

# Women to Watch and Role Models for Inclusion in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure Index

The 2021 Edition from WiHTL and The MBS Group



# Foreword

The pandemic has provided a painful reminder of how the world as we know it can change in an unexpected way. It was evident from the early stages of the health crisis that women were disproportionately affected. At almost every level of leadership we have experienced a decrease in the number of women employed. Difficulty accessing childcare and pandemic-related disruption to schooling has seen many women hesitating to return to the workplace. Against this background, it is more important than ever to galvanise D&I strategies to attract female talent back and achieve the proven business benefits of a diverse and gender-balanced work environment. It is also time to celebrate the fantastic female talent across the Hospitality, Travel and Leisure industry as well as a selection of individuals who are models for inclusion in its broadest sense.

I am delighted to launch the 2021 Edition of the Women to Watch and Role Models for Inclusion in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure (HTL) Index. This year's edition of the Index, the third, showcases the breadth and depth of talent among our female colleagues. The Index highlights the profiles of women distinguished for their commercial and operational excellence, industry and social impact, achievements, resilience and commitment to the industry. Our aim is to inspire other women to join and progress within this vibrant, resilient and energising industry and

discover through lived experiences how to navigate the many opportunities for career progression in HTL.

In addition to the Index, this year we have identified a group of inspirational Role Models for Inclusion – leaders who passionately advocate a culture of inclusion and belonging within their organisations. These Role Models proactively champion diversity and inclusion through promoting D&I initiatives, creating networks and by engaging in executive sponsorship. It is by shining the spotlight on such inspirational leaders that both career and personal aspirations are created.

This 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 team at The MBS Group and have been included on the basis of rigorous criteria. I am immensely grateful to Elliott Goldstein, Sam Seigler and all at The MBS Group for their unwavering commitment and dedication to highlighting the profiles of these extraordinary people.



**Tea Colaianni**  
Founder and Chair  
WiHTL

# Introduction

In 2019, The MBS Group and WiHTL set out to dispel the myth that the hospitality, travel and leisure sector was lacking in female role models. Since that time, we have produced three editions of the Women to Watch in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index, highlighting more than 250 inspiring women who are forging exciting careers in the sector.

It has been a privilege to create these indexes every year, and to hear the stories and insights from such a diverse range of women. Most of all, we have continued to prove that there are dozens of role models in the sector, who can act as examples for anyone looking to enter or progress within hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL).

Since we began this project, we've seen a growing need for role models. It is no secret that the HTL sector was disproportionately impacted by the economic effect of Covid-19, and companies in our sector are still in the process of recovery. As part of this, some diversity and inclusion efforts were put on the backburner, and many women and those from ethnic minorities left their roles, either as part of redundancy packages or to seek positions in a less turbulent sector. Over the past two years, The MBS Group and WiHTL have been mitigating against the negative impact of Covid-19 in the sector, by celebrating the sector's successes, providing practical toolkits for hiring for diversity and continuing to highlight the large number of inspiring female role models who are proving what's possible for women in the sector.

As always, this index is not a list of the 'top' women in the sector, and nor is

it exhaustive. Instead, we have aimed to highlight the depth and breadth of female role models – hearing stories from everyone from restaurant chefs and airline captains to chief operations officers.

On top of this, in this edition and last year's, it's been fantastic to feature Advocates for Change and Role Models for Inclusion – senior leaders who are driving change in their organisation and community. In an industry still very much in recovery from Covid-19 and facing significant recruitment and supply chain challenges, it is more important than ever that D&I is prioritised at the top levels of a business. As part of this project, it has been a real pleasure to speak with some of the senior leaders in our sector who are leading by example, by spearheading and sponsoring initiatives designed to promote diversity, taking an active role in fostering an inclusive culture in their organisation and using their influence to create lasting, positive change.

I would like to thank Tea Colaianni, Joanna Aunon and the team at WiHTL, who play such an integral role in driving inclusion with the HTL industry. I'd also like to acknowledge my colleagues at The MBS Group for their hard work in bringing this publication together.



**Sam Seigler**

Director, Hospitality,  
Travel and Leisure  
The MBS Group

# Reflecting on the power of Women to Watch

This is the third edition of the Women to Watch Index, produced by WiHTL and The MBS Group. Each year it has been a privilege to highlight the depth and breadth of female talent in the hospitality, travel and leisure sector, as well as to celebrate leaders who are actively advocating change in their organisations and in their communities.

This publication was originally put together to dispel the myth that there are few women role models in the sector. Over the past three years, we are delighted to have featured more than 250 inspiring women, sharing their stories and unearthing invaluable insights on their careers in the industry.

“Successful businesses will operate with diversity and inclusion at their heart. This list is an inspiring read, showing the ambition of so many female leaders who are pushing for a fair and inclusive future in our industry”  
– Catherine Roe, CEO Elior UK (2020)

It has been humbling to hear about the impact that these publications have had. From spurring young people on to enter the sector to provoking critical conversations about the importance of diversity, we hope – and believe – that these reports have played at least some small part in driving lasting positive change in the sector. Most of all, the success of Women to Watch speaks to the power of role models.

## The power of role models

Role models play an enormous part in shaping careers, particularly for female and diverse candidates.

As Yasmin Brant, a Role Model for Inclusion in this report and a part of WiHTL's Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, said at this summer's Festival of Inclusion: "Role models are incredibly important. If you come from an underrepresented group, being able to see someone you can relate to in a senior position can have a powerful impact. That visibility can have a widespread effect and bring about lasting cultural change."

While the publications have always been valuable, Women to Watch and Role Models for Inclusion feels even more pertinent in the wake of Covid-19.

We know, from previous research from WiHTL and The MBS Group, that women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to be negatively impacted by the economic effect of Covid-19 than their male and white counterparts. Analysis undertaken in 2020 found that these groups were more likely to be put on furlough or made redundant, and that women in particular were more likely to accept voluntary redundancy. And as the sector has recovered over the past year, D&I may have slipped down the corporate agenda.

With this in mind, it is more important than ever to celebrate the inspiring women who work in this exciting sector, and to highlight hospitality, travel and leisure as an inclusive, creative and forward-thinking place to pursue a career.

“It is fantastic that there are more role models today than there have been in years... but we must not lose focus”  
– Keith Barr, CEO at IHG (2020)

After two years of this project, it is a particular privilege to see the women we have highlighted progress through the industry. We've seen numerous examples of previously-featured women taking on additional responsibilities, joining executive committees, broadening their geographical scope and assuming roles which shape the entire sector.



**Lisa Gibbons**, for example, has taken up a c-suite role within her organisation since being featured in 2019. Lisa was originally included in Women to Watch as Brand Director, Bella Italia. In November 2021, she was appointed as Chief Operating Officer at The Big Table Group.



**Clare Hunt**, who we highlighted in 2019 as Group Director of Strategy and M&A at Compass Group has since taken on additional responsibilities as Global CEO of the Compass Food+ division.



**Suzanne Peacock** has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer at Fridays since her inclusion in 2020, when she was People and Culture Director.



**Elizabeth Hogg**, highlighted in the 2019 edition of the report, has joined Holiday Extras as COO, moving from No. 1 Lounges where she was CFO.



**Pauline Wilson** also traversed the sector, having recently been appointed as VP, Operations, EMEA at Hilton Hotels. We featured Pauline in last year's report, when she was VP, Holidays at Virgin Atlantic Airways.



Many previously-featured women have driven progress for others since being highlighted in Women to Watch. **Beth Anderson**, for example, who had recently been appointed as People Director at Revolution Bars Group when she was included in 2020, has become a powerful advocate and change agent for the D&I agenda. Recognised by her CEO for her efforts, Beth works alongside diversity experts to help move the dial in her organisation – 'ensuring no one in the business feels excluded' – and across the wider industry.

“It's so important that women can look around our industry and see other women like them, and know that they can aspire to senior roles”  
– Dominic Blakemore, CEO at Compass Group (2019)

While it is vital to celebrate the successes we've seen in the sector, it is also important to reflect on those who have left hospitality, travel and leisure. A number of the senior leaders highlighted in previous reports have left the sector in the past two years to take up promotions in other industries, such as retail. HTL is undeniably an inclusive sector where anyone can succeed, but these exits provide a much-needed reminder that businesses must work to ensure that sector remains attractive to women, and to retain our female role models.

## Catching up with Ann-marie Murphy



**Ann-marie Murphy**  
Chief People & Operations Officer  
The Gym Group

We first featured Ann-marie in 2019 as Director, People and Development at The Gym Group. Since that time she has taken additional responsibility as Chief Operations Officer.

### What, to you, is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

There is never a dull moment; there are always new challenges and opportunities which makes it exciting. It is not staid, there is no inertia. If you are a person that is always up for new challenges, it really is the perfect place to be.

### How have you seen the D&I agenda develop during your time working in HTL?

I can really see how things have evolved in terms of the customer agenda, increasingly we are a customer (member) driven business with a firm focus that our Gyms are places that everyone (members and employees) feel comfortable and can be themselves.

### What impact has Covid-19 had on gender diversity in the sector?

I believe the pandemic, with all the challenges it created, has given women the opportunity to show what they can deliver. It has highlighted women as having a great understanding of people and human dynamics, as well as being fantastic communicators, adept in managing uncertainty. It has given many of us the confidence to step forward. Myself included.

# 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 forward-thinking leadership, their genuine commercial impact, their track

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



# Koula Achillea

Company **Oakman Group** / Job Title **Finance Director**



I went to Aston University in Birmingham and studied Accounting for Business. It was a fantastic degree, with a finance placement year at Marks & Spencer. I then joined Tesco's Finance graduate scheme before qualifying as an accountant there. Working in FMCG gave

me a strong grounding, and helped me to get through my exams quickly, however I wanted to be part of a business where I felt that I could influence it more. I then joined Warner Leisure Hotels, part of the Bourne Leisure Group, and this was my first role in hospitality. I never turned back, hospitality is where my heart is, and from there I became Finance Director for Butlins. I worked for a luxury hotel chain for a short while and then joined the Oakman Group almost two years ago. That's 15 happy years in hospitality!

**If you were not working within the HTL sector, where do you think you would be?**

I would have my own little coffee shop where I'd bake cakes and treats and be part of the local community. That's still hospitality, isn't it?! Just shows how much I love it!

**How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?**

I'm always interested in engaging with women, both from work, ex-colleagues and from my wider network. I have a lot of experiences and stories and I'm always happy to share, listen and coach women in the hope that it might provide some guidance and support.

I try to increase awareness within the workplace of the emotional and physical challenges which many women face when starting a family and

encourage communication around this.

I am big believer that diverse teams achieve higher levels of success, and I am proud my own team is diverse. The more diversity you have then the more views and opinions you have that are representative of our customers, which ultimately leads to better decision making.

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

Find and embrace your superpower. Everyone has at least one, and it is often what makes you special and unique. It is sometimes easy to feel like you need to blend in and be more like everyone else, but understanding your superpower, being authentic and bringing that to the table is a lot more powerful. You be you!



**Why do you think role models are so important in the workforce?**

I was fortunate enough to have a hugely influential role model throughout my career. She is a true growth leader, whose way of working and ability to engage the team and

win hearts and minds was inspirational.

A role model provides hope, and belief in a better way forward. They demonstrate the right behaviour, by walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

## QUICKFIRE

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

I'd say Jane Bentall.

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

To listen, you don't need

to feel like you have to have all the answers all the time. Sometimes asking the right questions is more important.

**My favourite book**

*The Twits* by Roald Dahl.



# Amy Alexander

Company **Greene King** / Job Title **Business Development Manager**



I graduated in 2015 from Queen Mary University where I studied Law and Politics. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do after that, so I began working in pubs before I went travelling. The pub happened to be an M&B pub, and I was asked to apply for their operations corporate graduate scheme.

I went for it and really liked how generalist the role and industry were. I gained a full 360 of the business and loved the ability to wear 10 different hats a day as an operator.

I then moved to Greene King in 2020. I was seeing a real cultural change programme going on there and really wanted to be a part of it. I am the Business Development Manager for London West End. It's a high-volume and fast paced area, which suits me perfectly.

**If you weren't working in HTL where do you think you would be?**

I think I'd probably be a Corporate Social Responsibility Manager. I'm doing a CSR masters part time currently, and I really enjoy marrying up the principles of profitable business and being a force for good in the community. I think it's the key to long term survival.

**How would you say you're an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and within your organisation?**

I think I am an advocate because of who I am – a young woman in a typically male-dominated field, but also by the choices I make. Typically, those who work in operations have years of experience. I don't. I believe I'm one of the youngest Area Managers in Greene King, but I make that my USP not my

failing by challenging the status quo and thinking differently.

Greene King has gone through a real cultural change and is more people-focussed than ever. It's a joy to be a part of. Our mission statement to "pour happiness into people's lives" really resonates with me and really connects the everyday with a higher purpose.

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

Hospitality is a completely legitimate, challenging, fulfilling and academic career choice – don't let anyone tell you otherwise! Graduates don't often think about it when they are doing their career planning, but I count my lucky stars I ended up where I am now, all thanks to taking that job in the local pub.

## QUICKFIRE

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

"I wish there was a way to know you were in the good old days before you actually left them" Andy Bernard – The US Office.

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

Authenticity, honesty, kindness.

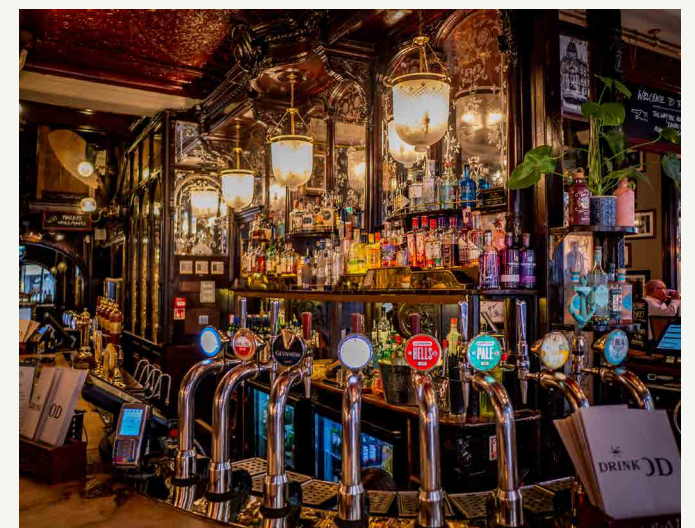
**Who is your role model in the industry?**

My MD Karen Boshier is an amazing role model for women in leadership in all sectors.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance diversity and inclusion?**

Role models give you access to a real-life example of what to do and how to be. I've always benefited from having a mentor, rather than having someone that I can emulate. I think it's important to have someone that brings out the best in you.

My biggest advice is to find a mentor that demonstrates the right behaviours, rather than the most successful person you know.





# Rose Ashby

Company **Spring Restaurant** / Job Title **Executive Chef**



**M**y great-grandmother right down to my own mother have all owned restaurants, so hospitality is very much in my bloodline. Cooking wasn't my initial choice but one day something just clicked, and I fell in love with it. I trained at

Leiths and then got my first job at a catering company called Absolute Taste. One of my lasting introductory chef memories was the enormous mountain of onions in the kitchen with my name on it!

I went on to roles at Petersham Nurseries, Formula One and did some private chef work too, all the while becoming accustomed to the long hours and fast pace but being lucky to learn firsthand from incredible chefs such as Skye Gyngell and Greg Malouf.

A chef de partie role at Spring came up 7 years go and since then I have worked my way up to Executive Chef.



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

If you want to move up quickly go alone. If you want to go a long way then go together. Loyalty pays off in the end.

## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and mean in your organisation?

Spring has always achieved a gender-balanced workforce, which is perhaps due to Skye Gyngell's female influence. Spring really believes in the importance of creating an environment where people feel comfortable, whether that be in your sexuality, in your own skin or in your beliefs. We are an inclusive environment and that helps our staff flourish and thrive.

## What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

I've always considered hospitality as the breaking of bread with others. And to me that is one

of the most magical and important experiences of life. You can share it with your family, your friends, or strangers, or anyone. The fact that I get to do that for a living is my biggest motivator.

## How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector? How do you think it will change in the future?

Looking at Spring specifically I have noticed that the reasons people dine with us are always changing. It's evolved from people coming because they know of Skye, to people coming because we're plastic free and zero-waste. It shows our message is reaching people and that the industry is always innovating. I can see the positive trends continuing, and kitchens becoming more welcoming and diverse, resulting in positive change for the industry in the future.

# Maria Ashton

Company **Accor** / Job Title **Vice President – Head of Luxury Development, Northern Europe**



**M**y dad worked in a Holiday Inn when I was younger, so hotels were a huge part of my upbringing and after graduating, I was lucky to be able to get a role at Hyatt Hotels in their headquarters.

After 4 years I found myself wanting to have a new challenge and to explore more of the world. Through Hyatt Hotels, I was able to move to Switzerland so I set off to explore a new opportunity, and world.

Covid certainly played a part in the course of my career and is part of the reason I landed my dream job at Accor where I am responsible for the development of our luxury brands throughout Northern Europe.

## What is the most rewarding thing about working in HTL?

Interacting with a wide variety of inspiring people throughout your career. From hotel architects & designers to the housekeepers and managers, there is a huge variety of people with different skills and passions. I believe HTL is particularly recognisable for its vast range of talent.

## How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda change in your time at HTL?

It's a very big focus. Junior roles have always been more diverse than the more senior roles, but the commitment and focus on making that shift is certainly apparent.

## What are the biggest lessons you have learnt in your career?

When I worked in Paris, I learnt how important it is to listen to people. I learned to observe, and to ensure trust and high levels of communication amongst my peers.

We're working with so many different cultures in the hospitality industry, and you must be cognisant of, and aim to understand, different cultural approaches.

## Why do you think more people should consider a career in HTL?

It is genuinely a great industry, and there is so much passion and enthusiasm within. It is impossible to be bored here as there are so many sub-sectors and different working opportunities.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"The decisions you make now dictate the way you live later" – unknown.

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

Honesty, drive, humility and compassion.

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

I am lucky I get to work for mine – Sébastien Bazin.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The Importance of Being Interested* by Robin Ince.





# Penny Baldwin

Company **Metropolitan Pub Company and Loch Fyne Restaurants (Greene King)** / Job Title **Head of Commercial**



I have worked in hospitality from the age of 14, throughout my GCSEs, A-Levels, foundation degree and BA (Hons) degree – in Graphic and Media Design. I started as a runner, progressing to full-time management in one of the restaurants while I was doing my degree. It's

safe to say that I fell in love with the industry, the people, the atmosphere, and the 24-7 nature. In my final term at university, I combined my love for the industry and skillset in arts and advertising and secured a position as Marketing Exec for Loch Fyne Restaurants who I had worked for the prior 6 years.

I really enjoyed my marketing roles, being part of shaping the entire customer experience and the focus and transition into a more digital era. However, in recent years I found commercial, finance and property really begun to intrigue me and provide the challenge I was yearning for.

The majority of my career has been at Greene King. Not because of a lack of ambition – far from it – but because of the sheer scale of the business and the development opportunities here. My journey has taken me from being a runner in one of the restaurants to being the Head of Commercial for the growing Metropolitan Pub Company and Loch Fyne Restaurants divisions. I am continuously learning from intelligent, passionate, and talented people – which I love.

## QUICKFIRE

**What film that has influenced you the most?**

Damien Chazelle's Whiplash.

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

They must be passionate, honest, inspirational, confident and a good listener.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Whitney Wolfe Herd – the

CEO of Bumble – what a journey she has had.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

Amazon opening their first till-less grocery store. I find the advance of automation in response to rising wage rates, a shortage of labour and increasing consumer acceptance of digital processes interesting.



**What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?**

No two days are ever the same, it's all about the people and being in a customer centric business that continuously evolves.

**What do you hope HTL might look like in five years' time?**

The hospitality sector is an innovative and dynamic place, I am sure it will look different to how it does today. Covid has shaped the industry in an unprecedented way, which will make a difference to what it looks like in the future, but it's up to us to learn from Covid, and to ensure that change is positive.



**What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress within the sector?**

The company has fantastic Diversity and Inclusion programmes and is closely affiliated with WiHTL, which means women here feel like they have a solid support framework.

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

Be yourself, be good at what you do and never lose confidence in your abilities.

# Alyson Benjamin

Company **RCI (subsidiary of Travel + Leisure Co.)** / Job Title **VP, Member Sales and Services – APAC, India and EMEA**



After completing my Accountancy degree and Articles at Deloitte, I began my RCI (a division of Travel + Leisure Co.) journey as a Financial Accountant in 1994. I was promoted to Finance Manager, then Compliance Manager

and later became Finance Director for RCI South Africa. I was fortunate to take a sabbatical midway through my career to spend quality time with my young family before re-joining RCI fifteen months later. For the past five years, I've taken on commercial roles. Today I am overall responsible for the RCI South Africa business, and I oversee RCI's contact centre operations across EMEA, India and Asia Pacific. I never imagined that I would stay with one company for 25 years, but there has never been a time when I have not been challenged to grow; plus working in the HTL industry is in my blood!

**If you were not working in HTL, where would you be?**

My Accountancy teacher told me that if I planned to earn my living as an accountant, I should rethink those plans. If I had listened to her back then, I would have been a lawyer instead. I can see myself saying, "I put it to you...."!

**How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?**

It's human nature to underestimate our own abilities. We all need that one person who believes in us and who will either create opportunities for us to grow, or will tell us when one is staring us in the face. One of our gifts as leaders is the ability to "lift as we rise". I try to do that. I love to share my own journey with my team and to encourage them to

tell their stories too. It is in these conversations that we become mindful of our own and each other's strengths. Good leadership is about how we make each other feel within our organisation. If I can make my team at Travel + Leisure Co feel safe, then they become fearless, courageous, and innovative and then they grow!

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

Say "yes" to the opportunities that scare you the most for it is through these that you will grow. Do not be your harshest critic; there are plenty of people who will do that for you, so be kind to yourself and then be kind to others. You will always catch more bees with honey!



## QUICKFIRE

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

Start With Why by Simon Sinek.

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

I don't have a single role model. Instead, I draw inspiration from good people across all walks of life. I'm most inspired by people who are authentic and by leaders who put their people first.

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

Gratitude; being self-aware of how much influence one has; authenticity and the ability to show vulnerability.

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

There are more Lego mini-figures than there are people on Earth.

We're in the business of making memories and that's powerful! Have fun and travel when you can. We need to be our own advocates in HTL.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance D&I?**

We are all on a journey of self-discovery where our potential is limited by what we know to be true. Role models show us what can lie beyond our own truth. We emulate them and we are emboldened by their stories. Those who have a



role model have a way to unlock their own potential. D&I is advanced when women and people from ethnic minorities are able to own their own journeys.



# Helen Brittain

Company **Genting Casinos UK** / Job Title **Chief Information Officer**



I've had a fairly unusual journey through my career. I started as an accountant in the utilities sector, before kicking off my career in HTL at Mitchells & Butlers (or Bass Leisure as it was then).

I moved into a commercial finance role, tasked with

enhancing the business and providing insight on areas such as product range and manpower forecasting. Despite this being a good grounding, I really wanted to influence the direction of the business, so I moved into the business development and change function, eventually joining the gambling sector in 2012.

I've been at Genting Casinos for the past eight years. I have led and rebuilt the Technology team, ensuring that the department really understands the business and can add value to it. Genting relies on technology as all businesses do, so that's where I come in – to set us up for success.

## How are you encouraging diversity and inclusion in the HTL sector?

Having a leadership role in what has historically been a male-dominated field allows me to use my voice to stress the importance of diversity and ensure that when we recruit from the market, we are maintaining the right balance.

I also hope to be a role model. I have put myself forward for a variety of challenges across the organisations I've worked for – and I hope that I have set an example for young women to follow in the years to come.

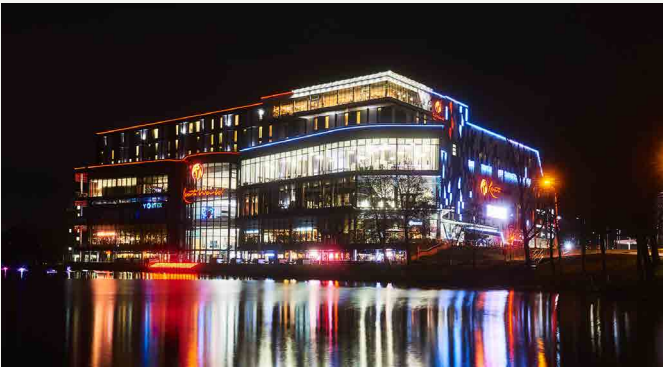
## What do you find the most rewarding thing about working in the hospitality, travel and leisure sector?

Vibrancy and fun are

two words which define this industry. I also love that there's equality of opportunity here – there are chances for everyone, regardless of your social background or levels of education. Anyone can enter the sector and have an impact if they maintain the right attitude.

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

I'd say that sometimes we can make mistakes, but that what matters is never giving up and being resilient. If you can be yourself, you also can't go far wrong – whether that's in terms of work assignments or the relationship with your colleagues. And just be a nice person! At the end of the day, it is all about how you make people feel and the legacy you want to leave behind.



# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

*A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking. Fascinating and a humbling experience that gives you a sense we are part of something much greater than we know – it inspired me to study my physics degree and learn more.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Tenacity to keep going when others wouldn't,

empathy, courage and always try to maintain a sense of humour as it can get you through most situations.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

An article on lifelong learning in the Harvard Business Review and how important that can be for mental health and to maintain a sense of purpose in life.



# Rebecca Brock

Company **Costa Coffee** / Job Title **Commercial and Customer Director**



I have a lot of respect for those who go deep into a particular sector, but I have found that the challenge, the stimulation and the development for myself has come by cross-tabulating learnings. By venturing out into different sectors I have developed different skills, different perspectives.

I began my career at Unilever where I received an outstanding grounding in having an obsession for the consumer and the brand, before moving onto luxury goods with whisky where it was about creating a memorable experience. I enjoyed learning about how to operate across different cultures, but I felt distant from the consumer. Due to a desire to have that firsthand engagement I moved to retail at John Lewis and then to my current role as Commercial and Customer Director at Costa. It is a fantastic role combining end-to-end proposition development, sourcing, marketing, and leading the way on sustainability.



# QUICKFIRE

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Clarity of purpose and dynamism.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

My CEO Jill McDonald. She has made that transition from CMO to CEO; bringing a laser focus on the consumer,

shrewd judgement, a confidence to back bold moves and most importantly being someone who cares about the people in the business.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*Factfulness* by Hans Rosling.

## What do you find most rewarding about working in the HTL sector?

With hospitality, I love the fact you have that immediate connection with the customer and can really immerse them in what your brand and business stands for. The small difference you can have on people's day is so rewarding, whether that's connecting people, giving someone a place to relax or just providing consumers with a lift. The flip side is that you also get immediate feedback, so you always need to be responding and improving!

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

I think commitment to sustainability needs to be a fundamental driver for the sector into the future. We have to lead and work together to make meaningful change. With the hospitality sector we have a broad scope of

influence outside of our own businesses – from helping our supply chain partners through to making it easier for our consumers to permanently change their behaviours.

## What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to join the HTL sector?

I think it goes past encouragement – I think we need to champion women, build their confidence and give them a fair shot and plenty of feedback. But it's more than just gender, I am a huge believer in getting a balance around the table, a balance of backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints on life.

It is important to note how you treat people, we need to breakdown any divides and make an effort to consistently enable people to be their best. Providing that encouragement for everyone is needed for growth.





# Sophie Buckle

Company **ODEON** / Job Title **Film Booking Director**



I started with ODEON 15 years ago, scooping ice cream at our Richmond cinema. I relished working in the cinema environment and despite opportunities elsewhere I progressed through leadership roles at the cinema before joining the Film Booking department in 2012 where

I now lead the team as Film Booking Director. I have had some amazing development opportunities including recently completing a degree as part of ODEON's apprenticeship program.

**If you were not working within the HTL sector, where do you think you would be?**

I come from a family of artists and dreamed of having a community focused gallery. I really believe in the power of art as therapy, and that's certainly true of film too; the big screen can educate and inspire.

**How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?**

I hope that through my role I can help women visualise a senior role in cinema. Whilst exhibition

was predominantly male dominated at a senior level when I joined, it has evolved in recent years, including Carol Welch, ODEON's MD and increasingly heads of Film Studios too. We're lucky at ODEON to be surrounded by incredible, inspiring women but recognise there is still much progress to be made in diversity throughout leadership roles in the industry which is a huge opportunity to change for the better.

I'm currently heading up the D&I Forum, which helps to capture opinions from across the organisation and make progress in all areas of diversity, aiming



to make ODEON the most inclusive place possible, for all colleagues and our guests too.

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

Embracing a consumer-focused approach in all my roles has been hugely valuable to my mindset and decision-making process. I'd also say focus on your abilities and understand what drives you as a professional rather than fixating on certain roles, you never know where your career may take you and generic skills and a focus on personal development

will help you achieve in whatever you do.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance diversity and inclusion?**

You can't be what you can't see, which may seem like a soundbite, but I think there's a lot of truth in that. If people are paving the way and doing so in an exemplary way, that rising tide floats all boats and everyone benefits. Being able to see other people doing it and doing it well, creates an atmosphere where everyone believes that you can do exactly what you want with no barriers.

# Julie Centracchio

Company **Boston Tea Party** / Job Title **CFO**



My hospitality career has lasted longer than I would care to admit, starting at university with a bar job. When I left to start my finance career, I was back of house manager and was gutted to leave the industry.

Auditing didn't exactly set my soul on fire however, so I came back to HTL with a job at Budget Rent A Car which saw me move from the US to the UK. I then joined JD Wetherspoon where I stayed for nearly a decade in a variety of roles.

Since then, I've worked in the SME hospitality space and in 2019 I swapped wine and beer for coffee and joined Boston Tea Party as FD and now CFO.



## QUICKFIRE

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

"Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress. Working hard for something we care about is called passion." – Simon Sinek

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

Openness, honesty, curiosity and determination.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

It changes all the time – there are so many. For the last 18 months it's been my colleagues – in particular Paul Hooker our COO and our CEO Sam Roberts.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*Measure What Matters* by John Doerr.

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

Don't be too hard on yourself! I see people starting out in their careers taking things really hard – as I know I did early on. I say – don't sweat the small stuff, we're in hospitality, it's supposed to be fun.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean within your organisation?**

We're values-led and determined to stay that way. The first part of anyone's interview is about their values – we accept you for who you are and recruit people who want to have a positive impact on the world.

We've recently refreshed our pay structure to ignore age banding. Why should someone over 25 make more money than someone who's 18 doing the same role? It didn't make sense to us.

We believe in doing good is good for business and we recruit team members who feel the same.

**What motivates you about working within HTL?**

It's the people, the buzz of being in a café. Hospitality should be done for you not to you. When that happens, it's magic.

**How do you think the hospitality sector has changed during your career, and how do you hope it will change in the future?**

When I first joined the industry was very much a man's world, happily, that has changed dramatically in the past twenty years.

Much of the pace of that change is down to people like Kate Nicholls. What she's done for the sector, having her voice heard at a government level has resonated with so many people. It gives me goosebumps because 20 years ago there was no one like Kate visible in the industry.

## QUICKFIRE

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

*Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman.

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

Authenticity and transparency.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Clare Binns, Joint MD at Picturehouse.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

'7 Leadership Lessons Men Can Learn from Women' in Harvard Business Review.





# Gemma Chance

Company **Forest Holidays** / Job Title **Head of Brand Purpose**



I don't have a traditional story to tell. I dropped out of university, and when I became a mum at a very young age, my professional journey began. I went back to study and spent a number of years in sales and marketing, then moved into fundraising roles in

the third sector, until being approached for an opportunity at Forest Holidays.

I joined Forest Holidays in a partnership manager role and have progressed as our business has evolved. I'm now head of brand purpose, leading the business to deliver its brand vision and live by its purpose – we believe our brand and our ESG aspirations should be aligned seamlessly.

Throughout my career I've actively looked for opportunities for growth and development. I've been passionate about the businesses that I've worked for too, and I think that has one hundred percent contributed to where I am today.

## What do you find the most rewarding about working in HTL?

We're creating special memories and experiences for people, and there is nothing better than seeing an incredible review on social media or reading a heartfelt email that lands in the inbox from a guest.

Forest Holidays' product is unique and now more than ever, we appreciate spending time in nature. To work for a brand that creates special authentic experiences, whilst helping our forests and nature thrive is incredible.

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

I hope that the sector sees a full recovery following Covid, especially in the UK. The WiHTL Global Female Leadership Programme

really opened my eyes to some of the incredible female leaders out there, and I think that there is more that the industry can do together to celebrate that.

For a relatively small brand like Forest Holidays, I think that being a part of the WiHTL network will bring huge benefits, and I hope that network continues to grow. I hope that they'll be more female leaders from our business that get opportunities to experience some of their programmes, too.

## What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress within the sector?

We have a very open culture, and a higher proportion of women than men in our senior leadership team, which

## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

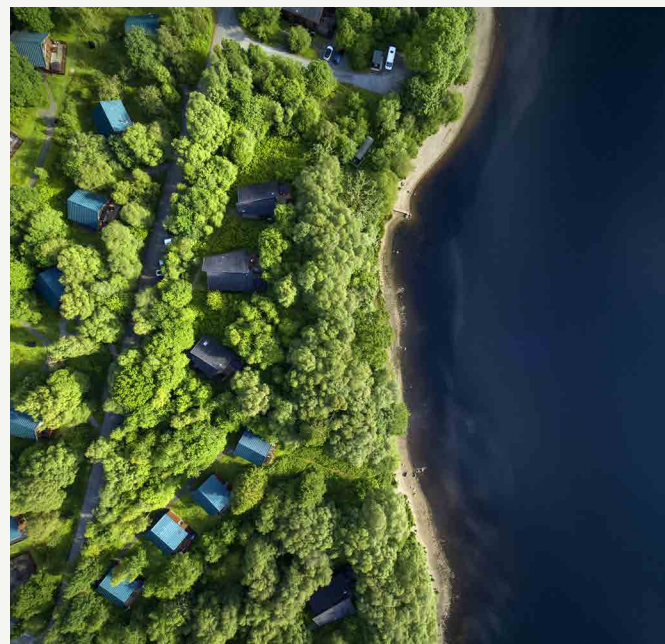
"She believed she could, so she did."

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

Integrity and accountability.

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

There are too many inspirational people to mention!



sends a great example to the sector and to our business. We're always looking for ways to showcase this.

I would say our involvement in networks like WiHTL is playing a large role.

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

To never be afraid to step out of your comfort zone, and always believe in yourself. Just remember that regardless of who you are, or what stage of your

career you're at, we all have moments of doubt. Just go for it!



# Katie Clipp

Company **Arriva** / Job Title **Transformation Director, Mainland Europe**



I started my career in the health sector at BUPA through a graduate programme. I became head of marketing for Asia within the company, before realising I wanted to be more involved in transformation and change. I then joined Serco, a big outsourcing company,

which was where I was first exposed to the leisure and transport industries. I started as a management consultant at Serco, before moving into internal transformation. I've now been transformation director at Arriva for 3 years, where I lead projects across Europe.

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

To not worry too much about not knowing what I wanted to do. When I started out, I was always jealous of people who had a defined career path. I then met a mentor who told me that she had a portfolio career, as she had experienced a range of different roles. I would tell my younger self to adopt that mentality and have fun, you're developing and each experience throughout your career will add value.

partnership in the UK with Ambitious about Autism to provide paid work experience in engineering has recently launched.

## What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

I really like working in the transport industry because it impacts thousands of lives every day by connecting people to jobs, loved ones and leisure activities. There is also an important role for public transport as

## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and your organisation?

It means a lot to me and to Arriva as a company. We have great female representation on our board, with 43% of the board being female.

We're actively working on the diversity of our driver and engineer workforce across Europe. We are particularly focused on attracting more female talent and have some great initiatives around wider inclusion; for example, a

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez.

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

Authenticity, integrity, desire to listen to their people, ability to execute change.

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

I have three! Mary Hewitt, Jana Siber and Marianne Böttger.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

All the press around COP26 – it's so relevant to our industry.

we look to decarbonise and create healthier living environments with less congestion and pollution.

## How do you think HTL has changed since you've been a part of the sector, and how do you think it will change in the future?

I think there has been a great focus on sustainability, specifically in terms of decarbonisation and zero emission vehicles. Despite the pressures of Covid and the significant drop in

passenger numbers, the focus on sustainability has continued.

I hope we can bring people back to public transport and avoid a car-led recovery from Covid, particularly at a time where we must address climate change and build a more sustainable future.

I also think we should continue to learn from our graduate cohorts; they're going to be the next advocates for change.





# Jane Cookson

Company **Aramark** / Job Title **Director of Operations**



**W**hen I graduated, I thought I was going to work in finance. I applied for the Finance Graduate Scheme at British Airways but ended up on the Catering Scheme. As soon as I joined the airline, I knew that catering was my first love. I stayed

at BA for about three years, before taking up a role at another smaller airline looking after all catering products which really kicked off my management career. From there I moved to the RHS reporting into the executive board. Although it was a different type of catering, I learnt that good food is good food, no matter whether you're sitting on an aeroplane or coming to a garden for afternoon tea!

Following the RHS, I was looking for a role in catering operations but was talked into a sales role at The NEC Group. After earning my stripes selling, I joined Compass in a sales and retention role, before taking up the opportunity as Director of Operations at Aramark. The company has recently reorganised from a regional to sector led approach. As part of the new structure, I have been promoted and my team of just under 200 has almost doubled in size. The team I lead are sector specialists in education and healthcare. We provide a range of catering solutions and other soft services, in an area of the business that continues to expand and I'm incredibly excited about this next chapter. In the last few months alone we have won and retained a number of key contracts including our first independent school.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Who Moved My Cheese?*  
By Dr Spencer Johnson.

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

Angela Hartnett.

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

Tenacity, Resilience & Humanity.



**What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?**

I had a really fantastic boss at RHS. I still remember him saying to me as a youngster, "Jane, the art of management is to make a decision. You will not always make the right decision, but you've got to make it." That was the moment in my career when I realised what true leadership was.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?**

I think it's about building a team with a range of different skills and backgrounds and recognising that it is those differences which add up to a really fantastic team which can deliver.

**What would you say to women looking to enter the HTL sector?**

The main message for women is: it doesn't matter where you are in your career. Perhaps you're young and you're starting out or maybe you're older, you've had children and you're thinking about a new career. You can start in hospitality at any time. As long as there is a willingness to learn and a passion for great food and service, then you will go far. One of the reasons I enjoy working at Aramark is because there are so many opportunities to grow and progress.

# Amy Cridland

Company **McDonald's UK&I** / Job Title **Director of Operations**



**I**'ve worked for McDonald's for 23 years. I started part-time while at college but quickly realised I loved the environment. There is a saying that people who stay with the company have ketchup in their veins, and I was hooked pretty quickly.

I spent my first ten years working for a franchisee, and worked part-time whilst having my children. I became a Business Manager in 2013, then completed an Area People Manager secondment. I worked as both an Operations and Franchisee Consultant before being promoted to Director of Operations in March 2020.



**What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?**

Having a team of phenomenal colleagues, you can learn something new every day. There is no better feeling as a leader than creating more leaders and seeing people progress their careers.

When you are a global market leader, the whole world is waiting to see what you do next so there is never a dull moment. We have so many functions within McDonald's which creates plenty of opportunities and cross functional work. We are blessed with people from

all over the world working in our restaurants and office teams, of different ages and backgrounds who give us different insights and perspectives. On top of great people we also have the most diverse customer base to learn from. Finding new ways to deliver outstanding customer experiences and understanding ways in which our customers want to interact with our brand is exciting and keeps us focused on the future.

**How have you seen D&I develop in your time at McDonald's?**

We have always had



diverse workforces but in recent years we have been more dedicated to listening to our people and developing everyone. We have a Women's Leadership Network and sponsor WiHTL's Ethnic Minority Future Leaders programme. Our inclusion network and people team are dedicated to educating our employees in the area of DE&I and finding ways to improve.

My team and I have worked hard to learn from one another and create a strong sense of belonging. Educating our teams in mental health and DE&I has been a priority of mine as well as finding ways to be more inclusive with the opportunities we create.

**What is your biggest learning as a leader?**

Integrity, authenticity, and empowerment are essential. Try to be the best version of yourself and be brave enough to have a voice

**Why do you think more women should consider a career in HTL?**

There are many different platforms for growth in this industry and it is collaborative, we have a lot of companies working together and learning from each other.

On top of the professional side, there is also plenty of opportunity for everyone to grow on a personal level.

## QUICKFIRE

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

"People may not remember what you said, or what you did but they will remember how you made them feel."

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

Empathy, authenticity and curiosity.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Steve Ellis, Director of Franchising at McDonald's, for being an amazing coach, and all the women on the WLN inspire me.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*How to Be Human* by Ruby Wax.



# Kim Daplyn

Company **Scott Dunn** / Job Title **Guest Relations Manager**



I've been in the travel sector since I was 21, when I went to work at TUI in the ski unit. After TUI, I joined Travel Republic – and ended up staying for twelve years, first as a complaints handler and eventually heading up the entire complaints team.

About half-way through my time at Travel Republic I realised how much money we were spending on legal when it came to litigation. I suggested to Travel Republic I do my legal training, to help save these costs. I found the local college and approached them with a business plan to sponsor me. It was a crazy time: I'd just had my second child, I was going to night school, taking exams, completing research projects, working part-time at a law firm and part-time managing my team at Travel Republic! Sadly, I got made redundant just as I qualified, but Scott Dunn was looking for someone with legal training to lead their service team so it was a perfect marriage.

My job is all about service. We say that one complaint is one too many, and I love the variety and the training element to my role.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* by Charlie Mackesy. Also *Women who Run with Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes.

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

Claire Mulligan, Partner at Kennedys.

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

Approachable and passionate about their craft and guests.

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

"You are the artist of your own life. Don't hand the paintbrush to anyone else."

**What is the most fulfilling thing about your job?**

As I work in complaints, people always say to me, "Gosh, how do you listen to negative feedback day in, day out?" But actually, there is nothing more fulfilling than having somebody on the phone with a concern about their holiday, and getting to the point at the end of the conversation where you're both talking about your families or what holiday you're going to go on next.

Also, improving our service and feeding back to the operators is so fulfilling. That is what's great about my job: giving the operators the opportunity to improve themselves and get better.

**How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop in your time in HTL?**

In my nearly twenty years in the industry, I've seen diversity and inclusion come on a long way.

We've got a female CEO at Scott Dunn, and it's really comforting to see that that's where I can aspire to be, and that there are serious managerial positions available to women.

I've got two daughters, and it's very inspiring to know that there will be equal opportunities for them.

**What are you doing within your business to encourage inclusion?**

I'm part of the diversity and belonging committee at Scott Dunn. It's a really lovely committee and we meet to discuss ways we can foster inclusion and apply inclusive practices across the business.

**What has been the biggest challenge in your career?**

I would say that balancing my legal studies with my work and my children was the biggest challenge.

# Michelle de Graaf

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Airline Captain**



I've always been interested in flying and I knew that I'd need to study maths and science in school in order to fulfil that dream. This suited me as they were subjects I naturally gravitated towards anyway. I attended Sheffield University where I studied chemistry for three

years, but flying was still very much at the forefront of my plans. I decided to take up a couple of trial flying lessons, which in turn encouraged me to apply to a few different flying schools. In 2008 I got into Oxford Aviation Academy, which was exciting for me and helped me learn much more about the travel industry. I then applied for easyJet in October 2010 and I've been based in Gatwick ever since.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Black Box Thinking* by Matthew Syed.

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

Communication, decision making and empathy.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

I look up to anyone who is challenging the stereotypes and creating opportunities for others.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

Steven Bartlett said "true failure isn't missing the target. True failure is never taking the shot."

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

Do not be afraid to try new things. It is normal to feel nervous when embarking on new experiences, but it is important to put yourself forward for new opportunities.

The HTL industry can be quite fast and at times high pressure, but don't let that put you off – let it push you harder.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you at easyJet?**

At easyJet I believe we strive to give everyone an equal opportunity for success. It's not necessarily about having the most diverse work force, instead, it's about giving those that want an opportunity a fair chance.

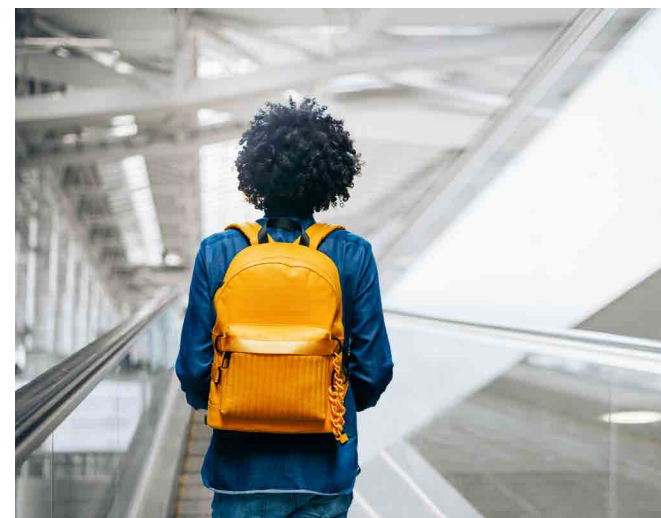
**What motivates you the most about working within the HTL sector?**

I feel motivated when I speak to the younger generation and see how driven and enthusiastic they are. Leading an example and being able to provide encouragement is an uplifting privilege.

**How do you think the HTL sector has changed and how do you think it might change in the future?**

I think the main thing that has changed is awareness surrounding diversity and inclusion within the industry. People are more aware of where some of the gaps are and what needs to be done moving forwards.

In the next five years, I think we need to continue to build on what we have previously done and show how everyone can benefit from a more inclusive workforce.





# Frankie Deane

Company **The Gym Group** / Job Title **Head of Commercial**



I started my career working in marketing analytics with some of Britain’s most loved retailers. I loved the role and the experience it gave me to eventually move in-house. My passion for digital, data and customer centric businesses grew, and I now apply this in an industry that I truly care about.

My team at The Gym Group are responsible for delivering on the ambitious member and revenue growth plans. The past 18 months have been challenging, but we’ve remained resilient and energetic and it’s rewarding to see members, old and new, back on the treadmills.



**What is the most rewarding thing about working in HTL?**

For me, it’s about diversity; of age, gender, background. I have achieved a leadership role in a fast growth business at a young age. I’ve worked hard, but I’ve always felt that my ambition is supported, and encouraged. Also, the positive and tangible social impact that our business has is incredibly rewarding. Our category has never been more relevant, and awareness of respiratory health has never been greater. I love being part of

a group of driven people, all focused on our mission – to break down barriers to fitness for all.

**What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in five years’ time?**

We’ve seen huge demand for healthier lifestyles, and valuing time with loved ones. I hope this appetite continues, and more people prioritise their wellbeing. And, as science and technologies evolve, I expect to see more innovation, especially around personalisation and how we deliver this in both a digital and physical format for consumers.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Principles* by Ray Dalio – brilliantly applicable to work and life.

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

Emma Woods is a legend!

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

Energy, consistency and empathy.

I also believe that the industry will continue to become an inspiring career choice for young talent. I hope that I am an example for others that you can progress quickly, regardless of age, gender or background.

**What are you and The Gym Group doing to encourage women to enter the sector?**

We are building a team with diversity of backgrounds, interests, and of thought process, which brings creativity to everything we do. I personally mentor other women in the business and our focus is on highlighting

to women the amazing culture we have and the benefits of a career in the fitness industry. This is especially the case at The Gym Group as we actively support an inclusive and flexible environment.

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

Be yourself, speak up and don’t fear failure. Everyone (not just women) can get imposter syndrome, but don’t be afraid to push yourself out of your comfort zone – it’s the only way to stretch yourself. Most importantly, enjoy and don’t take yourself too seriously.



# Julie Dilloway-Knapp

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Vice President, Cabin**



I always wanted to go into the leisure sector. I loved travel and meeting people, and had done lots of work experience at theme parks, summer camps and theatres. I especially loved the interactions at airports and was desperate to join an airline. At 26,

I was lucky enough to get a job with Virgin Atlantic – and I’ve been here for 22 years!

I started in uniform at the airport and worked my way up to Head of Customer Service at Heathrow, before moving to head office, which gave me insight into a whole different spectrum of the business.

Virgin was absolutely brilliant at giving me 15 months off to have a baby. I applied for the VP President of Airports and Clubhouses straight after returning from maternity leave, and then at the end of last year the opportunity arose to head up our cabin crew.

We have around 2,000 cabin crew but by next summer we should be up to 4,000. I lead all the functions that support the team. Excitingly, I’ve trained as crew myself so I fly alongside them which is absolutely brilliant.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Untamed* by Glennon Doyle.

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

Flexibility, authenticity, decisiveness and passion.

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

How Covid has had a positive impact on our working styles going forward.

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

I’d say don’t be held back by anything, and that one of the really important things is to be yourself. I sometimes feel that as women rising up the ranks, we feel the need to fit in – so end up emulating the men around us. But just be yourself – no matter what that looks like!

**If you weren’t working in travel what would you be doing?**

I think I’d be back in the theatre or in wellbeing and nutrition. As leaders, you can’t have mental resilience without looking after yourself physically and mentally.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance on D&I?**

Unless you see someone doing something, it’s not immediately obvious that you can do it yourself.

I saw a programme on TV the other day about Royal Navy warships with

female captains. I would have loved to do that, but when I was growing up I just didn’t know that it was a possibility. If the Navy had come into my school and I’d had seen a female captain, I might have thought “yeah I could do that.”

I also think role modelling is especially important for women who want to have a family. As parents in the industry, we need to be more vocal about the fact that we have children. Rising up through the leadership ranks it’s important to see people with great careers who also have a family – as there can be a misconception that it’s not possible to have both.

