, confidence, empathy, measured.



# Jas Burston

Company Domino's / Job Title Head of Finance



I started off on a completely different track teaching secondary school maths! I loved the interaction and the difference teaching can make, but after a couple of years I transitioned into financial services. Within a couple of years, however, I realised I wanted to work with a product I could touch, feel and have an affinity with. I moved into Orange Retail at a really exciting time, back when first being invented! My first role in hospitality was at Whitbread in the pub-restaurants sector, before moving into Burton's Biscuits and

eventually TUI. I did the lion's share of my career at TUI between a number of roles, and though the travel industry is challenging and extremely volatile it ultimately provides people with that breath of fresh air and feel good factor. Most recently at Domino's, I've transitioned back to what pulled me into the sector – roles that revolve around food and fun! It's an amazing brand and I'm so proud to help provide a product that my friends and family share as a reference point. We're a business that embraces digital transformation, which is fascinating – now, over 90% of our sales are online!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Innovation, creativity and activity are cutting edge in hospitality, as we need to remain relevant to bring great experiences to the customer. I love being key to the financial decisions that enable that.



## What advice would you give to the next generation of women entering your sector?

You have to accept what comes, so meet each challenge with courage and give the best you can.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

A TV presenter, or a fashion designer!

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Baseless, but pervasive, gender stereotypes. If a woman can negotiate she's 'confrontational'; if she's assertive she's 'aggressive'. Until recently I hadn't acknowledged how much these labels had coloured my own experience, as the biases are so often deemed acceptable or humorous that they become further entrenched.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we see diversity of all types, and not just as a statistic or KPI. As the mother of two mixed-race daughters, I'm passionate about what happens after those diverse candidates are onboarded; how they are included in the company's behaviours and cultures. Ultimately, the more senior positions are filled by people from all walks of life, the better we can understand the customer.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

The roadblocks in these sectors are never-ending – from volcanic ash in 2010 to Covid, I've taken and steered businesses through my share of challenges! As I've matured emotionally and professionally over the years I've responded to them better, learning each time about the power of collaborative working and empathy in bringing clarity to chaos.

# Sabiha Chohan

Company Costa Coffee / Job Title Digital Propositions Manager



I studied History at SOAS and then for a master's in International Business at Durham. I was always interested in technology, so I took a graduate scheme at Virgin Media Business before moving over to BT as Propositions Manager.

It was completely different to traditional telecoms, with an almost start-up culture, focusing on projects like drones and transforming old phonebooths. As I itched for a more senior role, however, I wanted to pursue my passion around food and FMCG, so I was lucky to find my current position which combines the digital side of delivery with the product side of cafes. I run our delivery channel with Uber Eats, which is live in 650+ stores now after a huge push over summer. The pace of digital really energises me, using data to ensure propositions are relevant and speak to the consumer.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love seeing posters of our propositions when I'm out and about, thinking about the incredible people behind it and the store teams who make it possible.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be bold, resilient and don't let outdated institutions tell you what success looks like.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I love fitness and train some of my friends, so I'd be a personal trainer, working with clients to help them reach their goals.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I signed up before I even started the role to help move the agenda forward and get a handwritten message from the barista alongside it. It really cheers them up, which makes me smile.

movement accelerated Costa's diversity work, which is when I helped launch our cultural and diversity network 'Belong' as Co-Chair. In the last three months, we've done everything from listening sessions, talking about unconscious bias and interviewing store teams for our Black History Month podcast.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Always wear your consumer hat. If you can think of five positives for the consumer and use data to shape your propositions, you'll never go far wrong.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

How relevant we are to people's lives – we have the power to make someone's day. I see comments all the time from people who are shielding, who order a Costa coffee to the house and get a handwritten message from the barista alongside it. It really cheers them up, which makes me smile.

## QUICKFIRE

### What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Honesty and integrity, commitment and passion, confidence, and an excellent communication.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

One of my close friends recently got involved in

the wellbeing industry. There are the five ways of wellbeing: connect, be active, keep learning, take notice and give. The quality of relationships or 'connections' is the biggest indicator to your health and happiness in older age – not money or professional success.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Kite Runner* by Khalid Hosseini. It teaches forgiveness and friendship but also highlights the economic and mental struggles of immigration.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I'm still quite new to the industry but I've learned a lot very quickly from my Director Arslan Sharif and my manager Richard Fellingham. They've created an environment where we can be ourselves, are encouraged to have fun but also drive the digital agenda which is even more critical than ever in the current climate.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Consumer savvy, emotional intelligence, decisive and to be someone who listens.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

A BBC documentary called *How to Break into the Elite*. Discrimination isn't exclusive to race and gender, and socio-economic disparities play a big part. It's a huge factor as to whether you even get your foot in the door.



# Amanda Ciraulo

Company Aramark / Job Title UK Sales Director



It's not an exaggeration to say I've been in the hospitality industry my whole life – my grandma ran hotels and pubs, so as a child I started off folding napkins! As I got older, I did part-time jobs waitressing and behind the bar, before doing my HND in hotel

catering and institutional management after school. I joined a graduate training programme at Jarvis Hotels, then moved into contract catering where I've been ever since. I've moved from operations to purchasing to sales, so I'm catering through and through! Many years ago, I joined Aramark as a unit manager, but it came full circle when I rejoined six years ago as a business development director focusing on the south of England. Last year I became UK Sales Director, which involves looking at new business opportunities across all sectors, from the NHS to leisure to education to industry. I love that we sell into such diverse market sectors – there's never a dull day! It's this diversity, flexibility, and collaboration across our whole business that allows us to create bespoke solutions for our clients' many needs, allowing me to pull on the most creative brains in the company.



**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Speak up; your voice counts. Young people often come into the workplace thinking their boss always knows better, but the next generation have taught me so much!

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I've spent time abroad studying accountancy, which seems like a natural fit for my love of numbers.

**What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?**

I hope we lean into the tech solutions we see on the horizon at the moment. I'm excited to see how humans will work alongside robots and AI in the future – I hope that automation frees us up to provide even better service to our customers.

**What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?**

We're an American multinational, so diversity

has rarely been far from our agenda. There is a superb range of employee resource groups, which have recently been opened up to anyone at any level anywhere in the world. They provide voices to everyone from LGBTQ+ to ethnic minority communities, and I'm part of our women-specific group, Empower. As one of many female leaders in our business, I strongly believe in the power of the 'see it, be it' approach to creating pathways and safe spaces for the exceptional women across our organisation.

**How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?**

It's heartbreaking to see closures and redundancies, and I hope we bounce back quickly so we can welcome those people back into the industry. On the flipside, it's brought us closer together to innovate at a much faster rate. Former competitors have joined forces on webinars and in meetings to create joint solutions.

# Clare Clough

Company Pret a Manger / Job Title UK Managing Director



I studied food technology at university because I knew I wanted to work with something tangible. I did a sandwich year at Marks & Spencer on-the-go food division – how things have come full circle! A few months into my graduate scheme at Safeway we were acquired by Morrisons, so I picked myself up from that early bump in the road and joined Tesco as a technical manager. I ended up taking on more commercial responsibilities before joining Pret ten years ago in a business development function. It was an incredibly exciting time – my first project was expanding into France, where we launched our famous Jambon-Beurre! I returned to the UK a couple of years later, working up through food and commercial roles until becoming Chief Food and Coffee Officer. When we switched up our management structure last summer, we siphoned off the UK business and I took over as MD – an incredible privilege and a fantastic opportunity to diversify my skills.

“I promoted someone in my team two days before her maternity leave as I knew she was right for the job!”

**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

Work has always been about people, whether that be our own teams I feel great responsibility for, or our customers we have such a warm relationship with. Now, the role is more rewarding than ever – we're building the Pret of the future off the strong foundations of the Pret of the past.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Love what you do – be a journey person, and enjoy every role you have along the way. If you feel comfortable bringing your purest self to work, that will always drive happiness.

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I would never stray from being consumer-facing, and I love food too much to leave!

**How are you encouraging more women into the sector?**

I'm part of a number of forums which focus on women in the industry, and I'm always happy



to connect and share my story. I do my best to be empathetic and fair towards those on parenthood and career journeys simultaneously – I promoted someone in my team two days before her maternity leave as I knew she was right for the job!

**What attracted you to work in HTL?**

A passion for high quality food mixed with fond memories of time spent in Pret shops at university! When I first interviewed for the job, I was blown away by the passion and kindness of the people in the business.

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

Any book about Steve Jobs. His approach to business is inspirational: follow your heart and trust that it knows where it's going. The worst thing that could happen might turn out to be the best thing. And stay hungry – to name just a few of his philosophies.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Interest in other people, setting them up for success and encouraging them to always want more. Their success leads to the company's success!

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

Have you heard about the relationship between wasps and figs? Look it up for yourself! You can't unlearn this fact once you know it!

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

It's not an original choice but *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R Covey. It's a classic but I was recently given another copy by a friend which led me to reread it. I found I took different messages away at a different point in my career.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Clive Schlee our previous CEO; his rapport and

connection with our shop teams taught me a great deal and I frequently remind myself our people on the front line have most of the answers.

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts” – Winston Churchill. I just happened to notice it on a card in a gift shop recently and it resonated for the moment I was in.



# Shirley Couchman

Company Wells & Co / Job Title Retail Board Director



I worked part-time at a pub while I was studying to be a PE teacher at university. I worked my way up to assistant manager there after graduation, until someone spotted my education degree and brought me into head office as a trainer. I rose through the ranks to area manager, Scotland and then down to Birmingham for the Spirit Group working with the Mr Qs and Q's brand. That was a real education in how to recognise trends and translate them into new concepts, which is what I've built my career on ever since. I crossed over to Greene King, a much smaller company at the time, where I was asked to join a team building its first premium concept from the ground up. Because I'd been part of getting the look and feel of the pubs right, I was asked to run the property department, which was a real wake-up call for an operator! I spent seven fantastic years managing over 1,000 sites, where I learnt more than I had at any point so far in my

career. After taking on an operations director role, I left the pub world for SSP to avoid being pigeonholed and dip my toe in something more commercial. Though I've only been at Wells & Co a few months, their family run ethos resonates with my own values.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Don't listen to people who tell you to be something you're not – be yourself and be proud about it, authenticity is the key.

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I'd be running around with a netball in my hand in a sports development capacity.

**What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?**

Starting out in the property department role. I was suddenly put into an environment where I felt I had no clue, but I realised that you don't need to innately know everything to make good decisions – what you need to know is how to put a great team together, listen to them and provide a platform for them to excel. I was so grateful that I was allowed to make, and learn from, my mistakes. It's true that you don't need to be a doctor to run a great hospital!

**How are you encouraging more women into the sector?**

There's no shortage of fantastic women, so I actively recruit them and try to create an environment where my teams feel comfortable to manage their own time around their lifestyles. We need more women at board level who focus on filling those senior gaps in recruitment.

**What attracted you to work in HTL?**

My grandma single-handedly became a hotelier in the 1960s, so I spent my childhood standing on a pot peeling potatoes in her hotel in Grantown-on-Spey. She was a powerhouse, my own introduction to the world of hospitality and my first role model.



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

I can't possibly pick one book – I love to read! I would say Terry Pratchett is the author who has influenced me the most.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

In terms of impact, the two Jonathans – Lawson and Webster during my tenure at Greene King challenged and inspired me to push myself to be better and I am lucky enough to still be mentored by Jonathan Webster.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

For me it's emotional intelligence, empathy and resilience.

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

Without a doubt the American election – I haven't been able to keep my eyes off it with all the twists and turns, knowing that whatever side comes through it will have an impact on our industry.

# Amy Culora

Company Rank / Job Title Head of Marketing – Grosvenor Casino



I've been working in comms since I graduated, firstly in an American software firm and then agency side until I joined Rank in 2003. Essentially, I've grown up in the gaming industry.

There was a two-year stint where my desire to travel

took over, and I was lucky enough to land a dream job as PR director for the Eastern Caribbean at Sandals Resorts. Essentially, I ferried journalists from diving to spa experiences. Although it was unbelievably fun, I knew I had to make the mature decision to return to the UK at some point and luckily for me Rank invited me back. When I returned, I worked directly for the CEO, again in a communications role, and spread my wings to new areas such as internal comms, employee engagement and public affairs.

I've chosen to pursue most of my career at Rank not due to a lack of ambition, but because the business model and number of brands gives the group an agency feel. From working for Mecca bingo, looking after London strategy for our casinos business to heading up brands across Hard Rock, Blue Square and Grosvenor Casinos, I've definitely been kept on my toes! My current role involves leading all the marketing for our Grosvenor Casinos around the UK.



**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

All the work my team does, from initial campaign ideas to national promotions, has a direct impact on the bottom line. It's very satisfying to see our teams all over the UK bring our campaigns to life and, most importantly, our customers enjoying them.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Historically, the gaming sector has been more male-dominated than most, although that has changed a lot in recent years. I think people just don't consider gaming simply because the awareness is not there. I would say not to worry if you're not a gambler yourself: the main drivers for this industry – data, technology and customer experience – are all transferable. There are opportunities across the board in what are, at the end of the day, just multi-site hospitality businesses.

**If you weren't in HTL, what would you be doing?**

In an ideal world, back on that beach in the

Caribbean! In all honesty I think I would always be aligned to hospitality or travel because that's what I love doing as a consumer.

**What career advice would you give to your younger self?**

Don't lose sight of the customer and know your numbers. You always need to know the impact you, as a marketer, are having on the commercials, so it's absolutely necessary to dig deep into the data to drive your decisions. We're ultimately only here as long as the customers are, so we need to know what they want and what the returns will look like.

**How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?**

It's reaffirmed the fact that we are first and foremost a people business. Everyone is willing to roll up their sleeves and do what it takes, whether that's checking in on our customers and colleagues or working towards our revenue targets to get the business back on track. Early on we created the hashtag #GrosvenorWithYou, and the message of solidarity has really rung true.



# Zoe Davis

Company IAG GBS / Job Title Director of IAG Global Business Services



Early in my career I was fortunate enough to work at the IT consultancy FI Group. I admired the progressive ethos of the company, which was a successful FTSE 250 mainly run by women. We were jokingly called “Female International” in many city circles! I started my career in procurement at FI and they supported me through the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (MCIPS) programme. My next company was acquired by a US-based private equity (PE) firm, which ultimately led to me moving to

the US where I worked for nearly five years. This provided me with a great insight into how PE works and broadened my skillset. When joining IAG, I was interviewed in a café at Heathrow T5 almost as I stepped off the plane back from the US! Thanks to our then Group Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), I started the following week heading up indirect procurement while the business was creating our new global business services division (IAG GBS). Early in 2017, the CPO moved to a new role in the Group and after a full recruitment process, I was appointed to the role of Group CPO. Leading procurement for so many iconic brands within IAG was a fantastic experience and after nearly three years in that role I was offered the directorship of the entire GBS business early this year.



**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

It’s so important to think about the future beyond your current role and take ownership of your progress. If you have a setback don’t let it define you, think why it might have happened, learn from it and keep going!

**What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?**

I feel passionately about the fact that teams with diversity are more aligned to customer needs. My IAG GBS management committee and wider leadership teams are aligned to, and reflect, this ethos. I feel very strongly that a key part of leadership is ensuring our teams reflect and provide an inclusive environment for all. We require our recruitment teams to include candidates from diverse backgrounds, we use external leadership programmes and encourage our shining stars up the hierarchy.

**How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?**

Our industry has been one of the worst hit by the global crisis and has had to adapt hugely in order to survive. Over all of this I have been impressed by the resilience and how wholeheartedly people have thrown themselves into finding solutions despite the enormous challenges. From bringing in PPE to ensuring we work with suppliers to provide a safe and clean environment in our cabins, we have had a critical role within the Group as it responds to the pandemic from a customer and financial perspective. As an industry, and within IAG, we have all worked hard to ensure the nation has what it needs, whilst paving the way for the future.

“ Teams with diversity are more aligned to customer needs ”

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

I don’t tend to get overly influenced by books, but I found *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman very thought provoking.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Baroness Denise Kingsmill is very inspiring to me. She was on the IAG Board but left back 2017. I met her again when I was on The Pipeline last year where

she gave a talk about her life, which included starting out in the fashion industry in Paris, deciding that wasn’t for her, so then pivoting to go into law, starting her own practice and more recently helping start Monzo Bank. She is generally happy to embrace change and strikes me as someone who epitomises a life well lived, and she hasn’t stopped yet!

# Beverley D’Cruz

Company Yum! Brands / Job Title Chief Brand Officer Pizza Hut META



My journey began in Pakistan, where I grew up as a Catholic in a predominantly Muslim country. Growing up as a minority in Pakistan I have always been aware of not having equal rights and not belonging and this has defined the path

my life has taken. At 17, I was blessed to be the only Pakistani girl chosen to attend MIT where I spent the next three years studying Finance and Economics. I started my career at Unilever back in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, before switching to Yum! in Dubai for Pizza Hut in the Middle East. After 5 exciting years in the Middle East I moved to Canada and fell in love with the country – I’ve always said the warmth of the people makes up for the cold of the country! Canada opened its arms, welcoming my family as Canadian. In Canada I worked both on Pizza Hut and KFC – my most career-defining role was leading the ecommerce journey for both brands. My career then led me to London where I was lucky to work on a transformative journey for Pizza Hut. 3 years later I have recently moved to Dubai to take on the exciting role of Chief Brand Officer for Pizza Hut for the Middle East, Turkey and Africa.



“ Believe in yourself! Doubt is a killer ”

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Believe in yourself! Doubt is a killer. Know who you are and what you stand for. As early as university I have struggled with imposter syndrome, the niggling voice in your head telling you that you are not good enough. Conquer that!

**How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?**

I was one of the first women to be hired in a managerial position in the Middle East 14 years ago... everyone was nervous having women enter a male dominated world of

franchise management and watched to see how it would pan out. 13 years later I’m proud now to have returned to the Leadership team leading and supporting an office that has an equal ratio of men and women in senior positions!

**How are you encouraging more women into the sector?**

I lead our Women in Leadership group in the Middle East. A talented group of women get together to support, celebrate and cheer each other on. We discuss meaningful issues like career progression and why women progress slower than men, imposter syndrome, and the mental load that women carry. My goal is to help women and the leaders that mentor women to understand the barriers in our way and to help remove them.

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

I’ve recently read *Becoming* by Michelle Obama and I found the book to be authentic, powerful and moving.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Not quite within the industry but I am deeply moved by Malala Yousafzai. To take a tragic story of death and to turn it into a powerful story of hope and of love is

nothing short of a miracle and if she can do it so can we!

**What’s the most interesting thing you’ve seen or heard recently?**

I have recently been watching (along with the rest of the world) the US elections play out and to hear the first female VP of America say ‘I may be the first woman in this office but I won’t be the last!’ leaves me with hope for our future!



# Andrea Dearden

Company David Lloyd Leisure / Job Title Marketing Director



as Marketing Director for Europe which spanned over 50 attractions across 10 countries, later moving to lead marketing of the iconic London attractions which included Madame Tussauds and the London Eye. Four years ago I joined David Lloyd Leisure as Marketing Director and lead a team of 20, focussing on driving the premium positioning of the Clubs in the UK as well as acquisition across Europe.



I've spent 25 years in the leisure industry, working all over Europe and living in Australia and the US. I started on the agency side, where I grew to Board Director of a Design agency, before setting up my own business within the marketing space for hospitality and leisure clients. My next roles, as Head of Marketing at Blenheim Palace and the Science Museum broadened my experience into the cultural space within some truly inspiring institutions. I then moved to Merlin Entertainments

“ Understand your sense of self, and build a community of like-minded people around you to provide mentorship and guidance

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

As a data-driven discipline as well as an art, I love how much variety there is in marketing. It's all about understanding what the customer is saying and translating that into a better experience for them.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Understand your sense of self, and build a community of like-minded people around you to provide mentorship and guidance.

## If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I studied history and politics at university, so I've always been interested in political systems.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Running my own business taught me a lot. It's your name on the door,

so I became incredibly self-sufficient. I have taken that entrepreneurial spirit with me into every organisation I've worked for since.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Whilst there has been a focus on broadening diversity within the organisation, the Black Lives Matter movement has served only served to reinforce this. We hold regular live listening groups with BAME colleagues to ensure all voices across the organisation are heard.

## How are you encouraging more women up through the business?

We have a group focused on understanding the barriers to progression, so that in time we can improve and eliminate our gender pay gap and ensure improved progression for women in the organisation.

# Debrah Dhugga

Company The Apartment Group / Job Title COO



the brand. I then moved on to a luxury portfolio group Tom's Companies, developing world-leading 5-star hotels and Michelin-starred venues. When we sold, I felt like I'd ticked off all types of hotels from a leading boutique brand to a corporate and then 5-star countryside hospitality, so I switched tracks into beauty retail for a year. But I just couldn't stay away from hotels – I rejoined into Dubai-based luxury hospitality developer Seven Tides. Splitting my time between London and the UAE was really interesting, but after 10 years I made my 'now or never' jump to work closer to home at one of the largest hospitality and leisure brands in the North of England. Leaving was a gut-wrenching, bittersweet process, but I felt the Apartment Group's wonderful product would give me



I started my career in hotels, much to my father's horror! I wanted to prove to him that there were worthwhile careers in hospitality. After graduation I became a trainee manager, but there is no job in hospitality I haven't done along the way, from cleaning bedrooms to manning reception. Eventually I found my niche in sales and development and broke out of middle management, joining Malmaison as Sales and Marketing Manager and working with the founder Ken McCulloch through its inception to help grow

the new energy I needed. Though I'm deep in crisis management at the moment, I can't wait to get stuck in to growing the brand again and leading hospitality rather than a pandemic crisis.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Leading by delegation. I've watched members of my teams move from managing F&B and operations to running properties in Bangkok and South Africa, and it's these future leaders who will carry the torch for our industry.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Know who you are, where you want to be, and what you want to achieve. It's about self-awareness and self-belief, even in the most male-dominated environments. It can be hard to put your own ideas on the table, but you've been hired to give your opinion. Mentors are so valuable on your journey as a sounding board for sharing your dreams and frustrations within the industry.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I always wanted to be a television presenter – I could see myself on a morning sofa! Joking apart, I would have a lot to offer as a CEO of a football club. I feel they are all very male-heavy and could succeed with a mixed boardroom.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

You can never know enough! Don't stop researching or asking for opportunities – every day is a school day. When I was a trainee manager, I risked pulling the MD aside in the lobby and asking to shadow him. Curiosity stands out: he was so impressed that he still shares that story.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

Technology is disrupting the slow pace and inaccessibility of traditional luxury, so I hope we see exciting innovation in the types of lifestyle experiences available.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind.*

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I worked with Emma Woods at Merlin Entertainments. She was a real inspiration due to her positivity, energy and drive as well as her great experience of the leisure industry.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Vision, integrity and ability to motivate and inspire.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I have been transfixed by the US election recently, as much by the process and how we have seen it play out.



# Rebecca Di Mambro

Company Leon Restaurants / Job Title Head of Marketing



I had an existential crisis when I finished my degree in history of art and management studies, as though I knew I loved food, I didn't know what career avenues I could take without becoming a chef. I wrote to Henry Dimbleby, founder of Leon, after he tweeted about an internship, and though he had filled the position he referred me to Polpo to do a stint there. After a year, I joined the Nestle marketing graduate scheme, but I couldn't shake my connection with Leon. I pestered Henry until

he put me in touch with the CEO six years ago, and I've been here ever since. I started in a hybrid role between marketing and food development, but quickly realised a passion for home cooking doesn't equate to a love of supply chain! I then moved more solidly over to the marketing team, specialising in innovation by leading new initiatives within the business. For the last few years I've been leading the department as the Head of Marketing.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Working for a brand that genuinely cares about making a difference. In the last six months we've received some of the loveliest messages from people whom we've managed to help or serve in some way, and it makes it all worthwhile.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I love reading but strictly fiction. *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck stays with me.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Vision, compassion, trust.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I was lucky to listen to Tim Spector talk recently about his new book, *Spoon Fed*, and the diet myths that still perpetuate. Fascinating!

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Ask for what you want – politely, of course! It doesn't matter if it's a role, a pay rise or a project you think suits you; play an active role in making it come your way.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I'd love to be an architect.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Honestly, to have more fun! I've spent the last few years making up for lost time.

“ Ask for what you want – politely, of course! Play an active role in making it come your way

### What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we have a renewed gratitude for the sector itself, and the people who work inside it. We've seen incredible support at all levels, from the public to the government, so I hope we continue to recognise that it's one of our greatest outlets of joy, and a land of opportunities for young people.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When the pandemic got serious, it didn't matter what job titles any of us had – we all put on any hats we could to figure out what we could do to help our communities. Out of that rallying spirit came Feed NHS, our fundraising campaign, and Feed Britain, our direct-to-consumer delivery service that we set up in 10 days!

# Sarah Dickins

Company Bourne Leisure / Job Title Chief People Officer



I've spent my whole career in HR – from retail to utilities; financial services to hospitality and leisure. I feel very lucky that my formative years were spent at Asda, where over 17 years I took roles across the whole HR spectrum.