**How has the diversity agenda evolved since you joined the HTL industry?**

We’ve come a long way on the gender piece, but there’s further to go still on ethnic diversity. There are a lot of women in airports, interestingly, but fewer in the core business functions – but this has come on a lot in my time.





# Fiona Doherty

Company **Stagecoach** / Job Title **Managing Director (West Scotland)**



made the move into Stagecoach as Managing Director for West Scotland.

## What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

The biggest thing is the impact it has on people. In Scotland alone before the pandemic, 350 million bus trips a year took place, compared with about 90 million on rail. Already we are back at 75% recovery. People rely on the bus for education, work, healthcare and to see family and friends. The bus is critical to keeping the economy moving.

## What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in five years' time or what changes do you hope to see in the future?

This sector in particular has been really hard hit throughout the pandemic. It's been struggling with

I am a chemist by trade and worked for a significant portion of my life within that sector. After almost two decades I found myself wanting a change of environment, which is how I came to join the transport sector. I started work with Glasgow Airport, then Forth Ports and then

recruitment and getting back on its feet. A large section of the HTL sector includes women and the resilience that we hold is undeniable so I think that will help strengthen the sector more over time.

In five years' time I am confident we will be on the growth curve again. The sector will recover but needs to be prepared to be flexible and adapt. We've got a really strong sector with strong people working in it but it's important that we can attract talent from across the UK as well as globally.

## What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

I think a big part of encouraging women



is visibility. Making myself seen and heard along with other women could provide role models for the next generation.

A key aspect for younger women to understand the importance of the transportation sector is education. As a result, I have spent a lot of time in schools and colleges making myself visible to children and students and highlighting the importance of the transport industry.

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

The best piece of advice I can give is to be true to yourself. Do not try fit into a pre-existing narrative or change yourself to be successful. Have confidence in who you are and recognise that you have reached where you are through hard work and because you have a lot to offer. Your opinion is valued – never be ashamed to voice it.

## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"Do what you believe in your heart to be right – for you'll be criticised anyway" – Eleanor Roosevelt.

### What quality is most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity.

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

I don't have a role model in the industry but outside it would be Katherine Johnson, the NASA mathematician.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The Planets* by Brian Cox.



# Nathalie Drew

Company **Club Med** / Job Title **Marketing Director**



been on a Club Med holiday as a customer, and it stuck out as somewhere that struck the perfect balance of luxury and being family friendly. I thought this is somewhere I could see myself working, and surprisingly, on my return from holiday, I noticed my position advertised. I applied, was successful and have never looked back since. Over my six years here I have doubled the size of the UK business by maximising our brand awareness through numerous PR initiatives, as well as driven the company through a huge digital transformation.

I have been in marketing for 17 years. Despite growing up in France, I have always had a passion for quintessential British brands, therefore started my career working for the likes of John Lewis, Waitrose and M&S. My interest in joining Club Med sparked from having



## What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

Discovering new destinations and cultures. I am very lucky to work in a multicultural environment, since a huge part of the role involves working with teams all over the world. Selling holidays is almost like selling escapism. Part of my job is to help people relax and experience peace. Being able to play a part in helping people create memories is wonderful.

## How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop in your time at HTL?

When I first began my career, I was aware that I was different to the rest of my colleagues, whether it was my French accent or the fact I was of mixed origins. Over time, I noticed how diversity and inclusion became a topic of conversation in businesses and representative reflection of the world became valued.

## What are some challenges you have overcome and learnt from?

From very early on, I realised that being flexible and adaptable would be

key, as we never know what opportunity or challenge may be round the corner. This was especially true when going through restructures, impossible projects or more recently navigating through new rules in Covid times.

Adjusting to the right mindset in order to benefit from the situation has been a big focus of mine ever since.

## Why do you think more women should consider a career in the HTL sector?

HTL is a warm and welcoming industry, and it's full of passionate members. Those who have invested decades of their lives into the industry are a testament to the passion that we all feel.

I think Covid has demonstrated the capability of the industry to be extremely resilient and innovative, despite a very challenging context.

Another incentive would be the positive impact on local communities in countries that are not as comfortable as Britain. For instance, when Club Med launches a new resort in a developing country, its Foundation will support and work with local communities and hire a lot of the local talent.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Art of Fairness* by David Bodanis.

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

Integrity, empathy, and the desire to keep learning.

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

Henri Giscard d'Estaing.





# Stephanie Dufty

Company **Expedia Group** / Job Title **VP, Customer Marketing**



(whilst travelling the world on standby!) and from there my career progressed to Capital One, Octopus.com and Expedia Group, where I managed the Global Hotels.com Loyalty proposition and now lead Customer Marketing for all Expedia brands.

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

As I look back, I am reminded how important it is to gain breadth of experience in those early years. It's the best way to determine what motivates you and the direction in which to take your career. Critically it also sets you up for being a more all rounded and experienced leader.

## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and mean to your organisation?

As a female leader, diversity and inclusion is close to my heart and having read Mathematics

My passion for travel began from an early age, so it was perfect to start my work life at British Airways. This provided the springboard for my career in marketing and the foundations in digital. I was fortunate to work in a variety of roles at BA

at university, I had an early experience into a male dominated environment. At Expedia we lead with considering how to be inclusive and I love the party analogy: 'Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked onto the dance floor'. We consider many dimensions, including how we recruit and nurture talent, as well as understanding different target audiences and building propositions to meet their needs.

## What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

Travel is such an exciting industry to be a part of, as it enables

personal connections and experiences across the world. What really motivates me is delivering amazing customer experiences, built on deep customer insight, and enabled through data and technology.

I also have a real passion for leading teams, and it's been really rewarding to support, champion and develop female talent. I have had the pleasure of working with many incredible people throughout my career.

## How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector? How do you think it will change into the future?

Immense change in the sector has occurred, particularly in the way technology has played such a critical role in enhancing the travel experience at every step of the journey. Covid has changed the way that people think about how and where they travel, requiring companies to adapt to this changing consumer mindset.



# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

*The Five Temptations of a CEO* by Patrick Lencioni.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Communicating a compelling vision, being able to take people with you on the journey and enabling execution – the hardest part.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

On a personal level, one of my role models is Johan

Svanstrom, who I learnt so much from when he was President of Hotels.com.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

Understanding the impact Covid has had on employment, with women feeling an increasing level of pressure and being more likely to consider leaving the workforce.

# Zoe Ebrey

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Head of Media, Project Wingman/Training Captain**



My interest in aviation began at a young age. I started gliding when I was 10 years old and after flying solo, I progressed flying light aircraft. This all took place in the background of my formal education.

I studied for a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science at university followed with a masters in Transport, from University College of London. After graduating I moved into IT industry for around 8 years, during which time I continued to pursue my passion for flying completing my commercial licence in 2005. I joined the airline industry and subsequently easyJet in 2008 and progressed to the role of Training Captain. My background in diversity initiatives in aviation lead to my role and directorship in the charity Project Wingman.



## If you were not in the HTL sector, where would you be?

I imagine I would probably still be working in the transport sector but maybe in motor racing or perhaps Formula One. I love anything that's safety-critical, fast-paced, adaptive and strategic in nature. I find it fascinating how strategies and technologies cross-pollinate into more mainstream industries. Imagine embracing the pace of an F1 pitstop in an aircraft turnaround in aviation!

## How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?

I am incredibly passionate about engaging with youth groups about both my job and developing their aspirations. Especially after having children of my own, I recognised that the education system doesn't necessarily support young people to translate their ambitions into reality. My own daughter at 5 years old once said to me "Girls can't ride motorbikes"!

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

I think the biggest thing is to be kind to yourself and be who you are. Have the courage to embody your own personality in the workplace. It is also important to challenge status quo. A recognised problem should drive a solution that endeavours to change the system, rather than requiring you to change your personality to fit a stereotype.

Secondly, I believe future generations should embrace portfolio occupations, and not shy away from trying and changing career directions, something previous generations perhaps didn't have access to.

## Why do you think role models are so important to advance D&I?

People say "you can't be what you can't see". The problem is this creates a glass ceiling, because if you can't see a female CEO then you're saying you can't be one. Why can't you be the first? Just because you can't see it doesn't mean you can't be it.

# QUICKFIRE

## What quote has influenced you the most?

"We rise by lifting others"  
– Robert Ingersoll.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Kindness, the ability to develop others and think innovatively; challenge status quo.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

Susie Wolff, British professional racing driver.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

The welcome conversations around well-being in the workplace.





# Vickie Elsey

Company **Greene King** / Job Title **HR Director – Destination Food Brands**



I fell into HR after several years' experience in financial services. I was working at Capital One first, and then Egg, before a role in recruitment came up and I worked my way up there. Working in a generalist HR role helped me develop my expertise in areas like relationship

and stakeholder management.

I then moved to a retail role in HR for Thorntons. I started as a Senior Business Partner and then I was promoted as Head of HR for Thorntons retail stores. I felt like I had found my feet in terms of the kinds of industry and environment I wanted to work in.

By the time I moved to Greene King I was very clear that I wanted to be in a setting that was people-focused, operational, fast-paced, but also somewhere exciting and fun. I am HR Director for our food brand segment. It's approximately 18,000 people, and 6 different brands, so a great mix and lots of variety. I report to the MD and I am surrounded by a brilliant leadership team. The massive benefit of this is there is a strong, central HR team that is really helping us in terms of mastering tools and driving the cultural transformation.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"You can do whatever you want to do, you just need to believe" – my mother.

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

Authenticity, humility, and clarity.

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

Nick Mackenzie, CEO at Greene King.

### Why do you think more women should consider a career in HTL?

Because it is people-centric. You are surrounded by people who care, who love their businesses, who want to deliver a great service and look after others.

I am driven by the desire to get things done. Pace is quick in hospitality and the external environment moves very fast, too. If you are motivated by drive, you can run with that and keep moving.

### What do inclusion and diversity mean to you as an individual, and also to Greene King?

I am fortunate to be in a team that is 50% female. The diversity of the conversations here is palpable, you can feel it. To me, D&I means being able to bring yourself to your job. We all have days where we aren't feeling our best, but what matters is that the company appreciates you

for you, and that it gets the absolute best out of you.

At Greene King, we are creating broader conversations with our teams to attract even more people to come and work in hospitality. You can see it in the balance, from male to female; we can see we have a great reach in the LGBTQ+ community; but we can do more in terms of ethnic minorities. What matters is the environment we are working to create and the conversation we are promoting.

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

If there is one thing the sector has taught me over the years it is resilience, the need to keep going and maintain one's drive. Know what you are bringing to your company's conversation and stick to it. Your opinion matters and you should not let anything shift that.

# Stephanie Farrow

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Head of Strategy & Insight**



I developed a real passion for understanding the reasons behind people's thinking and behaviour at university, as I read sociology at Bath and then got a master's degree in social research methods at the University of Surrey.

At the start of my career, I took on a role at Tesco as a sensory and consumer analyst, where I was able to carry out extensive research on customer behaviour across food and other grocery departments. Moving around the business and leading different projects, I entered the Insight Team, where I oversaw areas such as brand development and campaign proposition, alongside tracking brand health metrics.

After 7 years at Tesco, I then moved to PizzaExpress, a completely different business in what was a new industry for me. The question now was if I could make the same impact in a company that didn't have the same insight and analytics resource as a big grocer's, which encouraged me to broaden my areas of expertise and collaborate across the business to gain experience. The business has been incredibly welcoming, which makes it such an amazing experience to work for PizzaExpress.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"Whether you think you can, or think you can't – you're right" – Henry Ford.

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

Honesty, bravery, reliability.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf.

### What do you find most rewarding about working in the HTL sector?

It feels hugely rewarding when you develop the right strategy, that enables the business to create the next level of experiences for customers. From an insight perspective, I love it when you translate customer thinking into an actionable agenda for the business.

When you rely so extensively on customer feedback, nothing is better than seeing our plans filter through and change people's experiences for the better.

### What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

Visibility plays an important role in the D&I agenda, so for people like myself and for my organisation to be able to feature in projects such as Women to Watch is a great starting point for discussion.

The wider the word is spread that we are having

discussions around the need to champion a culture of inclusivity within the industry, the more comforted and encouraged people will feel to step forward.

It's also incredibly empowering to work for a company that has strong female leaders at the very top.

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

Lean into your natural style and always be your authentic self. Bring your true character to work and do not apologise for being the person you are.

Know your sources of energy and protect them passionately but, at the same time, do not shy away from feedback and take it on board to improve your performance.

Finally, don't ever stop learning in order to understand both yourself and your profession better.



# Rachel Fearon

Company **Firmdale Hotels** / Job Title **Global Director of Sales**



Having studied Hotel Management at university, I moved to London to start my career in the five-star hotel industry. My first role in the city was working on the launch of One Aldwych and after some time on-property, a role of Guest Relations Manager was

created for me. The position was extremely varied which I was grateful for, as with my previous experience working operationally across all hotel departments, it helped me decide the area I wanted to progress in.

Funnily enough a recruiter then asked me "If I could work for any hotel group, which would it be" and I said Firmdale Hotels. The rest as they say is history! At Firmdale, I very much started from the ground up, eventually being appointed as their first Global Director of Sales. Having experience at every level and within all areas of the hotel business has been invaluable to my management skills, appreciating first-hand what my team and colleagues all do and the hard work they put in. I have just celebrated my 21st year in the group!



## QUICKFIRE

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

The Greatest Showman!

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

Strategic thinker with a clear vision, inspiring and empowering.

Approachable, dependable and with credibility and integrity.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

My role model is not within my industry, but he truly outshines anyone else – my father who is a doctor.



**What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?**

Being able to instantly see where you can make a difference, whether it's to your owners and superiors, to the team that you manage or to the clients that you nurture and build long-lasting and strong relationships with.

**How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in your time in HTL?**

As a company, Firmdale Hotels has always had a very visible diversity and inclusion agenda. We have been incredibly fortunate from the early days to have a strong female leadership team within the business.

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

Working in an extremely busy environment where we have to deliver to many different stakeholders within the business and

externally, all of whom have very individual points of view and expectations. We are part of an ever-evolving and creative business, that's in great demand from our clients. It's a privileged challenge to have.

**Why do you think more women should consider a career within HTL?**

Women have so much to offer this industry and bring so many key elements to the table such as resilience, strength, support, openness and empathy. Efficiency and attention-to-detail are also very evident. It is important for women considering this sector to realise that it is possible to have both a long-lasting high profile career and a happy family life, and that you don't have to sacrifice one for the other. But self-promotion is important for women to progress within their careers and often we have to be the instigators to drive things forward.



# Marion Geoffroy

Company **Wizz Air** / Job Title **Managing Director and Accountable Manager**



I joined Wizz Air in 2015, first as Head of Legal and General Counsel, before being appointed as Group Chief Corporate Officer and Company Secretary in 2018. Then recently, in August 2021, I was appointed Managing Director and Accountable Manager for Wizz Air UK.

I'm a lawyer by background, with over 20 years' experience in the aviation sector. Wizz Air is probably the most globally and culturally diverse airline in the world, and I'm passionate about our promise of affordable air travel for everyone.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Women power* by Françoise Gri. Also the biography of Maryse Bastie, one of the first female aviators.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

In my industry it would be József Váradi but as he is not a woman I would say Christine Lagarde, the former French Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industry, currently President of the European

Central Bank and Simone Veil, a French magistrate and politician who advanced women's legal rights in France.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

A Forbes article about empathy at work and a French book *Merci mais non merci* by Celine Alix, explaining why many successful female leaders decide to quit the corporate world these days, as it does not reflect their values.



**What does diversity mean at Wizz Air?**

Diversity, in all its forms, is so important here. The agenda is promoted and supported by our Group Chief Executive Officer, József Váradi, who believes strongly in diversity, in equality and in female leadership.

He's made some real commitments to improve gender diversity at the C-suite, management level and in the pilot community, as well as balance out the ratio of women to men

in the cabin crew.

We believe that it is important to reflect society everywhere in the company. Not only is this right morally, but it makes for a better business and culture.

**What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?**

It's all about passion: the passion for travel, for people and for flying. I've always loved flying – whether it's the technical aspect or the social aspect

of connecting with others around the world.

**What challenges have you learnt the most from in your career?**

One of the most important things I've learnt is not to 'act like a man'. I've always followed my own way of working and way of approaching projects, challenges and people. It's been a challenge not to be influenced by the typically male way of working, especially when you're the only woman

in the room. But I would never have succeeded by trying to emulate the men.

**Why do you think more women should consider a career within the hospitality, travel and leisure industry?**

Travel is all about people – about connecting people and welcoming people, whether that's into a restaurant or onboard an aircraft. This sector is perfect for anyone who is interested in people.





# Shona Gold

Company **Vue** / Job Title **Group Director of Brand, Marketing & Communication**



Food has always been a passion of mine. I started off on the marketing graduate scheme at Nestlé, which taught me all the basics, before moving to General Mills where I worked as marketing manager for Häagen-Dazs.

My next role was marketing director at Lonely Planet, and I was able to work my way up to chief marketing officer and global trade sales director for the company.

I joined Vue Entertainment in 2015 as the director of marketing and I am currently group director of brand, marketing and communication at Vue International.



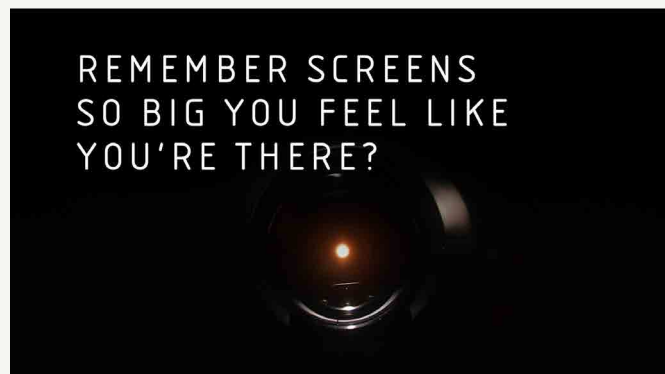
**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and mean in your organisation?**

We highlight the importance of customer understanding, and to be accessible to all and deliver the cinema experience in the best way, we need our workforce to be reflective and representative of our diverse customer base. When it comes to gender diversity, getting support from men to call out casual sexism and inequality can speak volumes – so we should make sure that the message for change is coming from men as well as women. I'm careful not to value an 'always on'

approach to work, making clear what is required when, and not encroaching on non-work time.

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

Judge people based on their performance above anything else. Do not make judgements based on external factors such as whether someone leaves at 5pm or is at a social event. The same goes for yourself. Be conscious that there are not enough female role models so take opportunities to be seen and to celebrate success.



## QUICKFIRE

**What film character has influenced you the most?**

Margie in Fargo: at 7 months pregnant she susses out what's going on, manages morning sickness, gets the job done, and teaches the men moral lessons. Extreme multi-tasking!

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

I have many super smart peers who get stuff done at pace whilst being excellent fun too – Sara Holt at Merlin, Reemah Sakaan at BritBox and Celia Pronto (previously at Casual Dining Group and STA Travel).

**What do you enjoy the most about working in the HTL sector?**

The variety and pace more than anything else. This is particularly true of cinema and film – it is non-stop!

I particularly enjoy the fact that we're offering people something of real value - the chance to sit back, switch off and have two hours out of their normal daily life in a cinema where they can completely relax, free of distractions.

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

The sector took a hit during the pandemic, but consumer demand is still very much present. To capitalise on that, as an industry, it is vital we accelerate differentiating the experience of watching a film in the cinema vs watching at home.

More importantly, I hope that in the future we are in a position where everyone has an equal shot at success. I hope we can be free of the unconscious biases that still exist today.



# Sharon Goldthorpe

Company **Aramark** / Job Title **Regional Operations Director**



I've been interested in the catering side of hospitality since I was young, and after leaving school I took the opportunity to train as a chef. When I finished catering college, I wanted to go down the culinary route. I got my first job with a contract catering

group and progressed into operational support manager. I maneuvered across different management roles over the years, then eventually found myself at Aramark in 2019.

Overtime, I decided that I was at a point in my career where I wanted to challenge myself, so I moved into Aramark Defence Services. The main focus is soft facilities management, but catering is very much a part of it. The Ministry of Defense services continued throughout Covid-19, so we had to keep delivering. I've recently been appointed as regional operations director at Aramark, where I now direct a whole region.



**If you were not working in HTL, which sector would you work in?**

If I'm being honest, I wouldn't have chosen anything else, I feel as though I would have always chosen to work within hospitality because I love the industry.

There is a part of me that would have liked to have been involved in politics in some form or another. It's never too late, there is still time for me to learn more. There are so many leading female politicians who are inspiring to me.

**How are women and diverse employees empowered through your organisation?**

Aramark has quite a few employee resource groups (ERGs) within the business offering allyship for those that may face barriers within the workplace. EMPOWER is our female focused ERG, it offers opportunities for connection, collaboration and sharing of personal experiences with like-minded people, for example parenting and various other challenges that women in business may experience on a day-to-day basis. A platform is therefore given to women within the company and wider.

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

One of the big things is using your voice. The other bit of advice is that it's okay to make mistakes, it is something we all do, and we often learn from the mistakes.

I also think it is important to grab every opportunity that you can. I'm still grabbing the opportunities now, even though I'm further on in my career.

I would also encourage young women to celebrate being female in business and using their voices confidently. It is so important to keep progressing, keep challenging yourself, and more importantly, just enjoy what you do, that's my philosophy.

**Why do you think role models are important to advance diversity and inclusion?**

Learning from strong female leaders helps us learn how to achieve excellence. The things we learn from them can then be implemented into our career progression.

## QUICKFIRE

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

"If you are not intentionally including, you could be unintentionally excluding."

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

Empathy, honesty, stay

true to yourself, promote a good work-life balance and humour.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently.**

*Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown.





# Joanna Hacking

Company **Deliveroo** / Job Title **Vice President – Finance**



I'm an accountant by trade. After I left university I joined Deloitte where I progressed to Director level. Working in the Cambridge office I had good exposure to tech companies from early on in my career.

I then joined a media company as Finance Director and a year after I was contacted about the role at Deliveroo which I was super excited about. The day I was due to accept the role I found out I was pregnant and eventually found out I was carrying twins.

I rang the then CFO and explained that if I were to join I would be going on maternity leave shortly after. He was surprisingly great about it and said to me, "Hey, no matter, we're looking for the right person long term, not just somebody who can start in three months' time".

I have to say, all through my career with Deliveroo it's been pretty impressive in that respect. I've been lucky that the majority of people I've worked with here have been extremely supportive of working parents.

## What did you find most rewarding about working in hospitality, travel and leisure?

I think it's quite limitless. You tend to find a lot of entrepreneurs in this sector, and a lot of people who don't take no for an answer. There seems to be a 'no boundaries' mentality where you can always figure something out to solve a problem or you can always do something new, which is really great.

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

I suspect that Covid-19 has been a good learning curve for people, I would hope that in the future the industry could take whatever is thrown at it and still come out well.

I'd love to see more of the newer and innovative solutions that we're hearing about, such as robotic assembly lines working on food and things like that. I really like the tech and entrepreneurial side, and would like to see these new concepts being almost mainstream.

## What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress within the sector?

Deliveroo's very focused on this right now. Similar to most organisations, the Women in Leadership programmes are great at encouraging more and more women to come through. We are working a lot on parental policies, such as parental leave, making parenting equal

## QUICKFIRE

### Book that has influenced you the most

*My Life in Full* by Indra Nooyi.

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

Integrity, decisiveness, adaptability and a sense of humour.

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

Laura Harper-Hinton is someone I admire. She is known for championing other women in hospitality, and I love Caravan.



for men and women, which is a great way to level the playing field career-wise. Finance is quite typically dominated by men so we are specifically looking at things like apprenticeships and graduate schemes. We have a whole heap of new women coming through who have trained just in the hospitality and leisure tech sectors with Deliveroo. I think really learning from the ground up is key to developing new professionals.

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

Find a mentor. Ask leaders that you find inspiring for advice. Find people you want to work with and find people that you want to be like. Try to emulate them and spend time with them.

The other thing is just show up. If you can be at things in person, volunteer and get those experiences face-to-face, nothing can substitute for that really.

# Lizi Hills

Company **Various Eateries** / Job Title **Head of Finance**



I started working in hospitality at the age of 16 in an owner-managed business where the owner was the chef and his wife worked front of house. They were really passionate about helping all staff understand what it takes to run a restaurant but most importantly about what

great service looks like. It's where my love for the industry really started, and on my manager's advice, went to university to study business, economics and management to work in the industry at a group level.

When I left university I worked for a restructuring and M&A business, eventually working on the deal that saw Tragus become Casual Dining Group, and acquire brands such as Las Iguanas and La Tasca. Following the deal I went to work in house at CDG to oversee the acquisitions integration and headed up the Concessions Business. After Casual Dining I moved to Burger King to set up the UK Master Franchise, consolidating some smaller franchisees and rolling out the new store programme and operational consistencies as Commercial FD. I then moved to Various Eateries in September this year as Head of Finance.

The company is at a great stage of growth following its listing on the AIM market in 2020 and it's really exciting to be leading the finance team through its next stage, using the variety of skills I've learnt through the years.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*If I could tell you just one thing...* by Richard Reed.

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

Honesty and empathy, as well as clear direction.

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

Thomasina Miers.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The Kindness Economy* by Mary Portas.



## What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

It feels great to work in an environment where people are valued. The customer should not be seen just as a source of revenue, but as a guest we need to look after.

I just love entering a restaurant and seeing people enjoying themselves. It means that all the hard work going on behind the scenes to make that happen is paying off.

## What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

Our mission is to achieve

positive results through our values, not just targets. To have a strong community feel and being empathetic towards each other cultivates a warm and helpful working culture, which creates a culture women can excel in. When empathy and collaboration are used when making decisions, they will also inherently drive financial performance as everyone is bought into the decision. We are there to encourage people to speak out and ask questions so staff can bring their true selves to work. Training and time are key in giving people the skills and confidence to be the best they can be.



# Jane Howkins

Company **Moto Hospitality** / Job Title **Head of Talent and Resourcing**



With over 19 years' experience working in a number of fast paced retail and hospitality businesses in various learning and development, HR and recruitment roles from Dixons, Gamestation, Game, Cash Converters and now Moto, I grew

a deep interest for learning and development and seeing what great training can deliver not only for the business but for colleagues who developed their skills, knowledge and abilities.

## What drew you to HTL sector?

I have always enjoyed the customer facing aspect of retail and felt that moving into the HTL sector allowed me to not only keep that customer focus but also to build a great career.

The sector offers so much opportunity for development. People can be whatever they want to be. Sadly it can be a sector that is overlooked as a long-term career prospect, however, as an example a colleague can start at Moto as a Customer Service Assistant in one of our great high street brands and progress through various roles up to running their own site and leading up to 200 colleagues. With fantastic in house training, external qualifications and lots of opportunities to grow, the sector is an amazing space to have a long and happy career.

## What has been the best thing about working in this industry?

The people I work with make this industry so special. Being able to work with like-minded passionate people

who really care about doing their best for their customers and truly want to brighten people's journeys through life, is fantastic.

It's a very fast paced, fun and exciting environment and time just flies.

One key growth area in the industry is resilience and during the last couple of years this has been tested in ways no one could imagine. The willingness of people to continue to be the best that they can be in difficult circumstances is a massive inspiration to me.

## If you were not working in HTL where do you think you might be?

I would probably still be working in the retail sector as I love the buzz of the shop floor.

## How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL?

I embrace opportunities to learn more about inclusion and I call out others when they don't consider how supporting inclusion within an organisation is key, not only for continued growth but also it's about doing the right thing.



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

Just go for it! it's such a fantastic sector and there's a huge variety of roles to get into, as well as huge potential for progression.

## Why do you think D&I is important for businesses to consider?

A D&I workforce improves engagement, progression and results. I think having an inclusive workforce also means that businesses are more representative of the communities where their colleagues live and work.

# QUICKFIRE

## What book has influenced you the most?

*Feel The Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Authenticity, respect and trust.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

Dawn Browne, People and Talent Director at Fuller's.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*A quote from Celeste Headlee: "enter every conversation assuming you have something to learn."*

# Miranda Jones

Company **Everyman Group** / Job Title **People Director**



I joined the McDonald's graduate scheme 20 years ago, and got an incredible grounding in the real nitty-gritty of hospitality, developing a strong work ethic and passion for people. It was a time when we had to work hard to get people interested in a career there,

so bringing in people in, and developing them was the way to get our managers of the future. I was able to spot potential and then develop people in my restaurants, which is what brought me to the new, wonderful world of central HR and training!

From McDonald's I went to The White Company as I was interested in the intersectionality between hospitality and retail. Over my 13 years, our focus was on creating a special, personal instore and online experience for our customer, whilst developing an employee experience to be proud of every step of the journey. I left TWC as I was going through IVF. This very personal experience was the cause of me pursuing my next HR role at IVF clinics, as I wanted to give something back to the industry that helped create my family. I loved it but missed the everyday excitement of retail and hospitality so started to think about my next step. I love the opportunities you get in hospitality – so when the role at Everyman came up, how could I say no to being their first People Director!



# QUICKFIRE

## What quote has influenced you the most?

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" – Maya Angelou.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Honesty, integrity, and a sense of humour.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The World I Fell Out Of* by Melanie Reid.



## If you were not working in HTL, where would you be?

I am definitely in the right sector for me! But I come from a family of teachers, so teaching was something I considered – I'd love to know more about art history too.

## How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?

I have spent several years mentoring female entrepreneurs building their businesses. I particularly love helping people who have great ideas or great products, but don't necessarily know how to grow a business. At Everyman, we have the most brilliant, passionate people – we have fantastic women in the company,

and I feel incredibly lucky that my job is to help them succeed.

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

Believe in yourself and believe you can do it. Enjoy every second of the journey and if you work hard enough, and you love it enough, you will absolutely succeed.

## Why do you think role models are so important to advance D&I?

I've been lucky to have seen incredible female leaders in action, and it gives you a feeling, without you even realising, that you can do it too. Representation enables aspiration amongst young women.



# Nicola Jong

Company **Hilton** / Job Title **Senior Director Customer Engagement EMEA and APAC, Hilton Supply Management**



After completing my hospitality degree at university, I fell into procurement and did a variety of different roles within the hospitality sector and a brief stint in legal. I had built a good blend of corporate and hospitality experience, both from a procurement

and operational perspective, which was a good match for Hilton at the time.

I started in their Supply Management function, travelling all over the country, meeting with hotels and different stakeholders. I then went away and had a baby, came back, and took on a new opportunity where I launched a new business unit, which included the growth of significant revenues within our function.

We grew it from nothing to where it is now. From originating in the UK, we now cover 20 countries and I've got a team across the region doing a variety of different assignments.

**If you were not working in the HTL sector, where do you think you would be?**

I'd probably still be within supply management and procurement in some way, shape or form but maybe in one of the professional services areas. I was offered a job at PwC back in the early days, so perhaps I would have followed that route.

**How are you an advocate for women within HTL and your organisation?**

It was never my initial intention to become an advocate but I have found myself becoming one anyway. For me, it's the mentorship of new women in the sector that is important. I've been lucky enough to mentor women in both a formal and informal

capacity, which has been an insightful and powerful learning experience. The right insights, guidance and leadership are at the forefront of my agenda.

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

Firstly, just be yourself. Make sure that you feel comfortable with anything and everything that you're doing. Don't be afraid to stand up, ask questions, and be who you are. Whatever personality type you have, just go for it.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance diversity and inclusion?**

Role models are important because they provide an opportunity for young

talent to see someone else's experience, which ultimately helps shape their own future.

Role models can reflect the environment you're in and help you understand the type of person you are.

With this comes empathy for one another, which is crucial in certain working situations. Eventually, you gain a better understanding of how to be the best version of yourself.

## QUICKFIRE

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

*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte.

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

Empathy and vision.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Berenice Lurton - Wine Maker, Chateau Climens.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*The Madman's Library – The Strangest Books, Manuscripts and Other Literary Curiosities from History* by Edward Brooke-Hitching.



# Sally King

Company **Whitbread** / Job Title **Head of Internal Audit**



Maths was always my thing and that somehow translated into accounting for me, so that's what I studied. I've always been drawn to hospitality due to the vibrancy, dynamics and passion of the people that I work with.

Working in finance within hospitality didn't feel like an office job, it felt interactive and connected. I was very much a part of operations, marketing and product teams. I think that is why I have stayed so long with Whitbread, I'm currently in my nineteenth year.

It's been brilliant being able to work across all areas, being able to be a part of different brands and different areas within the business. I took on bar and waitressing work during my studies, and that gave me the customer facing first-hand experience which I could link to the financial side of my job today. Connecting those two pieces has meant I have insights across a wider base, not just finance.

## QUICKFIRE

**What poem or book has influenced you most?**

*Desiderata* by Max Ehrmann.

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

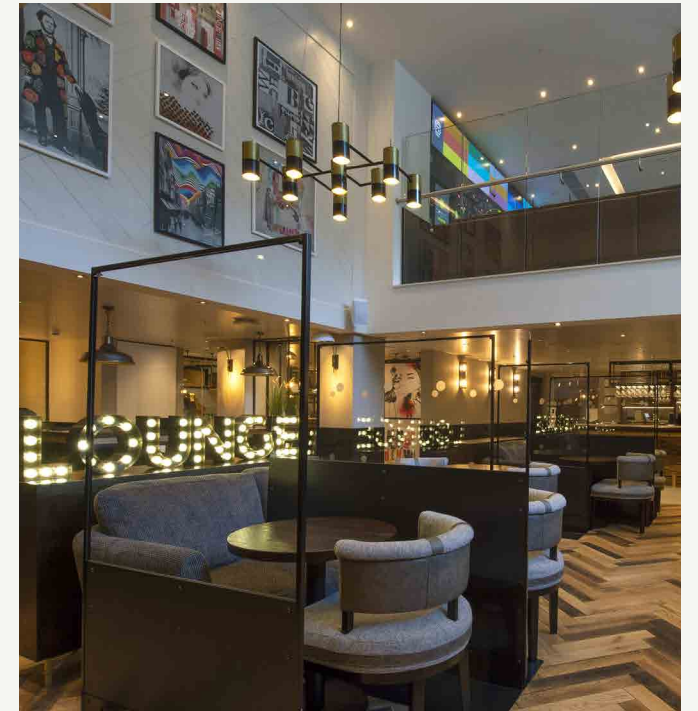
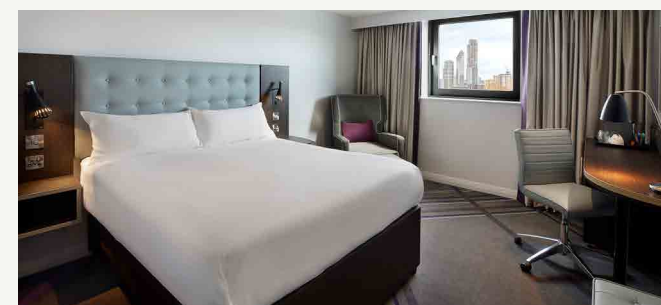
Authenticity and passion.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

There are many, but one would be Nicholas Cadbury for his integrity and for being a great ally for all diverse groups.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

My daughter's personal statement. Plus, an article on gender pay gaps and why women don't negotiate job offers – which is more to do with how women are treated when they do than it has to do with their general confidence or skills at negotiation.



**If you weren't working in HTL, where would you be?**

I would probably still be in some kind of consumer area. I like to understand what the business is delivering to enhance a potential connection. Being part of a company that I utilise and love helps build that passion.

**How have you been an advocate for women and diverse employees within the HTL sector?**

I set up Women in Finance at Whitbread where I really wanted to highlight and change the low-level of representation at leadership positions. I've continuously made an effort to open up those conversations. I've also really championed flexibility and recognised key events, making them fun and inclusive.

**What advice would you give to anyone from a younger generation in the sector?**

To speak up, and don't be afraid to challenge. Your viewpoint could be different, but it could be the view that we need to make a difference.

**Why do you think role models are important?**

I think the sense of familiarity you feel when you see someone like yourself is very comforting. We still need that to feel confident walking into a room. It is much easier to connect with someone who has had similar life experiences as you. Also, from the other end, it's nice to be that familiar face and help to grow that confidence in others.





# Nicola Maisuria

Company **Merlin** / Job Title **Health, Safety, Security Director**



I started in Merlin in 2016 after a recruitment agency contacted me asking if I would like to work for an entertainment business that owned theme parks and attractions. It sounded like my dream job. I was successful in getting the job and started my journey in

Merlin Magic Making (MMM) – the creative arm of Merlin Entertainments, which designs, creates and builds new rides and attractions. MMM also project manages everything from concept to delivery.

In 2018 I applied for a promotion to be the Director of Health, Safety and Security for the Midway Operating Group and was successful. Our Midway attractions are those city attractions such as SEA LIFE, Madame Tussauds, the London Eye and the Dungeons brand. I've been in this role for three years now, overseeing the safety of over 100 attractions globally with my regional team. It's a fantastic position, where I get to travel and see different parts of our entertainment industry around the world.

**What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?**

I love that we create a place for people to escape the everyday. It's so important that we offer a safe and fun place to break away and re-set from the reality of life, especially having just been through a major pandemic. I love the fact that you walk into our attractions and see guests smiling and laughing. Children have a magical experience here at our attractions but it's lovely to see adults regressing and being childlike too!

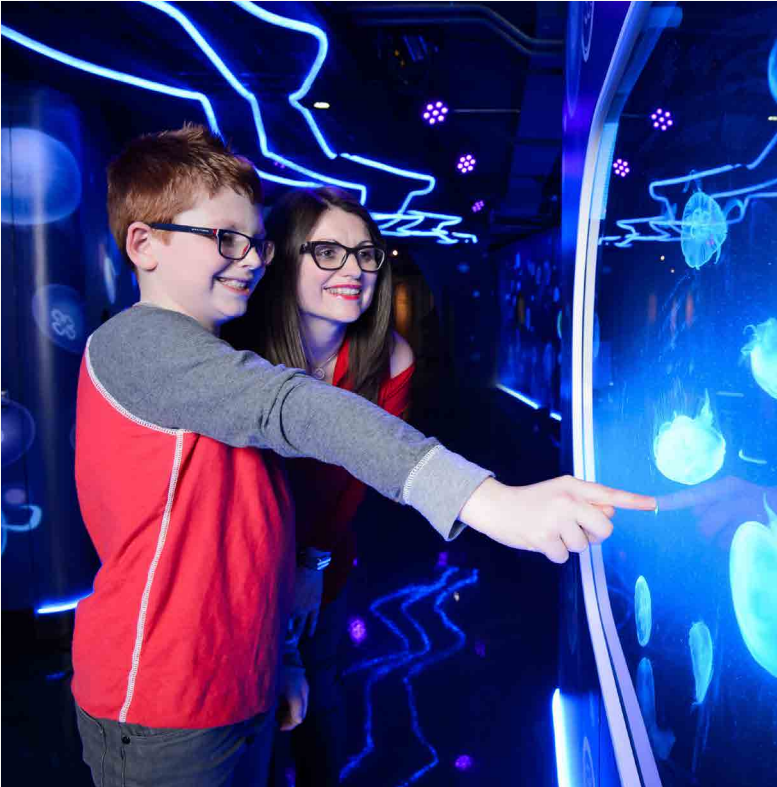
**How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop in your time within hospitality?**

I wanted to be part of the diversity and inclusion steering group at Merlin because I had something to say on it and I wanted

to be involved in the journey Merlin was taking. I've been working on a sponsorship programme ensuring our high talent staff from diverse groups are recognised and reach their full potential. The programme is about ensuring we are proactive in supporting talent from diverse backgrounds by giving people the confidence and actively pushing them forward for opportunities.

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

Safety and engineering tend to be a male-dominated profession and therefore as a female from an ethnic background I have sometimes struggled in the past to have my voice heard. I have also not always believed in myself which can be very



## QUICKFIRE

**What book has influenced you the most?**  
Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys.

**What qualities are most valuable in a leader?**  
Vulnerability, integrity and empathy.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**  
Fiona Eastwood.

challenging. I know having the support of my mentor but also other senior leaders in Merlin has really helped my confidence and pushed me to be the best version of myself. While we have a long way to go, I am already seeing more women come into the safety profession at a senior level and what is further reinforcing is the passion from others that are supporting this.

**Why do you think more women should consider a career within hospitality, travel, and leisure?**

If most of our guests are women deciding what the family does for entertainment and leisure, then surely, we need to be making sure we cater to that. If we don't represent our guests, then I don't think we're succeeding.

# Nicola Marshall

Company **Welcome Break** / Job Title **People Director**



I had worked in restaurants and cafes prior to attending university. Upon leaving, I joined the Enterprise Rent-a-Car graduate programme where I remained for three years. I then found myself at a recruitment company, which is how I landed my first HR role. I eventually

joined Welcome Break and I've been here for the past five years, most recently as People Director.

**Why should more women consider a career in HTL?**

I think it is one of the most interesting and varied industries that you can work in. You can move across the sector and work in a variety of different fields. For women in particular, there is no ceiling, we have got some great female senior leaders. The doors to opportunity are there if you want them. The sector is huge but it's also tiny – everybody does tend to know each other or knows somebody that knows you!

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

Courage of your own conviction is really important. As a woman, others will try fly your flag for you. It's also important to recognise the difference in language, between we and me, and understanding the value you add as an individual. I would also highlight the importance of being proud of yourself and your own achievements.

**What would you be doing if you were not in the HTL sector?**

For me, it's all about people and customers. In this role I am able to lead people in a consumer facing sector, which is my ideal role. I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else.

**How do you think the HTL sector will look in five years' time?**

I wish for the perception of the hospitality industry to change. I don't think we have a problem attracting young people. I think we have a problem with the parents and the perception parents hold and I'd love to see that shift. Working in hospitality does give you some pocket money whilst you're at school but there is also a wealth of career paths that hospitality can lead you down.

Managing people, customers and teams is a life skill that we all should want to learn, and the hospitality industry is a great place for that.



## QUICKFIRE

**What book or film has influenced you the most?**  
Disney's "Up". Lockdown made me check in on those who could be lonely and true friendship is priceless.

**What qualities are most valuable in a leader?**  
Empathy, humility, kindness.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**  
I have many and for a whole host of different reasons. I'm a big fan of the work Shereen Daniels is pioneering in tackling racism.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**  
The Patrick Lencioni fables. My current read is *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*.





# Brittany Mayer-Schuler

Company **Elior North America** / Job Title **Vice President of Legal Affairs/General Counsel**



I have worked in the food industry at each stage of my career, since my first high school job making pizzas. I went on to work for law firms where I represented various restaurant clients. From there, I began on my path as the inaugural General Counsel for Elior

North America, a premier food service company, which provides services to more than 1,700 client sites across the United States. Since then, I have also taken over our risk and safety departments. I have been at Elior for 10 years now and have loved every second of it.



## QUICKFIRE

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

"Who am I not to be great" – Conglomeration of Quotes.

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

Strategic, confident, resourceful, resilient, motivating, and committed to the success of others.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Elior North America CEO, Olivier Poirot.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

The book *The Confidence Code* taught me that "success correlates more closely with confidence than competence," and the authors have written similar books aimed at inspiring confidence in the next generation of young women.

**How are you an advocate for women within your organisation?**

For years, I was the only woman executive at Elior North America. Many women work in the food service industry, but few ascend to senior levels. There is not a talent gap – women possess necessary skills and capabilities to rise to very senior levels. Rather, women often underestimate their talents and allow self-doubt to hold them back.

We need to change that and, for that reason, I formed the inaugural Women's Leadership Council. I am proud to also serve as a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Steering Council for both Elior North America and for Elior Group (our parent company). One of the main goals of each of these councils is to promote talented women to senior positions.

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

Give yourself space and grace to make 'smart

mistakes.' When you make a mistake you learn from, that mistake becomes a valuable lesson. Everyone struggles with taking risks. The moment you rise above your fear and take calculated risks, you position yourself to learn, develop and grow.

Once you develop a track record for success, it matters more what you have done and less where you came from. I was able to attend law school because of a scholarship and entered the market with no career advantages. Once I developed my own successful career, the playing field levelled.

**What do you value in a leader?**

Much of being a leader is having people with the right talents aligned to meet a united objective. As a leader, there is nothing better than finding an individual's talents, helping them understand how those talents dovetail with the business' needs, and positioning and empowering them for success.



# Jenny McGowan

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Head of RM Strategy & Performance**



When I finished university, I was sure I would end up being an accountant. I came across a revenue analyst role at British Midland, a small regional airline based out of East Midlands Airport. I spent a couple of years there, learning

the basics but more importantly developing a passion for aviation and travelling. Shortly afterwards, BMI was acquired by British Airways, which put a quick end to my role at the company. I needed to decide what I wanted to do next whilst, in the process, also taking my Chartered Accountancy exams.

This brought me to Qatar Airways, in London first, working as an analyst, and then in Doha, operating in revenue management. That is where the spark in leadership roles really began. I moved to Doha managing a team of 4 people and I left leading a team of around 50, from over 20 nationalities. From Doha I continued living abroad but this time in New York which was a huge cultural transition. When I eventually returned to the UK, I really wanted to work somewhere where the focus was on people as a priority. I truly believe I have found that here at Virgin Atlantic. The leadership quality that we live by is leading with trust, and that is defined in a manifesto called 'Be Yourself', which includes groups chaired by our C-suite focused on different aspects of D&I.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures* by Erin Meyer.

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

Empathy and trust.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Annabelle Cordelli, who is VP Brand and Marketing at Virgin Atlantic.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*Radical Candor: How to Get What You Want by Saying What You Mean* by Kim Scott.



**How rewarding has your career been in HTL?**

The fact that I would never change any of it speaks volumes.

Also working in revenue management gives me a sense of real contribution, when I realise what I do in my work today directly affects the company tomorrow. I love that I have the freedom to make many decisions on my own, where the results are felt instantaneously.

**Can you talk about any challenges you had to face in your career and how you overcame them?**

The Middle East was a challenging place to

work given I was a white woman. There is often a certain perception of a decision-maker or leader and I was not someone that fit that profile. Having the support of my leadership was crucial, as it meant issues were acknowledged promptly.

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

Push hard and take risks to create opportunities for yourself.

Never let yourself believe that you are too young or too inexperienced to do something. You will need to get yourself out of your comfort zone in order to overcome your fears.





# Jacqui McManus

Company **The Restaurant Group** / Job Title **People Director**



I have been in hospitality all my working life; I fell in love with the industry and never left. At the beginning I worked as operations director within Mitchells & Butlers, in their O'Neill's brand. I then moved to TGI Fridays for a while, continuing as operations director, but due to my

love of the people side of the role, moved over to become culture and development director. Having the background of operations assisted in ensuring that HR (People Team) were fully aligned and balanced with both the needs of the business and the people within.

My role involves everything within the employee life cycle – from the moment someone considers joining right up until they leave. I joined The Restaurant Group (TRG) two years ago where I look after the Leisure & Concessions Division within TRG, whilst also supporting our head office and executive team across the group.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" – Maya Angelo.

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

Vision, integrity and flexibility.

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

Susan Chappell, Karen Forrester and Mark Chambers are incredible people who lead with resilience, determination and business acumen that is second to none.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*A Life on our Planet* by David Attenborough.

### If you were not working in HTL, where would you be?

I would love to have had my own business. A day care nursery would have been wonderful. I would still get to incorporate my love of teaching but be doing something for myself. But I do feel very fortunate to have had such an incredible career in hospitality, and have made the most amazing friends along the way.

### How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?

There are several agenda points for TRG on this topic. For example, we developed an EDI pledge that showed how we were going to show respect and integrity to all. We also developed a C.A.R.E. programme, which stands for connect, achieve, reward, ethical, and ensures an

environment of inclusivity, creating "ambassadors or storytellers" who help our current and future EDI programmes. It's important that we listen and hear all our women/diverse team members, making it clear they have a voice.

### Why do you think role models are so important to advance D&I?

Role models encourage and motivate us all to achieve, setting an example, and showing us the art of the possible.

It's also important that the leaders and role models are acting in a way that reflects some of your own experiences. Different perspectives are key. The same can be said for our diverse employees, the more diverse we are in our role models the more confidently we can say we have considered all perspectives. It is about equal representation and opportunity.

# Nicola McMullen

Company **Leeds Bradford Airport** / Job Title **Aviation Director**



I've been fascinated by air travel since I was a child; the airport features in many happy memories for me. Throughout my career, I've never been able to imagine a life working outside of the industry I love. I genuinely believe aviation is something that's in your DNA, almost like a calling.

My journey began working for First Choice Holidays, before spending 5 years ACL as a Slot Coordinator. Then, after a period with ASM as an Aviation Consultant, I moved to Manchester Airport Group for 9 years, prior to joining my current role as Aviation Director for LBA.

### How are you an advocate for women in HTL?

I am one of a very few women working in Aviation Development for an airport. At one stage, I was the only woman in the UK to undertake my role.

I completed my Master's degree whilst on maternity leave, which was the most challenging but equally one of the most rewarding things I've ever done. I made it my mission to use my experiences to improve the way mothers return to work after being on maternity leave; pushing for change and working with HR to create clear policies and guidelines around the maternity process.