Getting that breadth early on in my career through a structured programme was invaluable in unlocking opportunities to work with brilliant leaders across the business. I did venture out to run customer service to get some broader business experience, and I held a non-executive role on Marshall's Motors board as REMCO chair for 4 years too. Most recently, though, I saw the opportunity to focus on the transformation and growth at Bourne and I took it: I love that through HR you can influence our culture, grow our talent and make sure that we put our team at the heart of our strategy.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The opportunity to shape our talent agenda and see our team grow. There is nothing more rewarding! We have so much talent in our business it is fabulous to see our 'Grow to' programmes helping our team develop a career with us. In our business you can start anywhere and the sky really is your limit!

### What attracted you to work in HTL?

I just love customer-facing industries that are all about people. It's great to be in a business where people are at the heart of our success. Our philosophy is happy team = happy guests = happy shareholders.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

I would stress how brilliant a sector it is – it's very special providing an experience that my whole family love too. Spend as much time as you can listening to guests and your team – then make a difference on the things that matter most to them and you will be hugely successful.

### If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I would be an interior designer. We have an O2 box as recognition for our team and we branded it for Bourne last year – I was in my element!

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

It's a retail role model for me I'm afraid – Doug McMillon, Walmart CEO.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Marcus Rashford has done an amazing job to engage everyone to help him influence free school meals. I think there is so much we can learn from him.



### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

A culture that nurtures talent is vital. We've started by educating our teams on diversity and making career development more accessible for all through our 40+ apprenticeship programmes and our 'Grow to' career programmes. We've also launched our very own Bourne Degree Apprenticeship and this has really helped us attract more diverse talent to our team. We still have a lot to do and during Covid have done a lot of discovery with our teams around our diversity plan for next year – watch this space!

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

It's heartening to see the collaboration within the industry, but we still need to work on how we are perceived externally. The opportunities in our sector are amazing and we all have to work together to change perception and bring our businesses to life in an engaging way.

# Catherine Dolton

Company InterContinental Hotels Group / Job Title Vice President Global Corporate Responsibility



I studied zoology at Cambridge before becoming an accountant at EY – it seemed like what to do when one didn't know what to do! EY had just won Bass as an audit client back then, and I had the opportunity to go on secondment to

its internal audit function and loved going behind the scenes at hotels around the world. Bass then became Six Continents and then IHG, during which time I moved across permanently, building up the hotel and corporate audit function for EMEA, before deciding to step into something different. With my finance background, I had made connections in Investor Relations, so I transferred across and then went on to spend seven years leading the team. It was brilliant – there was never a dull day, dealing with everyone from analysts to activists!

As investors asked questions around purpose, environmental and social credentials, I became increasingly interested in corporate responsibility – I thought the change of scene would suit me, as a storyteller rather than a number-cruncher at heart, and it was a chance to get back closer to the business again. I moved over to lead that team a couple of years ago thanks to the support of senior sponsors willing to take a chance on me. It's a very exciting time, as we gear up to launch a set of long-term ambitions and commitments to be a more responsible business.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The sheer variety of what I do. In one meeting I can be discussing technical solutions to reduce carbon emissions across our estate, and in the next how to attract young people into hospitality.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't shy away from being ambitious, and vocal in your ambition. Unless

people know what you want to do, you can't get there. A lot of women fear this will paint them in a negative light and want their work to speak for itself, but it is what men are doing every day, and they are commended for it.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Something related to zoology – though I feel I've come full circle in working on conservation!

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

I wish I had worked abroad earlier in my career, as the experience of working in a foreign market is so helpful when you get to senior positions in a global organisation.

## What attracted you to work in hospitality?

The chance to travel the world and interact with the people you meet along the way. There's no one more interesting than a hotel general manager – the stories they tell about the people they've met are fascinating.

## What have you done to promote diversity in your organisation?

Even though there is a long way to go, D&I is a priority for IHG's Executive

“ Don't shy away from being ambitious, and vocal in your ambition

Committee and the Board. Our global CEO set up a D&I board with representatives across the business to set out what initiatives and actions to take to drive change across the business. It drives accountability and makes sure that, amongst other measures, we are sticking to our targets. Our employee networks have really thrived this year. We have almost 30 chapters of employee networks globally and they bring colleagues together but also provide them with a platform to feedback to IHG on what can be done better for their community.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity.*

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Hotel general managers – their ability to effectively juggle many different things e.g. leading teams, supporting their communities, and providing amazing guest experiences is inspiring.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Integrity, trust, compassion, vision.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

553 people have reached Earth's orbit (65 women); 12 people have walked on the surface on the Moon (zero women).

# Zarah Doyle

Company ODEON / Job Title People Director UK & Ireland



At school, I had thought about being a teacher or a lawyer, but reset my sights on HR based on the varied experiences it brings; from reward and recognition to talent development or driving employee engagement. I had always worked in

customer service roles and loved the guest interaction that hospitality and leisure give you, so I knew guest experience was somewhere I wanted to build my niche in the people space – how you treat your people connects directly with how your customers feel. I was the HR manager for a hotel group before joining Odeon 8 years ago, and feel incredibly lucky to have had a number of roles across the business. The work is so exciting and I'm passionate about the industry, which is why I've stayed so long. Now, as People Director for Odeon UK & Ireland, one of our three territories, I look after 5,000 colleagues and serve as chairperson of our Irish board. It's been an rollercoaster year for our industry and our function, but I'm a strong believer that every day is a school day, you never know what each conversation will hold until it starts and so through each difficult moment there has been an opportunity to learn more and make an impact.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be a sponge – always tune in to that podcast or that webinar. Sometimes you need to invite yourself – dive right in, because everyone in every role and every level is learning as they go along!

## How have you helped your company change on gender representation?

We've come on a real journey, and we are now seeing proper gender representation across the organisation. I'm extremely passionate about our Incredible Differences programme, which I was proud to work on right from the start in my previous role. We've worked hard to build our data and metrics and it has been great to see that our colleagues now have more role models to look up to.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Mentorship has been such an important part of my journey, so embrace the

people who will nudge you along to lean in and learn more. Get comfortable with not having the answers (this took me awhile) so keep asking the questions and you'll quite quickly know more than you realised! It's imperative that female leaders extend that helping hand, and it makes a huge difference in building confidence.

“ Be a sponge – always tune in to that podcast or that webinar

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

I knew we had a talented workforce, but I've been blown away by how well everyone has adapted to the continual change. The passion our colleagues have for the business has come through in a concrete way. It's jaw-dropping what you can achieve in 24 hours!

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg: it's my perfect go to when I need that little extra nudge to push myself forward and get brave to try new things.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I have been incredibly lucky over the last few years to have fantastic internal role models to

look up to. I am also a huge fan of Jacinda Ardern, having started my current role after maternity leave I was a little in awe of her multi-tasking skills!

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

A willingness to keep learning, show some vulnerability and support the development of those around them.



# Camille Drevillon

Company Abercrombie & Kent / Job Title SVP Strategic Planning and Business Development



Originally from France, I grew up and studied all over the world before moving to London with an investment bank. After five years I had an itch to switch focus, just as a former colleague asked me to join the finance team at luxury cruise

company Silversea in Monaco. I'm from Brittany, so the sea is in my blood! Back in 2011, Silversea was growing its expedition fleet, so it was hugely exciting to deal in far-flung destinations like Antarctica and the Galapagos. I then joined the historic Norwegian cruise line Hurtigruten, spending three years in the commercial team in Oslo. I planned the itineraries, deciding which ship goes where when based on customer trends, seasonality, excursions and more. Later I joined luxury travel company Abercrombie & Kent, where my job is to plan for the future and execute upon our strategy. I am most excited about digital transformation and tools, and the change that millennials are bringing to company cultures. Although Covid-19 has significantly disrupted the industry, I do feel that I have landed in the right place at the right time to make a difference.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*How Will You Measure Your Life* by Clay Christensen – it makes you think about what is important for you in the long run, and the parallels between who you are as an individual and how you behave in your work life.

### Who is your role model?

Marisa Drew, who now heads up Impact Advisory at Credit Suisse. I had the chance to work with Marisa in my early 20s, and she has been an inspiration both in terms of leadership style and empowerment, but also in how she has shaped her career through hard work, innovation and without compromising her values.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

We have a publication that collects personal 'thank you's' from guests who have shared memories from their trips. It takes a lot to create the perfect guest experience, so it's amazing that we can feed that appreciation back to these individuals and celebrate them.

### If you weren't in HTL, what would you be doing?

I would be a teacher; possibly in mathematics, as the logic appeals to me. There's a lot of crossover with leadership, in terms of understanding strengths, developing, and inspiring people.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Fighting the 'if it's not broken, don't fix it' mentality, which is such a hurdle to staying relevant. In many areas, things have moved more in the last 10 years than the previous 50,

so responses like 'no one's asked for this before' don't cut it anymore.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Don't be afraid of failing. When things weren't rosy earlier on in my career, I tended to take it personally and think I wasn't up to the job. I've come to understand that this is not a reflection of your worth, but sometimes a sign to move on and try something that better suits you.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in travel?

There is an increasing number of women across all areas of travel, including leadership positions in traditionally male environments such as officers on cruise ships and airline pilots. Travel is a lifestyle for many millennials; they value and drive diversity and social justice in the companies they work for and patronise.

# Kirsty Edwards

Company Scott Dunn / Job Title Head of Integrated Marketing



I fell into the sector by chance really. My first look into the hospitality industry was at Whitbread, where I was sales development executive. I first worked for Scott Dunn in 2000 as resort manager in Courchevel in France, before joining again twelve years later

as Ski Product Development Manager. As my career at Scott Dunn has progressed, I have found that travel is such a great sector to work in – in large down to the people that you meet. It's fun, friendly and fast-paced with everyone sharing a passion for the sheer joy that travelling brings.

### What do you find most rewarding about your job?

The diversity of it. I've been really lucky to have worked in a number of roles across the business, from being on the ground as a Resort Manager out in the Alps, to being part of the product team and latterly the marketing team. Working

across these different functions has kept me engaged with the business, challenged me and given me lots of opportunities to grow and learn.

This is particularly relevant now as we navigate through this pandemic. I've learnt the importance of being agile and nimble and quick to react, to

ensure that we keep our guests fully informed of the latest information. I'm lucky to have a great team who are also learning the importance of these traits.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

It's got to be how to react during a global pandemic. This past year has been incredibly challenging, both professionally and personally. At the start of the year we had recorded our best trading months ever and within a matter of weeks everything dropped off a cliff. I continued working throughout this period and I found myself taking on all kinds of tasks I'd never anticipated. I learned the importance of resilience, agility and communication and, on a personal level, I learned the importance of my own well-being and what I needed to do to maintain some sort of equilibrium during the ongoing turmoil.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be positive, listen, embrace change, be resilient and don't fear failure, use it to learn. And most importantly, be yourself.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Ask questions, challenge, be more confident and learn from all opportunities. It is possible to have a successful career and still be a great mum.

### If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I nearly became a ski instructor at one point so maybe that – definitely something outdoorsy.

### What attracted you to work in the sector?

I fell into the sector by chance really, but as my career has progressed, I have to say that travel is such a great sector to work in – in large down to the people that you meet – there's a shared passion for the sheer joy that travel brings and as a result a real feeling of kindred spirits within the business.

### What do you hope the sector will look like in 5 years' time?

The industry needs to be more inclusive with a diverse workforce to reflect this. It is encouraging to see this beginning to change but we must collectively ensure this progression continues.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in the sector?

There still aren't enough women in senior leadership roles in our industry, as a collective we need to work towards ensuring women currently in middle management roles can progress and reach the top jobs.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I really enjoyed *Becoming* by Michelle Obama and I'm currently reading *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg, which is really resonating. I'm already finding it incredibly inspiring and hope that it will help me overcome some of the self-doubt issues which women often struggle with in their careers.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I'm incredibly fortunate as I have some inspiring people around me, from colleagues to other industry peers. However, our current CEO Sonia Davies continues to inspire me, as she navigates our business through the turmoil thrown up by Covid-19. Having a female CEO at the helm is something we're all proud of at Scott Dunn and I continue to be in awe of her courage, strength, resilience and humility.

# Meg Farren

Company KFC UK & Ireland / Job Title Chief Marketing Officer



I started at in investment banking at JP Morgan, before going to a management consultancy. I knew, however, that I wanted to get into a food business, so I wrote to the founder of Gü puddings – a brand I admired – persistently until he agreed to meet me. The only job available was a sales job as national account manager, which I knew nothing about! It was scary but I knew it would be a foot in the door, so I took it. It was challenging adapting to a much smaller company than I was used to, and scary taking a risk that deviate from a good career path. I loved the pace of a small business, and loved building a consumer brand. I was inspired by Howard Schultz' book *Onward* about the possibilities when you can influence the customer experience of your brand more holistically. In hospitality, you can have an incredible impact at scale so quickly – which is both a good and a bad thing! I've stayed at KFC nine years, and in the CMO role for four. I lead marketing, which

touches every corner of our experience – from menu strategy to consumer insight. The scale and breadth of the role have morphed, so even within my position I am continuously learning from super smart, ambitious and incredibly talented people.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

As we've undergone our brand transformation, seeing the perception of our brand change in the consciousness of the British public has been hugely motivating.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Strive to be yourself – your very best self – every day. Give voice to what's in your head, and in your heart, authentically and confidently. You are hired to give your perspective, not emulate someone else's.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I studied Political Science and French at university, so I might have been an international affairs journalist.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

It's not always about going up – by moving sideways, taking parallel opportunities and experiencing different functions and sectors, you build a holistic understanding of

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Mindset*, by Carol Dweck.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Resilience, curiosity, humility, perspective, ambition, grit.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I love the podcast *How We Built This*.

business with a broader, fresher experience and perspective. My dad told me once, "Find something you love to do, work hard, give it your all and then the rest will follow." He was right – I have never obsessed about pay rises or promotions, and that has paid off for me.

### What have you done to promote diversity in your organisation?

At KFC, we have many formal programmes, support networks, leadership trainings and mentoring, but one of the most things I try do as a leader is role model transparently and with vulnerability. It's not easy being a working mum. I've learned to manage my own expectations of myself and to role model that too;

I can't be everything for every person in my life at every moment in my life. You wouldn't hold others to that standard, so why expect it of yourself?

### How have you seen the role of women in hospitality change?

In previous generations, senior women (or men!) never spoke about their children at work. Now, at work we see each other as whole humans and we know the whole person: their brilliance at work, but also their partners, their children, their side hustles... their hobbies. At KFC, we work hard to create an environment where every individual can bring their whole self to work every day.



# Henny Frazer

Company AMAN / Job Title Global Director of Hotel Marketing



I often say I attended the University of Life, having bypassed a British university education for a year at the Sorbonne! The language skills I learnt there proved to be a springboard for my future career. I began at a small interior designer with a hotel in

the South of France as one of our clients, completely unaware that I would switch sides. I moved into communications, doing PR at Moët-Hennessey before heading up the function at a food and drinks boutique agency where I looked after the CIVC (Champagne), the CIVB (Bordeaux), Michelin-starred restaurants and Harvey Nichols restaurants and food markets. I was surrounded by strong women making things happen on all sides. The champagne industry straddles drinks and hospitality, so although I had some experience in the latter, moving to Hyatt in 2005 was eye-opening. Understanding operations and how to bring marketing communications alive across all areas was key. It also gave me the opportunity to get to know colleagues from all over the world. A lifelong traveller, I felt like this was the most natural place for me, and I rose up the ranks at Hyatt to become Director of Brands for EMEA and Southwest Asia out of our regional head office in Zurich. Then, last year, I joined AMAN.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I like progressing more than deliberating, so I love the fast-moving process of working on a great idea together as a team, trying it out and watching it deliver success. A good day is always when we work together as one across all teams.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Never assume you know everything, as there's always someone smarter who has new ideas. Think about how you build your brand and what defines it – that's how you gain loyalty.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I'd be a vet! I adore all animals.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I use LinkedIn as a platform to write blogs, as I want to let the younger generation know how great an industry this is. When I speak to women in their early

20s, I ask them if they've considered hospitality, and if not, why not! There's a misconception that the big jobs don't exist here, but if you're interested in people and travelling, there's a world of opportunity out there waiting.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Spend as much time as you can working in different departments, understanding operations, revenue and sales, to forge a more rounded career in hospitality. Before joining this industry, I never realised quite how complicated hotels are!

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's frightening how many people around the world have been affected, from those at the top of their game to those just starting out. Coming out of this period, I hope we see more clearly defined brands, across the different hotel sectors, delivering unique guest experiences.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I'm an avid reader, so this changes frequently. Most recently *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. A man under house-arrest in a hotel in Moscow for over 30 years. Always a gentleman and if you love hotels, this is a great story.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Katrin Melle, a former HR colleague I worked with. A constant professional,

kind yet with a great sense of humour!

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Compassion, honesty and integrity, delegation and empowerment.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

The Paris Agreement on climate change was signed by the largest number of countries ever in one day.



# Estelle Giraudeau

Company Club Med / Job Title MD UK & Northern Europe



At university in France I had wanted to be a teacher until a masters' degree in Canada broadened my horizons, both metaphorically and literally. My career has hinged around the intersection of digital and international ever since: I began as a brand manager at a global advertising firm, where my best accounts were centered around travel and tourism. Next,

I moved to the premium children's fashion brand IKKS to transform their marketing and ecommerce strategies internationally. After three years there, having covered everything from supply chain management to wholesale, I joined Club Med as UK marketing director. I loved the prestige of the product: we sell the idea of a hassle-free getaway rather than just rooms. Soon, I was given the chance to build up my commercial acumen as MD of the Nordic region, and eventually took on all of Northern Europe. I went on to run a digital transformation, which drove me to double the size of the business in four years. It was an enormous challenge to carve a niche

in the oversaturated British market, so my goal was to focus on luxury ski and concentrate our best service there. It's fascinating to work alongside people spread across the world, giving the right tasks to the right people to make a real improvement in the business.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be yourself, be assertive, and be aware of your worth. It can be hard for women to demand promotions or pay rises, but for me that confidence led to my first MD role. Your weaknesses are your strengths: people are more willing to trust you when you share your weaknesses with them.

### What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Go faster in your decisions, and trust yourself when you have a deep conviction. Timing is more important than ever – even if there

“Your weaknesses are your strengths: people are more willing to trust you when you share your weaknesses with them

is no perfect solution, you have to be practical and make the right decision at the right time for your people and the business.

### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Covid-19 has been a battle for our industry, but it's human nature to come out the other end of these deeply traumatic situations wanting to make the most out of life. I think there will be a big shake-up of the travel industry: people will look for both safety and a delightful luxury experience, to make the most of their quality times with their loved ones and bond with them.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill.

This is a pioneer book in terms of leadership and personal development as it was written in 1937 after the Great Depression.

Contrary to what the title implies, this is how to reach your goals and your success, whatever is your own definition of success.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

A powerful leader is the one who manages to

give people trust and confidence so they know they can do anything and that their only limit is themselves. Leading is also sharing the vision, the collective and individual purpose to cement everybody around the same goal and ambition.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I recently watched *The Last Dance* documentary on Netflix about Michael Jordan, which was a fantastic eye-opener.

# Charlotte Gogstad

Company Expedia Group / Job Title VP Product and Technology Enablement



I am originally from Norway and made my way to London in 2000, after having studied in the United States. After some early roles in telecoms and computing, I joined Expedia Group in 2005 after completing my MBA at London Business School. It was exciting to be able to combine my passion for travel with my strong interest in the online marketplace.

During my career, I've sought out distinctly different challenges in each of the roles I've held. I have consciously chosen a path that strays from the beaten track, believing in the importance of having expertise across



numerous fields. That approach has broadened my perspective and enables me to adapt to various situations.

This has involved roles in marketing, product, strategy and general management, with each role providing a stretch and growth opportunity. It's when you step out of your comfort zone that you truly test your skills and evolve. One role that provided a step change in my career was becoming Product

Director for EMEA. The role was unique as it required working across a matrix organisation and challenged me to enhance my influencing skills. It set me up for what was my dream job at the time; being a General Manager. While a GM, I became the proud mom of our daughter Arabella and took a leap of faith by taking a full year of maternity leave. My best decision ever!

When I returned, our CEO asked me to take on a global search marketing role. The online marketing space had evolved, and it meant having to 'build a new muscle' and learn how to truly leverage technology for growth.

In my current role, I'm responsible for the global operations and planning function of our retail product organisation. We aim to build experiences that travellers love and return for again and again.

“If you love what you do, it'll be easier to deliver and achieve

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be aware of both your own strengths and weaknesses, and how these might be perceived by others. Also, ensure you're in a role you love. If you love what you do, it'll be easier to deliver and achieve.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Expedia Group is very focused on diversity efforts and has been on this journey for 10 years now. We have a comprehensive learning series, and my team has completed allyship training this past quarter. I have personally also participated in reverse-mentoring sessions where I've spent 1-1 time with individuals sharing their experience.

### What do you hope your sector will look like in 5 years' time?

First of all, I am sure we will have bounced back from the challenges of Covid. People are eager to travel and gain new experiences, and I think they can't wait to get out there again. However, travel patterns might change in that seeking out nature and connecting with people will be top of mind. The sector will have to adapt to meet the needs of new habits.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book influenced me the most?

For me, I have to admit I reserve books for fiction and enjoyment, and try to keep on top of business topics through articles. However, I did quite like reading *The Woman I Wanted to Be* by Diane von Furstenberg (wife of Expedia Group's chairman Barry Diller).

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

The key to great leadership is the ability to build strong relationships. Hence, being genuine, empathetic and inclusive are key qualities of effective leaders.

# Patrice Gordon

Company Virgin Atlantic / Job Title Head of Joint Venture and Commercial Planning



I have a love for numbers and thoroughly enjoy reading and learning about new things. My degree was in business, specialising in psychology and accounting, post degree I took some time out and I spent six months immersing myself in different

cultures travelling around the world. I then qualified as a Chartered Accountant with PwC satisfying my love of structure. After qualifying I joined British Airways in the Group Reporting team where I was able to learn about the full structure of an airline from a financial perspective. This first role was instrumental in developing both my understanding of the Airline and my network across the business. From there I move to manage the finances of the Marketing Department through the relaunch of the brand and working with LOCOG during our sponsorship of the London 2012 Olympics. Post this I moved to New York as VP Americas & Caribbean and on my return I switched regions to support APMEA. I had an interesting and varied experience at BA. I then joined Royal Mail as Commercial Finance Director, working on the modernisation of the Data & Growth business unit. When I was offered a role at Virgin Atlantic heading up the Commercial Finance team, I was excited to work for another iconic British brand, a smaller organisation, where I could make a real difference – I've always been determined to leave a legacy. In 2018 I left finance to head up our joint venture with Delta, KLM and Air France, which sees me collaborate with teams across the business to maximise the value of our co-operation.

“I'd like to see more strategy, technology and even CEO roles embracing women as senior leaders

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love being part of something that connects

people, delighting and surprising along the way. Developing people means everything to me: my proudest moment was when my entire team was rated excellent at Royal Mail.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't be afraid to reach out and approach someone you admire to be your mentor, mentorship has

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I am an avid reader so that is a difficult one. I would say one of the books I refer to and recommend frequently is Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

For me it is authenticity and credibility.

been really instrumental to helping me in my career.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

When I first started, I was slightly blinkered – junior levels are usually more diverse, so I never thought twice about representation. As I've progressed I've seen fewer people that look like me in the room, whether that be Black women or women more generally. I hope we can become more representative of the communities we serve.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Being recognised as competent beyond the

stereotypically 'female' functions like HR and marketing. I'd like to see more strategy, technology and even CEO roles embracing women as senior leaders.

### What have you done to promote diversity in your organisation?

Within a year of joining Virgin Atlantic I instigated a finance apprenticeship scheme when I realised we lacked that point of entry. I was the first reverse mentor to our CEO and I am also the first trained facilitator outside HR for our Springboard development programme, which has welcomed over 200 women to date.



# Elaine Grell

Company The Collective / Job Title Group People Director



I did my growing up at British Airways, spending 21 years in various roles, from frontline customer service to marketing and IT until I crossed into the people space, where the stars aligned for me. I did my MBA alongside managing a range of teams and

getting stuck into big change projects. As someone constantly looking to stretch herself, I needed a new horizon, so I transitioned into IHG where the drivers and stakeholders were completely different. I learnt a lot from my posting in Atlanta, travelling around the world and getting involved in the strategic elements of every commercial function. It was fascinating working in a global context, which is all about providing the clarity of vision that meshes the local context with the bigger puzzle. On returning to the UK I looked after our European hotel operations and our Group Functions which brought me closer to what hotels are all about as well as keeping me in touch with the strategic direction of the company. Most recently I joined The Collective, a hybrid real estate-hospitality company with service at its essence. Because the business is young and agile, I feel well placed to lay down the foundations beneath its ambitious growth plan.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Our purpose at The Collective is to enable people to lead more fulfilling lives, together. I find making an impact on people incredibly rewarding, so those who work here feel it's a good place to grow, and our members who live with us feel they're benefitting from great experiences.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't lose your curiosity – it's easy to get sucked into tunnel vision but keep

your eyes open to your surroundings. Networks are so valuable but you only get out what you put in, so make sure to interact with people with a variety of interests, across industries and sectors.

### What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

Until I moved to Atlanta, I didn't realise how much I assumed. You can be fooled into thinking US and UK culture are similar, but the small differences – both in work practices and in lifestyle – add up. Now, I try to dig deeper for the underlying meaning when I listen to people.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* by The Dalai Lama. It's a nice reminder of a time when I had the privilege to hear the Dalai Lama speak in person and share his wisdom, applied to modern day challenges.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity and integrity. I think that if these are the core of your actions, your behaviours, your intentions and the decisions that you make, then you can inspire and motivate others to achieve great things.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

It seems like slowly a broader cross-section of people are willing to act – younger generations simply won't accept the status quo. The changes that go against the current need time and effort, but we can't lose sight of the long-term goal when pressured deadlines get in the way.

### What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I'd like to see us harness the inherent flexibility of our 24/7 industry to

“People are willing to act – younger generations simply won't accept the status quo

ease the care burden on women. More broadly, I would love to see hospitality businesses taking accountability for developing local talent pipelines which reflect the diversity of their communities.



# Franziska Heller

Company Hilton / Job Title Senior Manager Commercial Planning & Optimisation EMEA



business come to us with their pressure points, and we try to help them become more efficient in their work.

“It's so rewarding to venture out into the field and work with our teams to set us up for the future”

I was fortunate enough to travel the world during my childhood, so my most formative memories revolve around great service in beautiful hotels. Though it was a new field of study in Germany at the time, I went into international hotel management at University. From then on, I tried to get as much hospitality experience as I could, spending five years in hotels learning the nitty gritty of operations. I was always pushing to know more, asking the uncomfortable questions about why we did what we did, so my General Manager in Vienna referred me for a role at our European headquarters in the UK. Five years ago, I took my first role in sales strategy, collaborating with teams to ensure we have the right structures in place. It's so rewarding to venture out into the field and work with our teams to set us up for the future. Three years ago, my role expanded into commercial, so now I'm running my function as a strategy consultancy within Hilton. Leaders from all facets of the

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I'm very proud to work somewhere that lives and breathes the values of hospitality and it is immensely fulfilling to be able to directly connect them with my personal values. My role as project lead fortunately also allows me to connect with a variety of talented Team Members from a wide range of functional specialties.

## How have you responded to challenges in your career?

Though it's easy to dwell on past mistakes, I've had to remind myself that my personal path for growth comes from my learnings from challenging moments. This outlook helps me spin difficulties into opportunities and ultimately positive learning experiences.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I am looking forward to continuing to innovate and stay abreast of new

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Definitely *The Power of Moments* by Chip & Dan Heath.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Patricia Page-Champion, Hilton's SVP of Commercial Services and Global Commercial Director, who featured in this index last year. She is an inspirational and motivational leader who always 'walks the talk' and takes time out of her extremely busy schedule to listen, care and empower her team.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

The musical *Hamilton* from Lin-Manuel Miranda – bold, brilliant and daring! Plus, the topic of a low-income immigrant becoming a prominent public servant and US founding father is ever so timely with the US Presidential elections having just wrapped up, resulting in the historic appointment of Kamala Harris as the first Black and Indian American woman Vice President!

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I'm fortunate that the D&I agenda at Hilton is holistic and a priority from top to bottom – we're in the business of people serving people after all. I lead one of the chapters of our Next Generation Team Member Resource Group, which aims to ensure we're giving younger generations a voice at Hilton and creating an inclusive workplace for millennials and Gen Z.

trends in travel such as alternative urban destinations, domestic travel opportunities and increased digitisation. From a sustainability point of view, I hope we will have made great progress towards our Travel with Purpose 2030 goals to cut our environmental footprint in half and double our investment in social impact. This will ensure we can continue to attract 'new travellers', who rightly demand we have a positive social impact.



# Luana Herrmann

Company The Restaurant Group / Job Title Head of Brand and Marketing



While at university in Brazil, I started my career with internships in market & retail intelligence and marketing, gaining incredible experience in leading companies like Pernod Ricard and Red Bull. When I least

expected it, I was approached by Unilever – the crème de la crème of marketing in Brazil. I coordinated trade marketing for brands like Knorr and Hellmanns, developing more my commercial skills and learning a lot by going out into the field. Coming from a multicultural background I always dreamt of living abroad, so I studied at UC Berkeley and moved to Burger King Spain for my next marketing intelligence role. I was initially sceptical of the culture shock, but it was eye-opening for me to work across different international markets – even more so when I moved to the UK to head my first marketing department! I stayed here to join The Restaurant Group as I wanted to challenge myself to learn the totally new landscape of casual dining. After a few years in a strategy role, I was put in charge of brand strategy and marketing for Chiquito, the biggest Mexican chain in the UK, where I'm proud to say we achieved great results in revitalizing the brand and the operation. After the rollercoaster of Covid-19, I've taken over a challenging new role looking after more brands and with a bigger team – it's a beast but I'm pushing through!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Reading positive reviews from our guests and getting operational teams excited about the brand and marketing initiatives are really the best. Sales come naturally when we have clarity of what we do and we believe in the brand, so getting operational teams' buy-in is key and the best way to do that is by taking them through the journey, getting their thoughts, clarifying the objectives of initiatives and sharing results.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Make adaptability your strength – use this to navigate better through different scenarios and situations and allow yourself to take risks. And also don't let anyone mistake your kindness for weakness, if someone tries to undermine you or talk over you, just keep playing the high ground – a quote I love is 'Don't raise your voice, improve your argument'.

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Pranee Laurillard, founder of Giggling Squid.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

I would list a handful, but three I find non-negotiable

are integrity, empathy and more than ever, positivity.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

How Peloton invested in gamification to bring the gym classes into home and push people to thrive.



## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Don't be taken in by the bright lights. I've been offered roles with better pay or more responsibility in the past, but I didn't take them as it wasn't right for me. If you stick with what you like to do, you'll get to the right place eventually and you'll enjoy the journey there.

“Make adaptability your strength”

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Overnight most players were forced to implement service changes and technology that would usually take months of trial, so I think it has forced the industry to be faster on its feet – especially casual dining. Seeing players in the industry come together on LinkedIn to share resources with those who needed it and supporting each other in general was very heartening too, it showed a sense of community I hadn't seen before.



# Joanne Howe

Company Stagecoach South East / Job Title Operations Director



## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

The more flexible you can be geographically, the more opportunities there are for those who want to progress. Also don't limit yourself by not applying for roles. A lack of confidence in your own abilities could lead to you restricting your progression by not applying for roles. If you're unsure then ask friends and colleagues whose opinion you respect.

Towards the end of a degree in transport and product design I knew a career in design wasn't for me. I spoke to a participant on the Stagecoach graduate scheme and found out about the training and experience the scheme offered with the opportunity to progress to positions of responsibility. After roles as an assistant manager in different parts of the country, my first substantial role was in Dumfries and Stranraer as Operations Manager.

Following this I moved to London as Garage Operations Manager, before joining the Megabus team as Operations Director for Megabus Europe to set up our European depots. It was a hugely competitive market, so when the decision was taken to refocus on the UK I returned as Operations Director for the South East. It's a great all-rounder job – I get to balance working with people with future planning and financials.

“A lack of confidence in your own abilities could lead to you restricting your progression”

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

People management is a large part of my role so possibly HR. My back-up plan after university was to do a ski season, so I could have had an alternate life in the mountains!

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's been difficult for everyone and all companies have had to look at working practises to see what changes need to be made to allow for

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed For Men* by Caroline Criado-Perez was quite thought provoking as I hadn't realised how flawed and limited some of the data used by companies, organisations and governments to inform their decision making is.

### Who is your role model within the industry?

I've been fortunate to work for a number of managers within the industry who have all had different qualities and leadership styles that I admire.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Clear vision but will listen to ideas and feedback. Investment in people in both time and resources.

Covid-19. The focus now is on the future, restoring confidence and getting people to where they need to be.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

In three years we increased the number of female staff in one of our locations by over 450%. When there are opportunities for progression we will encourage those who we think are capable, but lacking in confidence to apply for roles. Greater representation at all levels is helping to encourage more diversity in our applicants.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Setting up the European depots and network for Megabus was the biggest challenge in my career as we created the companies

and set up the operations in four different countries within a year. There was no existing infrastructure and we had to deal with different legislation in each country which in some cases was only just being developed as we were setting up our European operation.

It was a huge task to set it all up, but we recruited an experienced team of managers and sought advice from local experts. Whilst there was a lot to do in a short space of time, we succeeded in setting up a successful, good quality reliable service with a brand new team of staff. This showed me that whilst it seemed like an incredibly daunting task to start with, by breaking the job into smaller parts we were able to make progress very quickly.

# Louise Hughes

Company Moto Hospitality / Job Title Human Resources Director



greater place to work for our 5,000 colleagues, which is what I have been privileged to try and do every day since!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

It's been incredibly rewarding to see such a vast number of colleagues progress their careers rapidly through our business. We are fairly unique in that our people can gain experience of working for lots of brilliant brands under one roof whilst working for just one employer. Many of our Senior Leaders started on the shop floor before progressing to where they are today. If you're willing to work and be committed then anything is possible in Moto.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be confident in your ability and what you bring to the table. Building self-confidence is key to smash through self-perpetuating imposter syndrome. It's the classic 80/20 trope: men apply to a role with 20% of the required experience, whereas women think they need 80%. We are making great progress in gender diversity in senior leadership roles but complete gender parity is our ultimate aim.

## If you weren't in HR, what would you be doing?

I'd probably be on the shop floor in retail somewhere; I love the pace and pressure and could never give up chatting with customers!

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Simon Sinek – *Start with Why*.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Tea Colaianni and her passion, drive and determination.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Self-awareness, positivity and authenticity.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

That you can't buy Coca-Cola in Cuba or North Korea – it was a question in our weekly family quiz on Zoom!

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's elevated just how important the hospitality sector is in all of our daily lives and that when we suddenly can't access many of the things we take for granted such as pubs and restaurants we really do appreciate them even more.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope it will be a thriving sector offering an

exceptional customer experience, which attracts a diverse mix of talent looking to fast track their career progression.

## What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

This one! Making decisions during this pandemic at pace has been relentless, and every decision we make impacts the livelihoods of our colleagues so that is always at the forefront of my mind.



# Dr Julie Humphreys

Company Compass Group / Job Title Group Head of Diversity and Inclusion



I've been in HR for 20-odd years, starting as a graduate and working all over the space in every sector from retail to banking along the way. D&I hasn't always been on business' radars – indeed, for most of my career, it didn't exist as a 'profession'

in the UK. The work was there but always at the side of a desk, waiting for someone to volunteer to take it on. My own interest was piqued while I was Global HR Business Partner at BNY Mellon, where I took on the responsibility of supporting a transgender colleague through their transition. I was so affected by the difference I could make that I transitioned into a D&I-specific role seven years ago. At Compass, I support our 600,000 colleagues across 45 markets, considering priorities, leading strategy and showing each country how we can implement initiatives in a practical manner.

“ We talk a lot about microaggressions and structural biases, but there are so many practical challenges we haven't examined yet

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Don't listen to those who say you can't do it – I was advised not to do A Levels, and now I have a doctorate!

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I'm part of Speakers for Schools, so I'd love to be in academic access and outreach.

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado-Perez. It's packed with shocking facts and insights into how the world is largely built for men and the impact of this gender data gap on women's health and wellbeing.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Tea Colaianni – she is a force to be reckoned with! Tea is humble and authentic in all she does. She really leads the way for women in the industry.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Authenticity, humility, high emotional IQ, and a sense of humour!

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

I came across a report that said 90% of organisations claim they prioritise diversity, but when drilling down only 4% of those organisations prioritised disability as part of their diversity strategy. 14 million people in the UK have a disability – that's a lot of people being ignored.

**How have you seen D&I change during the last few months?**

It feels like a lot of organisations let D&I fall by the wayside in March as they focused on business survival and mental wellbeing. After the tragedy of George Floyd's murder, however, everything changed, thrusting D&I into the spotlight. It was my job to make everyone feel safe, and to amplify the voices of our Black and ethnic minority colleagues.

**What are the biggest challenges facing women in hospitality?**

We talk a lot about microaggressions and structural biases, but there are so many practical challenges we haven't examined yet. Something

as basic as professional kitchen design can be a barrier to female chefs – our physicality simply doesn't fit! We're trying to do our bit to change what we can.

**How do we get better diversity at a leadership level?**

You need advocacy from the top – our group CEO has been a powerful force in keeping D&I consistently on the agenda. We're proud of our internal leadership development programmes, but you have to balance that with external recruitment to get new blood in the mix.



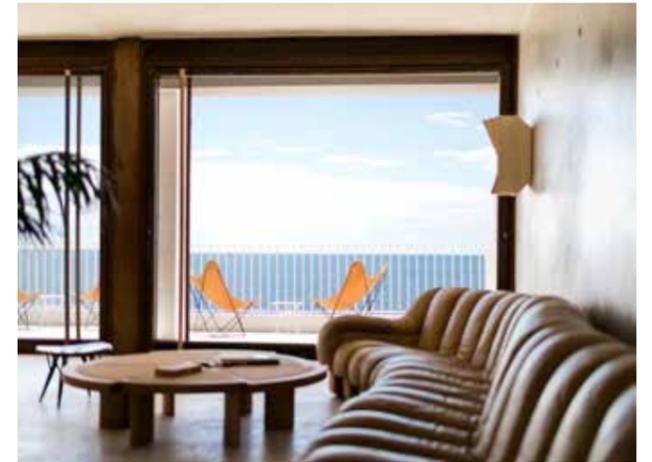
# Duna Irshaid

Company Perseus / Job Title Head of Architecture and Design



I grew up all over the Middle East before moving to the UK to study architecture. As a newly qualified architect, I worked in a luxury-residential-focused traditional practice. When I saw a job offer at Soho House, however, I realised that I wanted a change – being part of the product, as the client as well as the designer, struck a chord with me. I worked in-house on their new concept Mollie's Motel & Diner, which offers an affordable but contemporary and glamorous take on the

typical roadside offering. I learnt a lot developing a brand from scratch – we had to consider what exactly customers would want and need. Next, I joined WeWork as an interior designer, and quickly advanced to Creative Director for Northern and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Although I loved creating something consumers could directly enjoy, I missed the service element of hospitality, so earlier this year I joined the luxury hotel operator Perseus. The company's mission is to refurbish and run modern luxury hotels that feel natural in their communities. At Perseus, there is no set 'style' – every hotel, from Paris to the Alps, is unique, designed from local inspiration and engaging with the local community.



**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

When I've worked on the physical design of a space, there is nothing better than seeing it filled by people and experiencing the atmosphere as they use and enjoy it.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Remember that 'luxury' no longer means made for a specific kind of person. There is so much innovation worlds away from white tablecloths and suits, so don't be scared to come in with new ideas and question old assumptions. Nothing is set in stone!

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I'd be a marine biologist, exploring the whole world that lives parallel to ours beneath the sea.

**What advice would you give your younger self?**

Don't let fear hold you back from speaking out. I've had times where I've thought

“ There is so much innovation worlds away from white tablecloths and suits, so don't be scared to come in with new ideas and question old assumptions

something and stayed silent, but someone else says it five minutes later and gets credit. Trust your voice even if it conflicts with others in the room: you're there for a reason.

**What attracted you to work in HTL?**

In a traditional architecture firm, what you design is delivered by other people. In hospitality, the connection with your product never ends. You can always physically visit and make adjustments to continually improve the experience.

## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. I've read it time and time again, a powerful reminder of how we should behave around others if we want to make a real impression – by showing a genuine curiosity in others and a true desire to learn about them.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

Liz Lambert. Listening to her podcast on the Tim

Ferris Show is one of the most inspiring career stories I've heard. Her journey started with buying a rundown motel and ended with her building a strong brand, which shows a tenacity that can inspire women no matter what career they're in.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Empathy. To lead people one must be able to step into their shoes and understand things from their perspective.



# Sian Jenkins

Company ODEON / Job Title Head of Sales



Growing up in a household of three strong women, my mum's adurance on a good education gave me a certain drive. She opened the initial door into hospitality for me, as I worked in her café-bistro while I studied, where I got a kick out

of offering people the best service and seeing them come back. I've always had a mentality that suited sales, so after studying Hispanic studies at university I took a job selling children's educational books door-to-door. The experience taught me a lot about what kind of salesperson I did, and didn't, want to be. Next, I moved into sales recruitment, where I found the male-dominated environment tough at first but relished the challenge of moving right up to managing our London office. I was approached by a photography agency client, Bill Gates-owned Picture Library, to make a switch in-house. I started as an Account Manager, working my way gradually up to Global Sales Director selling content to media clients including books, magazines and newspapers. Most recently, I moved to Odeon as I was drawn to our senior leadership and our values.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

In every company I've been at I've worked my way up to a management role, because I get a buzz from seeing people thrive and develop.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering the sector?

Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Be confident that you're as good as everyone else.

## What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

Navigating tough bosses. Every role I had pre-Odeon was surrounded by men, so I've had to develop a balance between being thick-skinned and not forgetting empathy and emotional intelligence. By balancing understanding with strength in leadership, you get the best results.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I'm a big believer that being a woman is an opportunity – I feel that our female MD at Odeon is a great role model who

“I've had to develop a balance between being thick-skinned and not forgetting empathy and emotional intelligence

inspires many of the more junior females within our business. It's important to me to help other women see it this way too, and build their self-confidence to eradicate that inner self doubt. Now more role models are starting to become visible, I want women to realise their potential and connect the dots.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

I love that we're worlds away from the stuffy corporate culture of other industries. When I visited Odeon cinemas during my interview process, my takeaway was how welcoming the people were, which really drew me in.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Eat that Frog* by Brian Tracy.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

More within an extension of the industry – Karen Stacey, CEO of Digital Cinema Media (DCM).

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Empathy, energy, humility, strength of character and

self-assurance, eagerness to always be better, build a team consisting of different skillsets which encourages healthy debate.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

It actually came from Joe Biden's victory speech where he said "we must stop treating our opponents as our enemies."



# Erin Johnson

Company Travelopia / Job Title Marketing Director – Tailormade



I've been in the travel industry for 20 years – it sounds a cliché, but I got the travel bug as a child admiring my grandfather, a pilot, in the 1970s. During my business degree I did a placement at a student travel company (USIT Campus for those that remember), which stood me in good stead to get a sales and marketing internship at a cruise line post-graduation. Between the loyalty its

fans have and working through the challenge of getting new customers on board, I grew to love cruise. I discovered that general marketing is where my strengths lie, so I went to the Chartered Institute of Marketing for postgraduate studies. After 15 years I felt there was an opportunity for me to broaden my knowledge in the sector, so I joined experiential travel operator Travelopia as marketing director for the Sovereign Luxury Travel and Citalia brands. I love the variety of working with partners across the spectrum of travel and hospitality to create our packages, and the ethos of giving people unique and unforgettable experiences is so exciting.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I view my job as selling people their dreams. Travelling is a privilege, now more than ever, and being able to take people on an escape away from their own four walls is very special.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

On the last day of my university placement, my boss wrote down 'persevere' on a scrap of paper. I still have it, and it still rings true: if travel is your passion, don't give up on the industry. We've dealt with all kinds of setbacks, but there are always going to be opportunities for motivated people to offer fresh inspiration.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I'd be in fashion. My mum made the majority of my clothes growing up, so I value the creativity and nonconformism of the industry.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Overcoming the stereotype of cruises – they're not just for the newlywed, over-fed and nearly dead! Top of my agenda was encouraging new customers who had previously turned their nose up at cruises to take the plunge. When I speak to them afterwards they're often converts, so deconstructing their initial barriers presents an exciting marketing challenge.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we take a more mindful approach to seeing the world. We need to remember the environmental wins we saw at the beginning of lockdown and remain conscious of our carbon footprints as time goes on. I would also love to see us leverage the new technology of the last six months, as consumers will now expect a Zoom or Reels experience over a static travel brochure.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg. Read during my second mat leave, it massively left an impression to show that women CAN have a family and career.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Lynn Narraway, the now VP for Holland America Line and Seabourn in the UK. She was my former boss for 10 years, and has become a dear friend a mentor – a true example of how a female can be

a strong and strategic leader, as well as enjoying her family.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

The ability to listen, flexibility and nurture to bring out the best.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

One of my sons is learning about ancient Rome at school and I'd forgotten how much their words influenced the English language.



# Noelle Jones

Company Compass Group UK and Ireland / Job Title Managing Director – Chartwells Independent



**W**hen I was a child, we moved to Singapore and I attended boarding school in the UK, which instilled a love of travel and understanding people. I abandoned my plans to study accountancy when I fell in love with hospitality

and joined Whitbread's management programme, spending 18 years doing everything from running busy sites to regional management. I moved into catering as a stopgap, but I got encapsulated in the industry and didn't want to leave! I started at Compass as a contract manager in MOD Whitehall, moving on to Chartwells' university division in London in 2011. After three and a half years it felt like time to graduate from freshers' events, so I went back into government services, looking after high-profile security sites and government agencies. I circled back to Chartwells this year when I was offered the MD Independent position, predominantly looking after schools. As a former boarder myself, it's an exciting space to be in, where I can give back what I learnt as a child to add something special and engage pupils.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Challenging my team in the same way my best bosses pushed me. Everyone's goals are different, so I mentor them to satisfy their own personal ambitions.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

When a job feels like a step too far, just give it a try. With perseverance, honesty, and hard work, you can probably do it! Sometimes, however, you do something for the right reason and it blows up in your face, but that's okay – you need to make the mistake once so you don't do it again.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Accounting – I love an Excel spreadsheet!

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I mentor young women to give them the confidence to try new things. We need to champion each other, giving our time and effort to make sure everyone's voice is heard. The 'macho' chef stereotype comes with the territory, but I'm optimistic about the strong women rising up from apprenticeships.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I have read many books through the years and there are probably two that have inspired me at different points in my leadership journey, the first being *Building the Happiness-Centred Business* by Paddi Lund. The other one I read and that made me think and consider my leadership techniques is *The Chimp Paradox*.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

For me it's relatively simple: being self-aware, great communication with clear transparent plans and expectations, and ensuring your behaviours and work ethics are always impeccable to influence positive behaviours onwards.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Not getting your face out there – we need to fly our own flags rather than shying into the background. There's a perception that you won't come back all guns blazing after maternity leave, but your lifestyle choices shouldn't curb your career opportunities – we need

great succession plans so we don't lose great women.

### What attracted you to work in hospitality?

I love that it's a job, a lifestyle and a social life all in one. You become part of a family, which builds strength of character, and though the public is a tough place to be the life-skills last forever.



# Mandy Kaur

Company PizzaExpress / Job Title Head of Legal



**I**spent 15 years in Finance and IT, but it wasn't until I worked in children's services that I realised I wanted to be part of the conversation for change. I self-funded my law studies alongside a day job in IT admin at Gondola Group. The workload was intense:

I averaged 60-hour weeks on top of my studies, but I learnt that if you're determined and embrace discomfort, anything's achievable. I conducted in-house work experience by supporting Gondola Group with the sale of the Byron, ASK, Zizzi and PizzaExpress brands, before moving over to PizzaExpress as its Group Legal Counsel to establish the Legal Function at PizzaExpress. As Head of Legal, along with the UK & Ireland, I'm also responsible for our newer markets in the UAE, Singapore and Hong Kong.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Being of service to people, which links back to the values from my Sikh heritage.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't hold out for more visible female leadership; we've not hacked that yet, so it could be a long time. Instead be one, come join us, build each other up, support each other; don't sit there waiting for others, be part of the solution and conversation of change.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Motivational speaker or coach.

## What moment has had the most influence on your career?

During our D&I meetings, I've shared how I was often one of the only people of colour at my school in Canada and Ireland. I didn't feel included, nor thought I fitted in. My parents would often come home sharing their experiences of racism at work, and seeing how that affected them encouraged me to dispel those myths in my own workplace. Our D&I committee name includes 'Belonging', as belonging encourages us to be ourselves.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

This starts with you. I work on empowering my all female team to

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Rising Strong* by Brene Brown – this book explores how to cultivate courage from failure, compassion from shame and grace from disappointment. The sooner we recognise that our failures don't define us, the better chance we have to lead with success.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

My team, our future role models. They inspire me every day to be better, try harder and remain agile.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Accessibility, authenticity, accountability and above

all else just be kind, it costs nothing and can make a huge impact.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

A quote from a speech Theodore Roosevelt delivered 110 years ago, referred to as 'The Man in the Arena'. It's framed on my desk, reminding me each day to show up, be brave and never give up. Who would have thought 110 years later those words would inspire leadership whilst navigating a global pandemic!

step into their abilities. It's about modelling the right behaviours – there's no point setting development objectives if you don't supply the toolkit to achieve them. It's our responsibility to demonstrate the right behaviours to inspire hearts and minds.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

More diversity in boardrooms: every person around that table needs to have equal influence and impact on decision-making. Currently, our Leadership

“ There's no point setting development objectives if you don't supply the toolkit to achieve them

Team are navigating Covid-19, by recognising that creativity, innovation and change are borne out of open and vulnerable conversations; a much-needed disruptor.