Recognising the strength a diverse workforce brings is crucial, but from experience is one that is frequently overlooked. I've worked hard to progress and overcome many obstacles, so I hope I can inspire other women to be driven and focussed. As the lead on the D&I programme with Leeds

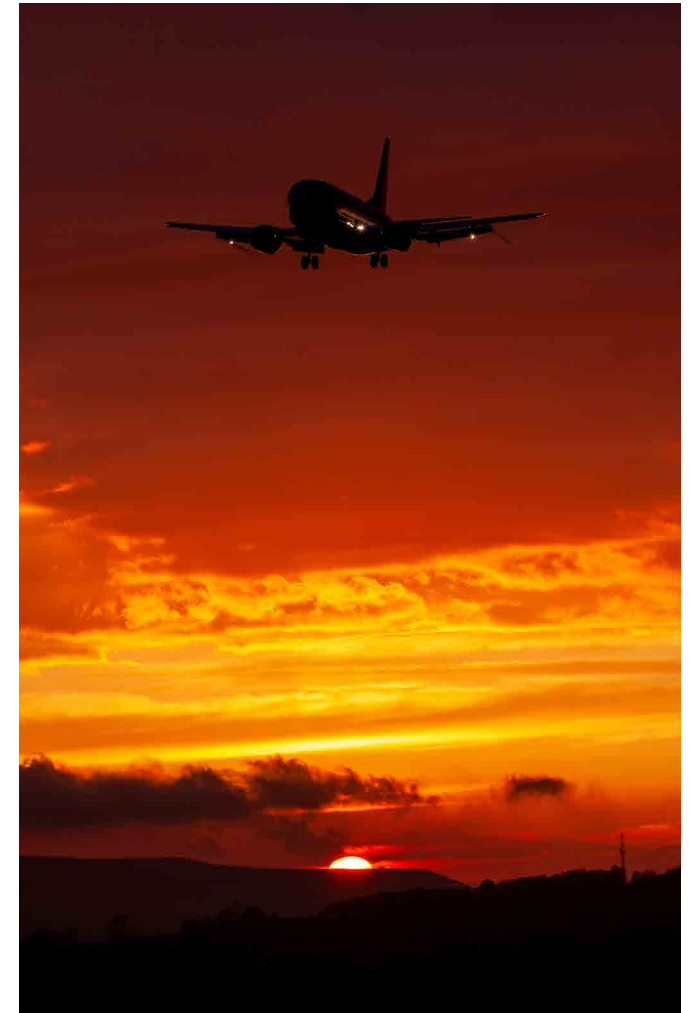
Bradford Airport, it is vital for me to promote inclusivity in the industry.

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

The path to where you want to go is unlikely to be smooth, but the only barrier in the way of the end goal is you. Always believe in yourself and never question your ability. Use your experiences to your advantage and learn from them so you can be better and stronger moving forward. Seek support from role models and always support other women.

### Why are role models important to you?

Visibility of underrepresented groups in business helps give a holistic voice that represents the minority. Any doubts the younger generation may face about entering new roles and industries will be eased if similar role models are visible to them.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"Be the woman who fixes another woman's crown, without telling the world that it was crooked."

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

Integrity, self-awareness, empathy and respect.

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

Bessie Coleman, the first African American

female pilot. She refused to give up in the face of adversity, and used her experiences to encourage other women to achieve their dreams.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

That Finland, one of the most progressed countries in the world with regards to equality, has grown faster than the US.



# Sarah Miles

Company **Travelopia** / Job Title **Chief People Officer**



I wasn't clear about my career path when I left university. I did a broad degree and my first real work experience was in retail. That's when I saw up close the importance people play in making organisations successful. From that point on I consciously built a career in human resources.

I am fortunate to have had a very varied career, across multiple sectors and geographies. I spent 12 years at PepsiCo (FMCG) which is where I did my functional training, and I've lived and worked in Singapore. After two PLC jobs I now work for a private equity luxury travel business.

### What is the most fulfilling thing about working within the HTL sector?

I have worked in numerous sectors in various geographies around the world, and what stands out is the extraordinary level of natural engagement and commitment by those who work in this sector. People come to this sector because they love it, whether it's the customer, the work they do, the products they sell or the environment they create for customers. There's a depth of tenacity, resilience and engagement that I have not seen in other sectors, it's extraordinary. The natural

passion is one of the things I love the most about this sector.

### How have you seen the inclusion and diversity agenda develop in your time in HTL?

Our progress on D&I has been disrupted by the chaos of Covid and the devastating impact it has had on our sector. As we return to growth, I am really pleased to see commitment to this agenda remains a priority. Some of the changes we made through Covid (like the role of remote working) will remain and will remove some of the traditional



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."

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

Our passionate employees who create and deliver

exceptional travel experiences for our customers, year after year whatever the challenges.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family and Defiance During the Blitz* by Erik Larson.



geographic boundaries on where we hire and where talent needs to be based. This will ensure we continue to include and develop an even more diverse talent pool.

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

Being brave enough to stand up for what you believe in is a career-defining moment. I have learnt how important it is to speak up and not stay silent. This requires bravery, but it is great to be able to look back and realise you seized a moment to speak your mind.

### Why do you think more women should consider a career within HTL?

This is an exciting sector that is changing all the time so it's an exciting place to work, and the nature of work and opportunities will continue to evolve. Everyone working in the sector and women considering the sector should be energised and excited by this innovation and change.

The sector has so many strong female role models who provide sponsorship, support and are creating career paths to ensure this is a sector where female talent can thrive and develop.



# Rebecca Mills

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Deputy General Counsel**



I started my career working as a lawyer in the City straight after law school. As much as I loved the job, I really struggled to see myself there long term, particularly as there was a lack of female role models in law at that time. I was ready for a new challenge just as a maternity leave

cover role came up at easyJet.

At easyJet I felt part of a family from day one, which was a huge factor in my decision to stay on full-time. Working my way up through the company, I took the opportunity to work as an airport negotiator within the procurement team, which enabled me to look at the business from a different perspective. I was then given the opportunity to work back within the legal team as the Group Head of Legal, looking after all the legal services provided to the group, before eventually taking on my current positions, Deputy General Counsel of the easyJet Group and Legal Director of easyJet holidays. I've also been part of the easyJet leadership team for six years and a board member for easyJet holidays for nearly two years.



### What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

I absolutely love travel, it's something that I really connect with. I love the work that we do as an industry – we bring joy and help people create real memories. I love the fact that I look out of the window in the head office to Luton Airport and see people with their suitcases going on an easyJet holiday.

### How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector? How do you think it will change in the future?

The pandemic was a huge challenge; overnight, we switched to survival mode. However, it also allowed the industry to showcase the spirit people have, as everyone pulled together with a common purpose for the recovery. We also reset the way we work with the introduction of hybrid working, for instance. We have all realised the importance of people

being their true selves and the value of diversity, which fills us with hope for the future.

### What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and your organisation?

We want to ensure that easyJet is a place for people to feel like they belong, ensuring that nothing in people's background, gender or ethnicity prevents them from realising their full potential. During my career there have been setbacks and successes, but I've learned how to be myself and push through my boundaries. As a leader, I feel my role is to help people do the same, giving them the support that I've received over the years.

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

Believe in yourself and be open-minded regarding new opportunities. Never be afraid of being your authentic self and share it with other people.

## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

"Leadership simply begins with the courage to be yourself, so that everyone else can be too."

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

To be able to listen, empathise and care. And being authentic and leading by example.





# Meera Mittel

Company **Editions at Deliveroo** / Job Title **Director**



I studied maths at university, and I really enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of the subject. After graduating I went into management consulting, which I ended up doing for 12 years.

The beauty of consulting is that it encompasses a

range of different industries – when I started I worked in healthcare, retail and financial services. Eventually I realised that I wanted to focus on the consumer sectors, and to work side-by-side with operational leaders, really getting into the weeds of a problem.

The work I did was predominantly in food retail, working on 12-month engagements. Around 18 months ago I thought ‘I could either become a partner here or I could start doing something a bit more operational myself’. I wanted something fast-paced, and that’s where my Deliveroo journey started.



## What is the most fulfilling part of your job?

I love the fact that I’m able to see the results of my hard work. I’m a consumer at Deliveroo, as are all my friends, so I can talk to them and get live feedback on what’s working well and what might need improving.

I think this all stems from my degree. I’ve always loved applied maths – the mechanics side of the subject, like physics – because you can see it and understand the logic behind it.

## How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop?

When I adopt a long-term view of the talent landscape, I can definitely see that it is moving in the right direction. I think diversity and inclusion is a vital part of any business, as it gives you a breadth of different opinions around the table and a richer output as a result.

I think what’s really changed over the past five

or seven years is that more than one viewpoint is being acknowledged. Businesses are realising that a diverse workforce, with competing viewpoints, opinions and areas of expertise, is really powerful. In fact, it is a massive priority for Deliveroo – we have recently hired a Director of Diversity and Inclusion to support on the topic.

## What is the most valuable thing you’ve learnt in your role?

To put yourself in someone’s shoes – whether it is a site manager, a restaurant partner, or a consumer. Being able to empathise with their point of view will give you a more rounded picture.

## What would you say to young women looking to enter the HTL industry?

It’s such a fascinating industry. It’s constantly evolving and changing, bringing plenty of different opportunities to make a difference. There is so much potential to help shape the sector.



## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight; a fascinating read about the beginnings of Nike.

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

Being authentic, and driving meaningful connections with people.

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

The amount of entrepreneurial activity that has sprung up through Covid. The quick commerce space just didn’t exist 12 months ago!



# Yasmin Mukhida

Company **Premier Inn Brands** / Job Title **Head of Brand Marketing**



I started my marketing career agency-side, where I was able to get a great foundation in advertising, marketing and brand development. Next, I got a job at GLH, London’s largest hotel owner-operator and progressed to Head of Brand. This is where I learned the fundamentals of how large-scale hotel businesses operate.

I joined Premier Inn as Brand Strategy Manager in 2017 and since then, my remit has grown considerably – I now lead the 15-strong multi-discipline team responsible for Premier Inn’s recent return to TV screens, with the launch of the new brand platform, Rest Easy, alongside running the tactical marketing across our 800+ hotels.

## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and what is Whitbread doing to improve it?

Making our customers and my team feel seen and included is incredibly important to me. I’m half-Ugandan Indian, half-English, which has definitely shaped the way that I think. I want everyone to be able to bring their true selves to work.

At Premier Inn it’s about making sure that we are truly representative of our customer groups and c. 30,000 employees, not in a tokenistic or clichéd way, for example making sure that we have women of colour in adverts in leading roles, rather than as extras. We’ve also taken

some tangible actions such as the option of adding gender neutral pronouns on our hotel team’s name badges, updated corporate e-mail signatures and built inclusive principles into our photography guidelines, so that inclusivity is codified into the brand. We still have work to do, but I’m proud of what we’ve achieved so far.

## What motivates you the most about working within the HTL sector?

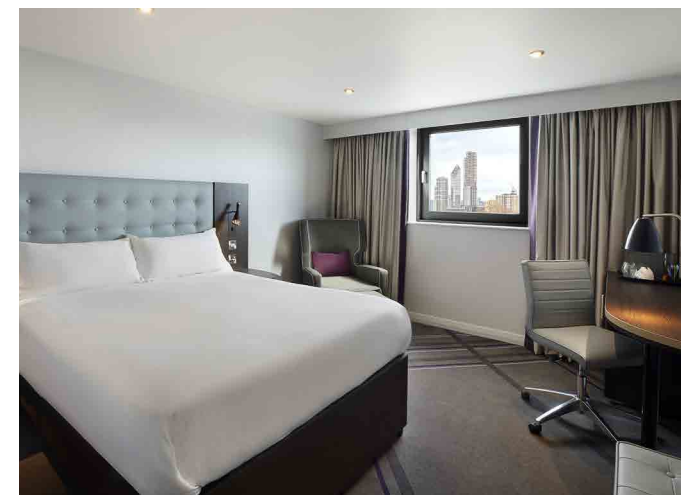
I love the fact that in hospitality we’re giving people an actual memory, experience or a feeling. It’s quite easy in hotels to think that you’re selling a great holiday, but actually, there are so many

instances where people are staying with us that aren’t necessarily for happy reasons. They might be staying because they’ve got an operation, or they might be staying because they’re going to a funeral, and you suddenly realise that as a hotel group, we’ve got a meaningful part to play in someone’s life.

## How do you think HTL has changed since you’ve been in the sector, and how do you think it will change in the future?

We’ve experienced a seismic shift in the industry

over the past two years – more than the last 12 years combined. There are more barriers to travel, customers demand hyper-flexibility and their expectations have heightened. How do we keep up with this as we’re faced with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, supply-chain constraints, inflation, labour challenges and a climate crisis? But the fundamentals of hospitality will remain; bringing people together now is more important than ever. But how we keep up and facilitate this through technology is going to be key.



## QUICKFIRE

### What quote has influenced you the most?

“Don’t tell me you’re funny, tell me a joke.” – Matthew Heath (ex-M&C Saatchi CSO taught me this one).

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

Empathy, humility and consistency.

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

Tea Colaiani, Chair and Founder at WiHTL.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

Nearly 75% of Gen Z are willing to make serious changes to their lifestyle to help the planet.





# Marnie Munns

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Airline Captain**



During my time at university, whilst studying a psychology degree, I joined the University Air Squadron where I was taught to fly by the RAF. Passionate about a career in aviation but unable to fund the airline pilot training myself, I decided to undertake

a master's degree in psychology whilst simultaneously applying for airline sponsorship programmes. In 1999 I gained a place on the Aer Lingus Cadet Scheme, and they sponsored me through the pilot training at FTE.

I worked for Aer Lingus and Excel Airways before joining easyJet in 2006. I was promoted very quickly to Captain in 2007 and worked in Madrid, Gatwick and Stansted before being based at our HQ in Luton. During my career I have set up female pilot initiatives, outreach programmes and carried out research into career progression for female pilots.



**If you were not working within the HTL sector, where do you think you'd be?**

I enjoy working with people, problem solving and being in a skilled role, so if I wasn't working in hospitality and leisure, I would probably be in a management role, using all the skills I have gained in aviation to help other safety critical industries. I also enjoy public speaking and will start to broaden that area of my career through the work I am doing on D&I in Aviation with the University of the West of England.

job market at the right time. Aviation is a volatile industry, and resilience is found in having a diverse career portfolio!  
As airline jobs are very hard to secure before training, timing is everything. Women are less likely to take risks generally so for female pilots it is important that they are supported and encouraged in the early stages of their careers.

**Why do you think role models are so important to advance diversity and inclusion within hospitality, travel and leisure?**

Role models have a huge responsibility to be "active bystanders". The airline industry needs cultural change to embrace diversity and inclusion, so role models are not just pictures, they need to be encouraged to step up and be active in defending what is right, by exhibiting correct behaviour, and calling out bad behaviour.

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

Pilots effectively need to think like entrepreneurs due to the large up-front investment required to get into the industry. They need to do their research, get the best possible training and ensure that they are available and in the

# Kirsten Penny

Company **Welcome Break** / Job Title **Head of Trading & Supply Chain**



From a young age I pursued an international sporting career in ten-pin bowling. I was lucky enough to travel the world and even won multiple European and World Championships amongst my titles. It was a truly amazing time and brought invaluable life experience.

When that came to its natural end, I wanted to work in a business where I could make a difference and JD Wetherspoon was a great place to start. I stayed for seven years, looking after non-consumables procurement. My claim to fame was introducing the multiple-measurement wine glass, which meant the business removed the requirement for multiple sizes of glassware, achieving a huge cost saving.

Wetherspoons gave me a great start in procurement and led me on to roles at Tragus and Stonegate Pub Co. Stonegate was going through a growth period whilst also transitioning the procurement from outsourced to in-house, and I was project lead, whilst successfully building a new department and team. My role at Welcome Break came up a few years later. It was a whole new ball game and a steep learning curve as it was the first time in my career I had been exposed to retail. I have now worked here for six years and am always learning.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*Surrounded by Idiots: the 4 Types of Human Behaviour* by Thomas Erikson.

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

Integrity, authenticity, vision, and direction.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

In a single hour, the amount of power from the Sun that strikes the Earth is more than the entire world consumes in a year.

**What do you find most rewarding about working in the HTL sector?**

I love to eat and love to eat out. When I go out, I like putting my customer hat on and being able to see the live innovation achievements of the industry. Everything becomes tangible and you see the trends you have been working amongst shine through. It is great to see.

**What changes do you expect to see in the industry in the next five years?**

Due to the pandemic, travel and holidays within the UK have become much more popular, and we knew this would have a knock-on effect on our business. More cars are on the road resulting in increased activity at our services. At Welcome Break, we are prioritising making the most out of this change and really thinking about how to transform our customer experience and make it stand out from the competition with our offer and brand lineup.

I am also involved in our ESG agenda at Welcome Break and electric vehicle

charging is a key priority. I expect the infrastructure of this will develop rapidly in the coming years.

**What are you, and your organisation, doing to encourage women to progress within the sector?**

Transport in general is a male-dominated environment. However, for as long as I have been here, at Welcome Break we have always had female representation on the board. In addition, over a third of our head of departments are women. I think Welcome Break recently joining WiHTL demonstrates our commitment to D&I. Our current people director is female. I hope that this will inspire and enable more women to take on roles that, traditionally, were the remit of men.

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

Have confidence in yourself, push yourself forward, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Own them and learn from them.

## QUICKFIRE

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

Hidden Figures – talent is not defined by gender, colour or background.

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

Integrity, especially when change is involved.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Dame Carolyn McCall.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

A report on women in aviation: Lift Off To Leadership. We need to retain our female talent at the highest level as we rebuild the sector.





# Joanna Phillips

Company **Carnival** / Job Title **Chief People Officer**



I held a number of different HR roles across telcoms, pharma, aerospace and defence and consulting prior to joining the travel and hospitality industry. I joined Carnival UK 8 years ago as Head of Reward and broadened my remit over the years, before being promoted to Chief People Officer in June 2019.

## QUICKFIRE

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

*Courage is Calling* by Ryan Holliday.

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

Openness, integrity, courage and EQ.

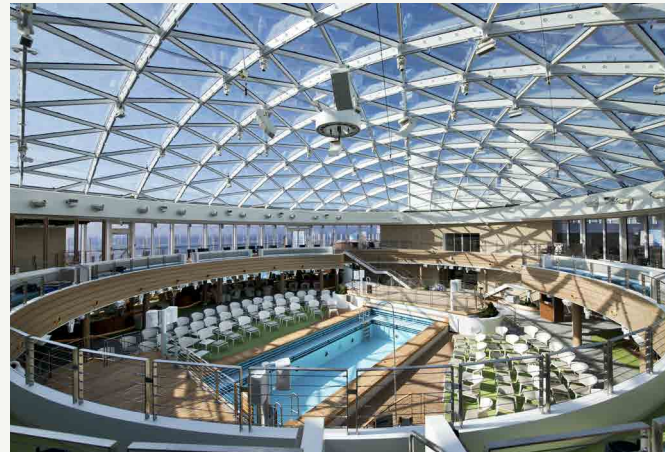
**Who is your role model in the industry?**

The growing population

of incredible female senior leaders on our ships across the Corporation, who are paving the way for others in our industry and showing what's possible.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*Rebel Ideas* by Matthew Syed.



**What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?**

For me, it's proximity to the guest and to the amazing experiences we create for people. Our purpose is to create unforgettable holiday happiness for our guests; the connection between what I do day to day and our purpose is stronger than I've experienced in any other industry. Travel and holidays are such an important part of our lives and how we make memories; to play a key role in that is really special. Cruise in particular is a pretty complex business and that makes it really exciting. We're a 24/7 operation, we employ over 73 nationalities, we operate across many boundaries and cultures and manage everything from hotels and retail outlets to huge supply chain and logistics operations, medical centres and engine rooms.

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

For consumer confidence to be well and truly back and for the industry to be creating incredible experiences for people again, playing its pivotal role in supporting the many communities and economies it touches around the world. I hope there will be greater diversity at senior levels across the industry; it's not where it needs to be and it's pivotal to the sector's ongoing success. I'd also like to see continued progress in terms of sustainability.

**What advice would you give to the next generation entering the sector?**

To always push yourself, and others around you, to get to where you want to be. Women often doubt their ability, are too accepting of their situation, or at times are too modest to ask for more. It is normal to have doubts in your own ability, but never let those doubts manifest more than just thoughts. Know your value and be ambitious.

# Naomi Robinson

Company **IAG Cargo** / Job Title **Head of Business Management and Planning**



I started my career in academic publishing but soon realised that it was not for me. I saw a role come up for Revenue Management Route Analyst at IAG Cargo, which was linked with travelling and aviation; two sectors I absolutely love. I thought, let's take the plunge and try something new.

I moved up through the ranks whilst gaining new experience such as leading teams, before being appointed to my current role – Head of Business Management and Planning – in December 2019. Before long, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived. It has been a bit of a whirlwind, combining everything I had learnt over the years into one practice, but I am extremely proud of the way everyone in the team contributed to keeping those vital supply chains moving during such a tough time.

**What is the most rewarding thing about working in HTL?**

The fact that we keep the world's vital supply chains moving. This has particularly come to the forefront during the pandemic, as we helped to move critical items such as PPE and more recently the Covid-19 vaccines.

I also find it fascinating how it links with everyday world news. For instance, if there's a new phone launch or political trade tariffs, you name it, you will see an impact on the cargo industry.

Lastly, the industry is so dynamic that no two days are ever the same. It keeps you on your toes and you are constantly learning something new.

**Describe the challenges have you faced, and how have you overcome them?**

When I started at IAGC,

I was lacking in confidence. Coming from academic publishing, I had to navigate around a totally different skillset. I used to compare myself to colleagues that were far more experienced, and I was nervous about asking questions in case it came across as silly.

But in fact, be curious, question and don't be too proud to ask, you will undoubtedly learn more that way.

**What is your current impression of diversity and inclusion within the HTL industry?**

There has been year on year improvement, but I think there is still more work that can be done.

As the latest reports show, as seniority increases, the proportion of female representatives decreases. That is why we need platforms such as Women

## QUICKFIRE

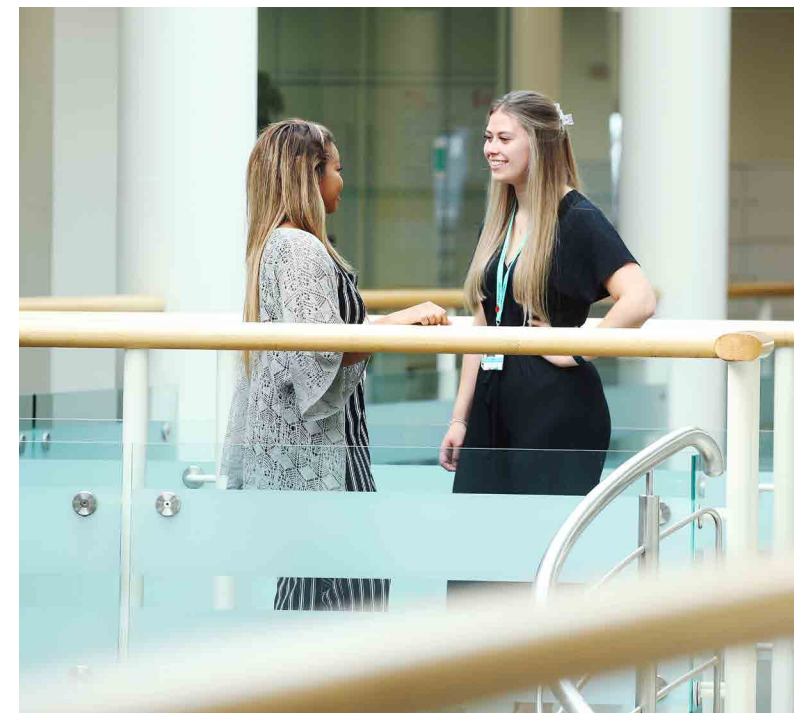
**Who is your role model in the industry?**

I've been fortunate to have encountered many inspirational women throughout my life. My mum is on top of that list, teaching me to seize every opportunity and embrace challenges. One of my favourite sayings is 'behind every woman is a network of other successful women who have her back'. At IAG Cargo we are

surrounded by passionate and determined women, all creating an inspirational and exciting place to work.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

*Thirteen Lessons that Saved Thirteen Lives: The Thai Cave Rescue* by John Volanthen. I hadn't comprehended the scale and complexity of the rescue!



to Watch to continue to drive growth in diversity and inclusion.

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

Seize every opportunity that is thrown your way and push yourself forward. Secondly, have a voice and

do not be shy to speak up. Diversity brings new ideas, fosters innovation and drives productivity.

Thirdly, cultivate a support system. Make sure you have a solid support network around you, which can help build your credibility and self-confidence.



# Nikki Rogers

Company **Moto Hospitality** / Job Title **Retail Director**



When I left university I joined Asda on the Management Training Scheme. After 2 years I joined BP – where I ended up staying for 20 years. I worked across assets, strategy, food operations and then finally in a retail trading director role for the UK. After that, I joined AF Blakemore, before returning to the travel sector and joining Moto Hospitality Ltd.

I know it sounds like a cliché, but returning to the travel industry felt like coming home. From the moment I joined, everything came flooding back; I hadn't realised how important the sector was to me until I returned. I'm responsible for everything that we sell within our M&S, retail and forecourt shop units, as well as fuel. Even though it's been a challenging period for travel, especially with the fuel crisis, I love being back in the thick of it.

## What has been your experience of D&I in the hospitality sector?

After being identified as a future female leader at BP I was lucky enough to receive dedicated training and coaching, which is one of the most valuable things that has happened to me in my whole career. These sorts of programmes are invaluable as I still see a huge discrepancy between what women and men think they are capable of. Early in my career I suffered a lot with imposter syndrome. The dedicated training helped me overcome that and gave me the confidence to believe in myself. I love the fact that here at Moto, there is a really progressive attitude to D&I with training courses aimed at ensuring everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

## What's the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

It's the diversity, no two days are the same. In travel, your whole customer base can change by season. Overnight our focus can switch from HGV drivers to families, and I just love that challenge.

## What would you say to someone looking to enter the HTL industry?

I'd say go for it, but don't be afraid of hard work – it can be very tough at the beginning. You learn so much from starting at the bottom, but if you've got the passion and determination you can get to the top.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

I love how JK Rowling persevered and had the drive to keep going even in the face of being rejected by a number of publishers.

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

I don't have a role model in the industry, but I think Jacinda Ardern is inspiring. She's strong and powerful yet also empathetic and compassionate.

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

The best leaders I've ever worked for have been

inspiring and visionary. They lead by example and are never afraid to challenge.

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

A fabulous TED talk by Susan Cain, called the Power of Introverts. We live in a world where we want people to talk up and join in... but for some people that is their worst nightmare. Sometimes the quietest voice is the most powerful and we need to ensure we hear everyone.



# Rosa Sánchez Olmos

Company **Elior** / Job Title **Finance Director**



All my professional career I've been working in finance. I joined Elior in February 2018. Before that time, I worked for almost 20 years in a well-known bakery company in Spain called Bimbo. During that period, I grew up professionally as the

company was bought out by a large US-based group, and then a Mexican conglomerate, Grupo Bimbo. Two different multinational companies with different cultures, processes and behaviours. I learnt from all of them. After those intense years, I made the decision to take a break and look for a change. I took a year off to look after my children – my oldest was 13 and becoming a teenager, and I felt I needed some real time with all of them.

I returned to the professional world thinking "I want to work somewhere where I feel comfortable, where I can really fit, and where people are passionate about their work and their mission." Sharing the mission and the values is key to being passionate and happy at work; as we spend so many hours at work, it is key to feeling complete in life.

I was considering a number of opportunities, and Serunion stood out. We work mainly in schools, providing food service, and everyone here is passionate about giving children a healthy diet and teaching them about eating, food waste and manners. I think it's really important that we teach future generations to have a healthier life and to preserve our planet.

## What do you find most fulfilling in your role?

Taking care of people. We look after children, after old people, after patients and

their health in hospitals.

I think sometimes we don't realise how relevant our work is – but the role that we play in society,

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Becoming* by Michelle Obama. It's been very inspiring.

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

Serunion's CEO, Antonio Llorens.

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

A good leader has to be fair, inspiring, a good

communicator, passionate, honest and empathetic.

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

The cook Jose Andrés during his speech after the Princesa de Asturias Prizes, talking about the need of building up bridges and the Power of Food.



in teaching children about food and keeping communities fed, could not be more important. When I was a child at the

canteen at school, or even when I became a mother and had children who ate in school canteens, I never considered how much work goes on behind

the scenes. There is a great team working hard to make everything work and be coherent with our values and goals.

## How important do you think diversity and inclusion are in the workplace?

I think that teams with a mix of genders, backgrounds and personalities are far richer than those with, say, only men or only women. Difference complements the work environment and sharing the different ways we see things can be invaluable.



# Deirdre Saunders

Company **Sodexo** / Job Title **Divisional Director**



I have worked at Sodexo in an operational capacity for 22 years, experiencing a wide breadth and depth of roles throughout my journey. Having the opportunity to move through the various segments of the business, from site management in pharma and corporate to

schools and universities, has been a wonderful learning experience in understanding customer needs and managing teams. One of the most exciting elements was having a multi geographical role – I have worked across the UK and Ireland and it's been amazing experiencing the cultural differences. In my current role as divisional director, I manage all the corporate services business in Northern Ireland, and around 50% of our corporate business in the Republic of Ireland, along with our full education portfolio across the island of Ireland, so it's a diverse portfolio that brings a dynamicness to my daily work that I greatly enjoy.



## QUICKFIRE

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

Shrek! I think it's a brilliant representation of some good and sound advice – and that is to be happy with who you are.

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

Compassion, decisive decision making and agility.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Neven Maguire and Bobby Kerr.



**What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?**

The people. People are the greatest challenge, but they also bring you the greatest joy. When you work in a services business, there are no products to sell or to put on shelves.

We are selling a service and therefore what we are selling, in essence, is ourselves. So, our people are indeed our greatest asset in that regard. Therefore, if you're not motivated by the teams you work with every day, who are finding solutions to meet different client expectations, you will be swimming upstream in this sector.

**How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?**

**How do you think it will change in the future?**

The consumer has perhaps always been the number one priority; however I think they now hold much more of the power than before. This is due to the industry having gone

through such a huge digital transformation, and consumers now having access to everything at their fingertips, on apps and smartphones. If they don't see what they like immediately – they will surf somewhere else! The sector has had to adapt to make way for and support this, which has had a huge effect on the day-to-day way hospitality businesses are run, and I think it will continue this way for some time. Covid especially has had a part to play in the acceleration of this.

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

Trust in your own ability. Never be too eager to please others, and always make sure you can maintain your own authenticity. Know that the road to success is never going to be straight. Embrace all the unanticipated bumps in the road, because you will learn from them and they will help shape your future. They will provide as much opportunity for you as they will provide challenge.

# Serena Shah

Company **InterContinental Hotels Group** / Job Title **Global Strategy Manager**



Having studied engineering at university, the hotel industry was not the most obvious place for me to start my career. But after studying and working abroad (and as much travelling at any opportunity I could) whilst at university, as well

as working in hotel catering & events, I cultivated such a passion for the industry. I wanted to continue to use my problem-solving and analytical skillset so joined the Corporate Strategy team at IHG and it was only then that I began to fully appreciate how exciting and complex the company is; B2B, B2C, guests, owners, employees, franchising, real estate, brands, tech, loyalty – so much going on! With so much going on requiring people from so many different backgrounds, it's no surprise that hospitality, travel and leisure is such a diverse sector, and this is one of the things I enjoy the most about it.

I've been a big champion of DE&I and increasing accessibility for diverse groups to non-diverse spaces all the way back from my engineering days, where I spent lots of time encouraging girls to study STEM subjects and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds to pursue higher education.

## QUICKFIRE

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

Empathy, passion, drive.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Asma Khan.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

A HBR article titled "Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome."



**How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?**

I'm an active member of our Employee Resource Groups, leading a workstream on 'Recruitment and Retention' where we are interrogating the end-to-end recruitment process, ensuring voices of diverse employees are heard, and holding the organisation to account on DE&I.

Also, there are so many initiatives that are going on at IHG; I'm particularly excited about the mentoring initiatives to increase female General Manager representation as it is historically an extremely male-dominated environment. I've benefitted greatly from female mentors across the business and think it instils so much confidence and positivity in mentees.

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

I am so passionate about sustainability and whilst the sector has made some material progress in the last few years on many fronts (carbon targets,

eliminating plastics, reporting) I'm excited to see what happens in the next 5 years. When I first started in the sector, sustainability seemed like it was an afterthought or box-ticking exercise and I found it very frustrating, but it really feels like it is now being embedded across sector. I hope the sector works together to push for innovation; whether that is bringing a zero-carbon new build to life, or making environmental impact more transparent to guests so they can make informed, environmentally-friendly decisions.

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

Build a strong, diverse network, be open-minded and curious to people's different experiences, and always be completely forthcoming with your career aspirations; there are so many amazing people who can offer you support, but it will work much better if they know where you want to get to. I've been so lucky to have great mentors and sponsors at IHG who have helped me get to where I am.



# Dominique Sidley

Company **Merlin Entertainments** / Job Title **Global Trade Strategy Director**



I started my career with 5 years in banking before realising I did not feel settled, nor was I where I wanted to be. The industry wasn't getting the best out of me, and I wasn't getting the best out of it, so to speak. One day a friend recommended me a customer service manager

role, working at Alton Towers Resort, which is owned by Merlin Entertainments. I had no idea if this was the place for me, but I took the plunge and went for it nonetheless.

Low and behold I got the job and was soon asked to join the sales team. Again, I wasn't sure this was the right role, but I have learnt throughout my career that you need to try different things to work out what you want.

Before long I was heading up the European function of sales for Merlin, and from there I looked after our longer haul markets. After maternity leave, I made the decision to take on the UK global sales director role and three years later I was promoted to my current role of trade strategy director which is managing the direction for all the B2B sales across the whole portfolio at Merlin.

## What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

The change and the pace at which the industry runs are huge benefits for me. We're working with the public, therefore our ultimate end goal is to provide a product, service or memory that is positive for them. This is a hugely demanding job, but I love that, especially as I now know I am in the right industry for me.

## How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop in your time in the HTL sector?

I'm fortunate enough to be Merlin's business sponsor for diversity and inclusion for the UK and so I'm actively involved in the movement. I think the biggest change I've seen

is the acknowledgement that there must be an acknowledgement. To develop the right creativity, the right productivity, the right energy, we have to reflect the audience that we have, and we are starting to see that.

## Why do you think more women should consider a career within HTL?

I think women should consider a career in any industry and not be afraid to put themselves forward for anything that drives them and drives their passion. I think HTL in particular is an industry that's very rewarding, and it can be flexible in the right hands with the right leadership. It's the ideal place for variety, pace and somewhere that will be a platform for your passion and drive.



# QUICKFIRE

## What quote has influenced you the most?

"If you're always trying to be normal you will never know how amazing you can be" – Maya Angelou.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

Fiona Eastwood, COO Midway Attractions

at Merlin Entertainments. She is a driven and challenging female leader with an incredibly high EQ.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*Doughnut Economics* by Kate Raworth.



# Claire Small

Company **Elior** / Job Title **Director of Innovation**



Graduating from Cambridge with a degree in natural sciences, I had no idea what I wanted to do as a career. I had been working at a pub part-time for 4 years, and loved every second of it; so followed this passion into a marketing assistant role in hospitality. I've never looked back.

I'm now the Director of Innovation at Elior UK, where I have the opportunity every day to create great customer experiences in restaurants, cafés and venues across the country, traversing a diverse cross section of contract catering sectors. My journey was primarily in marketing roles at The Restaurant Group and ETM Group, until joining the commercial team at SSP UK. As Head of Commercial at SSP I learned the importance of data-driven decision making and commercialising innovative ideas to optimise products and processes across the brand portfolio. This gave me a great foundation for my current role, where I lead the innovation strategy for Elior's concepts, food and digital functions. I'm incredibly excited for all the opportunities we have to innovate across the business, especially as we emerge from an extremely tough period and adapt to new customer habits and expectations. I'm very fortunate to have had some fantastic female role models every step of my journey so far, and I endeavour to inspire and support the next generation of talent in the same way.



# QUICKFIRE

## What film has influenced you the most?

The Help - a pioneering story of female empowerment.

## What qualities are most valuable in a leader?

Be inspirational and have dedication and tenacity. Communication is also important.

## Who is your role model in the industry?

Michal Seal.

## What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

A review of November's Redefine Meat dinner at Mr White's.

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

I think we still have work to do in elevating the profile of hospitality as a first-choice industry to pursue a career, in both operational and support office functions. I'd love to see more initiatives to engage young people at the start of their career journey, and by focusing on development and leadership training, keeping talent within the industry for the duration of their career.

## What are you, and your organisation, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

Elior launched 'Womentoring' earlier this year, a great scheme supporting emerging female talent by assigning them mentors within the business. We are also working to build a 'coaching culture' with

managers across the business being trained on coaching skills, so we are constantly focused on developing our teams alongside delivering great results. Encouraging the women in my team to carve out time for personal development is important to me; something that can be especially challenging with the fast-paced nature of our industry.

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

The value of self-PR! If you do something great, make it known and celebrate the success of others in your team accordingly. Never underestimate the value of your network, within and outside the business. Push yourself out of your comfort zone to meet new people, and never say no to an opportunity to build your relationships across all levels of the business.



# Dr. Nilsun Tümer

Company **InterContinental Hotels Group** / Job Title **Senior Development Manager – Turkey**



I am a member of IHG Europe development team, responsible for the expansion of IHG in Turkey.

I am a graduate of Middle East Technical University in Turkey, Department of Economics. Along with my professional career, I completed graduate

level studies in finance and banking at the University of California at Berkeley and Southampton University. I earned my PhD Degree from Marmara University in Turkey.

I started my professional career at Citi bank. During 1998-2006, I worked at the Industrial Development Bank of Turkey (TSKB) as the expert for the tourism industry and took part in numerous HTL-related financing projects. Following TSKB, I joined Divan Hotel Group as head of business development and helped with the expansion of a local hotel chain. Consequently, I moved to consultancy side and I worked in local and international consultancy firms. Prior to joining IHG in 2020, I had run my own consultancy business for over 4 years.

## QUICKFIRE

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

Life is Beautiful.

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

Integrity.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Guniz Celen from Turkey.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

The recent news about a cure for cancer.



**How are you an advocate for women and diverse employees within HTL and your organisation?**

I try to take active roles in various events and initiatives towards the development of women leaders in the HTL industry in my country. As an example, I have acted as a mentor in the mentorship programme of “Women Leaders in Real Estate Platform”, which is the Turkish Chapter of Women’s Leadership Initiative of Urban Land Institute. This platform aims to increase the number and effectiveness of women leaders working in real estate business, including HTL-related real estate. Besides such initiatives, during the lectures I have given in various universities, I was always happy to invite women leaders as guest speakers to provide a vision for our students of how they can succeed in HTL as a woman.

At IHG, I am usually the initial face of our company for various local entrepreneurs and I am pleased to be an example of our diversity culture at IHG for the Turkish HTL industry.

**What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?**

I’ve always thought that HTL is about providing comfort and making people happy. At the end of every hotel project I’m engaged in, I feel incredibly pleased to think of the individuals and families who will enjoy the facilities in the future.

**What do you hope the HTL sector will look like in five years’ time?**

Since the start of Covid-19, we have been going through difficult times globally and the HTL sector was one of the hardest hit industries. I believe that, as the pandemic draws to a close, overall HTL revenues will exceed 2019 levels. In particular, I expect the leisure segment to be very important in this. I also believe that with the experience we have gathered during pandemic, the resilience of HTL establishments against various risks will be higher going forward.

# Leanne Turk

Company **Compass Group UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Lead Development Chef**



My love for cooking began when I worked in my parents’ pub. I completed three years professional chef training and experienced working the kitchens of Le Gavroche, Locanda Locatelli, and a restaurant in the South of France.

My Compass journey started seven years ago, after a stint working for Gordon Ramsay Holdings. I’ve predominantly worked in our education sector creating recipes for our nutritionally compliant food offer across our state education sites. Two years ago, I took on the challenge working across all Compass sectors as Lead Development Chef. I’m in my element in this role, I love being able to influence the strong food offer we deliver as a business.



**What advice would you give to younger aspiring chefs?**

Hospitality is so diverse and offers many different routes. I would advise them to explore all the options, from contract catering to Michelin-starred restaurants, and really think about what they want from their career and how it can adapt to their lifestyle.

It’s also important to encourage the younger generation to always put themselves out there. I’m always looking for opportunities to better my skills and have recently signed up to ‘Forward with Marcus Wareing’, a culinary training Level 5 apprenticeship programme.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and your organisation?**

At Compass, diversity and inclusion is very much at the heart of everything we do. We strive to have a diverse workforce in all sectors, with representation in all parts of the business. I co-chair our Women in Food initiative, which is focused on empowering women in the workplace.

We work closely with all our D&I strategies, supporting the LGBTQ+ community, those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and we’ve worked with Mumsnet on a leadership programme for returning mums coming back into the business.

**What motivates you about working within the HTL sector?**

I’m involved in many projects which help develop and attract exciting new talent into the industry, and it’s very rewarding to see them thrive at Compass.

It’s also great to see some of my recipes or developments go into places like Wembley Stadium or receive positive feedback from one of the soldiers at an army base we feed.

I hope I can inspire female chefs in our business.

**What changes would you make to the HTL sector?**

We set out our net zero commitments earlier this year and it’s vital to educate the public about why we’re doing what we’re doing and how we’re going to achieve net zero by 2030.

## QUICKFIRE

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

Honesty, empathy, empowerment and respect.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Angela Harnett, for the way she cooks so effortlessly, for everything she stands for and

everything she has achieved as a female in the hospitality industry. She inspired me to mentor the women behind me.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

That it takes 6,000 litres of water to produce one litre of almond milk!





# Kim Van Campfort

Company **Hilton** / Job Title **Senior Brand Commercial Director, EMEA**



After graduating, I initially contemplated a role in a luxury hotel, however I decided to take a less conventional career route to gain greater managerial responsibilities from the get-go, starting out as the assistant manager of a fast-food restaurant. It

wasn't until later, when a friend mentioned Hilton was looking for a salesperson in my home city, Antwerp, that I moved into the hotel business. Initially, I felt reluctant to switch jobs, but I remember my sister telling me: 'Wasn't your big dream selling weddings for Hilton?' So, I went for the interview, was hired and the rest is history – I have now been with Hilton for 21 years. Although I'm yet to sell my first wedding, Hilton has provided me with many opportunities from living and working in France and the UK and studying an MBA, to roles in the Commercial, Operational, and Brand teams.

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

In one word: balance. At the beginning, I was extremely focused on my career, but not as invested in my personal life. I make it a point nowadays to discuss with my mentees 'how does your personal life fit in within your career and how do you discuss with your family or partner the support you need to be fulfilled on both fronts?'.

## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you in your organisation?

Hilton is extremely focused on diversity and inclusion and we recently ranked #1 on DiversityInc's Top 50 companies for Diversity list in 2021. Our motto is 'We are diverse by nature and inclusive by choice', and there are so many things you can be part of within the company to help advance this important

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost.

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

Honesty, empathy, listening skills and steady hands on the wheel.

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

Alice Williams of Luminary Bakery.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*Think Again* by Adam Grant.



agenda: programmes such as Women@Hilton, mentoring, team member resources groups: Women, Ethnic, Pride, Black, Next Gen,... the list goes on.

As a leader, it is important to realise these resources are just tools – a starting point – for D&I. Actions speak louder than words, you need to listen to every voice around the table so you can make inclusive decisions, not only for your teams but also for guests, communities, and owners.

## How do you think the HTL sector has changed since you've been in it?

On the one hand the industry has become more experimental, more fun and global. On the other hand, sustainability is now a serious topic. When we look at the strategic priority list of our own company and our corporate buyers, ESG is no longer one of the priorities, it sits at the very top.

Investors want to see that organisations have an ESG strategy, and guests want to know whether you are being truthful about your initiatives or trying to greenwash.



# Trudi Van Niekerk

Company **Nando's** / Job Title **Chief Operations Officer**



My initial career path was varied. I've worked in a manufacturing business, in the brewing sector with SABMiller and then in banking at Absa Group, but I quickly realised that banking was not the place for me and wanted a new challenge. I needed a role

that excited me, where I felt I could make a difference – and I believe I finally found that at Nando's, where I have been for 13 years. I started in a commercial director role before being promoted to COO in South Africa.

Moving into heading up our Licensed Markets business, which oversees our master franchising portfolio, gave me the opportunity to work and travel across 11 countries ranging from southern Africa to the Middle East, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The cultural differences I had to adapt to were challenging to say the least, but it was a privilege to be able to work in markets where I could play a direct role in driving diversity and inclusion.

In April this year I moved to the UK & Ireland business where I've been serving as COO.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book has influenced you the most?

*Failing Forward* by John Maxwell.

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

Integrity, big-picture focus, courage, empathy and being inspirational.

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

Robbie Brozin.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*Prisoners of Geography* by Tim Marshall.



## What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and mean in your organisation?

Having worked across multiple geographies, where cultural inclusion and diversity mean totally different things, there have been many challenging dynamics to bear in mind. For example, in Saudi Arabia I had to be escorted around and women were initially not allowed to work in restaurants. This was a lot to process as a woman, but I am very privileged to be working for a company that genuinely cares about its people and about diversity. At Nando's, everyone is welcome.

## What motivates you the most about working within the hospitality, travel, and leisure sector?

I have a genuine passion for people, and love being able to connect with individuals across a wide array of backgrounds. When running restaurants, no two days are alike, I love the challenge which

that brings. The industry is also constantly evolving, creating opportunities to regularly learn something new.

## How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector? How do you think it will change in the future?

From a UK perspective, it still feels very male-dominated. Those in leadership positions are acknowledging this and the industry will transform, but it requires us to make conscious choices regarding the opportunities we create for people to grow. Mentoring and coaching are critical levers to effect change. Also, women occupying senior positions need to play a decisive role in fostering inclusivity. Just because we have been able to get to where we are, doesn't necessarily mean others will be successful. Our support and encouragement is vital for others whose paths might be more challenging than our own.





# Sharon Vye-Parminter

Company **Stagecoach** / Job Title **Health, Safety and Environment Director**



I have been in public transport for the majority of my career. I started in rail and have worked in freight, local and regional transport. I started working with Stagecoach in 2013 as the safety and assurance director for the Network Rail Southwest Trains Alliance, which was a new way of

trying to run an integrated railway. I joined Stagecoach not long after and I've remained here for the last 6 years.



## QUICKFIRE

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

Steel Magnolias.

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

Integrity and empathy.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

One of our NEDs Karen Thomson.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

That the average person generates the equivalent carbon of driving 200 miles in a family car just through the number of emails they send annually.

**What is the most fulfilling thing about working in the HTL sector?**

In public transport the service we provide every day really matters to people's day to day lives. To be able to work in a sector that provides you with real purpose and value in people's lives is truly satisfying.

What we do matters even more than ever as without strong public transport we cannot address the climate emergency. We will need to do this at pace using all our innovative skills and entrepreneurship, which is interesting.

**How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda in the HTL sector change over time?**

When I first joined the industry, it was heavily male-dominated, with a limited number of female role models to aspire to. Over time this has improved with more talented women joining the sector. There is still a lot of work to do in terms of seeing more ethnically diverse role models, but the need for change is being recognised, and more importantly acted upon.

**Why should more women consider a career in HTL?**

Travel provides an interesting, challenging

career with lots of variety and purpose. We have seen over the past 20 months how important it is. The same goes for hospitality and leisure. It was only when it was taken away that we realised how invaluable it is to all of us. Being a part of an industry with so much purpose is motivating and inspiring and more women should consider discovering it for these reasons.

**What challenges have you learnt the most from in your career?**

I would say the pandemic, because it required a fast response where we had to adapt quickly. This required leadership and

technical skills from all our leaders to make sure we could carry on running an essential service whilst protecting our staff and our customers. We had to adapt to working in a different way very quickly.

I think change in general is a challenging aspect of leadership but can also be exciting. A big part of my development as a leader was just figuring out how to lead yourself and your people through it. For example, how do we keep our energy up and keep people engaged, while moving the team forwards? Understanding how to respond to change was a valuable lesson I learnt throughout my career.



# Louise Wardle

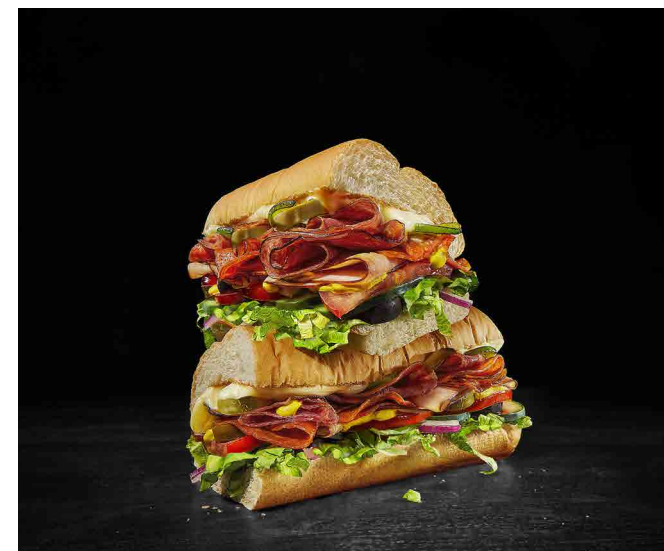
Company **Subway** / Job Title **Vice President International Marketing**



I have always been a creative person, with extensive art and design studies and a Higher National Diploma in graphic design to my name. At the start of my career, I took on a role managing a pub, which exposed me to the buzz of the hospitality industry.

This led me to marry my creative skills and interest in the sector together by pursuing a career in marketing.

I've had the fortune of working with well-known brands – it can be high-pressure but it's exciting to see the widespread impact of your work. I value the time I spent at Boots as an Assistant Scheme Manager early in my career, where I learned about the power of loyalty and segmentation. At Greene King, where I took on my first Director role as Commercial Director, I worked with some fantastic people and developed practices that I continue to implement today. Subsequently, I moved to Papa John's to become the International Marketing Director, where I became quickly familiar working with new cultures and across time zones and continents. Receiving a call from the largest QSR brand in the world brought me to where I am today – Vice President of International Marketing for EMEA at Subway. The brand is in the middle of an exciting transition and I am proud to be part of it.



## QUICKFIRE

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

*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a brilliant book by Steven Covey.

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

Being inspiring, empathetic, and coherent.

**Who is your role model in the industry?**

Jonathan Lawson, CEO at Liberation Group.