# Joanna Kurowska

Company InterContinental Hotels Group / Job Title Director of Operations



I studied political science in Warsaw and Lyon, and though I didn't go into diplomacy as planned, travel has been in my blood since those early days.

I initially worked as an IT consultant (based in Bratislava), where one of my projects brought me

to the opening of a Radisson hotel in Senegal. I spent six weeks in Dakar helping the team build the world of the new hotel. The genuine interest in the product and hospitality spirit that permeates the business resonated with me. The experience changed how I looked at my career. I wanted to play a part in a people-focused business and stay in this people-centred environment.

The first chapter of my hospitality career was in finance, where I moved through Croatia and Mozambique as director of finance at Radisson.

My journey at IHG began in Europe, when I was brought back to my home country of Poland to be finance director at our fabulous InterContinental in Warsaw. I moved across a range of finance roles, leading central Europe and then the whole continent, while moving to our head office in Denham, near London and finally switching out of finance last year.

Building on my international foundation I moved to operations, running the Northern Europe managed operation side of the business out of Frankfurt. My job now involves supporting our General Managers and overseeing the performance of almost all our brands from mainstream to luxury.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I made a commitment to myself to always ask "how can I help", to listen before offering a solution. My purpose is to be helpful and add value to every interaction, every conversation, every exchange.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Find a mentor. Mine have steered me through my professional and personal life.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I try to lead by example and demonstrate that everyone can achieve their dreams. I believe in sharing my story and my challenges, so I have given lectures at the

hospitality schools of Lausanne and The Hague. It's now a prerequisite that organisations consider diversity of all types and at every level as they move forward.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I co-chaired the foundation of our partnership between IHG and Change 100 from our head office in Denham, an initiative which facilitates internships and integration into the workforce for people with disabilities. I am also very proud to sponsor our RISE programme, which encourages female rising stars to go for general management positions.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Be patient, don't run, and enjoy the ride!

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

Personally, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro – beautifully painted but heartbreakingly picture of what might become of a society, if it forgoes its values.

Professionally, *Option B* by Sandberg, that speaks about a power of resilience (so relevant nowadays!)

and *Playing Big* by Tara Mohr, which encourages readers to "take a leap" and face their fears.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Courage to do the right thing, compassion to listen to understand and not to judge, care to genuinely lead.

# Salome Legesse-Dunn

Company Holiday Extras / Job Title Commercial Finance Director



Though British by birth, I grew up and studied in the US. I shotgunned into corporate America after university on a management training programme at General Electric that introduced me to the world of finance. At the time,

I thought corporate conglomerates were the only place I could succeed (it was the 90s after all!), and though I learnt a lot I didn't think the environment enabled the best version of myself. I took a huge risk – and a huge pay-cut! – to join a start-up, which was the right organisation for me to diversify my skillset and align myself with colleagues who shared my values. At that pivotal moment in my career, I felt like I had found my 'happy' for the first time, and was more productive driving change as a result. That laid the groundwork for my move to Holiday Extras, which suits my inner travel addict and provides the entrepreneurial, innovative and passionate environment I thrive in. I inherited a 30-strong team as head of finance, where my mission was to bring the function into the 21st century by building more meaningful partnerships with businesses. In my current role I have a seat at the leadership table, which encourages me to drive change on a much wider scale beyond finance at HX.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

We have a way to go in travel in terms of female leadership and diversity, but don't be dissuaded. As D&I gets a spot on more roadmaps to growth, now is the time to be heard. Grab this opportunity by starting in your own organisations. And most importantly, pull each other up, don't push each other out of the way. Women are formidable when they join forces.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

Writing – anything and everything! I rediscovered the power of words as a creative outlet during lockdown.

## What advice would you give your younger self?

Breathe through the pressure; don't be in

a hurry to chase what you think success should look like. Pause and find what makes you happy, as that should dictate what 'success' means to you, and measure your choices against that.

## What do you hope the sector will look like in 5 years' time?

The pandemic has forced all of us to grow up in travel and embrace change quickly, from remote working policies to adapting to the new digital age to encouraging responsible, safe travel. These trends will continue to challenge and change the ways we work and our ability to attract consumers to travel. I hope to see that continued speed in response to change. I hope to see our industry come together through more partnerships and strategic alliances in the battle for our survival.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I read a lot! So it's hard to narrow that list down. I've recently finished Brene Brown's *Dare to Lead*. Brene's book doesn't just spout theory on what makes for great people management and leadership. She puts her real life experiences (successes and failures) on the table as foundations for her learnings on how to be a daring leader - in life not just business. Her values really resonated with me.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Tricky as there are so many great, inspiring leaders in our industry. But I'm going to give this one to my fellow female colleagues at Holiday Extras. For allowing me to be my true self and challenging me when I'm not. For picking me up when things go wrong and for cheering me when things go great. For being courageous and defying the odds. And for being the hardest working bunch of people I've had the pleasure knowing.



# Echo Lu

Company Haulfryn Group / Job Title CEO



When I finished my economics degree, I left my native China to study for my master's degree in the US. To me, the two disciplines are inextricably linked: economics is about allocating and maximizing resources and human resources are

surely the most valuable resource of all. I cut my teeth in pharmaceuticals before moving to Tesco, where I shifted gear from HR to more general management-focused roles. I'm very grateful that Tesco's senior leaders had the confidence in me to create and invest in a two-year bespoke CEO development programme for me, despite having had no prior operational experience. I found that in order to learn a new discipline such as commercial or property, or a new market like India or Sweden, you need to know what good looks like and what are the right questions to ask. I am a curious person, always seeking complex and new challenges. This curiosity took me from Tesco on to Managing Director roles at Homebase and Holland & Barrett. Having worked across over 20 international markets in multiple disciplines and different sectors, I realized that it's less important what you do; more important why you do it and who you do it with. I was attracted to Haulfryn because the Board had like-minded people with shared values and goals. I am also excited about the potential opportunities in the leisure sector and within Haulfryn itself.



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*Switch* by Dan and Chip Heath; the best change management book I have read.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

I am still learning about the industry but I have been impressed by Bob Iger at Disney.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Courage and conviction.

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

I listened to an interesting programme on Digital Planet (BBC World Service) about the secrets behind the success of *Game of Thrones* – a very plausible and almost real-life social network that links the 2,000 characters and their 41,000 interactions, using data analysis.

**What advice would you give to the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Stop being a perfectionist. Ensure you have at least two back-ups in your tiered personal support network so, come what may, the stress is taken out of juggling child-care responsibilities. And remember, the most important words are those you say to yourself: no one can reject you or put you down unless you let them.

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I might be a neuroscientist or behavioural economist. Human judgement is often very flawed and human behaviour can be quite irrational – I think studying how the brain functions and how behaviour impacts the economy and businesses would be very interesting.

“The most important words are those you say to yourself: no one can put you down unless you let them”

**How are you encouraging more women into the sector?**

Almost half of my executive team are women, and I expect to see women on every key hire shortlist. I am personally mentoring a few high-potential women globally. I am really looking forward to joining the WiHTL advisory board to help make a positive impact.



# Catherine Lynn

Company Parkdean Resorts / Job Title Chief Customer Officer



and it was a cause that resonated with me. As CCO, I look after revenue, customer, sales and marketing, the contact centre and everything digital.

**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

I get my energy from leading people, whether that be my direct reports or our passionate park team. Bringing teams together to take a walk in our customers' shoes, challenge, create change and make great things happen.

**What attracted you to work in hospitality?**

Being customer-facing is close to my heart, and I feel very privileged to be part of the team enabling people to connect and enjoy the stunning scenery of the UK for a weekend or a week. I see holidays as a social service: they are for everyone, so we need the great leadership to help make those amazing holiday experiences.



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

There are many, but *The Endurance* by Caroline Alexander is a standout; a story of survival through Shackleton's strong, inspiring leadership.

**Who is your role model within this industry?**

I have been blessed to work with many inspirational CEOs throughout my career, and I have learned from them all. Each one is different and each one has shaped my career: Barbara Cassini, Andy Harrison, Carolyn McCall and now Steve Richards.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

The ability to inspire people around a common purpose, build the capability needed for success and create the environment where the team thrive; and possessing a strong sense of integrity.

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

There are more people in the world working in digital marketing than in delivering clean water supplies to the global population – just made me think....

**How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?**

We're starting to acknowledge that women general managers, though scarce, often perform brilliantly. It's difficult

to change a traditional industry, as we have to grow both bottom-up and recruiting in.

**What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?**

I think there are two things, awareness of the sector and the perceived long hours culture: ours is a 24/7 business, and we encourage our regional and general managers to be flexible on location, which can reduce the talent pool. There are benefits from giving people multi-site breadth, but also benefits from expanding the range of people we recruit into this exciting business.



# Tess Mattisson

Company Choice Hotels International / Job Title Senior Director, Sales & Marketing EMEA



I started in hospitality as a teenager and working with people has been a running thread through my life ever since. My first career was as a singer, as though I had never wanted to be an artist, I loved giving something to my audiences to brighten their day. I restarted my career in hospitality aged 30 after turning down the job offer twice! I knew I wanted to work in an energetic environment, and eventually I was won over. For me, hotels centre on giving that exceptional experience to

every single guest, every single time. My passion for people evolved into one for leadership, as I realised that if I can't be on the floor 24/7, I need to know that my teams will bring the same enthusiasm to providing phenomenal service. Given my time in hospitality has coincided with the digital disruption of our industry, a lot of my role has been equipping people to transform their area of business and move into the digital space. Five years ago, I switched to the franchisor side and relocated to London, where I'm in charge of commercial growth. My biggest focus has been changing the perception of the marketing function, so we build a culture where we're understood to be a serious business driver in and of ourselves.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

When I'm told something can't be done, and my team proves them wrong twice over.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't apologise, and don't question your opportunities. It doesn't matter how you got your chance, but it's on you to make the most of it.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Healthcare, as I studied behavioural science.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Don't get too hung up on what's straight ahead – you'll miss out on so much. Go for the things you don't know how to do yet, as that's how you find out there's a whole world out there waiting.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Our established ways of projecting demand have been turned upside down, so we've needed to think outside the box to contend with the prospect that everything we've built could be gone in a week. How we do business needs to reflect our ways of working: annual check-ins have become weekly, and much more driven by data and insights.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

People are creatures of habit, so when we look to recruit senior management, we often go for the safe bet, which tends to be men with extensive experience. We need to break this habit, be bold and recruit based on talent and potential instead of only experience, and start hiring women in leading positions to be able to carve out a balanced path to the future.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

The *Pippi Longstocking* books by Astrid Lindgren that I read as a child and that set the bar for what a strong, independent and somewhat unconventional woman is all about. I live by the quote: 'I have never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that'.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

To be able to listen, set clear direction for the business and show a genuine interest in people.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

How a crisis brings out the best, and worst in people. I have always been interested in people's behaviour and this past year has really presented a whole new layer.

# Julie McEwan

Company Big Table Group / Job Title Brand Director – Las Iguanas



My working life started when I stumbled across a pair of burgundy winklepickers in a shop window and needed a job to afford them – I was 13! My first role was washing up sherry glasses at a wedding venue, which I was asked to take over myself four years later. I loved the hospitality trade from then on, completing catering qualifications at

college before suffering through 5 a.m. breakfast shifts as a chef at Crest Hotels. The hard work opened the door to senior management positions, though, so I joined Whitbread, climbing the ladder from GM to operations support manager to senior area manager for Premier Inn. There, I received the best coaching of my career, falling in love with business improvement. After a period at another pub company, I was headhunted into Las Iguanas, part of The Big Table, as the company is called now, as Operations Director for 30 sites. The brand was new to me, but I've come to absolutely



adore it – the atmosphere is zany and exciting, and our young team brings together so many cultures as one. Two years ago I thought I could help take the business to the next level, so I applied for the brand director role. I wouldn't change it for the world!

responsibility builds up your skillset and creates a bigger network of sponsors.

## How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

The next generation won't stand for just men at the top. Young people ask during their interviews what we're doing to promote diversity, which is a stark contrast to when I joined.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Sitting around the board table has opened my eyes to where we are on our journey: it's our job to make D&I something we live and breathe. We share in celebrations of every culture and religion – we hosted our Diwali event over Teams! Inclusivity drives performance, so we've reviewed training and employee benefits with a diversity lens. Working alongside our teams in The Big Table, we are building on our wellbeing and belonging activities to understand our employees and ensure they feel part of our family.

## QUICKFIRE

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, always be you and not what people are wanting you to be. A great leader always builds an environment of trust, where people can be themselves and be their very best without compromise.

Be inspirational to others – someone who promotes their team, rather than themselves.

Patience – this is huge and underrated as a quality. I sometimes frustrate people as I may take a little longer to come to a decision, but I know I have been considered and make no apology for it.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

For me it has to be on how consumer needs are changing and how quickly too. I recently did some research into the "youth" of today and how we engage our next generation of teams as well as guests, for Las Iguanas in particular. I found it fascinating and we all have a lot to do in not only attracting talent, but also nurturing and keeping hold of it too, none of this will be easy and there's not a "one size fits all" approach. Something that will be on my radar with my team.

“The next generation won't stand for just men at the top”

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

When obstacles get in your way, ask yourself whether this is really the end of the road, or if you can make change happen.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

I used to shy away from taking projects on for fear that I would fail. I wish I had believed in myself earlier, as taking on more



# Diane Mulholland

Company Enterprise Holdings Scotland and Northern Ireland / Job Title Managing Director



**M**y first job after I finished at Trinity College Dublin was promoting a lager brand at Guinness during the World Cup – the most fun graduate role ever! When I went back to Belfast to study programming, I joined Enterprise Rent-A-Car with

little idea of what car rental was beyond airport desks. We have a unique model where you run your own business within an international corporation, which excited me as someone with big dreams but no proven track record. After six months of knocking on doors to help scale the business, I was given my own branch – I thought they were crazy! My manager told me that my naïve positivity and can-do attitude were strengths, and as I progressed from branch to group rental manager my confidence as a leader grew. After doubling the size of the business in that role I was promoted to director level, collaborating with all of our British and Irish operating groups and partnering closely with our global CEO, the third generation of the founding family, to visit all 340 UK branches. As MD, I spearhead three brands and three businesses – a big jump from the 25-strong fleet when I started!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I'm so privileged to give our young management trainees the same growth opportunities I was given. It's unbelievable what you can achieve when you put your heads together behind a common purpose.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't be too hard on yourself – it's okay to make mistakes. That's how you learn! You have a voice, and your opinion is valid.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I love helping people, so possibly running

bootcamps and wellness retreats – ideally on a Greek island!

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When I moved from branch to area manager, I struggled with managing my teams from afar. I hadn't yet figured out how to set expectations and empower people to meet them. When I returned to the role after maternity leave, motherhood had taught me that the best leaders step back and delegate.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Because we hire the brightest new talent and promote from within, we

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within the industry?

Internally, our CEO Chrissy Taylor, and externally, Sophie Dekkers at easyJet. Both are authentic and passionate.

### What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Honesty, and staying true to yourself.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

How 'know and owe' comes into influencing people – make sure people know and trust you, and that you help them.

### What book has influenced you the most?

There's no single one: I enjoy reading everything from John Collins' *Good to Great* to holiday fiction!



realised the longevity of our business is contingent on diversity. I have had great sponsors and I try to do that for others, so I run a Women in Rental programme to give female branch managers the skills and confidence to communicate across the business.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Given the everchanging restrictions, everyone is 'staycationing' last

minute, so we've had to readjust our models to accommodate this new norm. The speed at which our teams have adapted to keeping our customers and people safe has been humbling.

“Motherhood taught me that the best leaders step back and delegate”

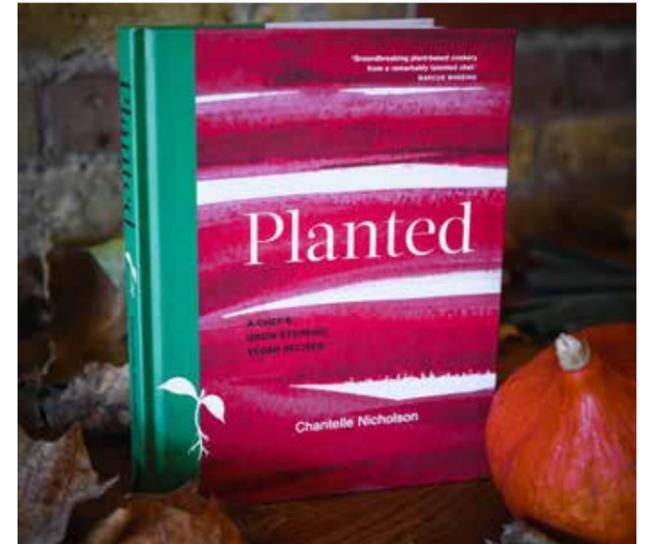
# Chantelle Nicholson

Company Tredwells & All's Well / Job Title Chef Owner



**I** studied law at home in New Zealand, but with little real passion. Instead, it was in the kitchen jobs I worked alongside my studies, at a café and a boutique hotel restaurant, that I found my groove. I entered a Gordon Ramsay scholarship competition and, though I didn't win, I landed a job at the Savoy Grill in London. Marcus Wareing was Chef Patron, but the prestige of the institution was lost on me at the time – I was naïve, and all the braver for it! I moved to Marcus's restaurant at the Berkeley in 2006, where I dabbled in operational roles until

we opened the Gilbert Scott in 2011 with me as a first-time general manager. That was a real trial by fire: I was launched into everything from marketing and PR to reservations and site maintenance. In 2014 we opened Tredwells, the group's first standalone restaurant in Seven Dials. A few months after opening, I had to get back in the kitchen to keep things ticking over, but I loved balancing both sides so much that I took over myself in 2017. With full ownership for Tredwells, I was able to implement more of my own ethos around sustainability and regeneration: in 2018, I wrote my first cookbook championing the plant-based food I've enjoyed since my childhood spent on my extended family's stone fruit orchard.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Getting to see the fruits of our labour first-hand on a daily basis. I find it really rewarding to observe how the plates of food we physically create bring people pleasure.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

See and do as much as possible. In my first year at the Savoy Grill, I was like a sponge: there was so much to learn that my 18-hour days weren't enough! That buzz was proof I was doing the right thing.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Pre-Covid, the industry had reached a breaking point. The closures have been devastating, but they have made us reflect on how crucial neighbourhood restaurants are to local communities. The pandemic has enabled collaboration and an

appreciation of people, and I hope restaurants and consumers alike think twice about the true cost of food, moving forwards.

## What do you hope the sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we're on track for our 2030 sustainability targets. I've recently taken up a seat on the London Waste and Recycling Board, and it's great to be around likeminded people passionate about implementing a circular economy; repairing what we have rather than replacing it.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

Outreach is key to making women visible where they haven't been historically, so I talk whenever I can about the benefits of the industry. After that, it's self-fulfilling: women see the inclusive environment in our kitchen during trial shifts and they want to get involved.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Setting the Table*, by Danny Meyer. It is effectively the bible for hospitality.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I don't have a single one; just qualities that inspire me from many - Ruth Rogers, Dan Barber, Doug McMaster, Danny Meyer.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Passion, empathy & a sense of humour.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

That there were vineyards in Holborn in the 13th century.

# Vicky Nolan

Company William Hill / Job Title Property and Estates Director



I worked my way up from an entry-level admin job in telecommunications. Back then, it was a male-dominated environment with few women in senior leadership positions. It motivated me to work harder and push boundaries to progress in my career. I applied for every opportunity that came up, regardless of my experience, and had roles in everything from telesales to IT helpdesk. I found my feet in service delivery and project-management during Phones4u's rapid expansion period. From there I joined German retailer Tchibo, where I learnt a lot about the positive role that retail can play in local communities and what does and doesn't translate across markets. I then joined Telefónica and spent a fantastic few years in operational and transformational change management. We re-designed and digitized the retail experience and transformed our reward and recognition programme. When I was offered the job at William

Hill, I had preconceptions about the betting industry and I wasn't sure it was the right place for me, even as a football fan who enjoyed a bet on the Grand National. However, it's a big-hearted organization that makes colleague and customer wellbeing a priority and I met some of the most passionate and engaging people I know. The size of the opportunity excited me. I lead a team making sure we deliver best value and service for colleagues, customers and stakeholders. That's everything from engaging with property owners and shop refurbishments to tech support and fixing leaky roofs.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't believe everything you hear about the industry! It's fast paced and dynamic with great people at the heart of it. Be confident and curious – don't be afraid to give something a go.

## If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I took a mid-career break during in which I helped out at a local pub. Nothing beats chatting with new and interesting people.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Doing what's right for the business even if it's the hardest and least popular



option. It's also important to get a good team around you.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I'm a mentor in the cross-sector 30% Club and regular speaker at our International Women's Day event. I take every opportunity I can to myth-bust about the industry and paint a truer picture of the wonderful careers available to talented women.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

I think it's taught us a lot about what can be achieved in a short space of time, and how you can overcome adversity through thinking creatively and fast-paced decisions. Working together as an industry on challenges is also vital. We're all guilty of relying on established protocol, but Covid has shown us that disruption is always looming and agility and collaboration are key.

# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

*The Servant Leader* by Jim Autry. A practical guide to being a better leader and getting the best out of people.

## Who is your role model within the industry?

Denise Coates CBE, founder and Chief Executive of Bet365. Despite her huge success,

she's never forgotten her roots and continues to support the Stoke-on-Trent community, which is where I grew up.

## What qualities are most valuable in a Leader?

Authenticity, honesty and integrity. An empathetic leader with a clear vision and purpose who inspires and engages people to follow.

# Ela Osterberger

Company Deliveroo / Job Title Director of Data Science



I studied economics in Vienna, but it was only on a three-month exchange in Amsterdam that I stumbled across econometrics, the statistical modelling discipline I ended up doing a master's degree in. I came to London 10 years ago, working for the business intelligence unit of Europe's printed phone directories alongside the former COO of Google Europe. Our job was to help SMEs transition from paper advertisements to an online presence. Then I joined Omnicom Media

Group's data science unit, helping clients from Harrods to Cadbury answer strategy questions like how to spend their marketing budget or how best to segment and grow their customer base. One day it dawned on me that although I enjoyed consulting, I wanted to see projects through to the end, so became part of the team at The Guardian where I stepped into my first management role. While there, I headed up the audience data team, working with tech and editorial to build better products and support their content strategy. Three and a half years ago I moved to Deliveroo, where I'm Director of Data Science. We work on everything from routing algorithms and recommendations to predicting the next big trends.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

At Deliveroo, we've grown so quickly that we're constantly hiring brilliant people to sustain our growth. It feels like a constant bootcamp – I'm learning so much about both leadership and new technical innovation.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Have someone to lean on who understands how it feels to be a minority in a team. Their role doesn't have to relate directly to yours, but they can provide the practical and emotional support to boost your confidence.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When I started managing people, I had to have some uncomfortable conversations. For many employees in any workplace it's very hard to speak up when someone is treated unfairly or unconscious biases creep in and you're not listened to, but it's important to maintain those lines of communication so others feel comfortable opening up.

“ We need to encourage girls to take on STEM subjects

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

We do a lot, from sponsoring events that encourage minorities into the tech world to constantly improving our recruitment approaches. We have also implemented mentorship programmes and started up reading groups. However, I believe we need to start further up the funnel. We need to encourage girls to take on STEM subjects. I've recently been working with a local school to do just that, and have been involved with the Girls in Data initiative promoting role models in tech and data.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

I wish I had not been so hard on myself about not being the master of one thing. In reality, I have a number of passions, and combining my interests into a job has made me more successful.

# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

I have always enjoyed reading John Brockman's books in which he brings together essays by the most important scientific minds. His latest book is *Possible Minds: Twenty-Five Ways of Looking at AI*, but all of his books are a real treat for science lovers.

## Who is your role model within this industry?

Dame Stephanie Shirley. She is a technology pioneer, businesswoman and philanthropist.

## What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, dedication, compassion, consideration, openness, objectivity, selflessness, honesty, integrity, accountability, decisiveness and determination - am I asking too much?



# Dasha Ovchenkova

Company Goodman Restaurant Group / Job Title Chief Financial Officer – Burger & Lobster



I was born and raised in Moscow, where I spent the first eight years of my career at Deloitte and KPMG – two wonderful companies which taught me a lot. I moved to London in 2004 on secondment with the view to bring back my international

learnings back to Moscow, but I enjoyed it so much I haven't left yet! My client at the time, Central European Media Enterprises, offered me a job, so I spent five years working across the central and Eastern European countries it served. By complete fluke, I then joined an aviation company as finance director, which handled aircrafts and charter flights from Luton. The small company was a huge adjustment from the NASDAQ-listed corporation I'd come from, but I learnt a lot about resilience and empathy through the challenge of putting businesses into voluntary liquidation. I did another year in media before entering hospitality in 2015, when I joined Goodman Group. Burger & Lobster was going through a tough restructure at the time, so I came in to recruit a new team and lay out a new business model. We went from loss-making to expanding into New York, Singapore and the Middle East, and though it's been a rollercoaster, I'm still loving it!

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Invest in your education, and don't be afraid to leave if you don't find your job rewarding – you only truly succeed when you enjoy what you're doing.

**If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?**

I admire investigative journalists – they're organised, analytical and like getting to the bottom of things, which I think are qualities I share.

**What attracted you to work in HTL?**

The people! I'm continually impressed by how warm and welcoming the industry is. Everyone is so open-minded, so the sky is the limit if you're creative, risk-taking and bold.

**What career advice would you give your younger self?**

It's easy to be risk-averse in finance, but you need to always ask questions in order to learn.

**How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?**

I have been amazed at how the industry has come together to handle this challenge. We've acted bravely, always with a smile, so I'm not scared for our future: we'll only come out stronger. It's not our first crisis and we've been on the same page the whole way through, so I think our agility will help us thrive.



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov.

For me as a Russian, this novel is an integral part of me, I cite it, I reread it, I have it on my shelf in Russian and in English, I buy it for my friends and my colleagues, I imagine how the characters look and feel like I have the right to criticize any television version of the novel when it doesn't agree with my vision. This book is about God and

Devil, faith, eternal love, truth, justice, redemption, people's vices and virtues. It has incredible philosophical depth, which is beautifully delivered with great humor and elegance. I do think that this novel is one of the finest creations of Russian literature of the 20th century.

**What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?**

Vision, emotional intelligence and communication.

# Anisha Patel

Company Paddy Power Betfair / Job Title Director of Technology – Portfolio, Optimisation & Programme Delivery



It was great schoolteachers who first got me engaged in technology, and I went on to study computer science at university. Without a clear career path in mind, I joined Tesco as a bright-eyed and bushy tailed graduate on a rotational IT programme.

I was lucky enough to get involved in the expansion of our international markets, from the US to Eastern Europe to our engineering arm in India. My first scale role at Tesco was running customer service systems across the UK before I switched into leading marketing development. We were the first big European retailer to transform its tech delivery in the mid-2000s – a steep learning curve, but I was proud to leave with Clubcard as my legacy. Next, I joined Whitbread to lead technology across its consumer portfolio, where we made great strides in bringing customer service up to date. Most recently, Paddy Power Betfair contacted me to look after a shared services portfolio. It wasn't an easy decision to move, as betting didn't seem like a natural cultural fit. As technology director, though, I'm surrounded by great colleagues, and I'm driving the D&I agenda forward within gambling. I'm awestruck at the traction we've made, which shows how much appetite there is to change things.

**What do you find most rewarding in your job?**

I get a lot of satisfaction from solving the complex problems I get thrown. I surround myself with bright people who can give me the answers I don't have myself.

**What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?**

Know your strengths, amplify them and take risks along the way. I take a Dr Pepper approach to life: what's the worst that could happen? Your support networks, both personal and professional,

will be there to steer and catch you.

**If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?**

More and more in my role I'm able to influence D&I strategy, which I see as my ultimate calling. As the mother of two daughters, I try to smooth the way so they won't face the same microaggressions.

**What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?**

The recent shift to homeworking is very challenging. I've noticed that often women continue

## QUICKFIRE

**What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?**

BBC recently reported that at this rate, it will take another 60 years to close the gender pay gap in the UK.

**What book has influenced you the most?**

*The Chimp Paradox* by Dr Steve Peters.

**Who is your role model within the industry?**

Clair Preston-Bear at Greene King. She epitomises the qualities of a great leader.

**What qualities are most valuable in a leader?**

Empathy, integrity, resilience and humility.

to do the lion's share of caring responsibilities, and this imbalance leads to burnout. It's about striking balance between flexibility and wellbeing, so we've put initiatives in place to support mental health.

“As the mother of two daughters, I try to smooth the way so they won't face the same microaggressions”

**What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?**

I'm the only female technology director here, and the only ethnic minority director full stop. I sponsor our Lean In Circles, where hundreds of women discuss barriers monthly. Senior male advocacy has

made the initiative a great success, and now our D&I directors want to roll it out group-wide. Black Lives Matter has prompted some encouraging conversations about race, so I'm optimistic for the future.



# Lisa Paton

Company Wingstop Restaurants / Job Title Vice President EMEA



I started studying manufacturing engineering at university alongside working part-time at McDonald's on their junior management programme; I loved the latter so much I decided to forego my degree in favour of hospitality. They invited

me onto their graduate programme, and I climbed up the ranks from assistant manager to GM to operations consultant where I was the only female on a team of 14! I then spent three years at Elior managing multiple sites across the UK, focusing on catering for stadia and concessions. That's where I became more involved in the commercial aspects, which was a great opportunity for me to dip my toe in the water of finance, legal and business development. From there, I moved to Paris to lead Pizza Hut franchises across Europe, transitioning from operations to business development. I returned as growth director for Europe and Russia before joining BrewDog as international growth director and retail director for Europe. Most recently, I've joined WingStop as Vice President, juggling leading the EMEA business with my part-time MBA.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg had a huge impact on me; for the first time I realised that everything I was feeling was perfectly normal!

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Jens Hofma, CEO, Pizza Hut Restaurants UK is someone that I have

admired for some time. Not only is he an avid learner who leads with integrity and authenticity, but he also stays very close to his team and customers by continuing to work shifts in his restaurants.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, courage and kindness.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I'm a natural extrovert, so I get my energy from the customers and teams that surround me – I love this industry for the sheer volume of those interactions!

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Resist the urge to blend into a masculine environment. You don't have anything more to prove than your male counterparts – if your perspective isn't appreciated, don't be afraid to move on.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When I had children, I was on an all-male team who didn't understand the complexities of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. Though I loved that role, I made the decision to move to a more supportive environment. Now, as a leader, I do my best to instil

that from the top – enabling everyone to contribute on a level playing field.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

It's not a race. The rush and desire to achieve everything yesterday can prevent you from enjoying the experience and finding balance; I had a great leader who once told me to be kinder to myself, I wish I had heard that advice earlier!

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in hospitality?

There has been a significant shift in the last five years. The #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have put more onus on boards to redress the balance at a senior level. It's frustrating to battle through bias, unconscious or not, in both recruitment and employment, but as leaders, it is our responsibility to affect change. We need to do everything in our power to maximise every opportunity for diversity and inclusion.

# Vicky Paulson

Company Greene King / Job Title Operations Manager



I live and breathe hospitality having worked my way up to where I am today - beginning with a waitressing job during A Levels. I found myself looking forward to going to work every day. I felt such enthusiasm and energy for the industry

that I decided to pursue it as my career, starting out at The Restaurant Group where I won 'Restaurant of the Year' as a General Manager and was appointed as the youngest ever Area Manager. I took a gap year and missed hospitality so much that I knew I had followed the right path. As my career progressed, I knew I needed to get broader experience under my belt, so I joined Boparan Holdings to get to grips with the fast-paced world of quick service restaurants. Pubs were the final part of the licensed trade I wanted to experience and I've been lucky enough to work for Greene King for three years. It's one of the best career moves I ever made! My current role is Operations Manager, where I get to lead people who genuinely love what they do.



### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The impact we have on employees' lives is priceless. Pubs are an institution, so it's humbling to be part of a company where the customer is never an inconvenience.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Successful leaders are not defined by gender but by those who get things done, balance the pressure, listen to others, take risks, and learn from their mistakes. I have learned that I don't know everything, not even close, but learn to trust your instincts.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

Some years ago, going from a company where I was well-known and established to a smaller organisation where I had no track record but had to produce those same results right off the bat.

“ Successful leaders are not defined by gender but by those who get things done ”

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Be confident and don't be intimidated by the executive-level players. I used to think my opinion wasn't valid, as I hadn't had as much experience and wasn't as high up the traditional pecking order. Now I know that isn't the case.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Being accepted as a credible candidate without feeling imposter syndrome and not feeling like a box has been ticked.

Greene King have many women in senior roles and I am fortunate not to feel that, however in the wider business world, I believe this is still a present issue that must be removed.

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Indra Nooyi – previous CEO of PepsiCo. Indra's strategic redirection of PepsiCo, along with her ability to redirect the company towards environmental concerns and sustainability was incredible – it was quite groundbreaking at the time, especially from a female CEO!

I will also always remember one of my first mentors within the industry who taught me to take a 'calm,

measured approach' when faced with a crisis – something I still repeat to myself to this day.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Integrity, consistency, calmness and the ability to see the importance of balancing both work and personal time. I've always believed that a sense of humour goes a long way in this job – we work long hours and it's great to have a giggle with those around you.

# Suzanne Peacock

Company TGI Fridays / Job Title Chief Operating Officer



After I graduated I accepted a General Manager role in retail. I realised it was the people that interested me and made the move into HR soon after. It was a great development ground, which stood me in good stead to take on more autonomous HR roles across manufacturing, FMCG, and later hospitality and leisure.

I've never had a perfectly crafted career plan; instead I've built my career more organically by finding the roles that motivate me and by making the most of each opportunity. I've built a strong career by launching myself into whichever role – be it international, UK-based, strategic or operational – that offered me something new and interesting.

My first foray into hospitality and leisure came when I joined Merlin. I enjoyed the sector and moved to Fridays last year as People Director. Joining a completely new Executive Team provided a rare

opportunity to reset the vision and implement a new strategy; everyone has responded phenomenally despite it being a challenging year.

Following the successful restructuring of our operations the opportunity arose for me to transition into Operations and my current role. Again a fantastic opportunity to leverage my experience to date and lead a fantastic business. I'm really enjoying the change and the challenge!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The ability to have a real impact. Whether on business performance, the people I lead, or the guests we welcome into our restaurants. In all the roles I've undertaken, my team have been a big part of my success, and seeing them grow, develop and flourish is always very rewarding.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

I'm a big advocate of inspiring people to join the sector as I believe it offers a real opportunity for those with a natural curiosity, a good work ethic, and a 'yes please' attitude when new opportunities arise to grow amazing careers. Lots of people at the top have grown from within and that tells its own story. Grab every opportunity. Think about why you should, not why you shouldn't.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Start With Why* by Simon Sinek. Its simple premise has always stuck with me and can often be a real game changer.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, drive and judgement – also being

'available' for those you lead.

### What is the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Very topical but regarding the true cost of the Covid-19 pandemic and just how long it will take for the world to recover not just physically but also mentally and financially.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

It's always been a dream of mine to have my own restaurant. Now I have over 85 of them to keep me busy! That said, if I wasn't doing this role then that is what I'd love to be doing.

### What attracted you to work in HTL?

A company's purpose and values are very important to me and these have become even more important as my career has progressed. In this industry we get the chance to make a

difference to people's lives and create memories between families and friends; such a gift.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in hospitality?

I don't believe the challenges faced are different to those in other industries; but I do think hospitality is a fabulous sector for women to overcome those challenges. The 24/7 nature of the business means there is so much flexibility to shape your role and career around your life.



# Marta Pogroszewska

Company GAIL's Bakery / Job Title Managing Director



Careers are what you make of them: if you have a growth mindset and inspiring leaders around you, you can push yourself towards any opportunity.

I started my career in Poland running my own business, after completing my master's in strategy and economy. I moved to London 17 years ago and fell into hospitality. I took a night-shift role at Pret so I could look after my baby son, but

I quickly realised there were so many chances to grow for anyone with determination, goodwill and an open mind. I had over 15 job titles during my time at Pret, starting in team roles up to operations in the UK, and moving to the US to run operations in New York in 2013.

I came back to London in 2016 and joined GAIL's as retail director, a couple of years ago I stepped into my current role. I spend my time setting direction and vision through growth plans, building strong teams and establishing collaborative ways of working. My team has an endearing growth mindset and leads a culture of high performance. I'm incredibly grateful for

all the highly capable, competent and inspiring people I work with, I continuously learn so much from everyone.

You can have the best product or strategy in the world; however the team is the best competitive advantage there is.

## What are you the most passionate about in your role?

Change and transformation from all aspects, particularly from a leadership angle is my passion. I was privileged to learn, test and experience leading change in most of the jobs I've had in my career. I love exploring and conquering the challenges of transformation and sustainable growth of business.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Observing how people embrace the opportunities and tackle the challenges they encounter in their careers. Seeing how people grow personally and professionally is definitely the most rewarding. Work is a significant part of our lives, and being able to help people fulfil their goals and dreams is extremely satisfying.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

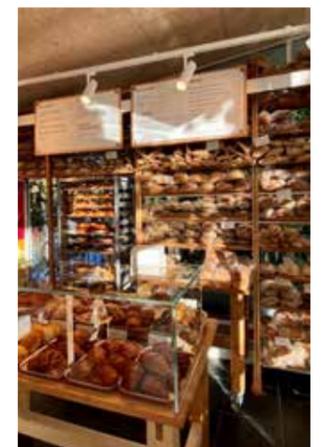
I love being around people and I love action, high pace. There's such a strong sense of community at every location in a hospitality business, each with its own culture, teams and regulars. The easiness of the connection

“Work is a significant part of our lives, and being able to help people fulfil their goals and dreams is extremely satisfying”

between the teams and the customers fosters a sense of belonging.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

As we navigate everchanging circumstances, it has been fascinating to observe how values drive decisions in unprecedented times. We are seeing the biggest transformation we've ever seen around leadership styles and business strategies; both have a huge impact on the future of the industry. I've loved seeing everyone come together to share best practices, foster ideas and push boundaries.



# Sarah Pope

Company The Big Table Group / Job Title CIO/IT Director



I thought I would go into arts or graphic design, so it was rather a shock when I fell into accountancy! It ended up being a great grounding for me, instilling a discipline I've taken into all my roles since – it's very satisfying being able to challenge the finance

whizzes! I moved from my small accountancy firm into a brand-new hotel company, where I stayed almost 20 years. That was my professional coming of age – it was a steep learning curve starting from scratch, but I loved travelling up and down the UK to push and change things and understand how sales and marketing interact with finance. I ended up looking after systems, morphing into IT and then business intelligence as a project manager. After acquiring and selling multiple hotels, I knew I needed a change of scenery, so I spent two fantastic years at the Lawn Tennis Association. It was a difficult transition when hotels were all I'd ever known but forging my own path to understand what digital initiatives needed to be implemented was a fascinating experience. I couldn't stay away from hospitality, though, so I went back into hotels before joining the Big Table Group last year. I knew instantly I had landed somewhere I would really enjoy, where I would be comfortable but suitably challenged, driving transformation forward.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

One that does resonate with me the most is *Legacy* by James Kerr.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Good leaders are able to find their deepest purpose

(getting the 'why?') and then are able to attract others (followers) through shared values, vision and belief. But in order for that to be effective, it all has to be visible and totally real and authentic, otherwise the 'following' will quickly fall away.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I've always liked to make things happen, so I enjoy being the mouthpiece between the server room and the wider business. I'm driven by the sense of achievement even what the smallest changes can give.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Both my parents were teachers, and I think I would have enjoyed seeing the potential in young people and help them achieve the best they could.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

I went through the painful experience of being bullied in the workplace by someone senior. You have a choice to make; it can beat you down, or you can use your belief and resilience to make good of the worst circumstances. It was hard but I have learnt to never take anything too personally.

“ I don't think we blow our own trumpets loudly enough to get fully noticed

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

In IT, we are definitely seeing more women coming through into the senior and board roles, but sometimes I don't think we blow our own trumpets loudly enough to get fully noticed.

### What attracted you to work in HTL?

I have wonderful memories of being a little girl delighted by the sweets trolley on our treat visits to restaurants. It got under my skin – everyone here works collectively, like family, to deliver that same great service to the paying customer.

# Sarah Powell

Company Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons / Job Title HR Director



At university, a rather narrow-minded careers advisor told me the Hilton graduate scheme was the only path for languages graduates other than teaching – so I fell into the world of hotels, and I never fell out of love! I started at the Hilton

Newcastle Gateshead before moving around hotels in Paris working for the Eastern Med cluster as an environmental coordinator when sustainability was just creeping onto the agenda. When I finished the scheme I returned to the 800-room Hilton Birmingham Metropole as Housekeeping Manager – a huge role for someone with no housekeeping experience! For three years I learnt a lot from my battle to gain the respect of my teams and improve efficiency. I pivoted into NVQ training, but I missed seeing people's growth through to the end. With a renewed interest in HR I rejoined the hotels space, first in Birmingham then at a start-up luxury group. Later I got the incredible opportunity to work for Soho House, where I was employee number two at Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire. I'd always wanted to do an opening, and the property and teams were just amazing even if the experience was tough. A year ago, I had the chance to come to Le Manoir, which seemed like the next natural step.



### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be open-minded in your career – there's nothing wrong with sidestepping. You have to push yourself to speak up when you're in the minority, even if you fake the confidence!

“ Be open-minded in your career – there's nothing wrong with sidestepping

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I would love to be a travel journalist, so I could experience the hotels and have the same conversations with guests and the teams.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

I didn't realise that once we opened Soho Farmhouse, the years that followed would be even tougher – nothing ever happens as you plan! I learnt so much sitting next to the best in the industry, so I knew I had to know my stuff to manage everyone with conviction.

### How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

It starts with opening the minds of the managers you already have. Just because a position has always been filled by a man, it doesn't mean it has to be! Now, I do the initial recruitment screenings, so our managers then have to get to know the person beyond the page.

### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

I genuinely feel that people have rallied around their teams to protect as many people as possible. It's heartbreaking to see the number of applications for each role, but I firmly believe people in hospitality have the skills to do anything.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I would have to say *The Chimp Paradox* by Professor Steve Peters, as it suddenly clicked a long time ago why people behave the way they do and was invaluable to me starting my career to try to work with such a diverse range of people effectively and also to help me manage my own Chimp!

### Who is your role model within this industry?

This is, without a doubt, the General Manager

and Hotel Manager at Le Manoir whom I currently work alongside: Eveline Noort and Niall Kingston.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Right now, it is more what I am seeing day in and day out – I am completely blown away when I see, on LinkedIn especially, the amount of support for our industry and our people.



# Jennifer Read

Company The Big Table / Job Title Commercial Finance & Planning Director



I started my career at PwC back home in New Zealand. I was in the Corporate Finance team so worked on M&A and Strategy projects. It was a great place to start and learning from an abundance of intelligent role models has stood me in good stead going forward. I had a desire, however, to move in-house in order to be part of the implementation of company strategy, rather than advising on it from the sidelines. When I moved to England, I left the world of professional services behind, contracting for a while before taking a role at what was then the Casual Dining Group in London. When I joined four years ago the focus lay on navigating rent, rates and national minimum wage increases, so there were challenges right from the offset! Taking a more holistic view, it has been fascinating to be part of such a changing landscape, especially this year, and I look forward to seeing how the industry emerges on the other side of Covid.

“Working in an industry that I’m actually passionate about helps me connect the finance and corporate strategy with the front-end operations (life and soul!) of the business

#### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Helping and developing those around me. I am super proud of my team and what they do to help others in the business better understand finance. I know finance departments in general have a rep that they are

reasonably boring and just say ‘no!’, so earning trust and proving that we are also here to enable good ideas, simplify and improve operations gives me a great sense of satisfaction.

#### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

It’s a fun and vibrant industry, with a diverse range of cultures – get involved!

#### If you weren’t in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Always something consumer-facing – I like working in industries with tangible products.

#### What attracted you to work in HTL?

I love eating out, for more than just the food! It’s the whole experience – how the service and atmosphere make you feel, the fun occasions that are

celebrated over a meal or glass of wine. Working in an industry that I’m actually passionate about helps me connect the finance and corporate strategy with the front-end operations (life and soul!) of the business.

#### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

So far, I’ve led by example. When I started at the company there weren’t many women on the leadership team. Now, more than half are women. The times are changing, but I still feel there is a fair way to go in terms of diversity and inclusion. I’d like to help address some of the more structural hurdles I see in play by challenging our policies on parental leave and flexible working.

#### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

This year has been a whirlwind – steering the business through the most extreme situation while strategising how we can keep our people employed and our restaurants open safely. The industry has had to be more agile than ever before, purely as a matter of survival. It’s really highlighted the amount of passion in, and for, this industry and I hope that the innovation we are seeing – initially borne out of necessity – continues well after Covid is a distant memory.

## QUICKFIRE

#### What book has influenced you the most?

*Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg. It got me thinking early on in my career about some fundamental aspects of work culture and work-life balance that I’m not sure I would have questioned otherwise.

#### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Humility, empathy and influence - being able to paint a vision that people will buy into.

#### What’s the most interesting thing you’ve seen or heard recently?

That we might be allowed to leave England again in a few weeks...holiday in the sun needed!

# Catherine Roe

Company Elior UK / Job Title Chief Executive Officer



I studied natural sciences at Oxford, but wanted to get out into the business world straight away. My first job was a trainee accountant, where I spent time with Hilton International and Ladbroke, and hospitality quickly became my favourite industry to work in. This passion led to my first job in catering as head of purchasing at Sodexo and I joined the UK board.

In 2005, I was named Chairman of the European Purchasing committee, then joined Elior as purchasing director a year later. Having sat on the board of two contract caterers for a long time, listening to operators talk though how everything slots together, I set my sights on the top job at Elior which I have held since 2014.

It’s been an exciting time. As CEO I’ve led several acquisitions: Lexington, Waterfall Catering Group and Edwards and Blake. These carefully chosen companies have built on Elior’s key areas of expertise and strengthened its position

in the UK foodservice market.

The time has gone quickly and the industry has changed so much – from the challenges of Brexit and the pandemic to successful business growth and acquisitions. I’ve learnt so much about staying organised and thrive on doing business in an ethical way, creating a positive, loyal culture.

#### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Working with so many people and businesses across a range of sectors never gets boring. Whether I’m talking to banks in the City or working with care homes, schools or stadia there’s never a dull moment! It’s a huge privilege to have such insight into them and meet so many talented, inspiring people.

#### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Have a vision and be clear on what you want to achieve. Be more demanding of your employers to get what you want and take advice from experts: line managers, leaders, mentors.

#### If you weren’t in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I’m interested in culture more broadly, so possibly behind the scenes in the music industry.

“Be more demanding of your employers to get what you want and to take advice from experts: line managers, leaders, mentors

#### What have you done to promote diversity in the workplace?

I try to go above and beyond to signal that we take diversity seriously – avoiding unconscious bias has become a cornerstone of our culture. I’ve just finished as chair of the Women of the Year association, a 66-year-old organisation which finds the unsung female heroes in our society and gives them a platform for at least a day.

#### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in hospitality?

The threshold of what is acceptable at work has changed, so sometimes it takes hindsight to realise there were unfair practices. A couple of decades ago, it was near-impossible to break through to the top, so I knew I would have to find my own route there. It feels like the industry is waking up to what diversity and inclusion mean.

#### What is the biggest learning in your career?

Never sit still, and stay alert to what’s going on around you. The company that doesn’t change is the one that doesn’t succeed. Never stop researching, reading, thinking and learning.

## QUICKFIRE

#### What book has influenced you the most?

There are so many. But in 2007 I met Marguerite Pattern when she won a Women of the Year Award, so if I had to pick one it would be *Cookery in Colour*. It was used by my mother too.

#### Who is your role model within this industry?

Anton Edelmann.

#### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Integrity, vision, empathy, resilience.

#### What’s the most interesting thing you’ve seen or heard recently?

I’d say both the Leonardo Di Caprio documentary, *Before the Flood*, and the recent release of David Attenborough, *A Life On Our Planet*. How much more evidence do we need to create positive change and make a difference to the planet?

# Danni Rush

Company Virgin Experience Days / Job Title Chief Customer Officer



I loved school, and I've retained that keenness for learning to this day. My path changed when I had my first child at 16, so I took a job in Essex County Council alongside studying for an administration qualification. I found out I really liked being

exposed to the new technology we were seeing as part of a big restructure. I spent the next several years at a local beer dispensary business which was the most incredible experience – although I was very young, I watched it grow from 5 to 200 employees and the founders let me get fully immersed in the business. I moved on to Mothercare, looking after the back-end of the Early Learning Centre acquisition, before moving onto Bourne Leisure. Having grown up by the beach, I understood the holiday product, so I absolutely loved my time there. When we acquired a new park I got interested in the deal side, which triggered a new phase in my career: big transformation projects for PE-backed businesses. I love getting stuck into cultural change and improving customer experience, and I was the last to be appointed to a brand-new executive board at Virgin Experience Days. The wide commercial remit of my role suits me perfectly, and Virgin is a lovely brand people are proud to work for.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I love Jackie Collins as an author – she has written a lot of novels about powerful women, from all walks of life, achieving amazing things.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Open communication, confidence to make

decisions, ability to empower others.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Competitors supporting each other through the pandemic to make sure the industry remains strong. I'm proud of how we have treated our teams, our customers and our partners.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Champion yourself and know your stuff. If you get involved in every aspect of the business, you'll be more credible to make strong decisions.

### If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I'm passionate about empowering those who have children very young. There's nowhere to find that support right now, so I would love to draw on my experience to set up a charity.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When crisis hits, hold onto your culture and use your core values as a foundation for your next steps. In March, our gut reaction was to hole the executive team in a room to make all the decisions, but we took a step back to stay true to our ethos and empower our teams.