**What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?**

I promise I don't only read news about subs and sarnies, but it caught my attention that Costa is introducing M&S sandwiches!

**What do you find most rewarding about working within the hospitality, travel, and leisure sector?**

Interacting with guests and making people smile is my favourite aspect of working in marketing, so it's extremely rewarding to develop new concepts and products that people love! Hospitality is all about escapism, refuelling and, most importantly, having fun – that's the energy that I try to bring to the job everyday.

**What are you and your organisation doing to encourage women to progress within the sector?**

As a woman in a leadership role at Subway, I am very cognisant of the role I play in inspiring the younger generations just starting out in their careers. To that

end, I sit on a global women in leadership forum. Encouraging women to progress within any sector also requires implementing small changes on a daily basis and ensuring that you are the kind of leader who has the diversity and inclusion agenda in mind at all times. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of mentoring and coaching women, of whom several have moved into leadership roles or set up their own businesses.

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

Perfect your ability to juggle spinning plates! If you like a challenge, you like people, and you are a foodie, the hospitality, travel and leisure sector is the perfect industry for you.





# Aoife Wycherley

Company **Sodexo** / Job Title **Head of Supply Chain & Head of Food Procurement**



I'm a real foodie, and I was brought up in an entrepreneurial family, so food and business have always been part of my life.

I moved from Ireland to London in 2006 to work for Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, responsible for Irish exports and creating

opportunities for Irish suppliers. It was here that I learnt about food service – which is all hospitality, travel, and leisure, really.

Once I entered food service I didn't want to leave. It's such a warm, exciting and fast-paced environment. I joined Sodexo in 2011 as a buyer and since then I've had six or seven roles here across our business, but all within supply management. I currently dual role heading up food procurement and supply chain, the latter role I started a year and a half ago. In total I have responsibility for more than 150 million pounds of spend within Sodexo.

## QUICKFIRE

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

I admire people who are breaking the boundaries and staying true to themselves along the way.

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

Authenticity, listening and being forward thinking.

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

Never doubt yourself. That's something I repeat so much to young people at the moment. I always say: don't put limitations in front of you, put opportunities there instead. Essentially this means always saying yes!

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

Everyone is open to change, it's just we adapt to change at different speeds.

### What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

There are a couple of things for me. One is that there's always something more to learn. At Sodexo we've changed the conversation from just D&I to diversity, equity & inclusion which is an interesting conversation. But then there's also the delivery piece: what are



you actually doing about it? At Sodexo we've made a commitment to have at least 40% of our senior leader roles held by women. Within my role in the supply chain, it's about ensuring responsible sourcing, and driving up diversity within our supply network. We have specific programmes dedicated to this.

### What do you think motivates you the most about working within the HTL sector?

The variety. In our business we can go from high-end banks, to Royal Ascot, to airline lounges to football stadiums and back again.

Each individual working within the sector has the ability to make a positive impact on someone. It's that old adage of 'make someone smile, and you

never know what's going on behind that smile'. I think we have a world of opportunity to make a difference to people's lives.

### How do you think the sector will change in the future?

I think consumers are going to start voting with their feet. Unless businesses are taking issues like diversity, sustainability and net zero seriously, then some customers won't eat in their restaurants, or fly on their airlines. I think it's going to be interesting to see where that topic is in five years' time.

### What's the biggest learning from your career?

I'm a strong believer that if you've got the belief and the passion, all the other stuff will come.



# Inbar Zilberman

Company **PPHE Hotel Group** / Job Title **Chief Corporate & Legal Officer**



I moved into the hospitality industry in 2010, joining PPHE Hotel Group to initially set up the legal in-house function. I now lead a diverse, international team overseeing corporate/development initiatives including acquisitions, expansion, governance,

shareholders' engagement and ESG, while continuing to lead the multi-jurisdictional legal and compliance functions. Prior to PPHE, I was in the corporate finance team at BCLP in London and formerly a partner at a leading Israeli law firm. I hold an LLB (Tel Aviv University) and an LLM (LSE) and am a qualified solicitor in England and Israel. I have four children and grew up with a highly achieving working mother who has been my role model.



### What would you say is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

The people and nature of service that we provide to guests and clients. There's a culture of sharing, engaging, assisting, welcoming and helping which are all contributing factors to employee productivity and engagement.

We were recently recognised as the 'Best Employer in Hospitality' in the UK, which is a vote of confidence from our team members. After going through this difficult period and having to make difficult decisions, it was incredibly moving to achieve that.

### How have you seen the diversity and inclusion agenda develop in your time in HTL?

Today, the environment and our own expectations are very different and there are much greater opportunities and flexibility around roles, working hours, career progression and development. With the evolution of the industry, and the entrepreneurial approach many of us now take, there are no longer set, traditional structures that we have to abide by, which naturally provides a

more inclusive, diverse way of working for everyone.

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

The last 18 months have been the most challenging. When Covid hit us, we had to devise a plan and ask ourselves how we were going to react, preserve the business and protect our teams. We've had so many deliberations, and taken actions that I could never have foreseen, all in a time of uncertainty in business and our personal lives. This has been one of the most fast-paced periods in my career, with constant changes requiring us to adapt accordingly.

### Why do you think more women should consider a career within HTL?

It's a diverse industry and we have a strong representation of women across all jobs and seniority levels. The industry is very suitable for women, because of the intellectual capacity, openness, engaging elements and hospitable surroundings.

There are plenty of opportunities for interesting jobs on every level, allowing for career progression.

## QUICKFIRE

### What book that has influenced you the most?

*The Book of Joy, Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

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

Having a clear vision, strong communication skills, empowering teams and leading by example.

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

Eli Papouchado, our Chairman, and Boris Ivesha, President and CEO of PPHE Hotel Group. They are visionaries who inspire, challenge and care about their teams.

### What is the most interesting thing you have read recently?

*Never Split The Difference* by Chris Voss with Tahl Raz.





# Role Models For Inclusion

## Leaders moving the dial on diversity and inclusion

For the second year in a row, we have also identified a group of leaders who are striving to foster a culture of inclusion and belonging within their organisation. These leaders are

passionate about promoting diversity, through being vocal advocates for change, chairing internal D&I groups or actively supporting external initiatives.





# Anna Appleby

Head of Loyalty Products and Services  
IAG Loyalty

I started my career on the general management graduate scheme at British Airways. The scheme gave me the opportunity to experience the range of roles that the travel industry offers, from helping passengers when airspace closed after the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2010, to learning how to evaluate potential new routes for the network. Ultimately it led me into commercial strategy, where I stayed until I made a move to IAG Loyalty in 2016. There I made a jump into the world of digital product management, an entirely new but fantastic learning curve. I now head up our Loyalty Products and Services department, leading a range of product teams as well as our goal to diversify into loyalty software and service provision. However, I'm currently taking a break from that to take on my most challenging role yet – Mum!

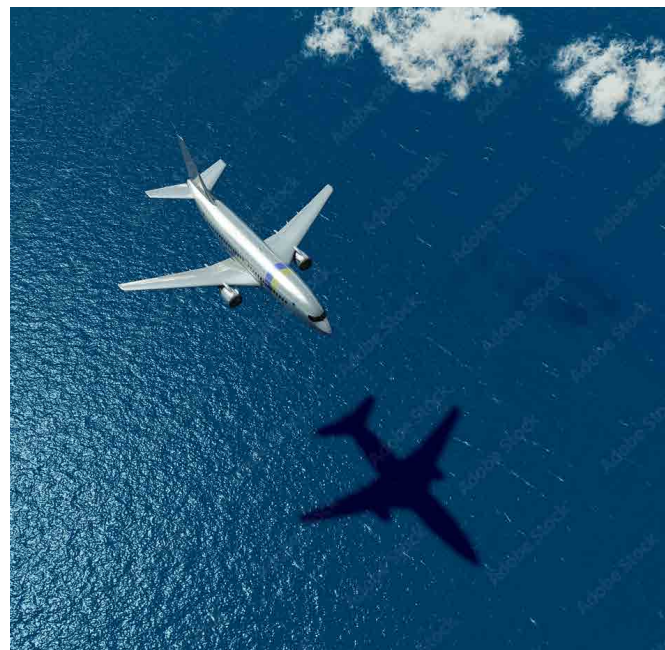
## Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

The evidence that a diverse workforce combined with an inclusive environment leads to better, more effective organisations is ample. I'm a firm believer that finding 'the best person for the role' is not enough, we need to think more broadly about finding the best person for the team. That requires consideration of different backgrounds, perspectives, skills and experience. But it is also equally (if not more) important to create an environment that enables a diverse team to flourish, which is where a focus on inclusion matters. I'm also the daughter of an Italian immigrant and I think growing up around two cultures encouraged me to be open to different perspectives.

## Can you describe the work you're doing to encourage conversations around inclusion and drive-up diversity within IAG Loyalty?

I get a lot from supporting, and being supported by, my female colleagues. Having noticed that we didn't have a women's network at IAGL, I was keen to create one to enable other women to connect in the same way. IAG Loyalty is one of the 11 operating companies of IAG, with head offices based across Spain, Ireland and the UK, so it seemed like a missed opportunity not to think bigger and bring together such a large and diverse community. The purpose of Elevate is to connect, support and inspire IAG's female talent. To date we have created an online community, launched a newsletter and hosted events focused on networking and confidence building. I also feel it's

important as a leader to nurture diversity of thinking in my team. In the wake of the BLM protests in 2020, I spoke openly about feeling uninformed about the realities of racial inequality in the UK. This led to us forming a diversity learning group for colleagues, where together we watched documentaries, read articles and explored questions that expanded our understanding of the issues that black communities face both in the UK and around the world. Our focus organically grew to include any and all aspects of diversity and inclusion – all with a clear purpose of fostering a safe and brave space for colleagues to explore and learn from one another.



## What does being a role model and an ally mean to you?

Being a role model is not about having all the answers. It's important to acknowledge our own knowledge gaps and accept that many of the issues we face are complex, with no single solution. By admitting our own imperfection, we give others permission to be imperfect. This can broaden the conversation on diversity and inclusion and enable us to tackle challenging topics with openness, tolerance and respect. Being an ally is about being proactive, demonstrating our support of others in whatever roles we play both in and out of work.



# Yasmin Brant

Cinema Manager  
ODEON

I have been with ODEON for almost 5 years. I started as a Deputy Manager at ODEON Leicester. After a year, I went on maternity leave and then came back as a Cinema Experience Manager part-time. Once I returned, I continued to work hard to acquire the knowledge I needed to take the next step in my career. In August 2021 I was promoted to Cinema Manager at ODEON Coventry and have since been looking after 2 sites giving me more experience. I am looking forward to seeing where my career will take me next.

## Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

D&I is important to me because I believe people deserve better. I want to be able to make a better future for everyone no matter their background. By allowing everyone to have an equal opportunity to contribute to and influence at every level in the workplace makes everyone feel more included and valued. No one should have to feel they are not worthy because of who they are. On a personal level this is important to me to show my young son that he can achieve whatever he wants in life, without being held back due to who he is and his background, as long as he puts in the work for it.

## Can you describe the work you're doing to encourage conversations around inclusion and drive-up diversity within ODEON?

I keep the conversation going by sharing my personal and lived

experiences and by encouraging others to share and also ask questions on our company's internal communication platform, to allow people to have a better understanding. I have spoken on internal office huddles about my experience on the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme. I encourage my team to talk about what makes them who they are by celebrating our incredible differences. I updated my team's name badges with preferred pronouns; this has been greatly appreciated by not only the team but also guests. I use an equality, diversity and inclusion calendar that also helps me educate myself on topics I may not have a full understanding of, allowing me to acknowledge and honor multiple religious and cultural practices. Having colleagues around me, who are at different stages in their career but who are also passionate about D&I, is very valuable. We bounce ideas off each other, and have open and



honest conversations which helps to encourage the ongoing discussion.

## What advice would you give to anyone looking to drive change from within their organisation?

Be your authentic self, work from outside your comfort zone, understanding that there will be emotional reactions to change, but continue to share and show why DE&I is important. Be prepared to dedicate the time as inclusion is ongoing. Establish a sense of belonging for everyone, empathetic leadership is key to this. Seeing the genuine passion for change from my senior leadership team and close colleagues has given me the confidence. So I'd say reach out to people around you who also want to drive

change and start that conversation. Ask questions without fear.

## What does being a role model and an ally mean to you?

It's an honour and makes me proud knowing that what I am doing is making a difference. I will continue to invest the time to ensure that people can reach their goals and to create a space where everyone is welcome and feels safe to be who they are. Not having a relatable role model within the workplace made me want to make that change. Putting myself forward has been daunting at times but having that passion to drive change for the future role models of tomorrow has pushed me to be that role model.





# Matt Case

Regional Operations Manager  
Whitbread

I have a degree in marketing management but once I graduated, I discovered my passion for operations. I have been a regional operations manager for more than 10 years now, having also worked in support centre roles leading on labour efficiency deployment projects, and operational planners.

Having been involved in LGBTQ+ Networks for many years, I became co-lead 3 years ago and am a keen ally of all D&I work, exploring the themes of intersectionality and how we can create authentic allies and a more inclusive culture through education and policy alike. As well as the work on D&I, I lead the Whitbread charity partnership with Great Ormond Street Hospital, which has celebrated many milestones, opening the Sight & Sound Centre supported by Premier Inn earlier this year.



**As co-leader of the GLOW inclusion network, can you please describe the work you're doing to drive up LGBTQ+ inclusion at Whitbread?**

We've been fortunate that our LGBTQ+ network has always been an active community in participating

in Pride events or supporting one another locally. My efforts have turned to creating inclusion throughout the business, and not just within GLOW. We have launched policies such as a Transgender and Gender Identity Policy, to support those who may

be transitioning, including a line manager action plan and are reviewing existing policies to be more inclusive. Last year we updated our Blood Borne Virus policy to ensure there was no HIV stigma. Our Supply Chain team completes a survey every year and we added a section on diversity and inclusion to provide us with more information that will allow us to share best practice and focus on where inclusion may be an opportunity. GLOW has recently consulted on brand activity including a Guide to Kindness which is in place in all hotels to set clear expectations on a zero-tolerance environment for discrimination in any form, for example, calling out homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?**

The term means many things to me. I think of representation and visibility, and I am driven to want more than equality, but equity for everyone.

This matters to me – as I don't think D&I can be seen as an ancillary arm of HR for a business. If you think of the way we communicate a message with three rings: what, how and why. You need to start at the centre with 'why', and the same applies to D&I. With diversity, inclusion and

belonging, if belonging is at the centre then you can often achieve inclusion and diversity will come.

This is why we must focus on the frameworks and systems that allow us to create a welcoming culture for our people, and then measure how effective we are at bringing about positive change.

**Why do you think communicating progress on D&I is so vital to creating lasting change? How do you ensure people remain engaged?**

I believe that to create inclusive environments you need to include everyone on the journey. We know that people are at different stages of their learning around D&I and identity. I am always keen to ensure that when we communicate progress on D&I it is received as exactly that: progress.

Becoming an ally is not a destination that anyone can arrive at, and whilst I truly believe that businesses can be inclusive, learning to be comfortable with the journey and progress will provide patience and an ability to listen with an open mind. Setting milestones to reach is important. It's key to give everyone the ability to look back on progress, and give people space for storytelling which can bring experiences to life and create lasting change.



# Donna Catley

Chief People Officer  
Compass Group UK & Ireland

I joined Compass Group UK & Ireland at the end of 2017. I lead our People strategy, which centres on a belief in social prosperity for all. I am a Board member, pension trustee and passionate advocate for equality. I have been instrumental in setting the strategic people agenda at Compass, including leading to Real Living Wage status.

Under my leadership, Compass launched its social mobility report in February 2021, in partnership with the Social Mobility Pledge – which sets out the aspirations and plans of the business to help colleagues progress and build long term careers in the food services sector. As the economy looks to rebuild post-Covid, this agenda has never been more important. I come from a family of frontline workers – I am passionate about this agenda because it is personal.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?**

Being yourself, the whole of you. Being heard. Seeing people like yourself in the business.

**You're doing excellent work in furthering the conversation around social mobility. Can you explain a bit about that?**

Our focus is on addressing the barriers to progression, around class. We recently announced a multi-million pound investment in our Compass Academy to build skills and help people build careers in our great industry. Uniquely, this will also focus on outreach into underprivileged communities to target deprivation. We became a Real Living Wage Service Provider in 2020 and actively advocate for Real Living Wage with clients

and suppliers. 15% of our colleagues have moved to Real Living Wage in the last year, which is important progress. Finally, we have put huge effort into articulating the career paths from frontline to boardroom so that colleagues know the roles, skills and support available to them. There are no dead-end jobs – only employers who haven't understood how to unlock the amazing potential of their colleagues.

**What role do you think the hospitality sector has to play in creating a more equal society?**

It's uniquely positioned to enable change. It is big, geographically diverse and open to all – I can't think of a better industry to affect change. We can be a huge force for good and make a difference in people's lives.



**What does being a good role model, and leading from the top, mean to you?**

Being authentic and seeking the 'magic spot' between doing good and creating commercial success. When you can achieve both the momentum will be immense.

**What advice would you give to businesses looking to focus on diversity, from a social mobility standpoint or any other area?**

Class is the big unspoken barrier, however it often sits at the intersection with race and gender. Interrogate your hiring and promotion practices, look at the senior leadership – do they represent society? Start small, do something. Measure the impact, and always strive to do better next time.





# Kate Coyne

Senior Manager, Global Consumer GTM & Gender Equality Committee Member, Deliveroo

I have worked at Deliveroo for 2 and a half years. I have spent most of that time working on the Rider side of our business in Operations Strategy. I recently moved roles into the Consumer Go-To-Market team, where I'm focused on driving consumer adoption of new product launches. I've always been passionate about gender equality and, as I was the only female in my team when I joined Deliveroo, I knew I'd really value developing a network of female colleagues. Therefore I joined the gender equality committee, one of the four committees driving DEI at Deliveroo.

Outside of my day job, I lead on Strategic Partnerships at 'Apart of Me', a tech charity start-up that uses a virtual game to help young people navigate their grief after losing a close family member or friend via a free app. We're a volunteer-run charity with diverse, purpose-led teams applying a new solution to an age-old problem to improve young peoples' mental health and wellbeing.

## You're doing excellent work to encourage gender diversity at Deliveroo. Can you talk a bit about that?

My focus is on attracting, developing and highlighting female talent through the following lenses:

- Building the best offer for female riders: Riders are a central part of our business at Deliveroo. It's important we attract and retain the best riders to ride with us, by developing a great rider offer. One area I am focused on is increasing opportunities for female riders who remain underrepresented on most delivery platforms. In doing

so, we're also increasing Deliveroo's competitive edge. This year I've spoken to female riders first-hand to understand the issues impacting them. From this insight I've developed dedicated project workstreams around female safety, gender data collection – to better understand our riders – and internal reporting and policies to ensure Deliveroo provides support so that all genders feel understood and a part of our community. Ultimately, if we're not consciously solving problems for underrepresented groups, then we're likely to be excluding them.

- Building and delivering a global female leadership development programme. This programme aims to increase the proportion of women in leadership roles. It's been a huge project to take on but it's great to hear 100% of candidates saying they would recommend the programme. After developing the initial concept, I had to convince senior stakeholders to support it before selecting the candidates and a coaching supplier to partner with. It's also given me the opportunity to build a network of fantastic women right across the business and increase my exposure to senior leaders in the process.

- Building a 'Roo Parents' programme: to make Deliveroo ('Roo') a great place to work for parents. Not being a parent myself, I wanted to get involved in developing 'Roo Parents' to build a better understanding of what challenges this group faces in the workplace and how I can better support them. I launched a parents' survey to gather insight into the challenges Deliveroo parents face and presented the findings and recommendations back to our senior leadership

teams. We're about to launch workshops for those returning from parental leave, soon to be parents, and line managers of parents.

- Developing a 'Spotlight On...' initiative, to highlight the great female talent that we already have in the business with a monthly post on our DEI page, focusing on one great senior female leader. I ask them to describe their career to date, share the challenges they've faced and the advice they would give to their younger self.

## How do you balance work on D&I with your day-to-day responsibilities at Deliveroo?

The balance is certainly difficult to get right. I've integrated DEI work into my strategy role, which helps with the balance, meaning that I can still contribute to creating greater equity even when not doing gender committee specific projects.

Finally, it's a case of ruthlessly prioritising work, communicating with my manager and wider team on time commitments of projects. Ultimately, it requires working additional hours to deliver.



# Ben Dias

Data Science and Analytics Director  
easyJet

I am currently leading the delivery of easyJet's Data strategy, aimed at realising the company's ambition of becoming the world's leading data-driven airline. Previously having worked at Royal Mail, Tesco and Unilever, I have over 15 years' industry experience in solving real-world problems in an industry setting. Having started my career as a hands-on data scientist, I have more recently focussed on building and leading teams, applying the Lean Startup approach to data science and analytics within large organisations. I am experienced in setting up and managing industrial research collaborations with academic and business partners. I am also actively engaged with the UK mathematics community and very enthusiastic about inspiring the next generation of mathematicians and data professionals. I hold a PhD in computer vision and an MSc in mathematics and astronomy, both from UCL.

## Please can you describe the work you have done personally to promote diversity and inclusion within your organisation, specifically in encouraging more women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds into data roles?

Firstly, I focused on creating a psychologically safe environment, in which my whole team feels safe and empowered to bring their whole self to work, be the best they can be and help make our team great. I empowered my team to challenge each other and me, if they have any questions or concerns about anything. As words are not as powerful as actions, I also make sure to listen to and act on all the feedback my team is

willing to give. At the start, I knew it would take time to build up trust between myself and my team. So, I launched a feedback form to enable anyone who wasn't comfortable contacting me directly to send me their feedback anonymously. At the start the anonymous form was used quite a lot, which allowed me to get feedback from my team members who were not yet ready to contact me directly. I also shared all the feedback with my team, including my responses either explaining the reasons behind something, or the action plan that resulted from the feedback. This very quickly built up the trust between us, and although the anonymous form is still

available, it hasn't been used for over a year, and instead, now I get regular feedback directly from my team. I also transformed our recruitment process, by making the wording of our adverts and our interview requirements more inclusive, especially for women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, data science interview processes usually require candidates to work on and present a set project just for the purpose of the interview, which in my experience, excludes many candidates from even applying, as they do not have the time to do extra work just for an interview. So, now we also welcome presentations of projects the candidates have worked on before.

## Can you describe your role in supporting the Trailblazer group?

I have shared my experiences (via blogs/articles) and other D&I resources I have found with the Trailblazer group to help us raise awareness across the company and continue to challenge our everyday thinking and actions. I also regularly try new things with my team (e.g. setting a standing

D&I agenda item for team meetings, and appointing a Chief Inclusion Officer in my team to experiment with new activities to improve our team Inclusion culture beyond just raising awareness) and share my learnings with the Trailblazer group.

## Why is D&I important to you?

People are the most important asset any team or company has, and with the right people and culture, you can achieve anything together. Diversity is essential to solving complex problems, especially in the data space where we are constantly driving innovation, and inclusion is what unlocks the value of a diverse team, as you can only solve those complex problems if everyone feels empowered to contribute.

## What does being a good role model mean to you?

I consider being a good role model in everything I do – and especially in how I do it – as the most important responsibility of my leadership position. This is because I strongly believe the actions of a leader define the culture of a team, which is the critical factor of success.





# Fiona Eastwood

Chief Operating Officer, Midway Attractions Group, Merlin Entertainments

I am Chief Operating Officer for Midway Attractions at Merlin Entertainments. I was appointed into the role in 2019, following a period as Managing Director, Resort Theme Parks. I joined Merlin as Global Marketing Director, Midway Attractions in 2015, responsible for brand strategy and marketing across a global portfolio of brands.

I joined from BBC Studios, where I was responsible for strategic planning and brand management across Nordics, CEEMA, Asia and Latin America. Previously, I held roles as Managing Director, Consumer Products and Commercial Director for one of the BBC's biggest international brands, Doctor Who.

I recently became a Trustee on the Board of the charity 'Only A Pavement Away' which helps transform the lives of people facing homelessness by giving them an opportunity to find and forge a career in hospitality.

## Can you describe the work you do leading the D&I steering group at Merlin?

I'm the Executive Committee champion for D&I at Merlin Entertainments. This entails working with our HR Director, Emma Pankhurst, to set the targets, build our strategy and drive the plan supported by regional task-forces in the US, UK, Europe and APAC to deliver the global strategy, supported by a laser focus in the business. We've set challenging KPIs to increase gender balance and ethnic diversity, alongside a desire for everyone at Merlin Entertainments to feel they can be themselves and have the opportunity to

thrive and build a career here. Since we started earlier this year, we've introduced a series of global initiatives including balanced shortlists, diverse interview panels and reverse mentoring for each member of the executive committee, alongside many local initiatives.

## What does D&I mean to you?

Quite simply it's vital for our business now and for our future to build a diverse workforce that reflects the societies we operate in, and to foster an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves. Our D&I strategy is entitled 'Everyone Matters at Merlin' and this is so true.