“When crisis hits, hold onto your culture and use your core values as a foundation”

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Calm down! I had my whole timeline up to 30 planned out, but I wish I hadn't been scared to take the opportunities that presented themselves along the way, even when I didn't feel ready.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

There are some functions that historically have had very little representation. Now is the time to champion women in areas like operations and work on enabling good work-life balance.



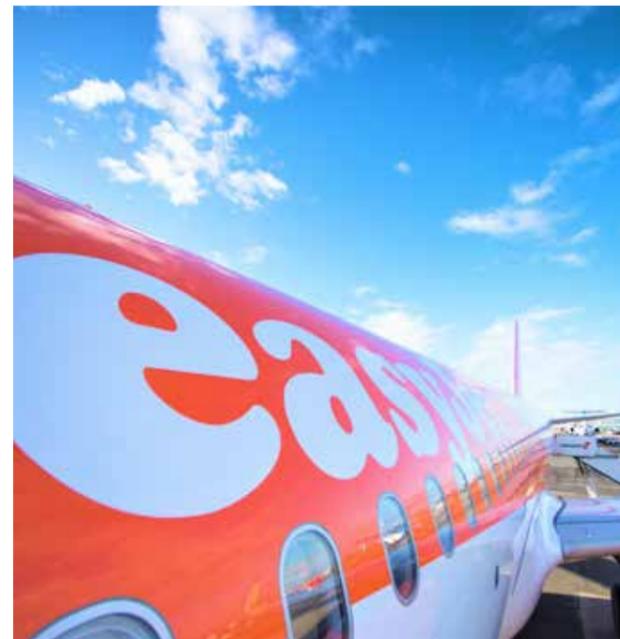
# Zarina Sabir

Company easyJet / Job Title Group Finance Controller



Maths was my thing at school, so after my A Levels, Accountancy seemed like the natural choice. I qualified at 21 before deciding that I was more interested in working in-house to shape the financials of a company than staying

within Practice. I moved into Industry at a global IT company CSC and later to AstraZeneca, before moving to easyJet over 13 years ago. I came in as a Finance Manager, doing various roles to support our Engineering and Operations functions. My first big Management role was as the Group Chief Accountant, where I jumped from leading a team of two to sixty overnight – quite an intro to people management! I was lucky to act as the Finance Lead kicking off big projects to take us into the FTSE100. That was a real turning point, because I moved from a purely financial role to linking the numbers with broader strategy. This was followed by a couple of years' secondment on our future finance transformation project, and currently I am the Group Financial Controller leading the auditing and reporting function. I've had a brilliant journey at easyJet, and I hope people see me as an example of how you can move up and have a diverse career in finance.



### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

No day is the same. Reporting cycles can be mundane, but this sector is so dynamic that you're constantly learning and developing.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Whenever an opportunity arises, take it; whenever you have an opinion, voice it. If you take that leap of faith, you'll probably surprise yourself and realise you are capable of more than you know.

### If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I've always wanted to help people develop and love children, so I think it would have to be a primary school teacher.

### What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

This year has been a huge challenge, as we learn to cope with working remotely

and face unprecedented financial challenges as an industry. You need to all be in it together, and remain positive even when things are relentless.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I'm part of our Shine programme for women in leadership, and am involved in our D&I strategy as well. More informally, given how male-dominated finance can be, I've always tried to role-model work-life balance and demonstrate to other team members that you can balance work with having children and be flexible.

### What do you hope the travel industry will look like in 5 years' time?

I believe it will be adapting to the flexibility both costumers and people within the industry want. When it's safe for everyone to escape away, we will have a rebound in bookings as we can see there is pent up demand, and how we adapt will be key.

## QUICKFIRE

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Decisiveness, compassion, being able to lead through uncertainty and being authentic and humble as well as having credibility. Being the same person you are in the office as well as at home.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I am about to go on maternity leave shortly with a set of twins due...! The amount of advice and interesting facts I have been given has been fascinating and it's been eye opening how common they are.



# Caryn Savazzi

Company Loungers / Job Title People Director



I studied business management at university, before entering the cruise industry in food and beverage. After four years I returned to the UK and joined Whitbread, where I worked up through a whole host of roles including

learning and development, recruitment, and talent management. Being part of such a large and high-profile company was invaluable in training, and I felt lucky to gain exposure to all its different brands. I went with TGI Fridays in its transition from public to private – a tremendous crash-course in how to set up a new business, and turnaround a culture from despondent to a ‘Best Companies to Work For’ winner. In late 2014 I became People Director at The Breakfast Club, which was and still is a cracking brand, full of brilliantly creative people and a strong culture. I’ve spent the last three years at Loungers amid its brisk UK expansion. We operate two fantastic brands, Lounge café-bar and Cosy Club. Pre-Covid we were opening sites at a rate of one a fortnight which is exciting to be part of, and again a strong people culture is what drew me to the business and what I continue to enjoy building.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

In my current role it has to be the pace at which we operate. There’s a phenomenal thirst to improve, grow, adapt in Loungers, and that transcends all the functions. Adding value to the communities in which we operate and constantly developing the culture of the business are the two greatest priorities of the business. They’re talked about daily and it’s reflected in the service and spirit that is experienced by our employees and customers alike.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

‘Stay close to the coal face’. It’s important in the world of restaurants to understand operations and to be assured you’re truly delivering what is important to your team and your customers. Look inside the four walls for answers before looking to what everyone else is doing – sometimes it’s absolutely the correct call to go left when everyone else is going the other way.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years’ time?

I hope that 2020 acts as a foot on the pedal. That can manifest in many ways, from doubling down on attracting more female and ethnic minority talent, to increasing our focus on innovation so that we come out of this current situation leaner and stronger. I hope we achieve a balance between rapid advances in automation and driving forward the personal interaction that makes hospitality magic.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

I’ve suffered from self-doubt as a woman and mum before, and it’s essential to have a supportive network that assures you that you are capable of balancing work and home. Talent is talent and we don’t need to throw every available hour at a role in order to be successful or prove strong commitment.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* – the autobiography by Maya Angelou. Hearing her speak in 2010 of the racism and trauma she was subjected to was truly inspirational.

### Who is your role model in the industry?

I’ve been lucky enough to work with a number of excellent CEOs, and I count Nick Collins right up there.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Trust (in your team), integrity (in your every action) and having a great purpose.

### What’s the most interesting thing you’ve seen or heard recently?

Did you know the heads on Easter Island have bodies? You won’t ever forget that now...

# Michal Seal

Company SSP Group / Job Title UK & Ireland Commercial Director



My career started as a corporate lawyer as it seemed like a great career path as an ambitious 19 year old. I was offered a training contract at Linklaters during my first year of university, but a year into the job I realised it wasn’t the career for

me. I was running a restaurant blog with friends at the time, and although I liked the idea of a career in food, I didn’t know in what capacity. I spent several months networking whilst completing my training contract and left law upon qualification. My networking led me to discover SSP, I was really lucky that the Marketing Director at the time offered me a trial position and I took the leap. Seven and a half years later, I have had an interesting and varied career with the business in a variety of commercial and marketing roles; working my way up from brand executive to UK & Ireland Commercial Director.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Seeing my team progress – there are a couple of individuals who have really stood out, they have applied and pushed themselves and progressed very quickly by making an enormous contribution to the business.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Think about where you want to be and how to get there then be tenacious about it. No one tells you how to achieve your career goals or teaches you how to progress including negotiating promotions or pay rises. I’ve always thought men are socialised to be more confident in pushing for career development, the next generation of women

shouldn’t be afraid to push for the same opportunities and progression.

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

I always feared that by being forthright people might perceive me as ‘bossy’ or ‘high maintenance’. With experience, I’ve realised that these words are gendered, and that being confident is no bad thing.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in hospitality?

The sector has a long way to go in terms of supporting women having babies. Sadly there is still a huge stigma around women going on maternity leave and when is the best time to do so from a career perspective. The lack of support is very off-putting,

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

As a child, *Elmer the Patchwork Elephant* was my favourite as it taught me from a young age not to be afraid of being different – I now read the book to my daughter and the message is as important as ever.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Kate Swann who showed me what a woman in

business is capable of achieving. I also very much admire Gini & Eccie who started Karma Kitchens.

### What’s the most interesting thing you’ve seen or heard recently?

I really enjoy Elizabeth Day’s podcast *How to Fail*, she always has interesting guests on the show.



and if we could do more to support working mothers, it would significantly improve the retention rates of women in the sector.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years’ time?

More automated and tech-focussed. Customers

are demanding more convenience; a broader selection of quicker, better products on demand and the traditional hospitality sector is only just starting to cater to that. I’d like to see existing operators innovate and deliver in line with these changing expectations.



# Natasha Shafi

Company Mr & Mrs Smith / Job Title Managing Director



Travel came into my professional life very early on. Fresh out of university I got a job at the Travel Bookshop (now sadly no more) in Notting Hill, intending to use it as a jumping-off point into the world of publishing. What I actually got from it was an education in

running a small business: day-to-day operations and the relationship between supply and demand. When I landed at Mr & Mrs Smith as an office manager the business was still in its infancy, but its hotel guidebooks had been bestsellers at the bookshop and I'd always found the brand inspiring and irreverent, and the beautiful visuals carried a true feeling of escape.

Having been part of the operation for over 13 years now, I've quite literally grown up with the business. I understand all its wonderful intricacies and how it evolved as it became a high-growth global enterprise. All the roles I've occupied have been centred on people. From my position in recruitment to creating an inspiring company culture as Chief of Staff, to my current operational role as MD, I've always tried my best to marry the right people to our business goals, make our company a dynamic and attractive proposition for career progression, and to ensure that human relationships remain at the heart of everything.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

In absolute honesty, I love helping people fulfil their goals and seeing them achieve their potential. My mission every day is to create and improve the pathways that help people grow within Mr & Mrs Smith. It might seem counterintuitive, but I'm most proud to see people who joined us as interns and who have been incubated by the company leave the business and become entrepreneurs in their own right. I believe a good company should leave a professional legacy that reaches beyond its current employees.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be bold. If you have self-knowledge, you know what you need to develop and where you can use your skills to break boundaries. It's easy to feel that your new ideas need too much persuasion or buy-in to push ahead with, but that shouldn't stop you. As Susan Jeffers put it: feel the fear and do it anyway.

## How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I'm a big advocate of understanding people's dreams, both within our business and more broadly, and demonstrating that a varied, non-linear career journey is no bad thing. Open forums are key, but actions speak louder than words – I believe that showcasing the women who have used our company as a springboard to success is the best possible way of demonstrating that women can and do make it in this sector.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

The heart of the travel and hospitality sector is a promise to help people make meaningful memories distinct from their everyday lives; to spend time together with loved ones; to celebrate special moments and fulfil lifetime ambitions. We're in the business of wish fulfilment – the closest thing to genies that exists in the real world. That's a pretty compelling draw.

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Mr & Mrs Smith founders James, Tam and Ed – they all inspire me in different ways every day.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Generosity, openness and courage.

# Karen Shiers

Company Merlin Entertainments / Job Title Vice President of Sales, North America



When I was applying to colleges from Connecticut, the University of Miami was my wildcard – I never expected they'd offer me a scholarship and I'd still be in Florida 10 years later! The move led me to discover hospitality and travel, as I was recruited into Merlin's management programme on graduating. Merlin was growing so rapidly they needed to ensure a pipeline of future

leaders in the company, so I spent 18 months covering every aspect of the business, doing stints at sites as diverse as Madame Tussaud's Las Vegas and Legoland Discovery Center Dallas. I discovered my passion lay in sales, so I landed my dream job – sales manager for Madame Tussaud's New York – when I finished the scheme. Next, I took over sales & marketing for new openings in the US, and even moved to Poole for a year to head up new openings over Europe and emerging markets. I was called back home to become Head of Sales at Legoland California Resort, before being promoted to VP Sales North America two years later. In my current role, I oversee sales for all



North America attractions, including a brand-new LEGOLAND Resort in New York and over 30 other attractions.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

The glass ceiling in your mind is one of the hardest to break. Have confidence and you can shatter those barriers.

## If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I would love to combine my passions for painting and wellness – maybe running a hybrid art-yoga studio!

## How are you supporting women in your organisation?

I have consciously built a team including women of colour to LGBTQ+ community members. I started a series called Motivation Monday, where I send around speeches from inspirational women

or people from diverse backgrounds. In 2018 I was lucky enough to attend MGM's Women in Leadership conference, and ever since I've vouched to bring increasingly more women along.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

I have such distinct memories of a middle school trip to Madame Tussaud's New York – it was incredible to come full circle and sell that experience to the next generation. Travel has shaped me as a person, and who wouldn't want to work where people come for holidays!

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

We're faced with so many decisions at such a young age that it's easy to get swept up in the path others want you to take. Don't do something just because you feel you should – following your heart will get you further.

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

My boss, mentor, and friend, Dominique Sidley. She is bold and true to herself always; unapologetically. And she makes things happen – with no excuses! I have learned so much from her and feel privileged to have such an inspirational leader as my boss.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, drive, courage, passion, and emotional intelligence.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

A recent SpaceX launch inspired me to dig deeper into the future of travel. I came across a video labeled 'year 2050' – which, really isn't too far away! It featured drone style "cars" and a SpaceX rocket that traveled from NY to Shanghai in 39 minutes. To imagine that this could happen in our lifetime is incredible to me.

# Jana Siber

Company Arriva / Job Title Managing Director, Mainland Europe



I started as a midwife, but I quickly realised that it wasn't my calling. I moved to the UK as an au pair, later enrolling at the University of Oxford to do an experimental psychology degree. There, I came across management consulting, which seemed like

a fantastic springboard for people who didn't know what they wanted to do in business! Even after my MBA I always knew going into industry was the end goal, but I realised after a marketing internship at SABMiller that consulting was the best way to expose myself to smart, driven and senior people across a full range of industries. I spent eight years at Bain & Company, where I learnt how to get into the inner workings of industries very quickly. I got a call from Avis Budget Group offering me a commercial strategy director role, from which I made the conscious effort to stray away from strategy into commercial, and finally to take responsibility for a full P&L. That opportunity arose at Arriva, managing one of our four divisions in mainland Europe. I manage seven countries under that title, with a total workforce of 10,000 people – a small army!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love the variety of working with my teams in different countries. Seeing the great work our teams are delivering to passengers on the ground is what gives me energy.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

When an opportunity presents itself, say yes and worry about it later. Don't second guess yourself before you even start – eventually, you'll build up the confidence to take on anything thrown your way.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I genuinely love what I do. There's never a dull moment!

## What has kept you in travel?

It's a very exciting time in the sector. The mobility era will affect everyone, and it's fascinating to watch new players emerge as traditional players react. It's quite a complicated industry, which gives you the variety of customer relationships that keeps me engaged.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*My Own Words* by Ruth Bader Ginsburg – she is my true hero!

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Being in transport, that's a bit tricky, I like to look to other females for role models. Perhaps Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors comes closest in my very male-dominated industry.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Mental agility, empathy and persistence.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Very topical – watching to US Presidential election unfold live is definitely the most fascinating stuff!

## What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

When I joined Arriva, the seven countries under my remit had never been grouped before. I challenged everyone to learn and perform Fortnite dances as a bonding exercise, but no one responded – it was nerve-wracking! It turned out everyone was really good sports, and I was very proud to have broken down

boundaries to foster those international relationships.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope that public transport embraces the trends on the horizon, as if we don't invest in electric vehicles now we will pay for it down the line. I hope we partner with customers and local authorities to drive innovation, beyond purely transactional relationships.



# Karen Sidhu

Company ODEON / Job Title Regional Operations Manager



I started doing computing at university but it didn't feel right, so I convinced an interior business to take me on their graduate placement, despite not being a graduate! They asked me to work harder to prove myself, which catapulted my career – I got really

into them with kitchen and bathroom websales, and as they involved me in big decisions my confidence grew. I joined a small franchise pizza business as training coordinator, and despite no experience in the area, I knew I would thrive applying myself in a business setting. I rose through three promotions in two years, eventually winning the regional manager position I'd been turned away from for being too junior. I was on a weekly contract while I proved my worth! I was the youngest ever to cement that role, though I didn't realise the extent of the victory then. I moved over to Papa John's looking to become franchise business manager, in another environment saturated by middle-aged white male leaders. I eventually achieved my ambition, getting really stuck into the ins and outs of that role. I moved to a franchisee as head of operations, where I worked 20-hour days to drive the business forward. My dream was to work in the fun world of leisure, and now here I am, absolutely loving the larger corporate environment.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Businesses talk a lot about how people-centric they are, but we really do live and breathe the values here – I genuinely look forward to going to work.

## If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I'm curious by nature, so learning about people in some way.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Ask for more constructive feedback, and reach out to network more.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Though we've focused on promoting women to senior positions (I've seen our board's gender representation flip over the last couple of years), I'm scared the pandemic has disproportionately affected women. I hope we fight for that encouragement so this blip doesn't stall the wider D&I agenda.

“ Not everyone knows how to share their experience, so I'm doing my best to create a safe space

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I grew up professionally with no diverse leadership at the top. It's all about breaking those barriers to progression, so I've opened up conversations on our social media platform to champion diversity and dig deep into what that word means to everyone. It's tough: not everyone knows how to share their experience, so I'm doing my best to create a safe space where people can ask questions.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Chimp Paradox*. This book stays with me and I refer to it constantly. It's helped me to have a better understanding of human behaviour, including my own and understand the why, when working with people. It's helped me to communicate more effectively and improve decision making.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

There are so many inspiring women in Odeon to look up to; for me it's Rebecca Parr-Phillips. Rebecca is the Operations Director and has been part of my journey from day 1. She's championed women and is a leader that is authentic, courageous and inspiring.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, integrity and being articulate.



# Eve Sukhnandan

Company PureGym / Job Title Chief People Officer



I chose the world of work over the university route, stumbling across HR while I was in sixth form. I gained my masters in HR through distance learning while in junior HR roles, going on to achieve the status of fellowship with the CIPD. My steepest learning

curve came when I entered the pub trade, where I spent three years as a young field-based HR manager liaising with experienced pub managers. A lifelong fan of sports, I then joined LA Fitness and progressed to the HR director role after returning from maternity leave. It was humbling being promoted while pregnant, and though hugely challenging, I knew it was important to lean on the amazing support network behind me and carve out a real path for myself. I sharpened my teeth during our CVA and was fortunate enough to move over to our buyer PureGym in 2015. Since then, we've more than doubled our gyms in the UK, acquired a business in Europe, and started franchising. I love that I see the world in a different way from the others around the executive table, and that I have the power to both commercially improve the business and directly impact the lives of 3,000 people and their families.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

When there's a difficult conversation to be had, I take pride in being a rock for the leadership team by being confident, clear and decisive, and framing things in a positive light.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be authentic and work hard to achieve the goals you set yourself. As you progress, there's a danger of losing yourself, but by bringing your whole self to work you will gain people's trust.

## If you weren't in leisure, what would you be doing?

I can't imagine being anywhere else! The strategy side of things really interests me, as it's so broad but keeps people at the heart.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

I used to be phased by people who commented I didn't seem 'like an executive'. Now, I know it's a compliment: it's only because I am myself that people open up to me; without the knowledge of what's on peoples minds

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Black Box Thinking* by Matthew Syed.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Francine Davis, Chief Strategy Officer for PureGym.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Trust, clarity and inclusion.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

"In order to dismantle unjust, racist structures, we must see race." An open and inspiring view of the world by Reni Eddo-Lodge in her book, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*.

I am powerless to impact change. As you get older, you get more confident in your own skin, so make peace with yourself sooner rather than later.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

This year has been pivotal for ethnic diversity. Fitness can and should be for everyone, and the Black Lives Matter movement has provided momentum: in the short term we find out what urgently needs fixing, and in the long term we

invite open conversations. For me, diversity is about getting to know the person beyond the job title and providing a great space for them to bring their whole self to work.

### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

The fitness sector has mobilised to transform its environments from a safety point of view. After a mammoth industry effort, I hope we continue to provide this healthier training experience.



# Jyoti Tailor

Company Hilton / Job Title VP Finance EMEA



My first loves were politics, history and the world, so I studied international relations at LSE. It was clear early on that I wanted to work in a global environment, so I was lucky to get a taste for that at such a diverse university. As an analytical and numerically minded person, I thought accounting sounded like a good place to start, as the big firms give you unparalleled insight into different businesses, and interaction with senior stakeholders. I trained in audit at Deloitte, where I loved being surrounded by a range of talented people, but after four years I wanted to move into consumer services. I did a stint in retail before finding Hilton and falling in love with all of it: the people, the product, the values, and the scale. I've been at Hilton 21 years, growing from a manager to VP Finance for Europe, Middle East and Africa, with lots of twists and turns along the way. It's a great culture filled with great people, and it also carries a clear purpose in terms of where the business

is headed globally. Though I've always worked from the UK, the travel opportunities and international outlook are incredible – the world is evolving so quickly, by bringing those ideas into our businesses we can become more dynamic ourselves.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Working with brilliant people who are passionate about what they do.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

No two ways about it, you have to work hard – that's how you succeed. Be passionate about what you do, though, so you're driven to achieve the best results.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Politics!

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in hospitality?

Historically, flexible working has been difficult, with hotel managers expected to be on call 24/7. This obviously isn't conducive to balancing work with family responsibilities, so women often didn't apply for these roles for fear that they couldn't fulfill the requirements. I do think, however, we're starting to see more openness to the idea of flexible working. Hilton has some great examples of hotel General Managers who work

## QUICKFIRE

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, integrity, positivity, determination, and the ability to conceive a compelling vision for others to follow.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I have been watching *The Handmaid's Tale*. It's an interesting lesson in what could happen if the fundamental principles of freedom of speech and democracy are allowed to be compromised.

flexibly to balance family commitments, which really helps to inspire others to see that those roles are accessible to them.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I look after our finance graduate programme, which goes into Universities in the Middle East and Africa to reach a wider and more diverse recruitment pool, so we can best represent the local communities of our hotels. I also sit on the race and ethnicity committee of WiHTL and will be setting up a focus group for BAME people in my

office to encourage open and inclusive discussions.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

I have been blown away by the resilience and dedication of our Team Members. The speed with which people have had to react to the changing circumstances is phenomenal, and you see that nowhere more than in hospitality. From our new Hilton CleanStay protocol to the ways in which hotels have adapted to attract new business segments, we've mobilised overnight amid ever-changing circumstances.



# Katy Taylor

Company Go-Ahead Group / Job Title Chief Strategy and Customer Officer



transformational head of marketing role at Kroll. As social media exploded, I discovered that these commercial turnaround roles really lit my fire – my role was a first for every company I joined, and I acted as a catalyst for change. The spread-betting company IG Group was particularly invigorating – implementing strategy into a superfast digital business gave me a buzz. When I joined Go-Ahead Group, first in a digital transformation role, it was clear that we simply weren't getting through to our customers. The internal culture of our business was key to our success, so we reframed ourselves from moving buses and trains to moving people. I'm proud of the partnerships

I cut my teeth on handling marketing and media at my university radio station, before continuing in PR post-graduation. When I joined a Russian investment bank, I experienced somewhat of a culture shock: as a 23-year-old marketing manager, I was the most senior woman in the organisation! Despite the challenges, the language skills I developed liaising with Russian investors opened the door to a



we've forged through our amazing frontline ambassadors, alongside charities like the Campaign to End Loneliness.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I get the most out of big-picture strategic projects. I want to be able to say that I wrote a strategy, I weathered the challenges in implementation, and I delivered it.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Being in the room is key. Though tokenism is a problem, if you're not given the opportunity to be there, you can't question the assumptions borne out of decades of homogenous thinking.

### What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

During culture transformations, I've realised there's no point going forward quickly if everyone else isn't

following close behind – there's value in going slowly and discussing the journey with others. Always remember to pause and check in with the whole person, not just the self they bring to work.

### What do you hope travel will look like in five years' time?

I hope this is a wake-up call to ask what customers really want. There's more demand for off-peak services now, so we should redistribute the timetable to offer people more flexible journeys – there's always opportunity for innovation amidst crisis.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Mentoring has been fascinating – seeing the industry through the eyes of my Black mentee transformed my perspective, and I sponsor our Women in Bus network. Often, though, my main role is to help male leaders appreciate that diversity ultimately leads to better ideas.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Death of an Idealist* by Beverley Naidoo, was written about my uncle who died in Apartheid South Africa in 1982. You can learn a lot about yourself by reading someone else's perspective on your family.

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Dame Carolyn McCall – she showed that customer focus and a positive culture can create commercial success no

matter what industry it's applied to.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Moral courage to speak out when you think something is wrong and the ability to listen to others and learn from them.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

Less than 6% of the land in the UK is built upon, the rest is farmland or nature.