## What advice would you give to other leaders looking to ramp-up focus on D&I?

It's crucial to start with a picture of your current D&I status, which isn't about box ticking, but as per the quote that I love from one of our shareholders: "what gets measured gets done." To drive change and deliver against the plan it's also crucial to have D&I regional taskforces in the business, comprised of advocates and 'champions for change', as the strategy needs action-focused plans which are tailored to each region or site. Having

these 'on the ground' ears and voices means that the actions are based on real feedback. We have the opportunity to listen and tailor the messages to the audiences, and direct feedback can be measured and fed back up to the global strategy.

## What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

I'm very proud of the work that we're all doing at Merlin Entertainments and it's great to be recognised, alongside the hundreds of people in our organisation who are focused on D&I.



# Steve Ellis

Director of Franchising McDonald's

I have been in the HTL sector for 28 years, starting as a crew member in my local McDonald's on Staines High Street. In my career at McDonald's I have worked throughout the business, both nationally and internationally, including roles across operations, HR and sales, with my current role being a Director of Franchising.

My passion for advocating change has been important to me throughout my career and I have strived to use my platform to help positively impact diversity, equity and inclusion. One of my current priorities is supporting franchisees in creating, and delivering on, a DE&I plan for 2022 that builds on the progress made in 2021. This is alongside sponsoring underrepresented talent to become successful franchisees.

## What work have you done personally to promote diversity and inclusion within your organisation?

I have tried to understand what limits diversity, equity and inclusion, and have sought the views and experiences of my colleagues to help me. I am fortunate to have a close working relationship with our Head of Inclusion who has been invaluable in raising my awareness of the barriers that exist and have also received personal mentoring from a long-standing colleague. This has been critical in giving me the confidence and understanding that has allowed me to confront those issues and act accordingly to drive change.

I am passionate about creating a collaborative environment that encourages open and

honest discussion on why it is important we make progress. My focus, with the support of many others, has been to provide a platform for people to engage on the issues at every level and I hope to reassure them of our commitment to act.

## What does being a good role model mean to you?

Someone who has courage. Courage to stand-up and challenge behaviours and/or courage to recognise their limits and take action to educate themselves.

The world has given us many examples of leaders that show courage and commitment. History and society has produced many courageous leaders that define inclusivity and are an inspiration to take action. On a smaller scale, I have been fortunate to learn

from many role models around diversity, equity and inclusion who follow those principles. Their actions take many different forms. From business leaders, like our Head of Inclusion, who define our vision, to mentors who take the time to help, support and educate those willing to develop, learn and grow.

## What steps are you taking in your team to ensure engagement in D&I?

The team has made diversity, equity and inclusion a priority. We know that this allows people to bring their authentic selves to work, encourages diversity of thought and creates a sense of belonging. Critically, the team believes that it is the right thing to do, which unsurprisingly improves business results.

We are trying to create a safe environment to openly talk about our differences, our feelings and our experiences, and we encourage everyone in the team to be curious with one another. This takes time, but the team is growing in confidence on the actions we need to take to improve our culture of inclusion and how we best engage our franchisees in this area. Importantly, we look for examples of best practice and aim to

challenge any unconscious bias or contrary behaviours. Thereafter, we have committed to holding each other to account and celebrating positive actions.

## What do you think are the biggest hurdles to progress on D&I in HTL?

I think that we must collectively find and open more opportunities for greater representation at a senior and executive level. That is a challenge for many industries but one where hospitality, travel and leisure could demonstrate leadership.

Businesses in our sector have strong and diverse representation because we operate in most, if not all, communities across the country. That is a real strength and proves that we have incredible access to diverse talent.

I am proud of the progress McDonald's has made in this area and know that many others have done so too. This has to be a springboard for more change. We need to demand progress and need to embed a culture that embraces equity, eradicates privilege, and is inclusive to all. Everyone must commit time and energy to make real progress in a world that is only getting faster.







# Estelle Hollingsworth

Chief People Officer  
Virgin Atlantic

As Chief People Officer at Virgin Atlantic, I am responsible for ensuring our people can thrive at work, by creating inclusive experiences that energise teams and drive our vision to be the most loved travel company and sustainably profitable. I bring over 25 years of People experience across five different industries, most latterly as Vice President, Cabin, here at Virgin Atlantic, leading our cabin crew and ground teams.

**You work closely with Virgin Atlantic's diversity networking groups. Why is it important that these groups have executive sponsors, and what impact do they have on the business?**

Working closely with our diversity network groups is so rewarding. Having the opportunity for our executive team to learn, understand, listen and support our networks to make the changes that will make us stronger as a company is just so inspiring to me and makes me a better person and a more inclusive and thoughtful leader. Our networks are made up of the most incredible members of our teams, who have an important story to tell and who want to be heard in order to make change for the good of our company, our customers and our people. Our executive allies meet regularly as a team, to share perspectives and to see how best we can support. Our sponsorship demonstrates the value we place on our networks at Virgin Atlantic. They are a key part of delivering our company plan. Our

leadership team is leaning into what people need, and they are hands-on and active in the changes we are making. I feel privileged to be helping to make a difference to the lives of our people.

**What does being a good role model and ally mean to you?**

It means everything to me. As a leader, you are in a position of influence: how you see the world will impact how others see the world. Our responsibility as leaders is to inspire, ignite passion in others and show a curiosity about and a true understanding of the differences that each person brings to life and their role.

To me, our behaviours will inspire others to behave in the same way, so we need to ensure that we are inclusive at every moment of the day. Most importantly when no one is looking, because that is the true you, and one that we need to be proud of. Our people at Virgin Atlantic are incredible. I want to learn from them and see the world through their eyes, to really increase my



understanding and care for others. I have much to learn and it is an exhilarating path to be on.

**What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?**

To me, diversity and inclusion means that the people in our world all bring difference. It means that difference is a strength and that our responsibility is to seek it out and to embrace it in order to become stronger.

Our diversity and inclusion philosophy is called Be Yourself, because once you are in an environment where you can be yourself and not worry about that, then others can learn from that and appreciate it. Being yourself makes you more productive, allows you to enjoy a stronger sense of wellbeing and to ultimately thrive. Feeling included is such an important feeling – it shows that you are valued,

respected and that people are curious about your perspective.

Creating an environment that encourages everyone to be themselves requires a relentless focus and a commitment to never stand still. As the society around us evolves, communities change and circumstances throughout our lives ebb and flow, so does what's important to us as individuals. This translates into how we view the world, the impact we can have, how we treat the people within it, and what we leave behind for future generations.

A sense of belonging creates love, and love is what makes Virgin Atlantic so special. We must continue to show energy and dedication in ensuring that each of our people feels included, feels that they can be their true selves and feels that they belong.



# Amanda Jamerson

Director, Hilton Honors Member  
Experience Hilton

My journey with Hilton has been an adventure, and throughout my time with the company I've been involved in our team member resource groups (TMRG) and love bringing diversity and inclusion to life in every aspect of our business. For over 9 years I supported both franchise and managed hotels, management companies, and owners as a consultant to their ecommerce and digital marketing needs. I recently transitioned to a new role supporting our loyalty program and am looking forward to reimagining how we celebrate members and bring the Hilton Honors experience to life.

**What does inclusion and diversity mean to you?**

Embracing ideas, people and things that are different from my individual view, culture, or approach to life.

**As the leader of Hilton's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion council, what are your priorities?**

The goal of the council aligns with that of our company: to be the most hospitable company and team in the world, by creating heartfelt experiences for guests, meaningful opportunities for team members, high value for owners, and a positive impact in our communities. To do this, we are focused on the following key priorities:

**1. Education & Training:**

To create a baseline understanding of what diversity, equity, and

inclusion (DE&I) means in the current landscape within Hilton. To support DE&I education, we will continue to create programmes and resources to help team members acknowledge the privilege, and how to recognise oppression broadly, and stand up for or alongside our diverse team members.

**2. Action & Accountability:**

Create an ongoing line of communication regarding DE&I council goals, training, and outcomes. Create SMART goals along with practical training for people leaders to support team member development. We will then measure leadership participation and engagement to ensure alignment with our company and council goals. And finally, measure success by utilising the company's global team survey.

**Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along on the D&I journey?**

It's easy to get caught up in the work we do, and so much of the time – whether intended or not – we forget that there is always a human factor to consider. Hilton desires for all team members to have the ability to show up as their authentic selves at work. However, after the increased spotlight on racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and so many other inequalities over the past years, I found myself having more conversations with team members for whom this did not always feel possible. It was at this time that I and many others in the company agreed we could do more around inclusion and diversity. Our Corporate Diversity, Equity & Inclusion team was hard at work, but we also wanted to begin grassroots conversations to support their efforts and bring it to life in our everyday work environments.

**What advice would you give to leaders looking to increase focus on diversity in their organisation?**

Don't try to do it alone. No matter the title, background, or level of experience there will always be something you miss. We all see the world through our own lens, which is influenced by what we know, so we must intentionally surround ourselves with a truly diverse set of people to help bring a vision and change to life.

**When it comes to advocating for D&I, is there anything you can share that you're doing outside of Hilton?**

My husband and I are incredibly intentional in our community and with family and friends. D&I can feel overwhelming at times, so we decided to start small by engaging in a healthy dialogue. As we interact with business owners, our church, schools, or neighbours, we intentionally encourage diverse topics, thinking, and ways of working. We also volunteer to support local businesses that make our community diverse.





# David Melhuish

Chief Development & Sustainability Officer, The Gym Group

I joined The Gym Group in April 2013 and have successfully opened over 160 gyms. Prior to joining The Gym I headed the Development & Facilities team at Central England Co-operative managing a diverse estate of over 300 properties. With a Masters degree in Engineering I have always been engaged in energy and environmental issues and I specialise in directing property development and sustainability strategies, but have always been a keen advocate of promoting social inclusion.

**As a member of the executive committee, you are ensuring that D&I remains a priority at the top level. Can you please talk a bit about this?**

We have had an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group at The Gym Group for some time. While I have had the pleasure of being on the team from the start, I recently took up the role of executive sponsor for the working group. Since forming the group we have consciously ensured the sponsor role is rotated amongst the executive team so that all the Board is fully engaged and invested in our EDI agenda.

The team is drawn from a broad section of the business with representatives from all departments who play a key role in driving and delivering actions within

our EDI plan. In addition, we recently launched a number of additional D&I work streams to focus on identifying potential barriers that people face within our business and industry and what we can do to break these down. Through these workstreams I get to hear the voices of a large number of colleagues from across the business on EDI issues, enabling me to directly reflect the thoughts, feelings, actions and plans of the groups into the Executive and main Board to ensure that an EDI view is applied to everything we discuss.

In addition, EDI topics are regularly reported and discussed formally at Board meetings, and we have recently formed a Sustainability Committee which incorporates EDI within its terms of reference. Chaired by a non-executive director and

attended by one other, as well as myself and the CEO, the Committee is fully empowered to act on behalf of the Board and provides additional time and resources for EDI to be considered at senior level.

**What does D&I mean to you?**

As a white, (late) middle-aged man, I'm aware that I have benefitted from privilege throughout my life and career. The unconscious – and sometimes conscious – bias that disadvantages others has, I'm sure, advantaged me. This is nothing new and stretches back into history and I cannot presume to know what it's like to be on the other side of this prejudice or to understand the disadvantages that many people face.

For me, therefore, diversity and inclusion is about very deliberately and consciously recognising all of the above, and using my position to actively do something about it, building inclusive practices and environments where people can bring their whole selves to work and advocating for change.

In addition to this, I believe in equity – where things are made equal, not just the same. I strongly believe in providing those who are disadvantaged or discriminated against with greater opportunities, by giving them the means necessary to move up to a point where they can realise the same success as everyone else. Imbalances in opportunity must be purposefully corrected.

**What does being a good role model and mentor mean to you?**

I aim to consider EDI in everything I do, and in doing so hope that my views and behaviours provide an awareness to others so they might do the same. But this does not, and will not, happen overnight. EDI is not a work group or a meeting, it's an attitude and a belief. Being willing to challenge the casual bias that goes on around us but that so many don't see is essential if there is to be a positive shift in society. I do not presume to be an expert, but I will always try and hope the impression made on others will lead them to do better than me.



# Bebe Oladipo

Head Of IT  
Azzurri Group

Having graduated with a master's degree in computer science in 1987 from the University College London, I embarked on my professional career starting in the insurance industry at the Sun Alliance Insurance Group, which later became the Royal & Sun Alliance. I then moved into retail, working with Mothercare for almost 10 years in various technology roles finishing up as their Support & Service Delivery Manager. I left Mothercare and joined a consultancy outfit as a Project Manager implementing retail projects for fashion and lifestyle brands such as TM Lewin, FatFace, White Stuff, Bamford and EAST. I always felt the urge to go back into an organisation, so my next move was as Group Applications Manager for the Gondola Group (PizzaExpress, ASK Italian, Zizzi, Byron & Kettners). I was appointed Head of IT when the group was split and the Azzurri Group (ASK Italian, Zizzi & Coco di Mama) was created.

**What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?**

In my professional life of over 30 years in the UK, my journey has been interesting, challenging at times but overall extremely fulfilling.

I am more than humbled to be a role model for inclusion. It has always been a passion of mine to be part of a safe environment where people can address issues of inclusion and champion the values that inclusion brings.

**You're a mentor with the Plan B mentoring scheme. Can you explain your work in this area and why mentoring is important?**

My involvement in Plan B came from sharing my experiences with a friend who just happened to be one of the founders of Plan B. I was honoured to be matched with a very lovely lady following our last virtual session. Due to the pandemic, we have not been able to hold face to face mentor/mentee sessions, but we have had a couple of virtual meetings and I will be meeting her in person very soon.

My contribution has been to listen, share my thoughts and provide guidance and tools based on what has

worked for me in similar situations. I am not there to make the decisions for my mentee but instead to provide the tools and sometimes a different perspective which I hope would help get her where she wants to go.

I believe that mentoring is so important because it provides an environment where both the mentor and the mentee can bounce ideas off each other and the mentor can provide tools and guidance on their real-life experience and what has worked for them. What I particularly love about being a mentor is the two-way communication. I have learnt a lot from my mentee as I hope she has from me too.

I have found being a mentor extremely fulfilling. To be able to give my time and use my experience to help someone else to solve a problem or make the right decision where they might have been struggling is invaluable.

**What does D&I mean to you? What motivates you to help drive up progress in your organisation?**

On one of the definitions of diversity that I love is "having a range of people with different racial,

ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds with varied lifestyles, experiences, and interests." For me, diversity and inclusion is centered around three words: empowerment, respect and appreciation – regardless of our differences. My motivation within my organisation is the fact that we are now on a journey. Looking inwards within the organisation and recognising that we can all do more around D&I. I am very excited to be part of the conversation and I am confident in what we will be able to achieve together.

**What work are you doing outside of your organisation on D&I? Are there learnings that can be applied to Azzurri?**

I am a member of the UKHospitality Diversity Committee. I have also recently engaged with an organisation called Everywoman. Founded in 1999, Everywoman has been at the forefront of the international movement for gender parity in the workplace. They have a network of over 30,000 women around the world. There are always learnings that can be applied to Azzurri as we continue on our D&I journey.





# Annie Roberts

Senior Vice President, Club and Owner Services  
Travel + Leisure Co.

I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Washington State University after 9/11. I had visions of working in government and instead took a temporary job in Hospitality where I fell in love with the industry. My father told me to take a business class which I dutifully ignored and after 18 years with Travel + Leisure Travel + Leisure Co., I guess he was right. I served as the Associated Students Vice President where our campus of 17,000 undergraduates, in rural Washington State, experienced 9/11. We spent time that day working with the Middle Eastern Student Association, locating each student to protect and care for everyone. This experience taught me how people react in the face of trauma, fear, and the unknown. I've carried that forward into each leadership opportunity. I began my career at Travel + Leisure Co. in Consumer Finance supporting operations and large technology projects. I moved to support Sales and Marketing leading to my first Senior Vice President role where I lead a cross functional process improvement team. In 2019, I moved into our Customer Service Operations, just in time for a pandemic. My most important job is being a single mother to Lucy (13) and Baker (10).

## Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

Leading a team is about growing individuals with a collective goal. To truly grow individuals, I believe you must listen to each individual story. Diversity and inclusion allows us to learn individual stories across people and our organisation. Our exposure to new experiences, relationships, and beliefs provides us an opportunity to grow and learn. Learning each other's stories is the beginning of authentic connection. Diversity and inclusion provides an immediate opportunity to support any company needing to grow as it brings more voices and

perspectives to the table where decisions are made.

## Can you describe the work you're doing to encourage conversations around inclusion and drive-up diversity within your company?

To commit to diversity in an organisation I must align our short-term and long-term goals with diversity, sending a message of priority and commitment. Measuring the diversity of our internal interviews for promotion provides data to my leadership team about where we need change. I regularly interview business partners in a video format that my Executive Assistant and I invented called "Coffee with Annie", which



is shared broadly across the organisation. This year, I've added time to discuss diversity and inclusion with each interviewee. We must take every platform we have to share the message about the culture of diversity and inclusion and we must look for ways to keep the conversation going.

## What advice would you give to anyone looking to drive change from within their organisation?

A common theme that came out of 2020 and existed before was that diverse employees must work twice as hard. This created an 'a-ha' moment for me when I realised that I need to promote my diverse employees twice as often. Look at your own leadership and who you rely on, do they look like you? Look at the employees you are promoting in your organisation. Seek out leaders in Talent Acquisition within your organisation that will partner with you as you

create an environment for diverse leaders to thrive.

## What does being a role model and an ally mean to you?

I learned about the term ally when I served as a sponsor to our Pride Diversity Resource Group focused on creating a safe environment for LGBTQ+ employees. As I experienced meetings side by side with my direct reports who are black, the term ally took on more meaning. I realized that I must speak up in meetings. It cannot always fall on the person experiencing the comment. This year I served as the Women In Travel DRG Co-President. Besides goals to inspire and develop career paths at Travel + Leisure Co, my Co-President and I also committed to growing the volunteer members of our board and I am committed to continuing expanding their careers. We must advocate and grow diverse leaders across the organization, not only those that report to you.



# Amanda Scott

Director of Talent, Learning and D&I  
Compass Group UK and Ireland

I have 25 years' experience as an HR Professional with extensive generalist, talent and D&I experience across a range of industry sectors: energy, financial services and hospitality. I have a proven track record delivering value through designing and leading the HR agenda for significant international businesses and leading global HR teams. I joined Compass in 2019 and have been passionate about designing and delivering Compass' inclusion strategy, through many different initiatives.

## You've been instrumental in delivering Compass' D&I strategy. Can you describe the steps you've taken to drive the agenda?

On joining Compass in 2019, my first port of call was the data that we had and determining what it was telling us about the make-up of our workforce and which areas we should focus on. Alongside that, I had many conversations with colleagues and leaders on what they were experiencing from a business and employee perspective and to test what their appetite and commitment to the D&I agenda was. Fortunately, there was a high level of engagement in our senior team – which is important – so when I suggested an approach and focus there was a lot of support.

I also knew that change would only happen if we talked to our people across the business, so conversations with them really informed the actions that we took over the past three years. Harnessing existing employee networks and creating new

ones has played a critical role in determining and delivering our agenda.

## What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

I feel passionately that everyone should have equality of opportunity regardless of their gender, race, sexuality, disability, social background or any other characteristic, and being able to do a job that helps to influence that in some way is very rewarding. I am hugely honoured and delighted to be identified as a role model. There's still much work to be done so I will use this opportunity to continue to learn and make progress.

## What advice would you give to leaders wanting to increase their focus on D&I?

Listening to the experiences of colleagues across the organisation is fundamental – hearing different perspectives and experiences provides critical insight which you would otherwise miss and helps to create a

plan that is right for your organisation.

I also found it helped to prioritise activity to the resources you have; there are no shortages of things to do in most organisations but doing one or two things well and making a difference is better than having a long list that only scratches the surface.

## Can you describe some of the work you do on D&I outside of Compass?

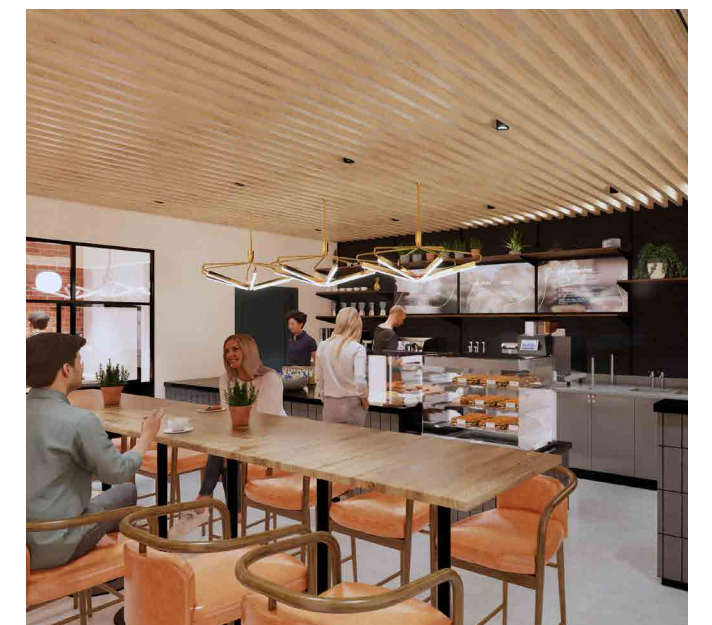
I have been part of the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) HR Leaders Forum for three years, two of which as co-chair, during which D&I was our priority focus. The group includes HR Leaders from across the food and grocery industry so the ideas we share and actions

we take have an impact on hundreds of thousands of employees.

I have been a mentor to disadvantaged teenagers which is very rewarding, and I also participate in the IGD school engagement programme which supports students in preparing for the world of work.

## How do you ensure that the business, from Board to front-line employees, remains engaged in the topic of D&I?

Communication is key; telling individual stories and sharing experiences is a really powerful way to educate ourselves, to show the difference we can all make and helps to turn D&I from just words or an abstract concept into real life impact.







# Carla Stockton Jones

UK Managing Director  
Stagecoach

I joined Stagecoach in February 2020 as Regional Director for South, became interim UK Managing Director in May and took on the role on a permanent basis in October 2020. My main priorities are to lead Stagecoach through its recovery and build a sustainable business for the future. I am enthusiastic about building an inclusive culture, developing people and using innovative thinking to grow the business. I am passionate about the charity work I am involved in, focusing on driving change and helping to improve the lives of others. I am stimulated by the varied and rewarding work I do, which gives me a real sense of fulfilment. I enjoy a busy home life with my 11-year-old son Cody, husband Ryan and Cairn Terrier puppy Jay.

## **What are you doing to ensure D&I remains a priority in your organisation?**

Ensuring D&I remains a priority at Stagecoach means that everyone needs to buy into the importance, benefits and the need for a diverse and inclusive workplace. Earlier this year we announced our sustainability strategy which includes key plans on how we will do this from a strategic perspective such as targeting 40% women in leadership roles and 25% of our workforce from ethnic minorities by 2026, whilst also introducing employee led networks so that D&I is not only led from the top down. These include networks for supporting women, multicultural employees, parents and carers, LGBTQ+ colleagues and ex-Forces personnel. We will also deliver a programme of events aimed at raising awareness of and educating about different cultures and

communities through the appointment of a D&I assistant as well as a health and wellbeing assistant in order to offer quality experience of work through the workplace.

## **What advice would you give to other leaders looking to increase focus on D&I activities?**

My advice to other leaders looking to drive up D&I activities is to ensure visible leadership. Letting other leaders, managers and employees know that this is something taken seriously all through the organisation is really important for making change stick. D&I cannot and should not be seen as a tick box exercise, there are tangible benefits from employees being valued, able to be themselves and fostering a culture where everyone feels equal. Therefore, setting clear goals at a strategic level whilst also getting involved in the conversation or celebrating the wins of the



employee-led networks is really important.

## **How has diversity and inclusion impacted the way the business operates?**

Initiatives such as the new employee networks and the creation of a new dedicated role for diversity and inclusion demonstrate a major step forward, and will help to ensure we can continue to recognise and celebrate everyone's differences, and create an even better place to work for our existing and new employees.

The networks are helping give a voice to individuals who may not have otherwise spoken up about positive ways we can change the business. This has been one of

the greatest benefits. Decisions are not just made with leaders and managers but also by drivers, engineers and support staff. One example of this is our Veteran Network, which created a business case to offer all military and veterans free travel on Remembrance Day and Armed Forces Day which was approved and then rolled out across the company.

Whilst we have made some good progress, we know that there is still work to do. The new targets we have set as part of our sustainability strategy will help to make sure that we continue this positive journey and play our part in helping to transform diversity in the transport sector.



# About Us

## About WiHTL

WiHTL is the most impactful Collaboration Community devoted to increasing diversity and inclusion at all levels including leadership positions across the Hospitality, Travel and Leisure (HTL) sector. We believe that through collaboration we can amplify the impact of individual inclusion initiatives, together we can have a bigger, louder voice for the good of the HTL industry. Our mission is to make a positive difference to 5 million people across Hospitality, Travel and Leisure globally by 2025.

For more information, 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.

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