# Hannah Tengnah

Company McDonald's / Job Title Legal Counsel



I graduated with a first class degree in law before taking a legal role in the oil and gas industry supporting Europe. My second office was in Milan, so I had the opportunity to travel with huge oversight across the business. After 18 months, I was seconded to one of

our partner law firms to train as a solicitor, before being promoted to Commercial Counsel for EMEA and Asia-Pacific. The cross-border transactions were invaluable experience but after five years with the company, I was keen to commence a fresh challenge so I took the McDonald's role as a UK commercial lawyer. I advise across the business, from delivery partnerships to data privacy to employment law – every TV advertisement you see has had our input and I get to work on our strategic initiatives too. While 2020 has been tough globally, on a personal level I have been fortunate to have some incredible moments having been selected as a Rising Star Leader for the UK as well as joining 19 lawyers from across the world on our Global Leadership Programme.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The culture of the business and the incredible people make working here very special. As a leading brand, we are at the forefront of what's happening globally and decisions we make impact millions of customers every day.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Don't be afraid to deviate from your plan. I'd never considered a career in-house, but I love immersing myself in a single business and advising on initiatives and challenges as they unfold. It's a skill to get comfortable with stepping

outside your comfort zone but you won't regret it if you do.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I'd be a professional food taster or a travel blogger!

### How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

It's served as a reminder to never be complacent. Like all businesses, we've had to adapt to continually unpredictable circumstances and it's not enough to just be a big brand - you have to be agile, adaptable and forward thinking.

### What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

I'd say ensuring you have a seat at the table when the key decisions are being made. Covid has stopped the incidental meetings in the office and if you're not the established go-to, it can be easy to be missed – so being proactive and clear on what you want to get involved with is essential.

### What have you done to promote diversity within the industry?

Participating in WiHTL's reverse mentoring programme has enabled me to educate others on my experiences. McDonald's has customers and employees from all walks of life, so I'm starting conversations to help ensure we are the gold standard and have taken a leading role in our Inclusion Network ensuring employee voices are heard and the business is being productively challenged.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi and Tahl Raz. This book really highlights the key to building strong relationships and the importance of doing so.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

I think integrity, empathy, as well as knowing when to provide direction vs empowering others to have autonomy.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I actually re-listened to a TED talk this week which I hadn't heard for some time and I had forgotten how much I love it! For those who haven't heard Amy Cuddy speak about how your body language may shape who you are, I would definitely recommend taking 20 minutes out of your day for this.



# Siobhan Thomas

Company InterContinental Hotels Group / Job Title Global Talent Acquisition & Diversity and Inclusion Director



I realised early on that I could leverage my experiences and education as opportunities to make the world a more equitable place. I entered the world of work in technology, as the explosion of advancement in the late 2000s interested me,

but it's a notoriously hard industry for women to break into. That first role was at Taleo, the applicant tracking system, which led me on a path into HR and recruitment. From systems I transitioned to the more hands-on side of Talent Acquisition and D&I, spending time at Sky and Credit Suisse before joining IHG five years ago. It's been a brilliant experience both bringing people into the business and looking after our existing colleagues, while finding new digital ways to deliver those services. Hotels are unique – it's amazing that we continue to do things differently in a millennia-old industry! My role excites me as it marries passion and progress, which is a strong position to be in to make change.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Seeing the changes we make: I'm opening the doors to people who perhaps wouldn't have thought of hospitality as a career otherwise. It's truly rewarding to provide an inclusive environment for them to thrive in.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Pockets of the industry are still very male-dominated, but there is a place for you at that table, even if you have to pull the chair out yourself.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I could see myself in a courtroom advocating for fair opportunities.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Be more patient – though I doubt I would listen! I was keen to educate my way out of challenging circumstances, and as a

Black woman, unfortunately I had to work twice as hard. I would let myself know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it would all be worth it.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

One of IHG's values is to 'do the right thing', so when I noticed we didn't have a UK employee resource group amplifying the voices of ethnic minority colleagues, I founded one myself, it's called Embrace. The biggest help I can individually deliver is being visible and modelling that there is opportunity for people from all backgrounds within this industry.

## How have you dealt with challenges in your career?

When I look at the challenges I've faced collectively, I see a level of beauty in the complexity. At the start it may seem insurmountable, but those tricky problems, while difficult to navigate, bring around the biggest learning curves.

# Suzie Thompson

Company Red Carnation Hotels / Job Title Vice President Commercial



I spent my 1998 gap year working for First Choice Ski in Saalbach-Hinterglemm in Austria – an eye-opening experience for someone who'd never been to the mountains before! I knew then I wanted to pursue a career in hospitality and travel, so

I did a BA in international hospitality management at Bournemouth, with a 1-year placement at the Holiday Inn Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, USA. On graduating I joined the IHG fast-track general manager graduate programme, selected as 1 of only 5 in the country. My first position was based in Cambridge where I progressed to the role of reservations manager, before moving to London to become reservations manager at the Holiday Inn Kensington Forum (the largest holiday inn in Europe with 906 bedrooms at that time). At the advent of online travel, I became interested in online hotel distribution and took the exciting opportunity of becoming Market Manager for London with lastminute.com. Online travel was a really fun place to be during those early years. I enjoyed working alongside a team of creative and talented people, doing something that felt new and exciting, and I had the opportunity to build a strong network of hoteliers and travel professionals which helped me when I moved on to my next role. In 2008 I was approached to launch the UK sales division of Sabre Hospitality Solutions, bringing the SynXis suite of products to the market. I spent 4 years driving sales, which ultimately led Sabre Hospitality to become the market leader in the UK by the time I moved on. I joined The Red Carnation Hotel collection in 2011 as VP Marketing and have been with the company now almost 10 years. My role has grown considerably along with the hotel collection, which now stands at 20 unique and special boutique hotels. Today, as VP Commercial I am lucky enough to be leading the sales, marketing, PR, reservations and revenue teams for Red Carnation and feel very fortunate to be working for such a wonderful family run business. I am fortunate to have had so many opportunities to learn and progress throughout my career, to meet so many inspiring and fun people and I am looking forward to seeing the hospitality industry thrive once more.

## QUICKFIRE

### Who is your role model within this industry?

I have been lucky enough to work with some brilliant people over the years who have all inspired me in different ways.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

As a leader you have to be effective! You need to be able to prioritize, be an excellent communicator,

adopt a good attitude, be resilient, up-skill constantly, manage time and productivity well and manage stress. It also helps to have some fun along the way...

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

If someone doesn't have a smile for you, then give them one of yours.

### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love blending the creative with the commercial. From hotel photoshoots one day to budget forecasts the next. I always feel like I make a difference, each and every day and that is very rewarding.

### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Be brave, seek out positions that you can grow into, find businesses that have a good reputation for building great teams, who invest in training and have a diverse and inclusive culture. Most of all, be yourself.

### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I have always worked in travel, when I was very young my 'dream job' was to be a Butlins Redcoat. I can't imagine working in any other industry.

### What career advice would you give your younger self?

Welcome constructive feedback, it's a gift.

### How have you seen the industry change on D&I in your time in HTL?

I think that our industry has definitely moved forwards, but in order to manage our leadership pipeline for diversity, it's important to acknowledge that diversity isn't just about gender.

### What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

Our 'Idea' (Inclusion, diversity, equality, action) programme is built around a 'circle' of people from our global team, who are personally interested and invested in improving D&I. We have developed a programme of education and a list of ideas and objectives for attracting, recruiting, developing and helping people progress the career ladder who fall into a marginalised group.



# Amanda Tucker

Company Hertz / Job Title Director, IT Service Management



I went straight into retail banking after school, doing front office tasks like loans and mortgages at NatWest. After six years, halfway through my tenure there, I moved into technology so I could see a different side of the banking world. I self-studied technology

alongside my shifts, where there were no other women – and certainly no other Black women – in sight. I soon realised that in the fast-pace world of tech, I saw a path for myself in leadership and management, so I worked through a number of consumer-facing organisations like Bupa and Marks & Spencer. I found my niche in those roles, dealing with strategy and leading people in a service management capacity. It's all about making sure you can deliver the best possible service to your clients and customers, managing the shop window for technology. I've been working in that space at Hertz for two years, which is a great organisation with switched-on leadership. I love how transformational technology can be for the productivity of our teams – by equipping them with new toolsets and new ways of working, every function can make a difference to the business.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Working with people and seeing things move forward. Change is the bread and butter of technology, so I love being part of that evolution.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

The opportunities are out there, but it's about what you can do within yourself to take those steps. Make yourself visible, and treat every opportunity as a building block.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

Motivational coaching. I live for that lightbulb moment when people realise what they can achieve.

## What are the biggest challenges currently facing women in the workplace?

I chaired a lunch and learn for Lloyds Bank about the role Black women can play in technology, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on

women of colour in the workplace, both in terms of childcare and furlough. Being furloughed is about grasping the opportunity to diversify your skillset, and stay connected with those close to you.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

We have a platform called Her Hertz where we come together as female leaders to sponsor women in corporate spaces. On the side, I work with Brunel University to help their female engineering students into the workplace.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we use technology to make it faster, easier and more accessible for people to travel. Travel is such a diverse and fast-paced space, so I hope we see more advances in technology, like subscription-based car hire services that enable us to be a one-stop shop for customers when they arrive at the airport.



# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

*Becoming* by Michelle Obama.

## Who is your role model within this industry?

Any female leader who is setting an example for other women to be the best they can be.

## What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Visionary, empathy, agility.

## What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

That we have a Covid-19 vaccine!

# Dee Vassili

Company Vue International / Job Title Executive Director, Group HR



I fell into HR by accident. Following graduation, I was attracted to the Virgin brand and successfully applied for a junior HR role. As the Virgin business rapidly expanded, I grew with it, ultimately becoming the Head of HR for UK, Ireland and Northern Europe; it was a brilliant training ground. I then changed sectors, taking on the role of Global Talent Director for the Reuters Group and, later, the European HR Director for Warner Bros' theatrical division. When the UK business was sold to SBC (a small business made up of 6 cinemas) I joined as the HR Director. This was a risky career move, as on paper it appeared to be a smaller role, but I bought into Tim Richard's vision and the exciting challenges ahead. The risk paid off and the rest, as they say, is history!

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Finding talented people, and watching them grow and become a key player in the company's success.

The Vue alumni are currently to be found in key positions across exhibition, distribution and other businesses within the leisure and entertainment industry. Being a small part of their success story makes me proud.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Change is the only constant, so be prepared for it! Ambiguity and complexity are the 'new norm': therefore, seek to understand and find a better way of doing things.

## What has kept you working in leisure?

The first time I went to the cinema, I was 5 years old and it became etched into my childhood memories. I was blown away by the big screen, but also because it was a shared experience with people that mattered to me. Life is about creating experiences and memories with people you care about. Being part of creating this for others gives me a worthwhile purpose.

# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

I am currently reading Caroline Criado-Perez's *Invisible Women* – which is a real eye-opener.

## Who is your role model within this industry?

Having worked across different sectors, I have been fortunate enough to meet and work with some amazing people who have had a lasting impact on me and ultimately contributed to the shaping of who I am today.

## What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Humility, authenticity, empathy, integrity and diverse/broad life experiences.

## What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

I recently watched *The Social Dilemma* on Netflix. It is a docudrama that assembles a group of engineers and executives who built the addiction-machines of social media.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

As we focus on resetting our world, we need to step back and think about how we adjust the good bits and throw out dated stuff. Currently, there is a lot of dialogue about the future of work. We have learned loads about virtual working but it doesn't mean we should automatically banish offices to the history books. Instead, we should eradicate presenteeism

but create clear value and purpose around colleagues coming together.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

Consumer expectations are changing and cinema will mirror other HTL sectors, where out-of-home activities will revolve around shared leisure experiences, as opposed to functional activities that can be done via the internet.



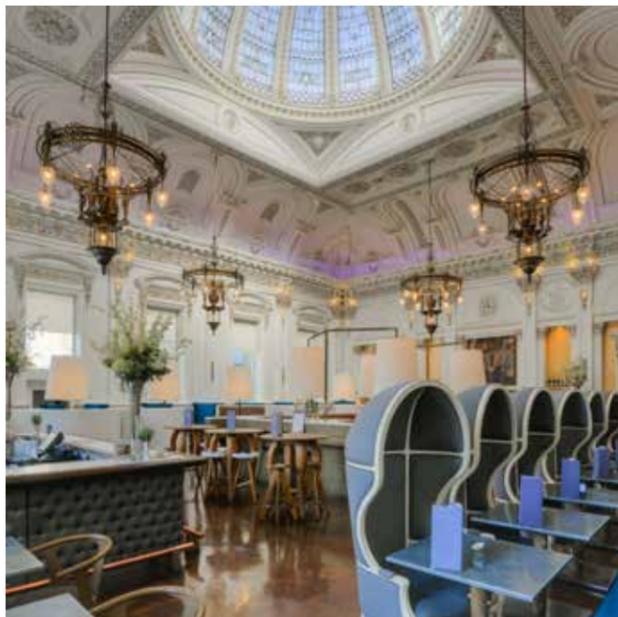
# Lesley Welsh

Company G1 Group / Job Title Chief Operating Officer



I spent five years qualifying as a lawyer in Aberdeen, before moving down to London for a 'gap year' of sorts. I got a job at Whitbread for some spare cash, but I got sucked into the hospitality world and never left! I had worked my way up to general

manager when the operations director pulled me onto a team building strategy around how the business could be more innovative in its new concepts. After a few years I moved to Punch Taverns, eventually moving up to Scotland to look after our business development managers. Someone gave my name to Stefan King, CEO of G1 Group, and though I refused his first few offers to move he ground me down over the next 12 months! When I first joined, they were looking to diversify and develop, so I started off running a recently acquired division of pubs. I've got my hands on anything and everything I could ever since as the company has expanded, taking on my COO role seven years ago. I love that we're a nimble business who can make decisions quickly, with so much variety under our umbrella – we do everything from residential property to convenience stores to stone restoration. Our mantra is to do everything ourselves, so I've learnt huge amounts about so many facets of business during my time here.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love creating things, be that businesses or concepts, and bringing those empty shells to life.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

You need to be tough and thick-skinned, so find a mentor you have a connection with and take their feedback on board.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

I wouldn't change a thing – sticking to my guns has done a lot for me. I've met amazing people and landed in the right place at the right time.

## What do you hope the hospitality sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we echo Europe's move away from alcohol-driven hospitality. I would like to see more investment in the industry and more pride in the businesses

“ There is always a way around everything – it might take time but you will always get there

we operate. It's easy to get caught up in making profits, but I hope we refocus our priorities on good old-fashioned customer service.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in hospitality?

It's not a 9 to 5 job, which makes it difficult to plan around a family. At G1, we pride ourselves on being hands-on and visiting sites at their busiest on a Saturday night, because we get huge benefit from seeing how we can improve our teams' experience. That's not always possible for women with young families, so I hope the introduction of technology will ease that burden.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Anything You Want* by Derek Sivers – to only say yes if it's a "Hell Yeah!"

### Who is your role model within this industry?

Stefan King, my current boss, has taught me never to accept "no" as an answer. There is always a way around everything

– it might take time but you will always get there.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Communication, charisma and tenacity.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

We are near having a Covid-19 vaccine!

# Pauline Wilson

Company Virgin Atlantic Airways / Job Title Vice President Holidays



I've always worked in travel – it's been my passion since I was very young. I still remember getting on my first aeroplane when I was 11 years old! After completing university, I began my career in travel as a sales agent for a large tour operator.

I worked my way up through several travel companies to general manager level, before joining Virgin Holidays in 2005. My current role at Virgin Atlantic as VP of Holidays is to lead my team in creating a memorable Virgin experience for our customers – and ensure we deliver on our brand promise.

In recent years I have taken the time to be more involved with supporting the future generation. I continue to share my story to give young people a real model they can identify with – rather than a 'perfect' role model. My aim is to demonstrate that a fantastic career in travel is attainable, and that difference and individuality is to be celebrated and embraced.



## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Working with a brilliant team to create exciting journeys and delivering amazing and memorable experiences to our customers.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

Journalism. I'm curious about people and I'd love to tell people's untold stories.

## What attracted you to work in HTL?

There's something quite wonderful about travel. Experiencing the vibrancy and differences of many cultures, religions, and lived experiences and the ability to connect people across the world are a few of the many highlights of working in this industry.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I'm an active member of our 'Be Yourself' programme, encouraging our teams to bring their true selves to work. I'm also

a passionate supporter of our women's network 'Scarlet', helping to progress women's careers and development. I actively support our BAME network to identify the key actions that will make the biggest difference. With the aim of driving intentional sustainable change to ensure our organisational culture is as inclusive as possible, at all levels of the business.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

I see a disconnect between the diversity of the people in the countries we send customers to, and the makeup of the people employed by the industry itself. It is also disheartening to see how few women are represented at the senior levels of organisations. It's important I do my part in driving change to redress this imbalance, making sure that we see women represented at all levels and that we reflect the diverse communities we serve.

# Lisa Wood

Company Great Rail Journeys / Job Title Sales and Marketing Director



I graduated in marketing and went straight into what was then Midland Bank, which later became HSBC. I stayed there for around 20 years, doing lots of different marketing roles. Then I left to help build a challenger brand called Atom Bank, spending four years working on digital and customer experience there. The start-up world is a tough one, and after four years I was approached by Great Rail Journeys to be sales and marketing director. I wasn't sure I had the

right background to enter the travel sector at first, but I came to realise there are commonalities between the two skillsets that bridge the gap. I've always worked for very customer-oriented brands, even during my time in financial services, so I was able to translate that customer-led view of the world into my current role. Given banking is ahead of the game in terms of technology, my upbringing in digital is a strength I can contribute to the travel industry while I work on getting sales through the door. I love that travel is an industry that inspires and evokes emotion in people.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Coming from the corporate world, it's so refreshing to be in a smaller organisation. There's little



red tape, which gives me more scope to make quick decisions and have direct influence.

“It's only when I actively chose to take a leap of faith that I accelerated my progression”

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering marketing?

Broaden your skills base as soon as you can. As you get more senior, it's useful to have the full toolkit there to draw on.

## If you weren't in travel, what would you be doing?

I love creative transformation, so I could see myself in architecture or interior design.

## What career advice would you give your younger self?

Take more risks. I took the predictable path up

through the corporate layers, but it's only when I actively chose to take a leap of faith that I accelerated my progression.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we embrace sustainability. Climate change has been bubbling in the background in the last few months, but it feels like consumers are ready to changing their behaviour. Travel has a pivotal role in reducing carbon footprints, so I hope we keep an eye on finding creative ways to let people see the world.

## How has Covid-19 changed your perspective on the industry?

Coping with Covid reminds me of working in a start-up: there's never a guarantee of where your funding is coming from, so you need to stay level-headed. The beauty of travel is that people love to do it, so I have no qualms that if we hold our nerve and connect with customers we will survive.

# Jill Xiaozhou Ju

Company The Collective / Job Title Chief Investment Officer



I'm from Shanghai, but I was educated across the US, China and Germany. When I graduated from Harvard Business School I joined Greystar, a company specialising in apartment development investing and operations.

I specialised in the UK student housing market, but it gave me the opportunity to learn about the US and elsewhere as I helped break into the Asian market. It was fascinating, and I learnt a ton! Three years ago I joined The Collective, a co-living company dedicated to enabling more fulfilled city living. It's been an interesting bridge between my experience in student housing and multifamily living – there's a real need for affordable but good quality, highly-amenitised accommodation that makes staying in the Londons and New Yorks of the world more communal and hassle-free. My role has been to help build up the investment function, then to oversee acquisition and fundraising and help set the strategy for the business. I've learnt the importance of aligning people with corporate strategy, and taking a step back to gather everyone behind a shared vision.

## What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Getting knee-deep in comprehensive and dynamic problem solving. Every day, I'm faced with changing trends in the investment market, as well as data-points from our own projects.

## What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Seek out opportunities beyond your comfort zone. I've noticed that more men than women put themselves forward based on potential over credentials. Great leaders should guide you based on what you could be.

I specialised in the UK student housing market, but it gave me the opportunity to learn about the US and elsewhere as I helped break into the Asian market. It was fascinating, and I learnt a ton! Three years ago I joined The Collective, a co-living company dedicated to enabling more fulfilled city living. It's been an interesting bridge between my experience in student housing and multifamily living – there's a real need for affordable but good quality, highly-amenitised accommodation that makes staying in the Londons and New Yorks of the world more communal and hassle-free. My role has been to help build up the investment function, then to oversee acquisition and fundraising and help set the strategy for the business. I've learnt the importance of aligning people with corporate strategy, and taking a step back to gather everyone behind a shared vision.

## If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

I love writing, so I would have enjoyed journalism.

## What have you done to promote diversity within your organisation?

I've helped bring back the awareness in recruitment and progression pipelines. In the investment function, open recruitment processes tend to yield a gender imbalance, but I've worked with our people team to actively seek out female talent to widen the candidate pool. Internally, it's important that we acknowledge there are different ways to demonstrate achievement, so quantitative feedback is more useful than 'gut

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

It's pretty tough to narrow it down to one, but one that I have really appreciated recently is *Being mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. I have enjoyed its insights and it has helped me to reflect on the ideas around well-being.

### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

In my view, that would be the ability to identify and build a well-rounded leadership team that has a shared vision, mutual trust and complementary skills.



instinct' when it comes to promotion.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

Ultimately, the investment side can be very driven by the bottom line, but co-living has shown us the importance of creating something which truly appeals to human beings. I hope we leverage our knowledge of human psychology to provide a fuller sense of belonging for those away from home.

## What are the biggest challenges facing women in HTL?

Informal networking. Although there has been a shift in overall awareness, and the vast majority of people don't actively block female progression, there is a subconscious blocker to making connections that stems from a masculine energy in the real estate space.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Touching the Void* by Joe Simpson – hugely inspirational in respect of pushing personal boundaries and coping with absolute adversity.

### What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Honesty. An ability to listen and learn from others and not always be right! To let people make mistakes and learn from them.

### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

A Times article about lockdown being so hard because as humans we instinctively conjure up a make-believe future and lockdown takes that away. Travel is part of the future we make up for ourselves, so as an industry we need to feed people's imagination, giving them food for thought on what they'll do when we can travel again!



# Alex Young

Company Revolution Bars Group / Job Title Sales & Marketing Director



Executive to Head of Marketing, working through a merger and honing my marketing skills in a highly commoditised environment. It was only in my next role at an events and festivals business that I followed my dream into hospitality – my secondary school yearbook has me running a bar in Sydney! Suddenly, I was in a whole world of building outstanding food and drink offerings at the best festivals and events in the UK, from Silverstone to Boomtown. From my first interview at Revolution Bars Group, though, my gut told me it was where I had to be. My team is brilliant, and though it's the toughest role I've ever had, I genuinely love it.

#### What do you find most rewarding in your job?

The variety, of both my role and of my team. Everyone brings something different to the table.

After leaving school, I worked my way up through a series of admin jobs before falling into marketing by complete accident. My first proper role was in a safety critical software company, which was a fascinating exposure to the B2B world of aeroplanes and government. Next, I transitioned into the tyre industry, working on building relationships with tyre dealers around the UK. I then transitioned into office supplies, which taught me a lot about commercials and pricing – I rose from a maternity contract as Marketing



## QUICKFIRE

#### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Ride of a Lifetime* by Robert Iger, CEO of Disney.

#### Who is your role model within this industry?

I can't pick just one! Beth Anderson, our People Director and Andrew Stones from Imbiba.

#### What qualities are the most valuable in a leader?

Passion, integrity and fallibility.

#### What's the most interesting thing you've seen or heard recently?

"The riskiest thing is to just maintain status quo."

#### What advice would you give the next generation of women entering your sector?

Have courage and confidence in your convictions; listen and be heard. Ask for feedback – the people who are brilliant at giving you actionable feedback are those who will shape who you become in your career.

#### If you weren't in hospitality, what would you be doing?

Something in technology.

#### How are you encouraging more women into the sector?

I've become a mentor off the back of a conversation I had with a team member about social media. We catch up regularly on anything and everything, as I feel it's my duty to support and nurture women within my team and more widely in the business. I want people to feel they can approach me about anything.

#### What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in 5 years' time?

I hope we find the right balance between harnessing technology and delivering the best customer experience through our great teams. That's what makes hospitality special – if Amazon built a bar, there's no doubt it would be slick, but it would lack the warmth our people bring.

#### What attracted you to work in HTL?

The industry has such a wonderful family feel to it. Previous industries I've worked in have been dog-eat-dog, so to enter into a sector filled with such big brands bouncing off each other in healthy competition is invigorating. There's loads to do, innovation is at the forefront and the energy is electric.



# Advocates for Change

## Leaders moving the dial on diversity and inclusion

This year, we have also identified a group of men and women who are leveraging their senior positions to drive lasting positive change in the hospitality, travel and leisure sector. These leaders are passionate about

promoting diversity and inclusion: through their words, actions and public commitments to D&I they are creating the momentum needed for a significant cultural shift.





# Keith Barr

Chief Executive Officer,  
InterContinental Hotels Group

I've been in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years, 20 of those with IHG. I started out working in restaurants in Boston as a teenager, which is where my passion began. When I later graduated from Cornell's School of Hotel Administration in 1992, I joined Bristol Hotels & Resorts, which was acquired by IHG in 2000. A few years later, Andy Cosslett, IHG's CEO at the time, told me, "If you ever really want to be a leader in this company, you have to work internationally; you need to understand the breadth and the scope of this business." In 2006, my family and I moved to Australia after I took up the role of Chief Operating Officer for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. We moved to Greater China in 2009 when I was offered the opportunity to become CEO of the region which was growing exponentially at the time and became a member of the Executive Committee. We spent four years in Greater China, which, back then, was the longest period we had lived in one place during our adult life since university. In 2013, I became Chief Commercial Officer, based in the UK, and I became CEO in 2017.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

Developing and supporting a diverse and inclusive culture should be seen as critical to any leader and is core to a company's success – it helps us attract and

retain the best talent, creates a sense of belonging among colleagues and ultimately makes our business stronger.

### What does great leadership look like to you? How do you get others to join you on the path to greater D&I, and what are the best examples of resistance you've had to tackle?

In terms of leadership, you can only lead by example. I often say that "people hear what you say but see what you do." If you are talking about inclusion and your culture, but not really showing any progress, people see that imbalance immediately. You also have to bring others along with you, rather than immediately springing into action and attempting to solve issues just from the top. You must recognise that a mix of perspectives will ultimately make you stronger.

You must listen to your people. You may not always like the feedback, but it is often where some of the most important change comes from. As a white male, I will never fully understand the challenges many women or my ethnically diverse colleagues may have experienced in their lives in the same way as them. Yet by listening I can increase my understanding and then have a positive impact through my actions.

In terms of bringing colleagues on a journey, when I became

CEO, we knew we wanted to put a framework around our D&I agenda to really drive it forward. I established a global D&I Board, which I chair as well as regional boards, to set some priorities and make sure we were all staying accountable to our goals and locally relevant. That has given us a focus we didn't have before and a better way to engage on the tough issues we are facing.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

The rich experiences hospitality can give you are unparalleled. I don't know of another industry that has the variety of roles we do, and with the same presence around the world, which gives you such exposure to different cultures. I would advise young talent to say "yes" to opportunities even when it takes them out of their comfort zone and see where it takes them.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion and taking care of your employees?

For a company dealing with a multitude of problems during a crisis like this, it's easy to neglect your ESG agenda, but we are probably more focused on it than ever before. It is the companies that continue to progress their D&I agendas who will retain the best talent in the industry.



# Robert Cook

Chief Executive Officer, TGI Fridays

I grew up in hospitality, my parents had hotels in Aberdeenshire, and I lived in a hotel room until I was 18 years old, until unsurprisingly hotel school called.

On graduating, I joined the Bass Hotels (now IHG) graduate programme in the late 80's.

At that time, hotel management was very much a man's world, and to be honest we're still playing catch up from that inherited tradition. In 1997, I joined Malmaison as a General Manager growing to become Operations Director until 2000. Then after 4 years in Monte Carlo working with Ken McCulloch launching the David Coulthard led Columbus Hotel and Dakota Hotel group I returned to Malmaison. In 2004, I took the helm back at Malmaison as CEO, and in that year acquired the Hotel du Vin group.

My GM team, going back 15 years now, were more than half women, I had long recognised and admired some of the best luxury hotels in the world. Their GMs were female so it made good sense to grow the business with that in mind and we set out on that ambition.

Since the trail-blazing days of Malmaison, I've headed up Village Hotels, Devere Hotels and Resorts, Virgin Active UK, before my current position leading TGI Fridays.

I've spanned the breadth of the hospitality and leisure space over my career, which has given me the broadest picture possible – it's such a fast moving world that there's no better way to learn than touching everything in the wider leisure arena!

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

It's important to broaden the scope of where you attract talent from – my view is, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, the best person should have the chance to be considered for the role.

At TGI we have five women on our board of eight, which was my making: those were simply the best candidates for the job.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

Look at every facet of hospitality – by experiencing leadership in all specialisms in hospitality whether it be casual dining, hotels, resorts or health & fitness as early on as possible in your journey, you will get the broadest sphere of experience.

And seek out a mentor who has made it in the last five to ten years – modern thinking has shaken off the shackles of tradition, so surround yourself with those who have broken the mould themselves and have embraced diversity in all its forms.

### Who has inspired you in your career? What impact has that had on you?

I spent 9 glorious years with Ken McCulloch, founder of Malmaison, whose hiring mantra was 'we hired you, we liked you, so be yourself' – his view was that the company should change to accommodate outstanding people, not vice versa.

One of the first general managers, Stephen Carter OBE, taught me about the different facets of understanding the value people in a business.

Although both my mentors were male, they had notably diverse teams back in the 1990s – Malmaison was disrupting what we knew hospitality to be.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion?

For better or for worse, Covid will stimulate change.

I've noticed the unparalleled tenacity of the women executives around the board room table in our own business and in others.

I would strongly urge new CEOs, boards and executives to focus in on that gender balance – compiling winning teams is all about chemistry after all.



# Paul Flaum

Group Chief Executive Officer,  
Bourne Leisure

I have such a natural affinity with the hospitality and leisure sector! I joined PwC after university, but I realised that you do your best where your adrenaline pumps the most – for me, that was hospitality and leisure, because I loved what it gave our guests. I've spent my subsequent career at blue-chip leisure companies – from Rank to Odeon to Beefeater to Premier Inn, where I was Managing Director of Premier Inn and Whitbread Restaurants. In 2017, I joined Bourne Leisure as Group CEO.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

There's a moral reason and there's a business reason. My Uncle Alec was a Holocaust survivor, and I could not tolerate living in society without trying to eliminate discrimination in every form. I always want to lead a business and create an environment and culture where all talent can flourish. Also, commercially if you want to create transformation you need a range of skills, experiences, personalities, views and backgrounds.

### What does great leadership look like to you?

Leadership is creating an ambitious guest obsessed mission and inspiring and engaging the organisation to achieve that mission. Creating a culture that allows individuals and teams to flourish and realise their true

potential. Having a clear plan, ambitious targets and a brilliant talented team. Good leaders create followers, great leaders create leaders.

### What interventions have you made that you think have made the biggest difference?

I'm a big fan of changing the culture inside-out and signalling what's most important. For example, when I visit sites, I want to chat to our front of house/back of house team members before the GMs. They're closer to the guests and I genuinely want to know what they think and to say thank you.

Interventions must be genuine – you can't promote diversity if you don't understand it in the first place! It was a no-brainer to sign up to the Race at Work charter, and to host diversity and inclusion focus groups to listen to others' experiences.

### What are the biggest blockers for diversity in hospitality, travel and leisure?

Meritocracy is great in our industry, but it hasn't necessarily led to enough diversity – senior leadership is oversaturated with a specific type of extroverted, driven operator. While that skillset is essential, it's too narrow and we haven't valued other strengths, experiences.

“ Good leaders create followers, great leaders create leaders

### Who has inspired you in your career?

Though I've worked with many brilliant leaders, from the charismatic to the strategist, my parents and uncle have inspired me the most.

My Mum and Dad ran a small hair and beauty shop and they taught me the things we often forget when we run a big business. Look after and know your customers, treat your team like family, know your product inside out, and never miss an opportunity to sell an extra item.

My Uncle Alec survived two ghettos, three slave labour camps and two concentration camps. His whole family were murdered in Treblinka. Despite that he taught me never to hate, always love, always be positive, the impossible is possible and always find time to tell a joke!! My hero!!!



# Debbie Hewitt MBE

Non-Executive Chairman,  
The Restaurant Group plc

I joined Marks & Spencer as a management trainee, which taught me the 'nuts and bolts' of retail and a lot about managing large teams of people. It gave me the itch to run something, where I had full accountability for a P&L and balance sheet. I joined the car services group Lex because they promised to sponsor me on an MBA, and I had a variety of roles including car sales and General Manager of a car dealership. When the company bought the RAC, I eventually became its CEO. From here, I did a buy-out of one of RAC's smaller businesses, HPI, where I got a flavour for both working with private equity and being a chairman, at a time when 'plural' careers were far from fashionable. I was told by many that it was madness to leave my executive career, but I felt it was now or never. Since then, I've sat on numerous boards covering 11 different sectors, and all of them have had a strong and direct consumer focus.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I worked my way from the sales floor to lead a big organisation, in a sector largely perceived as a "man's world", so I'm passionate

“ The tried-and-tested approach only reinforces homogenous thinking

about getting more diverse thinking around the table. Whilst I've never felt constrained by being a woman in a man's world, I have felt prejudice for having too little experience, like when I was trying to get my first man management role. Everyone needs a first chance – and needs someone to take that risk on them and in my experience, a tried-and-tested approach only reinforces homogenous thinking.

### What are the barriers to diverse leadership?

Though society is becoming more open-minded about how it thinks about talent, we can't change the fact that 'a woman's place' is a cultural inheritance from centuries of women being the home maker – it takes generations to change that. Many people are unaware of the prejudices they hold, and it is often unconscious bias that causes blockages, so despite good intentions, the behaviour is not always helpful to building diverse and inclusive teams.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

With ambition, determination and resilience, anything is possible! There are so many role models who prove this. Hospitality lends itself to taking people on a development journey, nothing can stop you if you have that drive and determination. Now is our moment – lockdown felt like

a coming-of-age, when people realised just how much our industry contributes to society.

### Who has inspired you in your career, and what impact has that had on you?

My mother worked full time when I was young. It was highly unusual for women to contribute anything financially then, let alone to be the major breadwinner. Her drive, determination and can-do spirit inspired me – no one told me girls don't have careers! Professionally, Sir Marcus Sieff, the late former chairman of M&S, instilled an absolute belief in the customer, and I have enormous gratitude for Sir Trevor Chinn's mantra of taking a risk on people with those initial opportunities.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion?

It's never mattered more. The pandemic has been a shockwave. We can't underestimate the hidden cost of lockdown on schoolchildren from low-income families, who simply don't have the access to technology and development that so many of us take for granted. My fear is we are widening the gap between the haves and have nots and we risk leaving a generation behind. Those organisations who make diversity and Inclusion part of their DNA will win the race for talent.



# Penny Hughes CBE

Chairwoman, The Gym Group

During my early days at Coca-Cola, the business understood cultural differences at such a deep level that I didn't even register being the first female VP – President of UK & Ireland – at 33 was something to celebrate.

Our first son arrived in 1995 and I chose to build up my non-executive portfolio; I have served on boards of consumer and retail brands, media, technology and banking. My first NED role was at The Body Shop, I learnt from the inspirational founder Anita Roddick, the creator of Profit with Principles. I recall planting banana trees in Kathmandu for sustainable gift wrapping and practicing what trade not aid really means. Today at The Gym Group, I've used my experience and passion for diversity and inclusion to propel us forward even in uncertain times – I haven't been willing to accept that D&I should take a step back.

When I look back over my career, there are moments

of understanding and respecting differences that have created harmony and value that I have been inspired to recreate ever since.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

At The Gap, everything revolved around celebrating individuality and self-esteem, which teaches you so much about respect. When you set a company on a mission towards changing values and greater diversity, as we did at RBS, you change the whole culture to refocus on the customer and employee brand. Being inclusive allows everyone to reach their potential.

### What does great leadership look like to you, and what have been the most difficult examples of resistance you've had to tackle?

It's about being confident and clear of the way ahead without an ego, so you can share your success while gathering the contributions

of those with different perspectives and strengths than you.

It's frustrating that those who provide capital largely still take diversity as a tick box exercise. Female role models are important but so too successful male advocates for change.

### What interventions have you made that you think have made the biggest difference?

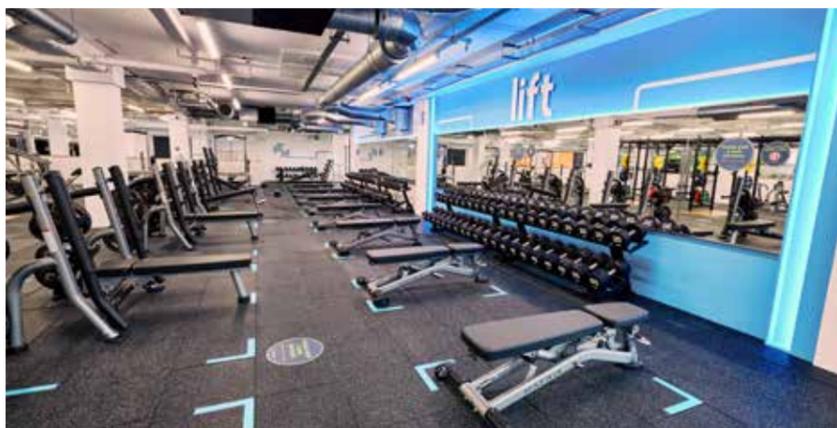
Provisions around childcare are critical. I'm a huge advocate of businesses going out of their way to support younger women so they can achieve both professional and personal successes. At SEB bank in Sweden, our female CEO had children while in the role, so with empathetic leadership it can be done! I also love reverse mentoring, so much still to learn.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the leisure sector?

Find out what you love doing so you'll be as good as you can be. Find the work-life fit that enables you to give your best.

### Who has inspired you in your career?

From Anita Roddick, an extraordinary campaigner, who opened my eyes to doing things differently before this agenda gained traction to Philip Hampton, whose legacy – the Hampton Alexander review – keeps setting the pace for women today.



# Nick Mackenzie

Chief Executive Officer, Greene King

I've gone from bottom to top in hospitality – I love that it's an industry where you can go all the way. While I've never strayed from HTL, I have worked in multiple parts of the sector. I spent time at Bass and Allied Domecq, before moving into Burger King as Development Director. In 2002 I joined the then Tussauds Group as Property and Business services director before we were acquired by Merlin five years later and I moved into operational and MD roles on the Executive Board. In 2019, after four years as MD for Midway Attractions looking after brands like Madame Tussauds and Sea Life globally, I returned to my roots in pubs as Greene King CEO.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

Every team in a business needs a broad set of perspectives. I've spent time in environments with no diversity of gender, sexuality, race, or background, and it's not an environment I like working in. A range of individuals leads to the best decisions, not only for the business but also for customers. People come to work to be inspired to be the best versions of themselves, so as a CEO it's my obligation to make the company facilitate this. Since I became CEO at Greene King, we've made great progress on promoting and hiring female leaders – of my Exec directors, I am very proud that

four are now female, one of whom is from an ethnic background.

### What barriers to diversity have you noticed in your sector?

Pubs are such a British institution, so our talent pool is naturally limited. People tend to stay in the industry for a long time, too – it was entirely male-dominated when I joined the sector 20 years ago, and many of those leaders are still in roles today. When I joined Greene King, I was shocked to see how little ethnic diversity there was among our senior management team. With no leaders in our business telling us what it's like to be a Black, Asian or minority ethnic person in a pub, how can we know how to improve the experience for those customers? I've sat in on listening groups this year which have challenged me more than I ever have been before, which is extremely powerful. We had started on a journey to improve race diversity in the business but recent events around our founder's involvement in the slave trade inspired me into taking more urgent and direct action, so we're partnering with external organisations to educate us and build a sustainable strategy for improving race diversity and inclusion. This focus on race is so important, and we now have regular steering committee calls – but this journey hasn't been easy, nor universally popular.



That being said, we've still got a long way to go – and I want to be measured on how we have moved the dial on diversity over my tenure as CEO.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

You can start five hours a week clearing beer glasses and go all the way up: leadership roles don't require a degree from an elite university, as it's all about connecting with customers. Jump right in, but set your sights high – you have the power to make a difference.

### Who has inspired you in your career? What impact has that had on you?

Nick Varney, my former CEO at Merlin, has extremely high levels of integrity, which rubbed off on me. I've tried to fuse this with other leaders who have taught me about the importance of having clear Purpose and values in a business – I try to apply them both in pursuing the D&I agenda.



# Patricia Page-Champion

Senior Vice President & Global Commercial Director, Hilton

I started my career in hospitality 30 years ago, and recently celebrated my 20th anniversary at Hilton. I took a traditional route into hospitality, attending hotel school before embarking upon a graduate programme. In the early days of my career, I transitioned through pretty much every role within a hotel. My goal was to become a General Manager – a position I was offered the day after I found out I was pregnant. At the time, flexible working in this field was unheard of and ultimately, I turned the job down for that reason. It was a difficult decision but a career-changing moment. I switched paths into revenue management, and realised it is possible to work flexibly in hospitality.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

This stems from my own experiences and the support I received from Hilton during the early days of my career.

After maternity leave, I had a computer installed at home so I could work remotely. Although this gave me more flexibility, my employer at the time only paid me for the hours I physically spent in the hotel. Hours of homeworking went unacknowledged. So that's when I moved to Hilton, a company willing to truly consider flexible working, which was not the norm in 2000.

I now have the privilege of being in a position to influence, and I feel passionately that it is now my role to empower talent from all walks of life to reach their career goals too. It's absolutely crucial that we help people to see beyond the barriers they perceive to be blocking their development.

### What does great leadership look like to you?

Always standing up for what's right and against what's not. This means eradicating unconscious biases – even the seemingly small and trivial things. As a woman, I have been asked to take the minutes in meetings countless times, and I didn't realise it was a problem until someone stood up for me. A leader should advocate for those who can't use their voice.

### What interventions have you made that you think have made the biggest difference?

I lead our global Women's Team Member Resource Group, which champions our incredible female talent, bringing people together to promote discussion and inspire women to reach their goals. A huge part of our success can be attributed to opening up the conversation – this isn't just for women; it's about bringing everyone along. At our latest regional event, we had the biggest turnout of male Team Members and leaders we've ever seen.

Everyone sees the value in being part of the discussion and really focussing on getting the balance right.

We need to educate ourselves in order to change, so we've also launched a series called Courageous Conversations to help colleagues open up the dialogue and become allies in our journey.

### Who has inspired you in your career?

Kristen Campbell – our EVP and General Counsel – is an unbelievable inspiration to me. She's offered brilliant advice and advocated for me throughout my journey to SVP. She has a gift for getting the best from people and inspiring them.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion?

Reports state that women and particularly people from ethnic minorities have been "double-jobbing" throughout the crisis, balancing jobs and taking on the majority of work in the home. While many people have reported being more efficient, we must make sure it's not at the expense of that precious time spent with families and that we don't lose key talent from the industry. Now more than ever this is critical for the ongoing health and success of the business.



# Paul Pomroy

Chief Executive Officer, McDonald's UK and Ireland

Some people believe your real career starts at 21, but I started learning when I was working part-time in Sainsbury's as a student. That's where an insightful manager taught me about customer care for the first time. Fast forward a few years, and I trained as an accountant before embarking on my McDonald's journey as a real estate analyst. That was 24 years ago, and I've since taken on a variety of roles across the business, from business strategy to commercial finance, before becoming CFO in 2012. My career has been shaped by inspiring people who've seen something in me and given me a chance, so as CEO – a position I took up in 2015 – I look to provide a fair culture to seek out that same raw talent in people from every background.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

My mum taught me to treat people how you want to be treated, so if you don't have leaders who are women or black or from ethnic minorities or LGBTQ+, something has gone wrong in your culture. We have 1,400 restaurants all over the country, and serve millions of people per day – so we need to ensure that our teams across the whole business represent the diversity of the communities in which we operate, our customers and our restaurant teams.



### What interventions have you made that you think have made the biggest difference?

We weren't sure whether setting up a target-driven women's leadership network was the right thing to do. Since 2015, however, the network has become the single most effective mechanism for catapulting gender diversity. We've just set up an inclusion network, which puts me and our 11 self-nominated colleagues in direct contact. I want to understand every individual's unique battles, lived experiences and perspectives in order for us to find the right solutions as a business.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

Be curious at every stage of your career and truly listen to customers. Feedback is a gift! I set myself a target to be 20% better every year so I can review what I've done well on, freeing up space to honestly work through my areas for improvement.

### Who has inspired you in your career? What impact has that had on you?

As a trainee accountant, one manager – Henry Shinner – had an interesting perspective on psychology; he could communicate to diffuse any kind of situation. Externally, I lean on my coach Annette Court. She's a respectful critic; the conscience I need to bounce ideas off.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion?

We couldn't have survived this without the incredible team across the whole McDonald's system – from farmers and suppliers to franchisees, our restaurant teams and company employees. It has made me especially proud when our restaurant staff feedback that they feel looked after. I've upped our D&I budget – it's time to see what we can achieve in the right way.



# Sumati Sharma

Founder & Co-Chair, Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter

I went to university at 16 to study manufacturing engineering and accountancy, and at 18 got hired by EY on a whirlwind immersion weekend! I trained as a Chartered Accountant, which was a fantastic training ground – the data-led approach I bring to work to this day arose from those structured foundations. I joined Virgin straight from EY as I was passionate about travel, spending 10 years at Virgin Holidays before rising to take on a range of VP roles, from strategy to financial planning, at Virgin Atlantic. Most recently, I returned to my roots as VP Product & Commercial at Holidays, balancing my role with my passion – helping women move up in the industry, in which they are so underrepresented. It hit me as I was heading up a project to create the largest joint airline venture across the world: why, in negotiation meetings of 25 people, was I the only woman

in the room? I was inspired to co-found the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter in July 2018, and we've since risen from 40 to 217 signatories – and counting! Only 5% of pilots and 3% of airline CEOs are women globally, so we've published a pledge for what companies can do to move the dial.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

We need to unleash the potential of the world's greatest minds, irrespective of gender, race or background.

### What does great leadership look like to you?

A great leader is open and has a clear vision, and includes all people on that journey to design and deliver that vision. It's the combination of inclusion & collaboration with strategy that makes the magic happen.

### What are the biggest barriers to driving the D&I agenda forward?

It feels like there is a lot of talk around gender and race, but we must help translate those words into action. We have released excellent research after surveying 1,500+ on tangible actions that can be taken to drive gender balance. I'm driven by the numbers, so I welcomed mandatory gender pay gap reporting in 2017: for the first time, we could see where we were and begin to measure over time whether our actions work in an objective manner.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the travel sector?

Current rough patch aside, the travel industry is wonderful and evokes such passion in so many. Make sure you move around the functions – I became a stronger and more rounded senior leader by diversifying from finance to strategy then commercial and HR.

### Who has inspired you in your career?

My cousin was one of the first Indian female Chartered Accountants in England, which left a deep impression on me as a child. More recently, Kamala Harris is an inspiration as the first female Vice President, and a woman of colour. You can't be what you can't see, so I'm passionate about a world where these cases aren't the 'Onlys' - they become the norm!



# Lynne Weedall

Non-Executive Director, William Hill; Greene King

I started my career in supermarket retail before moving into the leisure space in 1999. That was when I joined Whitbread as Group Organisation Development Director, leading our transformation before I moved onto BUPA. I returned to my roots in retail for the next decade or so, taking on group HR director roles at Dixons Carphone and Selfridges, before 'going plural' last year. That's given me the opportunity to get my teeth back into hospitality and leisure: I have been on the board of Greene King since 2012 until the business was sold – and still continue to advise them, and last year I became a Non-Executive Director at William Hill – and more recently, Stagecoach.

### Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I passionately believe that you can't leave untapped potential out on the table. I abhor groupthink and the damage it does to

businesses – my philosophy lies in speaking truth to power, and nothing good can come out of a leadership team without diversity underpinning it. We need to do everything we can to bring different perspectives, backgrounds and challenges into the mix. Humans have a natural tendency to cling to what – and who – we know, so to invite people in who don't look like you requires you to let go some of the ideas you might hold dearly. It's no mean feat, but we can't get to new 'whats' through old 'hows'.

### What advice would you give someone thinking of starting a career in the HTL sector?

David Malpas, former deputy chairman at Tesco, gave me the best advice I have ever received: "whatever you do, do something". Make your mark; give it a go; learn from it, and go again. Get to know yourself and don't shy away from your own ideas – it's an important pattern to get into.

“ I passionately believe that you can't leave untapped potential out on the table

### Who has inspired you in your career? What impact has that had on you?

Charles Dunston, founder of Carphone Warehouse, is a real inspiration – his vision pushes him to disrupt the status quo and to see round corners. Alannah Weston, Chairwoman of Selfridges Group, is another who has real conviction in her vision and beliefs. Sustainability was on her radar before anyone else's, so her work on this topic has always been exceptional and brave.

### What has your experience of the coronavirus pandemic taught you about diversity and inclusion?

We've all had to take stock and rethink what really matters. I'm cautiously optimistic: we've turned our old assumptions about flexible and home working on their head. Supplement that with the groundswell of emotion around the Black Lives Matter movement, and we have a collision of factors standing up in the face of inequality. Accepting that we're not in control, and that the impossible is possible, is freeing.



# About Us

## About WiHTL

WiHTL is the most impactful collaboration community of leaders across the hospitality, travel and leisure sector and is devoted to increasing women's and ethnic minorities' representation at all levels, and in particular in leadership positions. Our mission is to make a positive difference to 5 million women and people from ethnic minorities across the hospitality, travel and leisure industry globally by 2025. For more information, please visit [www.wihtl.com/home](http://www.wihtl.com/home)

## About The MBS Group

For more than 30 years, The MBS Group has been a leading sector-specialist executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries, with a particular focus in the hospitality, travel and leisure industry. Clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles that make a difference. We work at board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance. For more information, visit [www.thembgroup.co.uk](http://www.thembgroup.co.uk)

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